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ABSTRACT

In November 2001, elders, youth, educators, culture bearers, and community members came together to speak from within their own experiences about the critical issues and challenges facing Native people in the 21st century and to envision the positive thinking required for future generations. This proceedings documents 34 oral presentations and serves as the text for a curriculum package distributed to Native high schools and tribal colleges. The forum and resulting community education are intended to support Native communities' self-determination and nation-building within the context of indigenous intelligence. Participants gave personal and often spiritual testimonies to future generations that conveyed stories of growth and development, assessment of Indian world realities today, and experience-based advice in the areas of education and socialization, land and economy, governance and leadership, health and reproduction, and psycho-spiritual. The presenters were Jim Dumont, Darrell Kipp, Janine Jemison, Renee Gurneau, Ryan King, Migizi Pensineau, John Mitchell, Jim Enote, Ferrell Secakuku, Sherry Salway Black, Clayton Brascoupe, Tom Cook, Ella Mulford, Shawn Mulford, John Mohawk, Wilma Mankiller, Charlie Soap, Keller George, Tonya Gonnella Erichner, Maehkiwkesec El-Issa Washinawatok, Katsi Cook, Birgil Kills Straight, Debra Harry, Angaangag Lyberth, Debra LaFontaine, Richard Montague, Sherri Mitchell, Tom Porter, Janice Longboat, Pemina Yellow Bird, Michael Arredondo, and Teresa Lynch. (SV)

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A SPECIAL EDITION OF
NATIVE AMERICAS JOURNAL



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RENEWING OUR WAY OF LIFE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

AMERICAN INDIAN MILLENNIUM



ED 478 579

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Native

FALL/WINTER 2002

*Hemispheric Journal
of Indigenous Issues*

AMERICAS

VOLUME XIX NUMBER 3&4

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Photographs: Cover: Three generations
of Shoshone women; Camille George (left),
her daughter Rose Ann Abrahamson (center),
and granddaughter Leela Abrahamson.
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Inside front cover: A young Southern Ute child
rests after the Sundance at Ignacio, Colorado.
© Malcolm MacKinnon.

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and Design, NAJA, 2002.

First Words

GENERATION TO GENERATION

Culture passes through the generations. The knowledge of ancestors, the attitudes and language of ancient memory are priceless and should not be lost. One human being's trajectory, if respected and discerned, will provide great knowledge. The lessons of life itself—short or long—are often the most valuable. We are the ancestors, says the old axiom, of those yet unborn.

The many contributions to this special-double issue of *Native Americas Journal* (Fall/Winter 2002) reflect an invitation to a range of Native American youth and elders—activists all in the prime of maturity—to tell something about themselves, what they have learned in life and what advice they would give to their descendants, to that often-cited Seventh Generation, whose faces, say the midwives, are yet coming to us out of the ground. A burst of generous sharing came forth in response to the call. Powerful stories were told advice of hard-won wisdom to the generations, wise challenges and encouragement from the young. Serious instruction was offered, personal and ancient, that sparks clarity onto the future.

The purpose was not to present papers so much as to speak with each other and to listen to each other from the heart of personal experience. The gathering was organized as a long mutual introduction. It requested that all presenters stay, that

we do this together for several days. The format made it easier not only to approach from the heart but also to enter knowledge from that "other" perspective—the one landed in place and culture—indigenous at the Millennium. Less academic perhaps, albeit superbly perceptive and intelligent, this foray into Native oral culture marks the final issue of the *Native Americas* to be produced at Cornell University. Academic context recedes at this time to the call for a deepening of indigenous content, to the promise of more direct connection to Native cultures.

Even when layered with historical and contemporary social and cultural influences, sincere Native narratives are always deeply truthful and thought-provoking. Nearly always, the Native profound rests on a blanket of spirituality—the traditional language and culture demand it. There is much evidence of that in these presentations. In a gathering semi-circle, presenters shared deeply from the heart of their experience in serving the people. All are people who have carried forward careers dedicated to this principle, which is the underlying basis of the contemporary revitalization of the Native nations.

In every field of endeavor that Native peoples engaged throughout the 20th Century—as individuals, families, organizations, clans or tribal nations—the spiritual as practical, as a way to guide life and movement, has always been present. Cyclically, this connection ignites the instinct of the

tribal heart back to the survival of the peoples as peoples, as communities based on kinship, language and particular geographies that have provided meaning and sustenance for generations, both in spiritual identity (ancient prayer altars), as well as natural and human resources that support life.

Nearly thirty years ago (1974), at a gathering of traditional elders of the Northern Great Plains, John Mohawk, one of the honored presenters at the Millennium gathering, gave a speech entitled, "The Sovereignty Which is Sought Can Be Real." A vigorous contemporaneous address, it inspired the Native cultural economics movement, and was exemplary of John Mohawk's oratory throughout the 1970s, which fused traditional heart and mind to academic research in a new current of presentation. Mohawk's call then, which as always echoed the cry of the traditional indigenous peoples, was for the rebuilding of the nations through a re-dedication by the communities to their Native spiritual and material cultures. In this vein, this Millennium issue seeks to work with the oral transcript to present strong messages that add to the reality. Transferring oral presentations to the page is not easy, but it is rewarding.

A great thank you to all the presenters who patiently worked with us to prepare their pieces. Thus, the intensity of the circle is not all lost and others can share in the common reality of this first Millennium gathering. The thirty-plus people who shared their stories for this volume are each of them unique and special, but theirs are not the only stories to be gathered. This volume is expectedly a start, a way to encourage the Native peoples of the Americas, miraculous survivors of 510 years of severe dis-

ruption, to speak their truth. A special thank you to Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee) and Tom Porter (Mohawk), whose exemplary lives of service in leadership to their nations and to all Indian peoples, were honored. John Mohawk's special tribute to the two luminaries, "The Quality of Leadership: Honoring Tom Porter and Wilma Mankiller," appears in this issue (p.48). A special acknowledgment also to Dagmar Thorpe, for her steadfast involvement and generous leadership on the Millennium conference and the production of this issue.

The world is changing rapidly. Generation-to-generation conversations are easily overrun by the mass messaging produced by strangers and telecast, via television and computer, into our homes. New generations receive vast amounts of information—attitude and perspective—from television programming and from nationally produced education curriculum guides. The Millennium gathering, with the accustomed formality of a symposium, offered a forum that focused on that much-needed generational dialogue. It was organized into five areas or themes: Education and Socialization; Land and Economy; Governance and Leadership; Health and Reproduction; and Psycho-Spiritual. These five areas were identified by Native elders in a pivotal conference held at Loon Lake, New York, in 1977, as primary areas of life and community that a people must control in order to fully exercise sovereignty. There are many fields of endeavor in each of them, many careers, and they are all necessary to the development of healthy, spiritually-sound, self-determined Native peoples. The idea of the elders at Loon Lake was that conscious effort to integrate these areas of

life and community, while approaching each of them as major fields, is crucial to nation building. Sovereignty was not just a governmental prescription, they said, but is an attitude that can increasingly bring a fuller vision and clearer mission to all aspects of tribal life. Sharing stories of leadership and change in each of these areas, between the generations, was recommended as a way to start. As high school student, Maehkiwkesec El-Issa Washinawatok (Menominee) told the gathering: "One day, today's youth will be the elders."



With this issue, we announce a change of home for *Native Americas Journal*. Beginning Spring 2003, *Native Americas* will be published by First Nations Development Institute (Fredericksburg, Va.). A thriving and well-established Native development organization, First Nations Development Institute is at the forefront of defining an indigenous culture-based development practice with Native communities. Its researchers and writers have contributed to *Native Americas* and we have often been natural partners in national initiatives and movements.

Founded in 1995 at Cornell University, *Native Americas* was envisioned as a communications vehicle that would bridge the cultural and knowledge bases of indigenous communities with the documentary rigor of major academic documentation centers at universities, museums and other research, educational and developmental institutions. A winner of numerous journalistic and developmental awards and citations, *Native Americas* can lay claim to some success in that regard; it has always sought to contribute the highest quality concept base for indigenous



(l to r): José Barreiro, *Native Americas* co-Founder; Rebecca Adamson, President and Founder, First Nations Development Institute; Sherry Salway Black, Senior Vice President, First Nations Development Institute; and Tim Johnson, *Native Americas* co-Founder.

American journalism and non-fiction writing, while fielding well-researched articles on a wide range of topics.

I want to acknowledge the contribution of co-Founder Tim Johnson to the magazine's creation and welcome him back to the journal's editorial group. With the active participation of several members of our editorial board and other excellent colleagues, contributors, and institutional relations, Tim was instrumental in the planning and launching of the journal. *Native Americas* is a journal and it is more than words on paper. The journal that emerged at Cornell—and was founded on a challenge by a national Native circle and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation—was intended to present dependable writing on the complex and historically-bound situations of American indigenous peoples. Dozens of researchers and testimonial voices, journalist-scholars, essayists, and artists—a growing circle that enjoys long and fruitful histories of collaboration—have contributed to the mission of

providing American Indian peoples a forum that would approach the community bases and challenge the mind while respecting spirit.

Contemplating and meeting the rigorous standards of Cornell University, this circle generated a journal wherein the culture-bearing elders and representatives of indigenous cultures could present their knowledge sincerely and comprehensively, without concern for negative assault or denial of actual experience. The principal premise is that respect be given equally, both to the Western academic tradition of documentary, experimental and analytical method—if operating at high ethical standards—and to the authentic methods and content of indigenous peoples' traditional community knowledge, which are culturally rich, highly intelligent, and self-generating. We felt that this was an achievable synthesis that could help energize indigenous communities. We wanted to capture and cross-pollinate that discussion among Native scholars, students, professionals, and opinion leadership in Indian

country.

While the university base served foundational purposes for the publication's first eight years, it has also tended to distance the journal from tribal community currents. The journal has need of a more active base, one with equally dynamic ties to community projects and trends. The wide intellectual and philanthropic resources of First Nations Development Institute, which often guide the interface between Native communities, foundations, and universities, is fertile ground in this regard. From its new base at First Nations Development Institute, *Native Americas* invites all contributors to continue to produce. We look forward to the fusing of these two major currents, to the release and flow of new and significant creative energy.

José Barreiro
For the Editors

Calling for the Stories

JOSÉ BARREIRO, TIM JOHNSON,
AND DAGMAR THORPE

"THE CONFERENCE WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY GATHERING, A MARKER IN HISTORY. THE CONFERENCE WAS A LIFE-AFFIRMING EVENT, THE LIKES OF WHICH ARE RARELY, IF EVER, EXPERIENCED MORE THAN ONCE. THE UNIQUE COMBINATION OF KNOWLEDGE SHARED, DEEP HUMAN EMOTIONS EXPRESSED, AND INTENT LISTENING TO OVER THIRTY REMARKABLE SPEAKERS HAS MADE US ALL REALIZE THAT GOOD MINDS, PROJECTING TRUTHFUL IDEAS IMPLEMENTED THROUGH RIGHTEOUS ACTIONS, CAN INDEED CHANGE THE WORLD."

— TIM JOHNSON (MOHAWK), FORUM CO-CONVENER

The purpose of the forum *American Indian Millennium; Renewing Our Ways of Life for Future Generations* and resulting community education was to support nation-building within the context of indigenous intelligence, in support of communities that go forward with their own thinking to bring about self-determined futures. Native American communities and particularly youth are faced with critical challenges to our future continuation as peoples. The inter-generational forum, a collaboration of youth, elders, educators, culture bearers, community members, and facilitating national organizations who came together to speak from within their own experiences, examined critical issues and challenges facing Native people in the twenty-first century, and envisioned the positive thinking required for future generations.

The four-day conference held on November 29 thru December 2, 2001 was hosted by *Native Americas Journal*, then based at Cornell University. Thirty-three intergenerational participants engaged in an in-depth discussion giving personal and often spiritual testimonies to the Seventh Generation within the conceptual framework of

indigenous intelligence. The participants presented their story to the Seventh Generation to come at this moment in time, the beginning of a new century and millennium. These living documents of people's experiences projected out into the future are presented in the following format: personal stories of growth and development, assessment of Indian world realities today, and what it is participants wished to communicate to their future children, families, communities, and nations. Participants ranged in age from high school students to elders.

The major intent of the conference was to seek and offer understanding on the application of indigenous intelligence. This was viewed through a common awareness of our history in the past hundred years, back to the seven generations that came before us; through the present where we stand now; to the next one hundred years, the seven generations yet to come. The discussions sought experience from indigenous intelligence specific to the areas of: Land and Economy; Education and Socialization; Governance and Leadership; Health and Reproduction, and Psycho-Spiritual. Presentations and discussions took place by generations that

have experienced and accomplished much over several decades, people who are thinking deeply about their cultural foundations and aspirations for the futures of their communities.

The project calls for the dissemination of materials to educators within Native communities by providing a "Teachings for the Millennium" curriculum of published and audio-visual records. This special issue of *Native Americas* is devoted to the American Indian Millennium. It also serves as the text for a curriculum package, which includes a video-production of the forum and a curriculum guide. The curriculum for high schools, tribal colleges, Native schools, and other Native non-profit educational institutions focuses on the overall context of indigenous intelligence as applied to our communities. The curriculum consists of written and audio-visual materials produced from the forum and supplemented with recommended interactive activities and bibliography. Five hundred sets of the curriculum are being distributed as a gift to tribal schools and colleges and will also be made available for purchase on May 1, 2003.

Presenters at the Forum spoke within the following conceptual framework:

SHARING: PERSONAL STORIES OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Presenters told their own stories, an autobiography, about who they were and how they came to understand their history, culture, and sovereign rights, what motivated them to do their life's work, and what it means to use indigenous intelligence. Participants reflected on the past century, primarily on the past 25 to 30 years, on important events and people who most influenced them, and their thoughts about past Indian leaders that had to make tough decisions.

