

HIS PLEA

By Richard Calmet Adams

About 1900

Richard Adams was a Lenape and an attorney. He liked to write poetry in English and here is one he wrote as a plea for his Lenape people:

Why should we be a separate people, the target of every man?
We, who owned this country once, should be right in the van.
No one would objections raise, and surely Congress can
Declare all Indians vested with the rights of every man;
And grant us prompt permission to prove our every claim,
And pay us the obligations the Government has made in vain.
Then to our oppressors will we prove, who deny our right to live,
That Indians will make good citizens, if to them a chance you give.
Let the Indian have some duties, treat him as a worthy man;
Give him a voice in the elections, give him title to his land;
Give him place of trust and honor, let him feel this yet his home;
Let him use his mind and muscle, let his actions be his own;
Pay him what is justly due him, let your Government be his, too,
He will battle with each problem just as faithfully as you.
One who proves himself a warrior, and of danger knows no fear,
Surely can find ways to master each new problem that draws near.