

# The Experiential World Of D'Arcy McNickle

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## Abstract

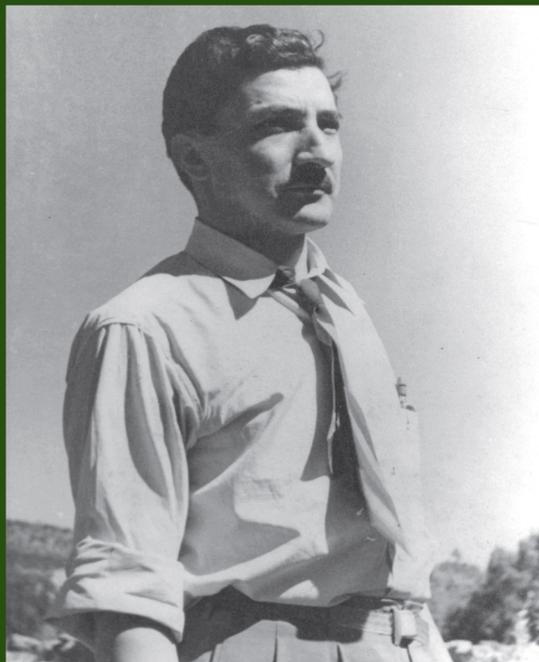
Our project adopted innovative research methods and ways of approaching biography to seek new ways of imagining and representing the experiential world of D'Arcy McNickle (1904-1977), a citizen of the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation in Montana and one of the twentieth century's most influential American Indian writers, intellectuals, and activists.

### More Than a Garden

We found that his garden writing, though easily dismissed, is profoundly meaningful--and that it allows us to see "more than a garden." In every craft, an artisan puts some of their self into their product. Whether for sustenance, as a hobby, or for solace, McNickle invested himself into tending to his flowers, vegetables, and herbs.

### Mapping an Experiential World

McNickle recreated a sense of place and belonging. He asserted and recorded Indigenous persistence and presence in places that were threatened or radically transformed by settler colonialism. This included the Tohono O'odham Nation, which he visited in the spring of 1942--which our research focused on. During that trip, McNickle wrote entries in his diary that spoke to the persistence of landscapes central to notions of Indigenous peoplehood.



### Hearing D'Arcy McNickle's World

McNickle's writings on what he listened to and heard allow us to comprehend how he and so many other Native people lived (and continue to live) in ways that refused and defied (and still refuse and defy) preconceived essentializing binaries that pit "Indian" against "white," "traditional" against "modern," and so on. The music that D'Arcy McNickle listened to, the critical way he listened to it, and the other sounds his writings allow us to enrich our ability to imagine his experiential world with greater complexity.

### A World Beyond Imagination?

McNickle wrote about his efforts to assist Native workers in migrant labor camps and register for sugar rations issued by the federal government after U.S. entry into World War Two. He references cattle programs, cooperatives, migrant labor, nutrition and health. Other entries speak to the ways that tribal nations sought to build their economies and individuals sought to provide for their families in the midst of the Great Depression.