ESSENTIAL: ASSESSMENT OF INDIAN WORLD REALITIES TODAY

Participants explained their view of today's Indian world, the struggles our people face today, the challenges and opportunities which exist today. What does it mean to be an Indian in the year 2003? In what ways has the base of the identity or "Indianness" diminished and in which ways has it grown? Did they see a process of synthesis from the past to the present?

WISDOM: A MESSAGE TO THE SEVENTH GENERATION

Participants spoke directly to the Seventh Generation, virtually a letter in which they communicated to their future children, families, communities, and nations. What did they wish the Seventh Generation to consider in its understanding of who they are? What are the values they hold most dear? What rights are insoluble and must never be relinquished? How should we behave towards one another? What fears, hopes, successes, and failures, did they have and want to share with the Seventh Generation? What would the Seventh Generation think about those who sent them this message from the year 2001?

The presenters were as follows:

EDUCATION AND SOCIALIZATION

Moderator: Darrell R. Kipp (Black-foot), Director of Piegan Language Institute; *Presenters:* Angela Gonzales (Hopi), Assistant Professor in Rural Sociology, Cornell University; Renee Gurneau (Ojibway), instructor, Bemidji State University; Rainey Gaywish (Cree-Metis), Faculty Member, University of Manitoba; and the Next Generation: John Mitchell (Penobscot), storyteller; Ryan King (Mohawk), junior in Public Relations/Communications, Buffalo State College; and Migizi Pensineau (Anishinaabe and Ponca), presently enrolled at Bemidji State University, transferring to University of California at Berkeley.

LAND AND ECONOMY

Moderator: Jim Enote (Zuni), Associate Project Director of Indigenous Communities Mapping Initiative; *Presenters:* Tom Cook (Mohawk), Development Director, Slim Buttes Land Use Association, Pine Ridge Oglala Sioux Reservation; Sherry Salway Black (Oglala Lakota), Senior Vice President, First Nations Development Institute; Ferrell Secakuku (Hopi), Senior Advisor, Center for Sustainable Environment, Northern Arizona University; Ella Mulford (Navajo), Environmental Specialist; Clayton Brascoupe (Mohawk), Program Director, Traditional Native American Farmers Association; and the Next Generation: Shawn Mulford (Navajo), Manager, Oakbrook Terrace Park District Fitness Center.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Moderator: Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee), first woman Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation; *Presenters:* John C. Mohawk (Seneca), Associate Professor of History in American Studies and Director of Indigenous Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo; Tonya Gonnella Frischner (Onondaga),

lawyer and founder of American Indian Law Alliance; Charlie Soap (Cherokee), Former Director, Cherokee Nation Community Development Department; Keller George (Oneida), representative, Men's Council of Oneida Nation of New York; and the Next Generation: Maehkiwkesec El-Issa Washinawatok (Menominee), eleventh grade student, Fort Hamilton High School, New York.

HEALTH AND REPRODUCTION

Moderator: Katsi Cook (Mohawk), traditional Mohawk midwife; *Presenters:* Birgil Kills Straight (Oglala Lakota), Executive Director of Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority, Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota; Debra Harry (Northern Paiute), Executive Director, Indigenous Peoples Council on Biocolonialism, Pyramid Lake Reservation, Nevada; Angaangag Lyberth (Inuit), North American Institute of Elders and Youth; Debra La Fontaine (Chickasaw), Community Development Planner; and the Next Generation: Sherri Mitchell (Penobscot), Program Director, Native Youth Leadership and Community Building Program; and Richard Montague (Quechan/Maricopa/Digueno), student in Human Biology, Health and Society at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

PSYCHO-SPIRITUALITY

Moderator: Jim Dumont (Anishinaabe), Professor, co-Founder and Chair, Native Studies, University of Sudbury, Laurentian University; *Presenters:* Tom Porter (Mohawk), Spokesman and Spiritual leader, Kanatsiohareke, New York; Janice Longboat (Mohawk), Traditional Herbalist and Coordinator, Earth Healing Herb Gardens and Retreat Centre, Six Nations Reservation; Pemina Yellow Bird (Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara), Repatriation and Sacred Sites Coordinator; Janine Huff (Seneca), Counselor and Instructor;

and the Next Generation: Michael Arredondo (Shawnee), student, Cornell University; and Teresa Lynch (Navajo), first female Navajo pilot.

It was clear from the collective experience of the American Indian Millennium Forum that:

- *Native American people and communities are at the threshold of synthesizing decades of efforts toward asserting, reaffirming, and revitalizing Native lifeways and languages within the total complexity of Native life;*
- *There are mature and seasoned Native American people within our communities who have been successful in a variety of these efforts;*
- *There are young and developing Native American people who envision hope for the health and well being of our communities and who are dedicated to the future of Native people and lifeways;*
- *There is promise for expansion of good minded, healthy, tradition-grounded values and beliefs, caring and respectful Native people, families, and communities, who have the strength and capacity to nurture and bring about the governing, economic, educational, environmental, and spiritual practices, nations, institutions, and organizations which are required in this millennium.*

American Indian Millennium is a collaboration of *Native Americas* working group (Cornell University–First Nations Development Institute); the editors of *Indian Country Today*, and the LifeWay Project of the Tides Center. Akwe:kon Press publishes and facilitates various magazines, and books, that address contemporary issues facing Native people, featuring its flagship, *Native Americas Journal*. *Indian Country Today* is a national American Indian weekly newspaper and is a leader in providing policy news, analysis and perspective. LifeWay is a non-profit Native

American philanthropic organization founded in 1992 and located on the Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma. LifeWay advances Native thinking as the element necessary for the healing of Native communities and revitalization of Native traditions through connecting human and financial resources to individuals, organizations, and institutions; and serves as a resource to foundations and individuals interested in working in partnership with these efforts.

The conveners, advisors, staff, consultants, moderators, panelists, and volunteers accomplished the forum American Indian Millennium. The forum conveners were: Tim Johnson (Mohawk), José Barreiro (Taino), and Dagmar Thorpe (Sac and Fox, Potawatomi, Kickapoo, and Menominee). Evelyn Arce-White (Chibcha), served as the forum lead coordinator at Cornell, while Brendan White (Mohawk), and Mar Perez provided valuable assistance. Jason Corwin (Seneca), documented the forum through videotaping.

The American Indian Millennium Forum is the result of planning by a Council of Advisors convened in March 2000. Members of the Planning Committee were: Rebecca Adamson (Cherokee), Jerry Reynolds, and Dan Runberg of First Nations Development Institute, Fredericksburg, Virginia; Carrie Billie (Navajo), Executive Director, White House Commission on Tribal Colleges and Universities, Washington D.C.; Katsi Cook (Mohawk), Iewerokwas Midwifery Program, First Environment Project, Akwesasne, New York; Jim Dumont (Anishnaabe), professor, Laurentian University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Phil Lucas (Dakota), Producer, Phil Lucas Productions; “Native Americans in the 21st Century,” Four-part Series for PBS; John Mohawk (Seneca), professor, University of Buffalo, Gowanda, New York;

Melanie Two Eagle (Oglala Lakota), student and trustee, Oglala Lakota Tribal College, Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota, and President, Student Congress, American Indian Higher Education Consortium; Poquin Vigil (Tetsu’geh), student, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California; Leslie Logan (Seneca), formerly Managing Editor, Akwe:kon Press, Ithaca, New York; Niki Sandoval (Chumash), formerly Assistant Deputy Director, Community Services Department; and Millie Knapp (Kitigan Zibi Anishnaabe), Editor, *National Museum of the American Indian* magazine.

The Planning Roundtable for the forum was hosted by the Cultural Resources Center, National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. Support was provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, First Nations Development Institute, Phil Lucas Productions, National Museum of the American Indian, and Akwe:kon Press/*Native Americas Journal*. The American Indian Millennium Forum was hosted by the American Indian Program at Cornell University and supported by contributions from W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Ettinger Foundation, Opportunity Fund of First Nations Development Institute, Lannan Foundation, Fetzer Institute, French American Charitable Trust, and Joshua Mailman. Valorie Johnson (Seneca), W.K. Kellogg Foundation, was recognized for her support of this effort and her leadership role as a Native American woman in philanthropy. The Ford Foundation is supporting dissemination and curriculum development.

We are thankful to all of those who contributed to this effort.

American Indian Millennium Forum Conveners,

José Barreiro
Tim Johnson
Dagmar Thorpe



THE WORDS THAT COME BEFORE ALL ELSE

TOM PORTER

I was requested by a brother who gave me this candle to light it here. He said a light burns for the next generation and the next generation. Let there be a fire and let there be a light that maybe this conference will shine the light, and they will carry on for the next generations so they can have a life that is sacred. And I was honored that he asked that.

And then someone gave me an offering for a prayer for a soldier, a man who had gone somewhere in the world, in the army. And so he sent this as his prayer. As soon as I heard that I said, probably there's Mohawks and there's Dakota, Navajo, Ottawa or Cherokee people over there somewhere in danger right now, even if they don't want to be there. And so we offer this prayer today, and we will include them, to say that we are thinking about them and hope that they be safe, and hope that they don't have to take the life of somebody.

Our grandparents and our leaders, they told us that whenever we are confused and look to make prayers, that we shall always do it in the language that we are. If I am a Dakota, then I will talk Dakota when I make a spiritual talk. If I am a Hopi, then I will speak the Hopi when I do a spiritual talk. But I am a

Mohawk, so I should do it in Mohawk. That's what our grandparents and mother told us, that our languages honor the Creator. For all these years you have survived this far, so honor the Creator and speak the language that He gave to you and then the Creator will be so happy because you are so proud. And I say that to you with a prayer so that you may share that with your nephews and nieces, children or grandchildren.

At this time then, I ask the Creator permission to speak another language than the one He gave me, so that everybody can understand these words I am speaking. This is a very important meeting these next days. When I got to be the first speaker, I was really touched because this gathering talks about tomorrow's kids, talks about our tomorrows, us Cherokees or Mohawks, Lakota, Hopi. That's what it is addressing and that is the most fundamental, the most important. I believe that a lot of good seeds will be carried here and dispersed here and returned so they can protect that future. So we ask the Creator to please stay with us during these days and help us see and help us identify those things that are going to be helpful to our young for tomorrow. Now we will begin what we call the prayer that addresses the important things.

As I look around, I know that our brothers from Hopi came on an airplane

to get here. I know that our brothers and sisters from Cherokee, too, have traveled a long way, and others from the west and south too, and way up north, from everywhere came the delegates. But as I look around, it seems like everybody arrived safely, no injury it seems. And so that's the first one, the Creator opened the road and the path for us to come here, and so it is indeed a great blessing this many delegates have arrived. And so we will acknowledge this in our gratefulness and our thankfulness because this is a wonderful gift, that our Creator allowed us to come together without problems. Actually that candle is most appropriate because whenever our ancient people refer to meetings they always say they are going to be close to the fire. That's what we call meeting, "close to the fire."

We are not alone.

I see a great beauty and I see great dignity, and I see a great respect in our women. But then also when I look around, and I see our men, they look handsome, they look strong, they look clean, and then when I put it all together, what a wonderful group! What a good people we are that we say thank you to one another, that we will share each other's company today. We will be family and so we say thank you with love to one another in our mind as one.

The next one is also important. That

Facing page: Tom Porter at American Indian Millennium gathering, 2001.

is the one that's called the Earth. And the Creator said that the Earth is going to be the mother. And not just a mother, but different than a mother because this Mother Earth is going to be the mother of all the human beings and all the birds and all the animals, and everything that lives. She is going to be the mother to all of us; that's why she is the special one.

What the Master loves best is when our old leaders talked about the Mother Earth. Our grandma used to say, when we talk about Mother Earth: she is just like a rock that never changes its mind, consistent everyday since the beginning

the most beautiful parents in the whole world, our Mother the Earth.

And because our Mother is so strong and so giving, what I am going to ask is that you and I, everybody here, that our minds become one. In Mohawk, they say "many layers of thank you." Many layers of "hello." Many layers of compassion and kindness and love, until it is a big pile that touches the ceiling, and then our job in our wonders of mind is to surround that big pile of thank you greetings and love and then we give it to our Mother the Earth. And we say Mother Earth, thank you. On behalf of our children, our grandchildren, and on

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of time. Grandma used to say, "Can you and I remember a day, yesterday or before, when our Mother the Earth ever threw us away and abandoned us or gave us away?" And we said, "No." She said, "That's right." The Mother Earth has been there since the beginning of time and she loves us. That's why she gives us food everyday; that's why we are walking on Earth and that's the way the Creator told her. She listens so good to the Creator because she loves the Creator and that's our Mother. So we have one of

behalf of the future unborns we say, thank you Mother Earth, for loving us. And our minds are agreed as one.

Our Creator made other things in the beginning. He made the water, the river and the creeks and the ponds and the lakes and the oceans. And then the Creator gave that water a life and a soul and a spirit, even a voice. That's what we hear at Niagara Falls—a tough, rough, big voice. Then sometimes it is a little stream—soft, nice. Sometimes just a drip of the rain will make you want to

sleep for comfort. Those are the voices of the rain and the water. And so when He made that water He talked to that water and He said: "Your job is going to be a special job." He said that people will make their little villages or their towns here and there along the rivers and the creeks, and what you will do, water, is you will go find them and make sure you visit them every day where they live. And that water was told by the Creator to find us, so He will give us a drink of cold water every day, and then when we drink that water, especially on a hot summer day, we will feel the hope of the next moment and that tomorrow is coming somewhere. Oh, it feels good when you drink that water.

