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Call of the Wild

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Call of the Wild

Once, I was a wolf
living among wolves

on the stunted backbone
of tundra and forests

where we hunted moose
and caribou all winter

in deep, drifted snow
without escape,

where only the expansive silence
of the far north listened

as we howled at the moon
and ran the glacial earth

until I awoke again a man.
Many years have passed,

but on some still nights
I hear them waiting

above the cup of this valley,
calling to me from shadows

like a visitor who comes to my house
and knocks on the door with both fists.

John E. Smelcer

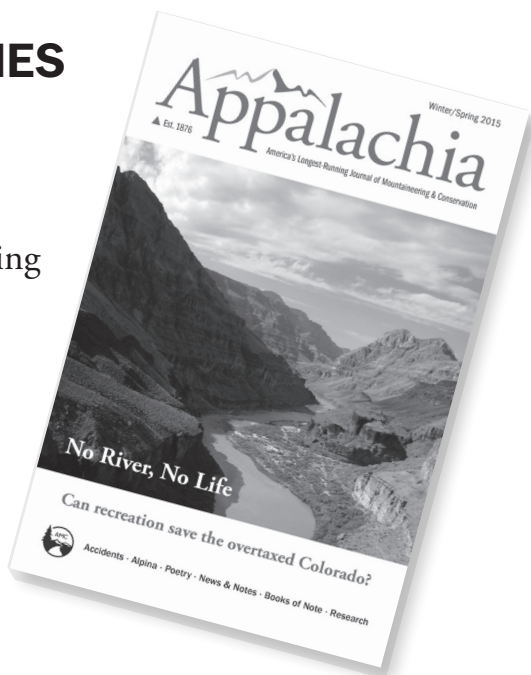
JOHN E. SMELCER, an Alaska Native American, is the author of 40 books, including *Songs from the Outcast* (American Indian Studies Center, UCLA, 2000) and *Without Reservation* (Truman State University Press, 2003), both nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in poetry. He teaches literature and creative writing at Binghamton University, SUNY.

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