The following index lists the major topics in the audio recording and the approximate point when they occur in the recording according to an analog cassette recorder’s tape counter. This tape counter index (TCI) has not been edited for accuracy by Archives and Special Collections.
Bill Bevis talks about the assignment for the class. Bevis says that there are two ways to talk about any novel. One is talk about about the work inside the cover of the book and the other is generally how the book is received by the readers. Bevis mentions that this book by Welch is seen as a native American novel. Bevis says that many people who pick the book up do so with the intent of considering it as a documentary of native Americans. Bevis mentions that he will discuss other works on native American history and its relation to how the native American is portrayed in novels.

The panelist for tonight's program is Gary Niles Kimble, assistant professor of Native American studies at the University and a lawyer who has served several terms in the state legislature. Bevis asks Niles whether he has seen many books published that are important to the native American movement. Niles says yes, the most important of which is Black Elk Speaks. Niles uses this book in one of the native American classes. He feels that it is important because it gives an excellent view of the mystical experience of traditional plains Indians.

Bevis comments that Niles uses the book more for the present sensitivity on the subject of native Americans rather than its anthropological value. Bevis takes the example of Welch's book and asks whether the rough life portrayed in it is helpful to the native American situation. Niles says that it is important to understand the starkness of reservation life and this book certainly presents that.

Bevis asks Niles to say something about Cushman's Stay Away Joe. Niles says that it is a period piece of work that describes a romantic type Indian who doesn't live any longer and who probably never will. This book by Cushman and Welch's book were book researched on the Belnap Reservation.

Niles talks about an experience several years back when he was teaching on the Cheyenne reservation. The priest at the mission was called upon every week to perform an exorcism. This surprised Niles greatly because when he talked to the priests in Montana about it before going down there they said that they had never had to do such a thing. This goes to show that
Indian life cannot be understood by looking at, say the housing the Indians live in. One has to look at the spiritual life of the Indian to really understand him.

301-350 Niles says that he is waiting to see a book that takes into account the spiritual way of life of the Indian and how it affects reservation life. Bevis says that a little of the spiritual life is brought out in Welch's book but not much. Bevis says that this concept is important because in the book you get the feeling that the old Indians had these spiritual powers but now it is gone. It is sort of the same style in white settler books where the paradise was once here but now it is gone.

351-400 Bevis asks Niles if he senses a more positive attitude about reservation life now than what is seen in the literature. Niles says, yes. Niles talks about the recent walk across America of groups of Indians. Many of the younger people on the reservations are not going because the medicine men tell them that the political movement put on by these groups is doomed to be struck down.

401-450 This is one of the things that Niles likes about the situation is that these ancient powers seem to be seeping back into Indian life where the Indians are beginning to listen to the medicine men again. Niles says that these customs of the Indians will continue whether they are written down or not.

451-500 There is a point about this that Bevis wants to make. Writing has never been much in the way of recording Indian history until the last few years and he wonders whether novels and other books will give the Indians a reflection of their lifestyles or whether it is the white audience mainly that it looking at this form. Niles says that to most people they don't need this literary confirmation.

501-550 Bevis asks what the major form of communication is between the Indians. Niles says that a great deal of communication occurs by word of mouth. He says that there is some of the things in the Indian community that are done by way of newspapers etc. but most communicating is still done orally.

551-600 Niles says that the Indians were in America long before the white men came and they may be here long after. If a culture does not have technology like the white men to communicate then another form must be found and this happens to be orally by the Indians. Bevis asks Niles how he accounts for the cohesiveness by the native Americans.
Niles says that it is not just the Indians who are in this role but society puts many different groups of people into such roles. Niles talks about one of his friends who really knows the Indian religion and they get along very well which surprises him by how much they have in common.

Bevis comments on how it must be to really feel what the Indians feel and also take an objective look at them from the outside as a lawyer and university level teacher.

Niles says that he was always trained to think of things very logically but you do see some things in the Indian cultures that are sort of magical and you have to deal with them.

Niles and Bevis talk about some of the mysterious things that happen to people such as seeing things and then when going to take a second look nothing was there. People ask themselves, "was there anything there or not?" and if your smart you'll think that it doesn't make any difference whether the thing you saw was there or not.

Niles says that there are some things that are mysterious that happen on the reservations and it sort of breaks down the alienation between the cultures when all of the people are "a little afraid of the dark". Bevis comments that some of the cultural things that are learned when we are little kids tend to alienate cultures more.

Niles says that in the white culture of America it is sort of inevitable that a person will go to school, get a good job and become a middle class citizen. Indians on the reservation don't have this inevitable path to follow, some may succeed, others will fail.

[END OF SIDE A]

[SIDE B]

Niles says that the minority cultures of the US must be able to speak up about the dull, rational culture of the whites and put some excitement into it. Niles says that what many of these books offer is a statement that there really is power in the world and peoples shouldn't feel alienated from one another.

Bevis wants to switch back to talking about Welch's book. Bevis says that he is surprised that a lawyer and teacher says that there is a spiritual presence in Indian culture. Bevis sees that there is this spiritual presence in Welch's book. Bevis reads a
passage from the book that depicts the spiritual tone. Bevis asks if this book by Welch is read on the reservation or assigned in high school.

101-117 Niles says that he doesn't know whether it is taught or not. Bevis notes that the time is up for the interview.

118-150 Bevis says that there is some spiritual passages in the book that are very important although very scarce. Bevis says that in all of Welch's work there is a very important spiritual significance. Bevis reads one of Welch's poems with this spiritual content.

151-200 Bevis talks about some of the other works that are done by native Americans and that publishers tend to push off on people and they usually pick these types of books up because they talk about native American life and it was written by a native American. Bevis says that much of the writing by native Americans gives only a very brief view of what native American life is really all about.

201-250 Bevis talks about several poems that are popular and are thought to reflect Indian tradition. However, if one is to look at these poems in more detail and track there origins down a person would find that they really don't represent a true picture of religious ceremonies etc. that they are supposed to represent. Bevis reads one of the poems that is supposed to reflect a ceremonial tradition of an Indian tribe. Bevis also notes that European literature has nothing to do with Indian art forms and Indians ceremonies and stories can never be translated in true detail because the Indian didn't have a written language.

251-300 Bevis describes the differences between a written culture, like that of the Europeans, and one of oral culture, like native American cultures. Bevis again wants to bring back a topic from an earlier lecture on primitive, simple, traditional cultures as native American cultures are supposed to be. Bevis notes that many of the ceremonies in Indian cultures are by no means simple and none are primitive. So to talk about European versus native American art is to talk about two different forms not to talk about primitive and simple versus complex and technical.

301-350 Bevis now wants to bring out this relationship of Montana writers to native American art. He first notes that Welch is using a European art form; English writing. So Bevis doesn't want Welch confused with what a native American artist is. Welch is only a native American artist in that Welch is a native American and he uses his background but nothing more
than that.

Bevis notes that on the next program the book will be discussed in detail. Bevis cautions his readers to watch out for Welch's writing. He is excellent at changes from prose into poetry and vice versa and many people will not be able to tell the difference in some cases. Welch also has a tendency to put a twist on some of the ending of his paragraphs which encourages reflection upon what was read beforehand. This is another trick that poets often use. Bevis reads a paragraph to demonstrate his point and then signs off.

[END OF TAPE]