When you work and you have grime and soot all over your body and you feel tired, you don't feel clean, you can go swimming or take a shower and the sacred water refreshes you, cleans your body and makes you healthy. And so you see the river and the creeks and the waters of the world are still doing their job the way the Creator told them to do. And that's why when we drink the water every day we must say to the Creator, "Thank you for that sacred gift, the water." And then we say to the water itself, "Thank you for quenching our thirst today."

And then to the life that is in the water, what they call fish, and other kinds of water life—the Creator spoke to them too, in the beginning of the world. He told them what their job is and gave them a soul and a spirit, and He said, "Anything that comes in the water to dirty the water, that fish jump and grab it, clean that water. And when the people need your help, if they get hungry, you will give yourself and they will be nourished." So no matter even if the fish are having a hard time today, they still try to do their job right until the end, no matter what happens to them. And so, we will throw our thank

I see a great beauty and I see great dignity, and I see a great respect in our women. But then also when I look around and I see our men, they look handsome, they look strong, they look clean, and then when I put it all together what a wonderful group! What a good people we are that we say thank you to one another, that we will share each other's company today. We will be family and so we say thank you with love to one another in our mind as one.

yous and our greetings and our love to every river and every lake and every ocean, and we will say to all the fish in the whole world, "Thank you for still following the Creator's way."

The Creator made the things that grow on the Mother Earth. He told us that we will plant gardens, and the head of the gardens, number one, the leader of the garden, is the corn. The second in the command of the garden is the beans. And the third leader of the garden world is the vines, squashes and pumpkin and things like that. Those three are the leaders of all the things that grow in the garden, and the other vegetables will follow them and then the people will have food in the villages and the towns.

And so this past summer where I live, the corn grew nice, our beans were nice, our pumpkin and squash are good, and everything else grew healthy and strong and we harvested many foods, so when the cold winter comes, we won't get hungry and we will not lack. And that's the plan the Creator made for us.

And so this past summer I have seen that everybody's garden in Hopi, Navajo, Cherokee, Lakota, Mohawk, is growing. That means the Creator loves us. And so to all of the garden beings we say "Thank you," and our minds agree.

And then our Creator made the medicine that grows in the woods and the

swamp and in the mountains and the valleys by the rivers' edges. When you are walking, the Creator said: "It is not certain, the next step you might take tomorrow. Maybe a sickness will come in the land or on you, and when it does it will destroy the peace and the tranquility that you have. But that's why I have got that medicine everywhere in the woods, in the hills, by the rivers—so if that happens to you, you can go pick those medicines and they will take away the sickness and will restore peace and tranquility and a feeling that there is a tomorrow again. And Grandma used to say, "That medicine is waiting every day for you or me to ask them for help, and when we do, that medicine smiles from ear to ear with the big joy that you asked them for help." And so to our medicines that grow all over Mother Earth, we the people send many thank yous and love, and we say to the medicines big and small, "Thank you for your services, that we know you will be there tomorrow." And our minds agree.

Here where we live, in the Northeast, the Creator planted many kinds of trees, big ones, smaller ones, slender ones with leaves, one that keeps its leaves in the fall. But of all those trees in the Northeast, the Creator chose the maple tree to be the chief, the leader of all of the trees in the forest. For when the snow of

winter comes and it starts to melt away, it is that maple tree that is the first one to have its blood to run again. And when we see that, we will gather it and we will drink it. It is called the Big Medicine. Then we can cook that from the maple tree and it turns to syrup and sugar that we mix with our foods to taste really good.

And then Grandma said, "From the tree they give us gifts—apples, cherries, peaches, pears, plums, and the list goes on. And the white pine is called the Symbol of Peace and Brotherhood. In its great shade, one day, all the nations will sit in its coolness, they will be brothers and sisters, and there will be peace for the world. The white pine is still growing, the beautiful white pine.

From that white pine and all the other trees that grow, we will gather fallen limbs, so when it gets cold and windy we will make a little fire where we live, so our family won't get cold. And when we want to send a message to the Creator, we will kindle that fire from the fallen limbs, and the smoke comes that carries our message to the Creator.

And from that tree also comes the wind that you and I breathe. They call it oxygen and it is a fact that if there are no more trees, there will be no more oxygen, and there will be no more you and there will be no more me. That is why I

ask the many delegates to become of one mind as we put our thank yous and our greetings and our love together in one big pile. Let every tree in the whole Mother Earth receive our hello and thanks today, and they will feel our love and our gratitude. Then after the big snow goes, they will bring leaves and flowers and fruits that we will eat for our family. That's a good life. And so with oneness in mind to the trees of the world, we say thank you with love. And our minds have agreed.

And then the Creator put here on the Mother Earth all kinds of animals. And of all the animals here in the Northeast, the Creator chose the deer to be their leader. In various parts of the Mother Earth other animals may lead, but around here it's the deer that is the chief of the animals. And when we walk sometimes in the woods, all of a sudden we hear that deer—a noise and the branches moving—and we turn around and there stands a deer with his big eyes looking at us, watching us as we are walking. Sometimes we see a raccoon, sometimes a squirrel or a rabbit running. That means the Creator's law is still going and our young men can go get that deer for eating and they find it still today. And so it is that the animals of the world, to their leader, the deer, we say thank you with love. And our minds have agreed.

There was another one, after everything else was done. It was you and I, the human beings, who were the last ones to be made on the Creator's agenda. When He made each of us, our Creator took sticks and He marked them, one for you and one for me. And when we were born, the minute we breathed the first breath of life as a baby, you and I, the Creator made a stick for us. And on this stick the mark is made, giving the days and the nights. How many marks are there? When you finish that mark each day and night and then

you have no more, that is when it is time to leave. And Grandma and Grandpa said, "When that last mark is there, no amount of money, no army, no matter its size, can negotiate another minute. It is time to go." And so that is the law that we know.

But while we are living, you and I, the Creator's main mandate—He doesn't want to see our lips dragging on the ground in sadness and in grief and in loneliness and boredom. That is not why He put us here. When you and I walk on Mother Earth, He wants to see us smile from ear to ear at least a couple of times a day. And then the Creator is going to be happy. That's why He wants

said, "Birds of the world, your job is to help the humans, and your job is to help the deer and moose, and your job is to help the bears and the raccoons so they won't get lonesome." So He gave them all a song, different songs for the different birds, and the Creator said to the birds, "I chose the eagle to be the leader for all of you, and He will be the guardian bird for the people." He said, "Your special moment will be every day before the Brother Sun shows his face and the dawn is coming, all you birds will get up before the sun gets here and you will sing your thousands of songs to greet the sun, our Old Brother. And when you do that the human people will

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us to live, so we can dance and we can have joy so we can laugh. That's pretty good.

And so in order to ensure that we don't get stuck with lonesomeness and boredom, in that great plan the Creator made, He made the birds and He put all of those nice feathers and colors on their body. It looks pretty. And then He gathered all those birds together and He

hear you and their minds will be shaken so boredom and lonesomeness and sadness will not find a place to sit in their minds; shake their minds so they will know joy and happiness."

And so this morning, as they did yesterday, the birds all got up early, as it was since the beginning, and they began to sing their beautiful songs, and what a joy it is. They never forgot the Creator's



PHOTO © COURTESY OF TOM PORTER

Tom Porter with generations at Kanatsiohareke community in Fonda, New York.

plan. All we have to do is know that and not forget that. And so to the birds of the world, we say thank you with love. And our minds have agreed.

Now, on our Mother Earth there are Four Winds in the sky, and they are the ones who bring the changing of the seasons. Our Mother Earth gets tired of giving birth and feeding all the beings that she has. Now, if we take one woman from here that has had children, just one child, we know how much work it is? Multiply that by millions, that's the work of Mother Earth. And so she gets tired now and then as our own mother does. And when she gets tired, Grandma and Grandpa said, the wind of the west and the wind of the north—it is their job to bring a white blanket of snow and cover our Mother Earth so she can rest. When she has rested long enough, the wind

from the south and the wind from the west will come and take the white blanket of snow off Mother Earth. And she will wake up and then there will be green grass growing all over, flowers of all colors, and the air will smell so good. Until the winter comes again, the world is warm.

So you see the wind is the most sacred thing that keeps the balance when we are tired, when we must wake up. So to the Four Winds of the universe, we the human relatives say thank you with love. And our minds are agreed.

And then it is now time for what we call the thunder that lives in the west. The elders call it our Grandfathers, the thunderers. And the Creator talked to them and He told them the thunder is going to be the Grandpa and you and I are going to be the grandchildren, and a

good grandpa goes to see his grandchildren every now and then. And when He comes the Creator told him, "Bring them fresh water to fill up the rivers where we live, the new water in our streams and in our springs." He said, "When you go visit your grandchildren take your bright arrows and flash them all over the sky and all over the world." And Irishmen, Polish men, all kinds of people including the Mohawk, after the big storm passes everybody will say, "The air smells so good." That's because Grandpa did his job and He purified the air for us.

And so you see, this past summer our grandfathers came just in the nick of time and made all the rivers and waters brand new and clean. So to the Grandpa Thunder we say thank you with love. And our minds are agreed.

To the Sun, whom we call Older Brother Sun, you and I are younger brothers. And the older brother has to take care of his younger brother and sister. That he has done. And so he shares the light, the Old Brother Sun, so that when we walk, I won't bump into my brother. The sun shines so there will be peace and respect. And Creator said, "While you are doing that, also warm up the Mother Earth so the corn will grow

like a brand new soft bed so a little tiny human being will find a place to have comfort to begin its life. That is what Grandma is in charge of, the birth of children of the nations. And not only that, but with her great strength she moves the salt waters of the oceans of the world up and down without fail. That's where we came from, her power. She is the one who opened the door for our birth and the children we have and

want to know about what is coming tomorrow, all we have to do is look at the stars. And if this winter there is going to be 30 feet of snow where we live, the stars will tell us. If this next summer comes and there is going to be drought or flood, we look up there now and the stars will tell us what's coming.

So the Creator didn't put us on the Mother Earth with nothing to protect us. He gave us all the knowledge of how to live in peace, for all people to have a good life. But then it was foretold by our elders that there will come a day in the future when our people will forget the knowledge the Creator gave them and they will not be able to talk to the stars to tell us what is coming tomorrow. And that is what happened. It says the people will become like small little children, who have not yet had a chance to learn knowledge. Even though we are adults, we will be like small children who don't know anything about the stars.

My grandma and elders said, "If that happens"—and it has happened—"I want you to use your eyes so that at nighttime when you are looking at the stars in the sky you will see with no doubt that the stars are awesome in their beauty. And then for no other reason that you know of except their great beauty, their magnificent beauty, that will be sufficient reason for the people to become of one mind and send their thank you and their love to every star." And so that's what we do now, we say thank you to the stars of the sky. And our minds are agreed.

At the beginning of the world, we were the last ones to be made. Some people say that maybe when the Creator made us humans He was so tired by the time He got to us, there was one wire that didn't quite get connected. That's why we humans are the ones that are the most in need of spiritual health on a daily basis. We are the only ones. Of all

And when we were born, the minute we breathed the first breath of life as a baby, you and I, the Creator made a stick for us. And on this stick the mark is made, giving the days and the nights. How many marks are there? When you finish that mark each day and night and then you have no more, that is when it is time to leave. And Grandma and Grandpa said, "When that last mark is there, no amount of money, no army, no matter its size, can negotiate another minute. It is time to go." And so that is the law that we know.

and the watermelons will get big and sweet." And so the Old Brother Sun every day never forgot the Creator's teaching.

And for all the miracles yesterday and today, there is the Grandmother Moon. She walks the sacred path in the universe and she will walk step after step, 28 to 30 days, and when she is finished she goes again back that way, 28 to 30 days. As she walks that 28 to 30 days she orchestrates every woman, every 28, 30 days, get yourself ready, make your body

the grandchildren we have. Thank you to Grandma Moon for following the Creator's plan. And so to Grandma we say thank you with love. And our minds are agreed.

And now way up in the sky are what we call stars. In the ancient days our grandparents told us that Algonquin and Mohawks, Dakota, Cherokee, Choctaw, all the great nations, not only just Indian, but all, including the Irish, Polish, Italian—all knew the same thing when the world was new: whenever we

life, we are the poorest ones. There's one thing not right, and to exemplify this, you know when a man goes hunting he gets a little deer, but by the time he gets to the village it has got 12 points of horns. You know the man who goes fishing and kills a fish, by the time he gets home that fish is huge. A human can never tell it just the way it is, including me. That's why the Creator never shows you and I the stick of our birth and our death, because He knows that we are going to cheat on it. If we know we have a lot of time left we will be wild and do anything we want, regardless of the consequences. But that's why He kept it in his back pocket and is not going to show it us. But instead He said, "I want you people to carry a good mind every day and every night. When you see each other I want you to say hello to each other. I want you to show your compassion to each other every time you see each other." And that's what I saw this morning among the people here. I was so impressed. Some people say we are almost lost and assimilated. I say, we are getting better. We are getting stronger. I have seen it. That's the Creator's plan of a good life.

From the beginning of the world, because of the inadequacy of our creation, we humans can get confused. You take those humans and give them a little freedom and they turn into somebody else. So that's why we must remind each other. Don't let our heads get too big.

Because of that inadequacy the Creator chose Four Sacred Beings—we call them the Four Beings, the unseen forces of the universe—so that when we falter as humans and make a mistake, sometimes intentionally and sometimes not, those Four Sacred Beings will come and they will kind of push us back on the road where we are supposed to be. Grandma said that they will do it readily when you are just a little boy or a little girl, because kids learn that way. And

they will do it a second time when you are in need. Even the third time they will do it. Our elders said usually only three times, and after that the Creator says, you are on your own now. You don't want to listen, go ahead, try it. Then they don't help us because they already tried three times. Those Four Sacred Beings are the helpers of the Creator, the unseen forces, they are the ones that brought us our plants. They are the ones that brought us our ceremonies and all the things that we have got. They are sacred. They are the ones that brought us the songs and the prayers. They are the ones that brought us the good law and the four sacred rituals of the Earth. Every time our people went off they are the ones that saved us, not just in North America, but in the Middle East, in Africa, in China. That's why there are still human beings. And so to them, the unseen forces, we send thank yous and greetings and love, and we will throw it high up there in the universe to those unseen powers. To you we say, thank you, with love. And our minds are agreed.

