

Three Hoots, Nothing More

Cliff Taylor

I heard an owl hoot three times the day John Burt died. It was morning time and with the first hoot I looked out the empty window where it came from and saw nothing. Then, it happened twice more: owl hoots from an empty window. My dad said he was in his prison cell in South Dakota and he heard three hoots, just three and nothing more. Later that week he read about a cousin's passing in the local newspaper. He included this story in one of the letters he sent me. It was proof: unconquerable, our ways live on.

Two Years Later

Cliff Taylor

We drove past where the old camps were, the heavy-duty Mad Max blossomings that put Standing Rock into everyone's hearts. Snow caked the empty earth; the ghost of it all was still visible. I remember having a moment to myself and seeing a bare-chested boy ride by on a beautiful war-painted pony. Felt like something was chiseled into my bones there; my fist stained with memories. I looked out the window at a million years of Indians loving that blessed, open land. Looked over at my girlfriend, gave her a kiss, and said, "Mni wiconi. Water is life."