

About a month after Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in May 2011, the 1491s released a video poem, “Geronimo E-KIA,”⁸³ which challenged the military’s conflation of a contemporary terrorist with the renowned Apache warrior. The 1491s, “a sketch comedy group, based in the wooded ghettos of Minnesota and buffalo grass of Oklahoma,” insisted that Geronimo—code name for bin Laden—had not been killed in Pakistan.⁸⁴ Nor did he die in February 1909.

Geronimo was not killed in Pakistan. . . . He is alive in the single mother from Tahlequah . . . who talks to her kids in Indian because she won’t give up . . . one . . . more . . . inch. . . .

Geronimo did not die in Abbottabad. . . . He is alive in Sisseton . . . living in the elder who refuses to die . . . that fluent speaker that shows up every day . . . saving the language one story at a time. . . . He lives in the lawyer from Black River Falls . . . who beats them at their own game. . . . He is alive in the domestic violence victim in White Cloud . . . who decided to fight back.

Although they describe themselves as “a gaggle of Indians chock full of cynicism and splashed with a good dose of Indigenous satire,” the 1491s had a serious message. Geronimo is “a college student in Lawrence,” “a civil servant from Gila River,” “a grant writer from Shiprock,” “a language immersion teacher from Browning,” and “the history teacher from Akwesasne . . . who knows that truth does not come in versions.” Geronimo, in other words, is everywhere. He is a part of every Indigenous person who resists colonization. “We chase his legacy, not his truth,” the poem concludes. “Neither will be caught, but one of them can be made up.”

The message of “Geronimo E-KIA” resonates on many levels with that of *Re-Collecting Black Hawk*. Indeed, it is easy to imagine the military using Black Hawk as an enemy code name had it not already been assigned to a helicopter. Ironically, the Navy SEALs used two modified Black Hawk helicopters in their raid on bin Laden’s compound in Abbottabad.⁸⁵ Similarly, it is not a stretch to imagine the 1491s producing another viral video featuring Black Hawk in place of Geronimo. Geronimo is Black Hawk. And vice versa. The 1491s poem “isn’t about Geronimo” in the same way this book isn’t about Black Hawk. Like Geronimo, Black Hawk is alive in Lawrence, Gila River, Shiprock, Browning, and Akwesasne. There are many Black Hawks and many Black Hawk Wars. The relevance of these particular histories reverberates far beyond the upper Midwest.