And then finally above all of these things, is the one we call Shonkwaia'tison, "you who make us," the Creator. Again, the Creator has many faces, as the Creator is in this body, and the Creator is in that body, the Creator is in that tree, the Creator in the animals and the birds, and so the Creator is in everything that lives and is holy. That's what the Creator is. He belongs to everybody. He is sacred to everything that lives and that's why we must follow the laws and respect them with gratitude.

And then when our Creator finished making this wonderful world, he said, "I don't make a great big institution or archives filled with doctors and philosophical religious things. All I do is wait every day to hear you, each one of you, say thank you with love. That's all I want. Now live." That's all He wants is

for us to say thank you. Isn't that wonderful? And then we have another tomorrow. And so on behalf of these delegations from the many nations and our children and our families, let our minds be one, and let us put many, many layers of thank you, and many, many layers of gratitude, greetings and love, many of them, how it fills this room. Then you and I will pick it up and with one big spiritual movement we throw it high in the universe and we say, "You who are our Creator, our Maker, we have chosen today with many layers of love to thank you for the miracle that we see in our lives every day."

And then we ask our Creator, for those of our people that are across the ocean right now: you told us not to hurt each other, not to take the life of another human. Help all of our people who are over there not to hurt anybody, not to kill anybody, and let them come home with a clean heart. So remember those of our young men and women who are over there, that they be safe and that peace be in their minds. And to the people who are struggling over there through the bombardments, the kids and women, old men, old ladies—just like the Indian people, just like the Cherokee, the Sioux, or the others, we all went through what is going on there right now and it has never been just, this killing of fellow humans. That's what our Great Law says. And so it is of our Creator, we ask a big favor. As this conference begins and the delegates have all arrived, shine the light down on the path our Grandma and Grandpa walked, so that we might walk it tomorrow with the same dignity and the same respect. Our Creator, we ask that you stay with us. The mind has agreed.

Tom Porter (Mohawk) is the spokesman and spiritual leader of the Mohawk community of Kanatsiohareke in Fonda, New York.



INDIGENOUS INTELLIGENCE

Indigenous intelligence is the wise and conscientious embodiment of exemplary knowledge and the use of this knowledge in a good, beneficial and meaningful way. Within whatever world view one is operating, intelligence has to do with more than the acquisition of knowledge; indigenous intelligence has to do with activating knowledge into something useable within a system that is charged with meaning.

“Intelligence” has been defined for us as, Native peoples, through the eyes of the Euro-American psychological and scientific culture. Its definition is limited in its application and understanding. What we have been pursuing as indigenous people, since our involvement in education in the contemporary experience, is attempting to measure up to that external definition of intelligence. To be as productive as *they* are, as successful as *they* are, to be as intelligent as *they* are. In doing so, we have lost the encompassing nature of our own definition of intelligence—indigenous intelligence.

We cannot talk about being an intelligent person without knowledge of and access to all the levels of our intelligence capacity—i.e., the intelligence of the body, the mind, heart and spirit. Within an indigenous definition, the intelligence of the mind does not operate to its fullest creative, discriminating, and encompassing potential without its active partnership with the intelligence of the heart.

We cannot be intelligent, act or think intelligently, unless we are able to attach our indigenous concepts, our way of being and indigenous knowledge to our connectedness and relationship with

Have We Lost Our Indigenous Mind?

JIM DUMONT

everything else. Our *responsibility* within that all-inclusive relationship is an act of intelligence. Whether it is in the name of providing an economic base, pioneering some great invention, or furnishing a breakthrough for the future, if our use of our knowledge and our approach disturbs or disrupts the balance and harmony of the life around us, it cannot be considered an intelligent act, according to indigenous standards of intelligence.

Our present-day thinking is inclusive of the legacy of our ancestors and of what our ancestors are waiting for us to do. Our thoughts also include the future generations, recognizing that they are already looking back toward us with the awareness that our decisions and our actions are impacting them. It is a living past, a living future, and we are the living connection in between. Indigenous intelligence is active on all these levels.

INDIGENOUS INTELLIGENCE IN A LINEAR WORLDVIEW

The prevailing and dominating worldview that surrounds us today and to which we are compelled to respond is one that is narrow in its vision, exclusive and detached in relating to the total environment, analytical and deductive in its perception and thinking, linear in its doing, and hierarchical and competitive in its management of the field of activity.

By indigenous standards of intelligence,

the accepted limitations to perception, the lack of consideration and caring for the total environment, the restrictions of thinking to narrow confines of cerebral activity, and the confinement to narrowly defined boundaries in the “rational,” “scientific” paradigm of the Euro-western tradition, are ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and doing that are deficient in most of the qualities of an indigenous “higher” intelligence.

Choosing to see and accept as reality only that which can be validated by the five senses, is not an indigenously intelligent way of seeing. Adopting a way of living that is destructive of the environment and upsets the balance of life itself, is not an intelligent way of being. Opting for a worldview that closes the avenues to the counsel and wisdom of the heart and the spirit is to choose a paradigm that deliberately retards the total capacity of human intelligence.

The degree to which we, as indigenous people, have adapted to and adopted this way of seeing, relating, thinking, and doing is proportionate to the degree to which we have limited the true potential of our total indigenous intelligence. We do have a choice, and that choice is to validate our own worldview and the intelligence that it advances.

INDIGENOUS INTELLIGENCE: A UNIQUE WAY OF BEING

How would we begin to attempt to define indigenous intelligence? If we make a start at it, perhaps we can put our collective intelligence to work and build a description of indigenous intelligence that embraces the total breadth and

that embraces the total breadth and depth of our way of being. Let's start with some key concepts:

Indigenous Centeredness—The concept of indigenous centeredness means being centered securely, comfortably, and confidently within the indigenous worldview, knowingly and intentionally embracing the indigenous perspective and the indigenous way of life. Acting from indigenous centeredness means that one affirms, asserts, and advances indigenous seeing, relating, thinking and doing as being inherent and central to the indigenous ways of knowing.

Indigenous Consciousness—The concept of indigenous consciousness affirms and is motivated by the primary and encompassing nature of indigenous awareness, thought, knowledge and conceptualization in all aspects of seeing, feeling, knowing, and doing. Very simply, it means being totally conscious at all levels of conscious sensing, knowing, and experiencing—from a place of indigenous identity, indigenous thinking, indigenous knowledge base, and indigenous way of being.

Indigenous Capacity for Total Responsiveness—The concept of indigenous capacity for total responsiveness recognizes that we function from all the levels of our being—spirit, heart, mind, and body. The ability to do so is an indication of a high degree of “intelligence.” The indigenous unique competence and “intelligent” expression, mastery, and creative aptitude is a multifaculty response from all levels of being.

Responsiveness and Connectedness to the Collective Whole—The concept of connectedness to the collective whole means collective consciousness—but recognizes that this is a cultural predisposition based in a value system that places connectedness and responsiveness to the collective whole at a high place in the priority of values. Indi-

vidual learning, creativity, and innovative achievement are “intelligent” accomplishments when they benefit and advance the collective.

Responsiveness and Connectedness to the Total Environment—The concept of connectedness to the total environment places the human person in direct and complete relationship to the total environment—a relationship that is “all-inclusive,” “personal” and “reciprocal.” Individual learning, creativity, innovative achievement, survivability, and attainment of quality of being are “intelligent” accomplishments when they are responsive to, respect, benefit, and advance the total environment.

Indigenous Value-based Seeing, Relating, Knowing and Doing—The concept of indigenous value-based seeing, relating, knowing and doing means that the “intelligent” indigenous person operates from the core psychology or value system of Kindness, Honesty, Sharing, Strength, Respect, Wisdom, and Harmony.

THE CONTINUUM OF INDIGENOUS INTELLIGENCE

Indigenous intelligence is all of this—exercising the total capacity of body, mind, heart and experience in total responsiveness and total relationship to the whole environment. This includes not only a responsiveness and a responsibility to the present, but to all of reality—seven generations into the past and seven generations into the future. Our thoughts include those who have walked before us and those who will follow our footprints in future times. The consideration for our decision-making encompasses the determination of our ancestors and the yearning of our grandchildren. The motivations for our actions originate from what our forebears have held in place and handed forward to us from the past, as well as from the hands of our great-great grandchildren reaching back

toward us. Indigenous intelligence is inclusive of and responsive to the strings of lives of the generations before and after us.

ACTING WITH INDIGENOUS INTELLIGENCE

We need to begin to think and speak and act from the center of our indigenous being, from the center of our culture and indigenous way of life. To do this we must become educated in our own way of life and the indigenous knowledge, the way of being and acting that flows from it. We shouldn't be activating major change in our communities, instituting governmental formulas and social organizations, initiating potentially culture-changing development projects, without being well educated in our indigenous way of being, and able to do it from our own traditions. Taking intelligent action has to be informed and driven by our indigenous culture, traditions and our way of life.

We can gather together as truly indigenous scholars, leaders and agents of change and use our indigenous intelligence. We can collectively share with one another and create an understanding amongst ourselves of what is indigenous intelligence and how our traditions, our way of life, knowledge, and foundations of belief speak to us today and to our future. Our ancestors handed this forward to us so that we would have it to live by in our time. Included in this “bundle” from the past is the gift of indigenous intelligence. We can reclaim it and begin to activate it in all of its quality and potential. We will then be prepared to hand it to our young people and our grandchildren who will move into the future acting with the fullest capacity of indigenous intelligence.

Jim Dumont (Anishinaabe) is a professor, co-founder, and chair of Native studies at the University of Sudbury at Laurentian University of Ontario, Canada.

Okoyi: To Have a Home

DARRELL KIPP

Every person's lifetime is a relationship between the time our life covers, and the space our bodies occupy. There have been countless lifetimes within my tribe and many to come. My lifetime as a tribal member is where past, present and future exists for me. This view allows me to put imposed tribal definitions aside. For example, in our language we are Pikuni; in English-speaking America we are the Blackfeet Tribe of Montana. Today many tribal names are not their true tribal language name, but one imposed on them. One of the horrors Indians endure is having outsiders define us based on one-dimensional studies. It is better we define our tribe, and ourselves.

I am one of many lifetimes existing in Pikuni time, and therefore am part of the tribe once and forever. The Pikuni language is my teacher now, and is in my view the truth keeper for future Pikuni generations. This is my vocation and belief. I believe loss of tribal languages diminishes the truth of Indian ways, and dishonors the lifetimes within the tribe.

We should remember imposed tribal identification is insignificant compared to the biological, linguistic, religious and historical continuum tribal essence possesses. Understand this, and imposed definitions of tribal membership become inadequate.

Words such as half-breed, full-blood, mixed-blood, and myriad others are fragmentary and inflammatory. Don't use them, regardless of any circumstance. Instead seek your home language and use it for knowledge. Allegiance to tribal languages is at present hard to come by, and many people have yet to find the way to embrace the notion. It is difficult because

allegiance must come to you through the heart and mean something. Yet, it is the way home, and can still be done.

Historical circles divide Pikuni history into elementary periods such as days of the dog; introduction of horse and gun, and reservation days. It is a weak, biased method, since my tribe is not limited to life in the dog, horse or reservation period. True Pikuni history is identified by stories extending back (and forward) thousands of years, and retold out loud in the tribal language. The archeologist recounts thousands of years of Pikuni people, but only our language remains the accurate recorder of our secrets. Learn the oldest word in a tribal language to realize how it speaks the truth. The true challenge facing future generations, as well as the present one, is revitalizing our languages in order to keep our memory viable.

Tribal languages contain the tribal genesis, cosmology, history, and secrets within.

Without them we may become permanently lost, or irrevocably changed. I am a Pikuni and know why. In our language, I am a *nizitapiwa*, a real person. It derives from how my language treats the form for "I" or "me" spoken as "niz," a derivative of *nostum*, or my body. When I speak Pikuni, my body and spirit speak to *kizitapiwa*, another real person. My Pikuni name is Apiniokio Peta, translated as Morning Eagle, and I belong to the Pikuni, translated as Far Off Spotted Robes. I know my family, chiefs, and heroes names (both women and men) from long ago times. I know Apistokiwa, the Maker, placed us on Earth in what is now called Montana. The reservation is what is left of our home ground, yet I take comfort in knowing points off-reservation named in our language are part of our heart's country. This is knowledge we should possess, yet I was not fully informed until studying my tribal language.

The one-room school I attended had a



Darrell Kipp, 2001, advocate for the Native languages.

PHOTO: JEAN YOUNG/AMERICAN INDIAN MILLENNIUM FORUM

map of the world on the wall. As a schoolboy I learned about distant places. In high school one teacher repeatedly told us to move to one of these places and stay there. He called it the American dream. A small number of classmates and I did go to college, and learned of more distant places. The United States Army drafted me into service in 1966, and sent me to a distant part of the world. In time I graduated from Eastern Montana College, Harvard University, and Vermont College. For years I lived and worked in what might be called exotic places, and traveled a lot.

