

straighter. But taking that outside of the community is a huge thing... if you asked people outside of the community ten years ago what powwow music is, they'd draw a blank."

The early Tribe tracks, which are collected on their 2012 self-titled mixtape, took samples from powwow recordings made by well known contemporary drum/vocal groups like Northern Cree, and mixed them with dubstep and moombahton rhythms. Jacques Attali said that sound is prophetic, and the sound of Tribe's early powwow remixes was prophetic of an Indigenous resurgence that spans Turtle Island (both Canada and the US), taking in the Idle No More movement and the demands for justice for murdered Indigenous women, as well as the Standing Rock protests, and other Indigenous protests against oil pipelines and other extractive technologies encroaching on native lands. This resurgence is cultural, too. It spans the experimental vocal work of Inuk singer Tanya Tagaq, the riotous Cypress Hill styles of Haisla's Snotty Nose Rez Kids, the installation art of Rebecca Belmore and the queer appropriated landscape paintings of Kent Monkman, as well as the writing of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Glenn Coulthard, among many others. It's a moment of great excitement, even if actual substantial shifts in the policy of the settler colonial states have so far been minimal.

The group were joined in their early years by DJ Shub (of the Cayuga First Nation), but Shub, Frame and NDN subsequently left. Tribe are currently a duo of Bear and Tim 'Zoolman' Hill (Mohawk, of the Six Nations of the Grand River). Amplified by the internet and a series of outstanding videos, their tracks circulate across North American Indigenous communities, as well as a post-MIA global dance scene fuelled by DJ /rupture aka Jace Clayton's *Mudd Up* broadcasts, the Rebel Up! crew's parties in Brussels, and so on, such that so-called powwow step became part of an eclectic global underground sound.

But sampling powwow recordings brings up complicated issues as to how to ethically work with this material. "On the one side, there's cultural protocols and we know we need to ask a drum group if we can use their song," points out Bear. "What we didn't realise is that with the business protocols, the people you're doing business with aren't necessarily taking care of the drum group the way you think they are." So, for 2013's *Nation II Nation*, A Tribe Called Red collaborated directly with artists on the Tribal Spirit label which specialises in powwow music. "That feeling that you get, and that feeling being mostly the drums, we make sure to take care of those groups above and beyond because they're just as responsible for the music as we are."

The third and most recent Tribe record, 2016's *We Are The Halluci Nation*, grew out of their relationship with John Trudell, a protean figure in Indigenous art and politics, who came to prominence as the spokesperson for the United Indians of All Tribes takeover of Alcatraz prison in California in 1969. A founder and chairman of the American Indian Movement, the most important activist group for Indigenous rights in the 70s, Trudell's house was burnt down and much of his family killed in a suspicious fire in 1979 – after which he devoted himself to music, writing and film as vehicles of Indigenous expression. Tribe first met Trudell in New Mexico in 2015. "He

explained that it took him half of his life to do what we figured out naturally," remembers Bear.

Trudell was eager to collaborate, and sent them a recording of a poem he'd written for them called *The Tribe Called Red*. The recording closed with another piece called *We Are The Halluci Nation*, which immediately set off lights in Bear. "When I heard that it was like, this is obviously our story but it was a poem, there's a lot of space to be filled. I've been working on sci-fi and superhero stories a long time, going back to high school, where I had a character who represents a lot of Halluci Nation. He was this native superhero who had the ability to teleport himself. He spent his lifetime teleporting around different peoples, and people who were connected to the Earth and gathering all this knowledge together and then having this crazy mish mash of things that he drew from."

Trudell's reading of the poem, which opens *We Are The Halluci Nation*, sets out with disarming directness the situation of Indigenous people in the Americas today: "*We are the tribe that they cannot see/We live on an industrial reservation/We are the Halluci Nation/We have been called the Indians/We have been called Native American/We have been called hostile/We have been called pagan/We have been called militant/We have been called many names/We are the Halluci Nation/We are the human beings/The callers of names cannot see us but we can see them*".

Halluci Nation could mean many things: the ways in which Indigenous people are mistaken by settlers and others for things that they are not; the way that Indigenous people can appear to be ghosts even to themselves today on the land that they still call home; it could refer to global capitalism and the forms everyday life takes in the settler colonies as a massive hallucination; and last but not least, the ghostlike possibility of a different kind of nation built on radically egalitarian principles and solidarities, sort of like the hip-hop nation or an expanded version of Paul Gilroy's Black Atlantic. Or an Indigenous nation to nation pact. For the album, Tribe collaborated with a global group of artists including US rappers Yasiin Bey (formerly Mos Def) and Saul Williams, Middle Eastern MC Narcy, Afro-Colombian vocalist Lido Pimienta and Tanya Tagaq in a series of joyful, militant dance tracks.

I talk with both Tim and Bear via Skype while they're working on tracks for their untitled next record in Los Angeles. Tim is quieter than Bear, maybe more focused on the details of the sound – he grew up on a reservation outside of Toronto where he's still a knowledge keeper, and started making beats as a teenager after connecting up with Six Nations hip-hop group Tru Rez Crew. Bear himself comes from a family long immersed in the arts. His father Jeff Thomas is a well known photographer, his mother Monique Mojica is a playwright and actor, and his grandmother Gloria Miguel was one of the founders of the longrunning American Indigenous Spiderwoman Theater.

"I'm like generations in on Indigenous arts... my great grandfather Antonio Miguel Mojica was from Central America, he was from Guna Yala, off the coast of Panama, settled in New York City, in Brooklyn working as a longshoreman, but also on the weekends was part of the Coney Island side show. He would perform in headdress and breechcloth that was not his traditional clothes. He would sing made up songs, and him and his brothers would mix up snake oil in

"Modern Indigenous art started from a place of necessity. We weren't allowed to perform our traditions unless it was for the side shows and the freak shows"

Ehren 'Bear Witness' Thomas