One quiet weekend morning, in the hush confines of a tall city building, I experienced a longing to go home. At first it seemed childish, but the feeling moved deeper into my thoughts during the following days. Banishment was the strongest punishment my tribe delivered to a member unable to abide the tribal ways, and without realizing it I had banished myself from my tribe. My pursuits up until then had been a journey away from my people, my ways, and my quintessential self as a Pikuni. On that morning I began a journey home. For some it may be difficult to find where true home is, but it is there. Relearning, or studying your tribal language is the ultimate pathway home, and it is important to start before the first sign of longing appears. You may misinterpret your feelings and miss the calling.

I have been home now for many years. I share my happiness with those I pray with at our medicine pipe and Okan lodge ceremonies. As Pikuni we thank the Creator for our good fortune and luck, and are glad to share it with others. I learned through language study my original band was called Moxamini within the tribe, and is translated as Those Who Camp By The Lakes. It is meaningful to me since I live most of the year next to a mountain lake in a home I built years ago.

I still travel to many of those places school taught me about. Last year I made a documentary in the remote mountains

of Bulgaria, and have visited the people of the Arctic Circle. This year I filmed a documentary about an early-day Pikuni campsite where a city now stands.

My first documentary, "Transitions: Death of a Mother Tongue," was about Pikuni children in an early day reservation mission school. It was there our language was brutalized and deemed worthless. It won national recognition, but was more important to my tribe's healing process and paved the way for us to respect our language again.

In my work in Native American Languages revitalization, I visited over 30 tribes throughout America, and met with countless others. Often at training sessions people were thrilled at speaking even a small part of their language. They would recount when their language resounded throughout the community, and emotion would overcome many to the point of crying. The deep emotion came from their love for those past lifetimes we wish to be part of.

Our parents and our grandparents often did not share the language with their children and grandchildren because they loved us. They loved us and they didn't want us to be abused and they didn't want us to be set back like they were. But remember, we like to think we are today in an enlightened age, we would like to think things are different today. And we as responsible individuals, if we truly love our grandparents and truly love our parents, and truly love our ways, as responsible individuals then we owe our allegiance to our languages. And we can reconcile that love. We can return that love by praying in allegiance to our tribal language.

I know when people relearn their language the first thing they wish to do is pray in it. I have been at the deathbed of several tribal languages, and know most are weak and fragile. On behalf of the tribal languages of this Earth, I share this dream with you. The dream has a question in it, but I do not know the answer except the

one I gave years ago. The answer is in your heart, and belongs to only you.

It goes like this: you are walking in a place you know and love, and come upon your grandparents sitting by the path. Do you pass them by and abandon them? Or stop, embrace them, and carry them to your destination? It should be an easy choice, but it isn't in this day and age.

Tribal languages are the grandparents in the dream, and only the uncaring, unknowing, and those too busy pass them by. If you stop and embrace them, wealth and a kinder world will be bestowed upon you. Tribal languages can be revitalized to soothe our children's hearts again if people stop long enough to embrace them. Our Pikuni language, and yours, can produce healthy kids with choices, and therefore parity.

To embrace our grandparents we designed the Pikuni Nizipuhwahsin (original language) K-8 school for 50 children as our grandparents' home. No government funds were used to build or operate it. It is the sanctuary of the Pikuni language.

It is a beautiful place, and I wish there were such places for every Indian child in this land. Maybe you will build one for your children. My language was a calling I heard years ago that I mistook for loneliness. I cherish every word learned, and my prayers are to be granted time to learn more. I learned a great deal through this calling. I utilize the formal education taught me, although it no longer dictates my definition of knowledge.

I can only tell you this: You do not need permission to study your language. Make your prayers to the Creator for strength, and trust in what is provided. Do not debate with people who question your journey. Make use of the process of self-discovery and follow your Indian heart. It is a difficult, but truly rewarding journey home.

Darrell Kipp (Blackfoot) is the director of the Piegan Language Institute, a Native language program based in Browning, Montana.

So That We Could Get On to the Learning

JANINE JEMISON

I would like to thank the people who invited me here, because it's always nice to return to a place where you spent so much of your past. I would like to say, Niaweh, meaning I am thankful that you are all well today.

When I was asked to do this and told that the goal was to leave some sort of message for the coming generation or to celebrate this millennium, I thought about some of the messages that had been given to me. And I feel that this is probably a good time to share those messages, because they have helped me to do the type of work that I do today, mostly in the community.

When I was growing up there were many elders in the community, many people with gray hair who knew what they were doing, and loved us enough to share what they had. And as I look around today there aren't that many people with gray hair anymore and there aren't that many elders alive because of many of our health problems that we have in the community.

And I realize how lucky I am, because I was able to spend summers with these elders. Without knowing it, I learned so many of the things that have become valuable tools that I use today. All the way from learning how to plant and grow our corn, to preparing that corn, to making baskets and some of the language.

One of those people was Harrison

Brown, who I am sure Tom remembers. And his wife Ella. They shared not only their knowledge, but their home for all the learning to take place. And also their relationship. I think the most fun part of being with them was to see how people could relate for 50 some years together and still maintain a sense of humor and a sense of love for each other.

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We would hurry up and go to their house and rush through the chores with them, and get the water and bring in the wood. And take them to the stores so that we could get on to the learning.

I remember day after day of study

time with them, and feeling so trusted and trustful. One thing that Harrison told me, I will never forget. He was ailing, of course, towards the end of his life. He had a sore leg. And he would tell me that when I walked through his door his pain would go away, and when I would leave his pain would come back. I remember when he told me that how he just made me feel so special. And that's how I remember our elders, as making us feel so very special and valued.

I thought at that time, what would I ever do without him, just like Tom mentioned—how would he deal with life without his grandma? That's how I felt about Harrison and his wife.

So when Harrison did pass away I had a hard time, and part of it was not being able to cry hard, because the elders at that time told us that if we cried too hard we would hold them back. And maybe that's what Tom's grandma was talking about being stingy. That we couldn't hold onto them. That we just had to be thankful that we were part of their lives and to let them go on their journey.

So, on the evening of the ten-day feast I came home and put the food on the table. And my grandmother was there and she turned to do something. And I remember that thought came to me again, what am I going to do without him? And all of a sudden this little Lazy Suzan that was on the table with

different shakers of salt and pepper and sugar—it turned all by itself in a complete circle.

It startled me at first. It didn't scare me, but it just surprised me. And so I told my grandmother what I had seen. And she burned tobacco right away and then we talked. She asked me what I was thinking at the time, and I told her that I didn't know how I would go on without him and his teachings. I felt like I didn't learn enough.

And she said, "Well, I think he was probably trying to tell you that life goes on. And to keep on going." And then I

The other messages that were important to me came from another elder by the name of Corbett Sundown, who was the chief of our clan. And he would always pull me aside and I never knew why, but he would tell me go and get a white man's education. And then come back and share what you can with our people and support your people. And I wasn't able to do that for a long time, because there weren't jobs available in my community at Tonawanda.

But there were jobs within the Seneca Nation, so I spent most of my

different way of relating with my own people.

It has been a really wonderful homecoming to be able to share what I know with our community. One of the things that our chiefs' council negotiated with the local school district was to have a Native studies course. And so they contacted me and asked me if I would apply. And this is my second year of teaching of this course.

The children were so eager and ready and open to hear about Native studies, they would all run to the rug when I would come in. I don't really teach the way other teachers teach. I pretty much tell stories and try and help them to find some meaning to those stories.

I also bring things that they can touch, because I find that they are very interested in learning something different from how they grew up. For instance, baskets. They just love to touch it and feel the texture, and they are so excited in learning how it's put together, and how you gather the materials to make a basket.

But Native children are so eager to show that they know something, because their school experience pretty much is telling them that they don't know anything. The attitude seems to be: we are going to teach you what you don't know and what you have to know in order to succeed in life.

So, when we bring in something that they are familiar with, their eyes are so bright and shiny. They are just so excited to have something of them validated in a somewhat foreign system.

This job has been very important to me, because I have also been able to teach my child, who is now in the fifth grade. I remember sitting with a group of elders who were talking about how none of us in that room have ever had a Native teacher in the school system. We always had non-Native teachers.

Native children are so eager to show that they know something, because their school experience pretty much is telling them that they don't know anything.

remembered the words that he shared with us, because towards the end he was only speaking in Seneca, and I took my dad with me to see him in the hospital. And his words were that he was so worried that our ways would not continue. And that each day that passed time was slipping. And he was afraid he wouldn't be able to teach all that he knew, so that our ways would continue.

But he left behind a strong legacy amongst a lot of our people, and so I think if he did look down on us today he would be happy in seeing that some of us have continued those things, even though we have taken the time out to go to school and to go to Wounded Knee and to do all these other things that we felt needed to be done in our lifetime. But we always return to our teachings because that's really what made us keep strong as a people.

professional life working there in the field of alcoholism and substance abuse. But I just kind of fell into that field. It was not something that I went to school for.

And after I was through doing that, I learned about a job back home. And so I was finally able to realize those words that Corbett kept telling me about. And it was a really exciting journey to come back home, because there was so much to do. And I was so excited to be able to write things for the council and to attend the meetings.

I think the alcoholism and substance abuse training was really important, because working with your own people can be very challenging. And sometimes I have to think about changing my pace, because when I am in the outside world, it's very fast and when I come back to my community, I have to slow down and realize that there is a

We always had to learn a non-Native process.

I am constantly reminded how important this is, that it's such an honor to be solicited by your own people. Probably if I don't do anything more in my life, that's the most rewarding part of going through college and going through the universities, to then be able to come home with that.

Many of the stories that are told to me are about our people leaving the community, getting that education and going on elsewhere, instead of coming back. So, I am just really thrilled that I am able to come back, because it gives me an energy that I have never had before.

I think another message is that even if you can't return to your community, you are still in the community. And you carry that community no matter where you are. I would hate for someone to feel badly that they weren't able to go back. Because it may not happen today, but maybe some day you will. I am proud of any of our people who go out and get an education, and use it wherever they are, because they are a reflection of the rest of us no matter where they do their professional work.

So, whatever students are here—even though sometimes you have that feeling of missing home, and wanting to be closer to your family, you always have to remember how honored your family is to have you out here and making a difference in the world.

The chiefs in their discussions, even a long time ago, looked at how they might send 12 people to study and maybe three would come back. That had to be an awesome decision to then send their children to school knowing that this might happen. That they would lose some of their children that they send away.

But what they talk about now is that even if we have been neighbors for a

long time, these border towns right off the reservation have little understanding of our ways. We have a lot of understanding of their ways, because we have attended their schools. And we are in this outside world more than they are in ours.

This is a way of bridging understanding, to take our history and other things that are important to us and share them with them. It also gives the non-Native community a way to be friends. This is more than before, when we first started, when even some of our Native children—and almost every-

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body else—raised their hands to say yes to the question of whether Natives in our area lived in tipis. And everybody pretty much thought that, even some of our own people.

Some of the teachers in the school just off the reservation were shocked at that. And yet, they had to recognize that they really weren't doing anything to teach something different. They were just taking the existing curriculum and teaching it. And not thinking about how it really related to the community that was a neighbor to the school system. So, there have been many ways I have been able to take

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what I have learned and then kind of filter it and take it back into the community.

Another piece of a message, I guess, would be what I have been reminded of by almost everyone of the presenters so far: relationships with people. And I think that's the utmost thing that has helped me to survive. And coming here and seeing old friends is rekindling the relationship that's always been there.

I believe that I have always been open to friendship and to learning. And I think laughter is a healer. Tom mentioned—I don't know whether it was in front of a group or just amongst a couple of people—but he said, if you ever need to get your spirits raised, go to Tonawanda and hear the women laugh. I am glad that we are known for that, because it is something that we are able to do.

In fact, we need to do it even more because even though we are a small community, sometimes the resentments that occur tend to be carried generation to generation and many times we need to heal those so that we can get rid of—as was mentioned—that baggage that we carry. That's something that we really need to continue to let go of, because our instructions are that every day is a gift. And each day presents us with an opportunity to start fresh. And yet, it's very hard.

I believe the difficulty is mostly due to the colonization process that we have been through. But, really a lot of

what we need to do is just reach out to each other as if it was a brand new day and a brand new relationship. We need just to strengthen what we already have.

This is the last thing that I would mention in terms of the message, is be on the positive side of our lives. Just yesterday I went to a workshop on diabetes in the Native community. All of what was shared with us about diabetes and about the difficulty with our circulation and heart has to do with emotions. They talked about how there is this big part of us that has difficulty with love expression and anger expression. And fear.

I would open up a challenge or an opportunity to young people who are going through the educational system, to always remember that there are still many hurts in the community that we need to be made aware of, and let people know that it isn't their fault that they have arrived at this point.

Also, remember some of those stories, like how mean and bad-thinking Tadadaho was and how by talking to the mind and working through things using their minds, they changed him. Change can happen at any time.

I would encourage people to think about how we can share more with our families and our friends. One of the points mentioned in looking at a study of Native children going to school is that they were involved in a high percentage of fights with each other.

We are not so much going out against

the government or against some of the institutions, but we are taking anger and frustration out on each other. That becomes an easy way for it to get out, but very hurtful. Because we live together, we are constantly reminded of these negative things that have gone on.

It takes a lot of work to change that around, but it's possible. It was interesting to me to see the correlation between this fighting and other negative things that we are doing to ourselves. Some people are medicating with sugars and high-carbohydrate diets for that instant sugar-high to help them to deal with some of these other things that are going on, and the effects are coming out in our health.

Our alternative way is to really take a look at what would be a good healthy community for the coming generations. We still have potential within our reach, and much of it has to do with translating new ways or better ways of strengthening the old ways for our children and the coming generations that will be here to take our place.

Janine Jemison (Seneca) is a faithkeeper for the Tonawanda Seneca Nation.

CAN WE FREE OUR MINDS AND LIBERATE OUR THINKING?

RENEE GURNEAU

Self-determination is sometimes an overused phrase. Nevertheless, we should not desensitize ourselves to its importance. Self-determination is paramount in any discussion of indigenous peoples. It means to decide all things for ourselves and to determine our own values and ways of living. This often puts us in direct conflict with the dominant society. Every value conflict that we indigenous people have with the dominating society, in all aspects of our lives, gets illuminated and played out in the educational sphere where self-determination appears to still be relative. This is not news to any of us. However it is helpful to review this information to move us into a new way of being, doing and thinking.

WHAT IS EDUCATION ANYWAY?

If we are to look at education strictly from a white institutional viewpoint, education begins when our children move from spending their days in the home to spending their days in Head Start, kindergarten and elementary school. They learn to read and write English, they learn the history of the colonization of our land from the colonizer's point of view. They learn that history began with the glorious discovery of the new land made by Columbus, and so on and so on, ad nauseum. The point is that even in reservation schools, our children have very little if anything of their reality reflected back to them to make them feel real in their indigenous identity and certainly, nothing in the curriculum or structure from their own cultures to validate their lives.

It is not education that is the problem. The problem is in the way that education is used to serve and promote the status quo. Paulo Friere, the great educator and philosopher from Brazil, stated that there is no such thing as neutral education, that education can only serve to either liberate or to preserve the status quo power structure. He said that most of the education systems in the world do not teach students how to think critically about their lives, or to evaluate the political systems under which they live. Rather, education dulls awareness and teaches people to take their place in the system. If one is not white and Christian, that place is to be of service to white, Christian values and societal structure. He further states that there is also no such thing as marginalized populations. The ones who are considered marginalized are the ones who are holding the oppressive system up

from underneath that, in fact, the colonizers are the dependent ones, living off the resources and very lives of the oppressed. The education systems are set up to promote the values of the people who are dominating, in the United States, who are white, male and Christian. The education system supports and continues to feed the domination that oppresses the rest of the world by controlling the content and process of education to advance the interests of those values.

Public schools and universities, under the pressure of non-white populations, have given lip service to including some other "stories" under Women's History Month, Black History Month and Indian Week. The problem with these gestures is that the history involved only reflects these populations in relation again, to the white male power structure. For example, Black History Month activities often



Dagmar Thorpe, left, and Renee Gurneau, 2001.

PHOTO © JEAN YOUNG/AMERICAN INDIAN MILLENNIUM FORUM

involve revisiting the civil rights movement, but rarely studies Black American relations with Africa. Instead the emphasis is on the relationship to white America and to the efforts at assimilation. For Indian Week, it is again a gesture of tolerance from the power structure, consisting of a pow wow, a speaker, a feast, possibly some romanticizing of our spirituality, but rarely a critical look at our political situation, racism, social justice issues or our history, pre-Columbus.

As for the actual curriculum in the public school system and universities, the

minds and spirits. This requires intense self-scrutiny. It further requires the continual revitalization of our languages, ceremonies, and movement toward self-knowledge. The true identity that we come from is powerful and rich. We have been given and are made of all of the intelligence and heart that is Creation. We are the living physical manifestation of Spirit with everything that could mean. What we have is so beautiful. We have direct access to the Sacred. And we have within our cultures, ways and means to move through all of the changes of this

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dominating education system allows some “Indian Education” as long as it does not challenge the power structure or the values that uphold it in any meaningful way. The oppressor believes in his own superiority, racially, culturally and in every way, and that the accommodation of his privilege should rightly be the norm within which all thinking and intellectual pursuits must fit. Our own brilliant Anishinaabe spiritual philosopher, Jim Dumont, says that the measurement of success of the oppressor is in the extent to which he can persuade others to think like him. I can think of no better description of internalized oppression.

The question for us indigenous peoples always comes to this. “Can we free our minds and liberate our thinking within institutions and systems that are set up to oppress?” The answer to this question lies in our own courage to decolonize our

life from our true education, which is knowledge of the spiritual science of creation. All of this has been disrupted, but certainly and emphatically, not lost, by colonization.

All revolutionary movements have literacy and re-education at the heart of resistance. In order to open our hearts to the limitlessness of our own identity we must clear our minds of the closed paradigm of the enforced education and create educational structures that better reflect ourselves to ourselves. There are many examples of these efforts; the Survival Schools of the American Indian Movement, Native American and Navajo Preparatory Schools, Charter Schools and Tribal Colleges. The values that drive these initiatives are as varied as there are schools. There are a number of questions to be considered in discussing these efforts. One huge issue is, what does “cul-

ture-based’ education really mean in a practical way? Can we really have such a thing lodged in a white institutional structure? Regardless of opinion, there is a wide range of initiatives addressing this issue. They extend from indigenous cultures and languages being at the core of the intellectual vision with the rest of the curriculum revolving around them, to the other end of the spectrum, which is the belief that the purpose of education is to prepare indigenous students to be successful in the white world.

Another thing we must watch for in our own internalized oppression is whether we, ourselves, consider these educational efforts to be “alternative” to regular schools, whether or not we have internalized the dominating society’s definitions of education. I propose we consider the American society’s education as “alternative.” Because it certainly is “alternative” and in direct opposition to our true identity. It can not ever include or even address our vast indigenous knowledge because of its controlling, mental conditioning and power preserving purposes.

What is confronting us as indigenous people and as the oppressed in this society is how to find our way to ourselves, to our own minds, to our own science, art and literature which is all informed by spirit. What is ahead of us in the millennium is the huge task of de-westernizing, de-colonizing our thoughts. This is the fundamental concern in our efforts at directing and empowering our own educational experience. It is an ongoing discussion and will be until we are completely free of the intellectual, political an—in every other expression of life—constraints of colonization. We continue to work toward our true indigenous identity, and to always function from that position of beautiful strength.

Renee Burneau (Ojibway) teaches at Bemidji State University and is enrolled in the Masters of Anishinaabe Philosophy program in Canada.

Value Your Individuality

Good morning everybody. I just want to say that words cannot express how honored I am to be here today among such prominent people in the Native American community as Jose Barreiro, Tom Porter, Katsi Cook-Barreiro, Tom Cook. These are all people that I have come to know. Katsi and Tom and Tom, they are all from my community. I look up to Tom a lot because he was working so hard and so diligently among our people, to have our culture and our language preserved. For me the opportunity was not available when I was as young. And I am not used to having all these people want to listen to me.

My name is Ryan King. I am at Buffalo State University, majoring in public relations. One question the students were presented with is what do you want to do when you graduate? Honestly, I don't know yet. A lot of people go home, try to fix the council, go to fix the tribe. That's a lifelong process. Another question is how have you come to understand the history or the culture? I would have to say that would have to be through my grandmother and my father. They are the two biggest influences in my life. My grandmother, who I lost 8 years ago, she spoke to me in Mohawk all the time. I didn't speak, but I could understand it, so it was real fun when she was on the phone with her sister talking in Mohawk, gossiping and stuff, and she thinks I don't know what she is saying but I am sitting there like...she will be talking about my uncle and I was like, "Ooh, Uncle

Our People Need Leaders

RYAN KING

Buddy, look what you did."

My father is in my heart forever and he is in my mind forever.

My father started down the wrong track. He got back on the right track and he makes sure that I stay on the right path. I was heading down that wrong path, making that curve, you know, wanting to have fun, wanting to go out, wanting to party and be with all my friends. He got me a car, a little bit of freedom, and he just saw which way I was going and he brought me back. So my love goes out to my father.

Where else can I go here? What

struggles do our people face today? Number one in my book is the stereotypes. I went to college expecting people would know about us. People can't get past the fact that some tribes live in teepees, so that's the biggest question I got. Did you live in teepees? Where is your braid? It's like, can you see me with a braid? I don't think so; it doesn't suit me. I would get angry with all the ignorant and arrogant people, but after a while I would see that as my opportunity to educate people. I would use this opportunity to educate people that did not understand us, did not understand where we were coming from, did not understand our struggles. So it sparked in my brain that if I can make a difference then everybody can. Don't go off on somebody for asking a stupid question, even though you are thinking in your head, "I am



Ryan King and Danielle Terrance, Mohawk participants at Millennium gathering, 2001.

PHOTO © JEAN YOUNG/AMERICAN INDIAN MILLENNIUM FORUM

going to knock you out if you keep talking.” Just sit them down and talk to them. If you seriously want to understand I will talk to you. If you just want to be dumb, we will leave it at that.

An opportunity that I feel I missed was learning my language and more about my history and my culture. There are opportunities for the younger men and women to learn the language, to learn the culture, that weren't really available to me. I went to public schools on the reservation

where we went to language class for maybe a half-hour, worked five minutes at the most, and the Mohawk teacher did not speak Mohawk the entire time. Looking back on it now, I wish that my grandmother had not been afraid to speak Mohawk and to give my parents Mohawk names. But they were afraid that they would not have opportunities outside the reservation if they did not speak English. So that kind of hurts me, because I look at it now and I see the younger people relating more to Black culture than

they do their own. They are listening to rap music, they are dressing in the baggy clothes, they are braiding their hair. They are doing everything that is not Native culture. It hurts. Now I listen to rap music, you know, it's my favorite music, but I don't go as so far as to wear baggy clothes, swear all the time. Because swearing all the time as much of the younger kids do, makes them just sound unintelligent, that's all it does. And I try and express that to my younger sister who is 12 years old, just getting into high school. She likes to swear, and I say “You know how stupid you sound?” She is like, “What? I don't sound stupid; I sound like you.” No, that's wrong.

The message I would like to leave to the people of the next generation is to value your individuality. In this day and age, our people need more leaders than they do followers. The Seventh Generation will bring the future leaders, our future leaders. We want our younger generations to be able to step up to the plate and take the opportunities, not just follow their friends and say, “Oh, I don't want to do that. John is not doing that and I don't want to do that. Ryan is not doing that.” We need leaders, we need language speakers, we need historians. Those are the three things that I think our people need the most. That would be the message that I would leave for my people.



Migizi Pensineau

We Have Always Been and We Will Always be Here

My name is Migizi Pensineau from White Eagle Ponca Tribe in Oklahoma and the Red Lake Ojibwe in Minnesota. I am honored and moved. The first influence on me was the Red School House, in St. Paul, Minnesota. Growing up around the Red School House, a school that was centered around tribal things, the drum and Pipe ceremonies in the morning, I got to really get in touch with who I was as a Native person.

I need to mention my parents, all three of them, Bill Pensineau is my biological dad, Tom Goldtooth is my mentor and my mom is Rene Gurneau. They helped me maintain my sense of identity, to stay in contact with who I am as a person—mentally, spiritually and physically. They kept me in a constant state of balance; and that is basically what I wanted was to come up here is say that to them and to everyone else.

One time I was in Cherokee, North Carolina. I saw this guy standing on the corner. He had the peacock headdress thing going on and huge diamonds and all kinds of mismatched things. He had a dream catcher hanging on his neck and other ridiculous things like that. There was a father and a kid

pointing and taking pictures. “Say *hau* to the Indian,” the father kept saying.

The man was a beautiful person, deep brown skin, and he was obviously Native, so I could not figure out why he dressed that way and had to play up that way. I could not understand why he would degrade himself to such a level. I realized that this man let himself, as my mom and dad used to say, “buy into the bullshit,” into the stereotype that you still see on TV, with the Washington Red Skins and all that. He sort of considered himself like a living relic, a human Jurassic Park clone, not believing that he was part of something, part of that vast range of Native people who are proud and strong.

What I want to say up here is: thank you to the generations before mine. For keeping me in balance and in check with who I am and for teaching me two things that are very important to me. First, they taught me not to fight with my fists but with my mind and even more importantly, more strongly, with my heart and spirit. The second is a lesson I will never forget. They told me: “As Native people we have always been and we will always, always, be here.”

Migizi Pensineau (Anishinaabe and Ponca) is enrolled at Bemidji State University, transferring to the University of California at Berkeley.

Ryan King is a student in public relations and communications at Buffalo State College in Buffalo, New York.

Know About Yourself from Your Own Heart

John Mitchell

My name is Cachee Mouin Miswon. That is my name in my Native language. It means Harp of the Big Bear. John Bear Mitchell is my name in English. I come from the village where the rocks come out of the water; I live on an island with a bridge. And my family, my clan, is Bear and Crow. We recognize both sides of my family today because we feel it is important to recognize the medicine each clan brings.

I will be a student until I die. I know my ancestors stand with me every day, they are standing here now with their hands on my shoulders and guiding me. Again, I am among many wise elders here, I know that I am humbled to be here.

Talking about language, I heard at one time that if you speak three languages you are a trilingual, if you speak two you are a bilingual, but if you speak one you are American. I believe that to be true. I believe that we have the ability to seek out our languages and we have that ability to learn that language. And as scary as it might seem, it is slipping away. I say just relax and learn what you can learn and pass on what you can pass on.

The story was before schools and books and CDs and computers. We learned everything in our culture through stories. Tom Porter started out this morning telling a great story of prayer, a life way. It is all here. We are all taking part in it, and I believe it is very important that we have all our stories as well, the stories of our people. Our stories teach morals and lessons, our stories teach how our tradi-

tional lands were created, why they are there. They teach us why animals look the way they do, why birds sing their songs the way they do, why they live and what they teach us. Oftentimes people who are lost in the woods are found dead because they have starved or because they died of exposure, but when they lift up their body, laying underneath are materials that they could have used to survive. It's like being in the mall and dying on a \$100 bill. You could use that go buy something to eat, to buy something to keep warm. It's all right there—the woods, the forest, the water. It's where we have gone for everything.

Oftentimes our kids in school learn from other kids by watching. And the mock and mimick what they think is cool and popular. If you look at gangs—Indian gangs are now all over Montana, California, Arizona, all over. Who are they trying to model? They are trying to model someone who is not them. Why? Because they don't know what they have. They don't realize they do have colors. They don't realize that they do have groups. They don't realize that they do have people who care and that they don't have to be at the very top in some kind of hierarchical system in order to be who they are, but they can stand side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder. It's the way all our Indian people did many years ago. And I am glad to be standing here with tribes that we did not once get along with—the Iroquois, specifically the Mohawk—and look at them as friends and be comfortable and sing their songs with them and

dance their dances. If we can overcome that we can overcome anything. We stand here side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder with tribes that were once enemies for one reason or another. Once we understood the boundaries of our resources, we had peace ceremonies and we sang each other's songs, and we visited each other's communities, and we ate each other's food. And we would bring our own food so they can share with some of that. We need to know that we can overcome that.

You have to be a leader in your own community before you can go out and become a leader somewhere else. You have to be recognized for what you can do. That's why you can do it, because you know who you are; you know what you can do. You know your limitations, you know your boundaries. You are not trying to go out and conquer the world, you are trying to make a difference to one person.

So I ask the future generations down the road one thing, from your heart, not from your mind—know about yourself and know who you are. Only then will you be able to go out and teach and reach other people. You need a group of people to be with, despite the different language, despite the different ways we look. We all have something in common and that's that our feet are on this earth, and between our feet and the earth is a connection and we know that there is a connection there.

John Mitchell (Penobscot) earned a Masters of Education Leadership degree in 1999. He is recognized by his tribe as a featured storyteller.



MAINTAINING OUR IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE IS THE HEART OF THE LANDSCAPE

JIM ENOTE

I am from the Zuni, which is way over on the west side of New Mexico. We have some land and mountain also. It is very old country and sometimes in introducing myself as coming from Zuni, I might say four score and 8,000 years ago.

It is great to be here. As I said I come from Zuni and would tell a little bit about myself. It's nice to come here and put on the nice clothes I got for Christmas last year and get out of my Jimi Hendrix t-shirt and my jeans, and come here and be with the rest of you and eat a lot of food.

I want to talk about the land and economy and the people of my country. As a child I grew up raising sheep and farming. My family were farmers and sheep growers. My earliest memories were getting way up early in the morning with my grandfather and seeing the sun come up. We would start to say our prayers as the sun was coming up with the corn over there and say a long, long prayer for corn. And about then the sun would come over the horizon and we would see all these 10,000 drops of dew glistening, reflecting the first light of the day, and all those corn leaves in the field were waving and shivering. And then my grandpa would say, "Okay here, grand-

son, start hoeing. We are going to make this ditch from here to way over there." Work, work, work, and pretty soon it is 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock. I would be thinking, I'm getting hungry, and thirsty. My part of the world is dry. We would work at between 6,000 and 9,000 feet with humidities of around four to 25 percent, where the edges of your mouth kind of crack. Your lips would get chapped and break sometimes. In the summertime, if the wind is blowing you won't even see your sweat. You could see little white stuff on you where the salt is drying up. It's that dry. Pretty soon you would be happy because a shadow would be straight down and it is time to eat. Grandpa says, "Okay, we will take a break now." We break out that Vienna sausage and the ham and that bread. Pull up some onions from the garden and we eat. That was it, man, that was life, that was a good life.

As I talked to my grandpa, and also my grandma too, I thought, boy, this is really good stuff; this is really great. Sometimes we would walk over to a little rock house, and get some water out that came from a spring and drink from that ladle. My grandpa would grab a drink from the ladle. My cousin would grab it and drink from that

ladle. But we all shared that ladle the same way. It turns out that that ladle was an old ladle; it was a ceramic one, clay. I don't know how old it was; it just happened to be in that house that we had, which was old, old, old.

I was talking with my grandmother and she said, "You know you are lucky. You don't know hunger; you don't know what hungry really is." I thought about it and I said that's right. My generation is really the first, at least where I am at, to not really know hunger. My mother, grandparents, those generations knew and lived with hunger all the time. So it made me think about how they grew their food and raised some sheep. They didn't use a lot of cash. Sometimes they would pawn something, otherwise the economy as a whole was a very different place. It is changing a lot. So that anxiety and the insecurities of where the next meal is going to come from will hopefully be less.

I have been working in conservation and development for about 24 years. I think how quickly we forget and how quickly our preoccupations change. Don't lose track of what our real preoccupation should be. Speaking to the future generations, I always speak through a voice of my great-grandpar-

ents. I am who they are. The blood that was in their veins is in my veins. My great-grandfather was monolingual. He wouldn't have written, he wouldn't have said it in English, he would have said it in our language. That's how he would have said it and that means something to me.

What it means is compromise. Speaking to our future generations, where are we now? We are dealing with compromise. Even at this gathering, the compromise comes from using English as a standard. And so we are

we still do have and we need to hold onto is the crux of maintaining our identity—maintaining our language. Our language tells us about our umbilical chords that go out across the landscape, the valleys, the texture of the mountains, canyons, climate, the creation of beings. Because we have been in the same place for a very, very long time, through this language, we can affect something. My understanding is in my vocabulary. We can still create medicine because we maintained that knowledge in our language.

ness from, my grandmother. I would go someplace and she would say, "Where are you going?" I would say, "Well, I have a meeting in San Francisco," or something, and she would say, "Well be careful because there might be people there who don't know you." Remember this is living in a community where I lived within two minutes of every living relative.

So when grandma takes all of these complex things and makes it simple—"Be careful, because there might be people there who don't know you." I would be walking out the door and stop, and think, oh yes, that makes sense.

So future generations: there is a struggle with dependence on external structures. Again sometimes it is spirituality versus science, but we are trying to take what is best from both. Future generations, I hope you learn from our mistakes. Future generations, enjoy life, don't take yourselves too seriously. Life is sometimes a crooked path, but you can walk straight on a crooked path.

My earliest memories were getting way up early in the morning with my grandfather and seeing the sun come up. We would start to say our prayers as the sun was coming up with the corn over there and say a long, long prayer for corn. And about then the sun would come over the horizon and we would see all these 10,000 drops of dew glistening, reflecting the first light of the day, and all those corn leaves in the field were waving and shivering.

compromising often towards the standards of a nation, of a region, of a westernized world, compromising lands. Our lands were once common property for people, people would come together and work one piece of land and share the results. Or in those communal hunts, whatever was being gathered was common property. But what we are seeing now is a move towards privatization—mapping, fencing, this is mine and that's yours.

What we did have and actually what

Future generations have a toolbox of knowledge to be gained in universities. But living with your grandparents, learning from elders, is also a toolbox, a toolbox that reflects different realities and interpretations of realities. Pick the right tools.

Future generations, as my grandmother would often tell me: don't take yourself too seriously. My grandmother set me in my place often. She had such a crazy, crazy, crazy sense of humor. That's where I get my weird-

Jim Enote (Zuni) is associate project director of the Indigenous Communities Mapping Initiative and senior advisor for the Mountain Institute.

Tribal Sovereignty Gives the People the Opportunity to Invest

FERRELL SECAKUKU

We can all relate to each other. We are happy that you have accommodated us here today, that we have come into this land of your people and you have provided a way for us to be happy here. We know that by coming here we will see our brothers and our sisters and mothers, uncles, fathers, and that's a healthy way of recognizing the people. So I am addressing you as my relatives, so that we will become more acquainted, and before we leave this place we will be more related as people of this earth.

I am Ferrell Secakuku. My Hopi name is Kuwanoya. It's a long process of receiving and accepting this name, so what I will do is to give a real short version of how I received it. It means the sun rising in the morning and giving original colors to everything. When I was a kid my godfather was chosen. A mother is responsible for finding a person from outside the clan, to teach a young person the way that our peoples live, the philosophies, the spiritual teachings, and the way the land is cared for. She chose a person of the village and this person was to be my godfather throughout my life, from a young age throughout adulthood. He was a member of the Sunforehead Clan. He took care of me. When I was initiated by him into the Hopi religion, he gave me the name, which came from his diety, the sun.

Some people talked about the prayer that was said this morning, the Mother Earth and Father Sun of us all. We were born from our Mother, the Earth. And that is re-enacted every November. The way of Creation, how we were, how we were made, how we grew, and how we were born, and how we get a name.

And I was given that name Kuwanoya. I am a member of the Snake clan. Some of you may have heard about the Hopi snake dance. I perform this dance, which is a religion of one clan. Today we have about 40 clans, and each one of them is responsible for various initiatives that are regarded as gifts to the society of the Hopi and the world. And with their ceremony they bring about good life, that there will be abundance for everyone in the future. Mine is a snake ritual of our society that goes on for about 10 days. The only part that people see is the dance. That is climaxed on the eighth day. That's what we as being a part of the Hopi contribute to our clan father and to the world. Our father, the Bear Clan, will use our ritual to take the people into the future in a more pleasant way.

I was educated at the local day school, the government's school. When I was in the sixth grade my father saw that I wasn't doing any good in school. He wanted me to be somebody who is more equipped for

the future than a person that is going to be living on a reservation all my life, meaning that he wanted me to be a college graduate. Here's what he said. "I want you to go to college, and not just go to college, I want you to finish. I want you to be a doctor. If you can't be a doctor you can be a lawyer." That was a big step for me, a big challenge.

He took me out from the government's school and placed me at Ganado Mission High School, and that's where I went to school. I finished in 1958. After high school I attended college and finished. To this day I am fortunate to have gained a high school education and college education. All through my life I have been taught the history of my people, the migration, especially when I became initiated into Hopi. It was about all that we have to know about our land, what it is producing, the limitations it has and how to protect it.

As a kid I grew up in business. My father was a businessman. When I was 7 years old I worked at the store; it was a general merchandise store where he would buy crafts from our people, like the plaques, sifters, the textile material. There was no economic bench on the reservation, so he would take it into town, maybe to the wholesale place like the Fred Harvey Organization, and he sells them for cash. He would then go into a local store like big Safeway in Flagstaff and buy

groceries to bring back to resell or trade with my people. This is how I grew up. This is how I got to know what business is about. My father was a salesman and he hardly had an education. I remember when I came back an educated man to the reservation, in 1964, I thought I could conquer the world. Somebody said earlier when you are young you have strong minds. You are strong and it seems like it is possible to do things at the snap of fingers. But that's not so, living and growing up on a reservation. There's

They are no different. They have the same problems, but they are under Russian government and we are under the United States government.

Another visitor came from Canada, same problem. A couple of weeks later I had another visitor from Colombia, South America. He looks just like me; he looks just like the people from Siberia—same problems, same stories, and I heard the same stories here this morning.

So we are all related. If we are all together, we could institutionalize ourselves in these United States, our countries. I am coping with a traditional and progressive mentality, both locking horns on Hopi right now. It is okay that people think the way they do, but we have to come together. We have to unite for our people's sake.

I dealt with the older people when I was younger growing up. My father was on a tribal council. He served as a chairman and as a vice-chairman. Those delegates of those days, it seems, had some control. People would talk to one another in a more respectful way, whether they are elders from another place, from First Mesa, Second Mesa, or whether they are progressive people, or traditional-thinking people, that are sitting on the Hopi Tribal Council. They talked until they understand. Sometimes they didn't understand the whole bit, but they didn't have any bitter fights, life goes on. But today the Hopi Tribal Council is different. I served 4 years as a chairman, and 4 years as a tribal council representative. Today we have become self-serving because of Peabody Coal Company. We extract a lot of coal, and in return for that we get \$13 to \$15 million into our tribal treasury. Now that's a lot of money at the hands of the Hopi Tribal Council, enough that they think they have power over their people.

Our cultural policy, or tribal policy in religion, in ritual, tells us, take what you need from it, but leave the rest because there are other people there behind you that are still coming, some of them have not been born yet, and they will need the resources in the future.

a lot of things that you have not learned, so basically what you do is to go back to your lifeways, the way you grew up. The only way to do things that honor the land where you come from is to do the way that your people have always done things.

When I was elected chairman back in 1994 I accepted a big challenge and a lot of problems. One of the biggest problems that I devoted my whole time and effort to was the Navajo/Hopi dispute. Fortunately we have seen it resolved in 1996. We did what we could to resolve the big issue and I think all three parties are happy. We all found out that we cannot forever fight.

A couple of weeks ago I had visitors from Yupik. They look just like us.

I think it is your obligation, it's your responsibility as young people that are educated to come back to our land to help us develop, so that the more sensitive issues can be ironed out.

So who gets the benefits first? The Hopi Tribal Council representatives. I don't mind bringing back our people who are working off of our land and paying them a good salary if they are worthy of it. I think those of us who have worked so hard to bring better living conditions to our people should remember that we are Hopis who are supposed to take care of the people first.

All morning I have heard people saying that Earth is our Mother. We have land, from it we can take things. Our cultural policy, or tribal policy in religion, in ritual, tells us, take what you need from it, but leave the rest because there are other people there behind you that are still coming, some of them have not been born yet, and they will need the resources in the future. And if they don't learn from us today, some of these resources are non-renewable and some are natural resources of course, but we have to preserve them so that the people in the future will have a chance to live.

Right now we are dealing with the coal mine exploration. It's a good business. It's good to have rich land. We have lots of coal. The Navajo people, the Hopi people share that. But if you are not careful, it will do harm to the people and the land.

Several years ago the Hopi Tribal Council made a lease with the Peabody Coal Company to extract tons of coal for a large amount of money. They also approved the Peabody Coal Company to use our drinking water to ship the coal. One of the transportation

methods for the coal is to grind the coal, pulverize it, then push it through an 18-inch tube to Nevada, about 273 miles. But they are using pristine water that will never come back. It is called a slurry. So in one sense we appreciate all this money—\$14-15 million coming into the tribal treasury. But what is it doing? We are not being sensitive to the very element that gives us life. We are hurting the earth by using that water, that should continue life for everyone. That pristine water is not coming back. So these are some of the things that we have to look at in the future.

I have a couple of points that I want to share with the young generation. We are fortunate that we have had some land left. I understand there are about 600 recognized tribes in the United States, many more in other countries—Canada, South America, and Mexico. We are fortunate that we are recognized to a certain degree and we have a land base to work with. We have lands that still maintain some of the natural resources. Some of them are threatened. I think it is your obligation, it's your responsibility as young people that are educated to come back to our land to help us develop, so that the more sensitive issues can be ironed out. This is what my father told me. "I want you to go get your college degree. Come back and help us develop this land because your heart is here. You understand the situation." And this is how we need to look at it. We can't just spend, spend, spend, dig, dig, dig, and

dig away the land. It is there for our survival; it's there for our future.

The other thing that I wanted to bring to your attention is intermarriage. There's intermarriage going on. Not only across the tribes, but with other nationalities. Hopi always said, somewhere in our future you will look just like anybody else. We have to watch that, pay attention. I am not saying that you should or shouldn't intermarry, what I am saying is that we should be more sensitive and you

it is very hard to understand when you are young, but when you become older, the longer that you participate in your cultural ways, the rituals, the better you will understand it. So, if you could take part in these rituals as often as possible, it is better for you. Then you would understand the land, what it can give you. Then we can understand what Mother Earth can do, and then we can be able to interpret how to go about developing it. How do I go about doing business? It is not only going to the bank and borrowing money. In some cases it might be the easiest thing. If you had lots of money in your piggy bank, the bank is willing to loan you money. If you don't have anything on your land you won't have any money, the bank won't even look at you. You won't even be known. How many times have some of you gone to the bank? It happened to me several times. I didn't realize I had already used my credit card. I went to the ATM machine, stuck it in there, nothing came back out because I didn't have any money. And that's the way it could turn out for our tribes. When we lose our land to insensitivity, we will become nothing.

Sometimes it is very hard to understand when you are young, but when you become older, the longer that you participate in your cultural ways, the rituals, the better you will understand it. So, if you could take part in these rituals as often as possible, it is better for you. Then you would understand the land, what it can give you. Then we can understand what Mother Earth can do.

should use your cultural teachings. Although it may seem old-fashioned, it may be ancient but there is power in the message.

This morning Tom Porter said something about the Indian intelligence and he is right. Our intelligence, our ancient traditional intelligence, indigenous intelligence, may not speak directly to science, may not speak to math. But it is there. In order to understand it, you must listen carefully to your elders. I listened to you very carefully this morning. In between the words, we can pick that intelligence up. However, sometimes

Ferrell Secakuku is former chairman of the Hopi Tribal Council and senior advisor at the Center for Sustainable Environment at Northern Arizona University.

The People, Our People, are Our Greatest Asset

SHERRY SALWAY BLACK

All of us have had different stories, and my story is a little bit different also. I followed the guidelines, but one of the things you will notice is that I didn't have an introduction speaking my Native language, Lakota. I was born on the reservation, but did not grow up there, and probably much to Darrell's chagrin I don't know my Native language, but I also think the why of that is part of my story.

What Tom said concerned me a bit about the Creator not knowing me because I don't speak the language, but I did have the honor of being named by my great-aunt, so He knows me by my Indian name, so that's a good sign.

What might be interesting in my story is it is probably similar to what other people have gone through. I have been tremendously fortunate in the opportunities that have been provided for me because of being Lakota, of being Native, being Indian.

I want to stress up-front, and probably throughout my remarks who it was that made it possible for me to have those opportunities. There were many people, both living and ancestors, who made it possible for me to have these opportunities. I consider myself amazingly fortunate in that I have been able to learn from all Native people and the opportunities that I have been provided.

My work and my experience has not been focused on my home reservation of Pine Ridge. I haven't spent a lot of my time working with one group of

people, but instead with thousands of Native people, hundreds of communities and tribes over the 27 years that I have been involved in this work. I have been influenced by many people and many events and I have had many opportunities. Again, I was born on Pine Ridge. Out of the four children my parents had, I am the only one that is working with Native issues. I truly feel that I have a connection through the land. We are talking about land and economy. Well, the land made a difference to me.

I grew up in Eastern Pennsylvania. My mother had gone to Pine Ridge as a nurse. She was not Native and devoted over a decade of her life to serving the people of Pine Ridge, and actually spoke more Lakota than my father because she had to provide services in the hospital. My father was of the boarding school generation, the ones pushed not to learn the language, not to know the culture, to deny being Indian, because it meant you couldn't succeed in the world. There are a lot of us my age and older and younger who have learned from grandparents or parents about that time period.

I was fortunate to receive a scholarship for my undergraduate degree from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and from my tribe. They didn't know who I was, I was never there, but still I had this wonderful opportunity. When I got out of college in 1974, the first thing I wanted to do was go back to the reser-

vation, much to my father's consternation, because [my parents] had moved off the reservation to seek jobs and education. But that has been a focus of my life, to work with people who want to stay in their communities. How can we do that? How can we make our communities, whether reservations or traditional Indian lands or urban areas, places where people can live together?

I traveled to Pine Ridge in the 1970s. We were all probably there right at the same time and it was an amazing experience, not just because of the time period, of the uprising of Wounded Knee and the aftermath of that. Family members were fighting family members and people were dying and there were burned houses. This was my first time since I was very young to see the place where I was born. Regardless of the political troubles, I found it to be an amazingly beautiful place with beautiful people, as Darrell says. The land was just so significant that it changed my life. But I didn't go to Pine Ridge to work. I came to Washington, DC instead, at a place and time that was very heady for many people. The mid-1970s had come out of the activism of the 1960s. The 1970s were focused in Washington. It was the time of the Indian Self-Determination Act. I had wanted to get a job as a health educator out on one of the reservations and apply in the Indian Health Service, but they had nothing available. So I took a position with the American Indian Policy

Review Commission, which was the last congressional-focused two-year commission to study Indian issues. A lot of the legislation that came after the period of the 1970s and the 1980s was a direct result of the American Indian Policy Review Commission. Many of the people in this room were the reasons for that legislation.

Next, I went to work for the Indian Health Service. My background was in health care, so I went to the Indian Health Service. But to headquarters, again, not really taking it out to the reservation and to teach.

What happened to me there again was another amazing opportunity. In 1976, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act was passed. I was fortunate to be able to get a scholarship through that, to go to graduate school, to get my masters in business administration from the University of Pennsylvania. Never would I have had that opportunity had it not been again for the work, the ground-work that a lot of people put down for me to be able to do that.

One of the driving forces that affected my career and my choices in life has been the desire to pay back. I am emotional too. I have been given this opportunity. It is important for all of us to give back to our communities in some way of our choosing. I came back to Indian Health Service and planned to spend the rest of my career there, but was frustrated with the government system. I truly felt that I worked for Indian people and I worked for tribes when I worked for the federal government, but that's not the case. You work for the executive branch, even if you work for Indian Health Service, even if you work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

I left the federal system 16 years ago. I don't know if it has changed since that time, but at the time it was also the beginning of tribes really pushing self-determination. The start of that was

self-determination contracts—but not self-governance compacts. I was the deputy of the division that looked at health facilities construction. Rosebud Sioux Tribe was the very first tribe to plan and design their own hospital. Who is not able to do that and to contract with someone? Well, the government made it so hard for this tribe to do a contract, it was the most frustrating experience of my life. I hated to see tribes treated like that. They had as much capacity as a private hospital where I had done my residency when I was at graduate school. The government eventually gave in; Rosebud did design their hospital and many other good things have happened since that time. But the experience led me to say, I have got to get out of here. I have got to be able to say, yes, to tribes and to Indian people. They were coming to us and the Indian Health Service with creative and innovative ideas and the system couldn't deal with it. It was very difficult for me to see that.

A friend of mine introduced me to Rebecca Adamson and said, you two really need to get together. And much to my father's disappointment, I was leaving a secure federal job, with a career ahead of me. I was going to work for a tiny non-profit, seemingly no future, having to raise your own money. He said, if you are going to work for Indian people, can't you at least work where the money is? He was very concerned about me leaving the health care field. We had a long conversation about it. I said, health doesn't matter if you are not doing anything about the economy. I meant what everybody up here has said, that everything is related. You can't work on health without working on the economic environment and without working on the language, without working on the social environment, it is all related. To have healthy people, you had to have the ability for them to feel

productive in their lives. That has been the effort of First Nations Development Institute. Through First Nations we have been able to work and meet with people who have made such a difference in Indian country. Think of Birgil Kills Straight, Dagmar Thorpe, Wilma Mankiller, John Mohawk: getting to meet these people when I started in 1985 with First Nations was great.

The second piece of my presentation is about the work of First Nations. Rebecca founded First Nations with a vision that still guides it today. The tribes and Native people have substantial resources of land, a source of wealth, but we have been unable to control these. Therefore we have not been able to define our own development to fit our cultures and our values. First Nations works to provide the resources to do this. Native people using indigenous knowledge will develop their own economic systems that reflect their own cultural experiences. I truly believe this, and that others will benefit from this knowledge.

It is really about assets. Assets are very key to thinking about our economic systems. I see the world through this lens. We all see it from our own perspective and mine is really coming from the lens of assets. Native people are lucky. We have huge amounts of resources. But where we are, economically and in some ways politically, as with our language, we have not been able to control our resources. We have not controlled these resources for 100 years, 150 years. They have been in the control of other people. And when you don't have control of something, not only do you not derive the most benefit from it, but you don't have any responsibilities, there's no consequences for your actions, and that is absolutely key when we talk about assets.

I don't mean just deriving a financial benefit from it, I mean deriving things

like maintaining the language, having tribal governments, having self-determination, having sovereignty, having our own culture and indigenous knowledge. It is not simply a financial pay-off by controlling your assets, but it is very much interrelated with everything else.

Our most important asset is our people, absolutely key. Our language, reiterating what Darrell had said on knowledge, our intellectual property, is also key. Land—our natural resources, our institutions, our sovereignty. We also have huge amounts of financial assets—the trust fund—but we have not been able to control them. If we did control them, we couldn't do a worse job than the government did. I think we can do a much, much better job.

Much of the disarray from our economic system comes from our inability to control assets. Let me give you one example, and it relates to some of the agricultural and environmental examples that we discussed earlier. We maintained huge amounts of land and natural resources, but it is not controlled by us to be the most productive. Again, we are not asking for other people to define it, what is productive for us.

In the "lower 48" we own 55 million acres of land. Forty-four million acres of that land is in agricultural production, the majority of which is in the livestock production, most of which we don't control, because it is leased out to non-Indians. And we get, as Tom Cook mentioned, \$18 a year for the leases. That's an asset that could be more productive for us, whether it's in agriculture or whether it's being preserved and conserved environmentally. For whatever purpose we are not benefiting from those assets. Even with that agricultural production, we have hungry people. We have huge amounts of resources from which we can feed our own people and we are not doing it. We are malnourished, we have health problems related

to food. So, what is it about this land asset that can help us achieve a better diet and a better all-around being? Again, that's just one example.

Control is just a starting point; we have to do other things. We have to retain the asset once we get control of it. The land we have to utilize it effectively, manage it according to traditional principles, as you were talking about. The elders can share that with you. That's how we can really retain it and utilize it, leverage it, and create new assets from it. As Ferrell Secakuku said, creating new businesses from land—not necessarily income being the most important thing—but looking at the different ways land can produce. I want to stress that with control comes accountability and responsibility and consequences. True, the control has always been with the government, but now, when it comes under our control, we have to be capable, we have to be responsible, and we have to understand the consequences of managing the assets that we have.

What we do as tribal citizens to really get with the tribal government—because sovereignty is so important—that it is a key asset.

In getting a masters degree in business, I had to take a lot of economic classes, Western economics. I can't tell you how many arguments I have had with economists, because they consider economics as a valueless science. I said, are you crazy? Western economics is filled with values and they do not recognize it, which is where part of the problem comes from. Anybody who has studied economics knows that the most fundamental concept in western economics thinking is scarcity. When you start from scarcity you will have a totally different system than if you start with the value of conservation of resources, as Native people do. When you start with scarcity, you have a system that has

competition. If we apply that to ourselves, then, what are the activities we do? What are the laws that we set? What are the institutions that we want that are based on our own beliefs and our values? If we do that, we will have the answers to a lot of the world's issues, and it will come from our values and our beliefs.

I want to end with my presentation to the Seventh Generation. This is something I wrote for our 20-year report last year. It had a profound effect on me and I want to share that with you. It talks about assets.

It was an unusually windy and cold Sunday in June when the Oglala Lakota College held its Year 2000 graduation ceremonies, but no one minded the weather. It was truly a time for a nation to celebrate itself. 131 students received their degrees—elders, children, veterans, family members, friends, tribal officials, spiritual leaders, visiting guests. Business leaders had all come to the beautiful site overlooking the college on the Pine Ridge Reservation. They came to witness the ceremonies and reflect on the promise and the future of the nation. In the midst of the ceremonies an eagle flew over the graduates, surely the best of omens. The tribal radio station, KILI, covered the ceremony for all who couldn't attend, but who were still interested in the achievements of the graduates.

Vendors were out in full force selling food and drinks. Children played all around as children, but were respectful of their mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins receiving their degrees. They may not have realized that they were viewing role models for their future dreams. I came that day to give an award to a nursing graduate, honoring the memory of my mother who had started her nursing career on Pine Ridge almost 60 years earlier.

Who can exactly pinpoint the dates

when tribal nations and their members started to re-emerge from the club of federal paternalism and move towards self-determination? Not the self-determination contained in federal legislation, but the true exercise of sovereignty. Some say it has been 25 years, others go back 30-40 years. What is important is that this movement is happening and over the decades a significant change and development has occurred in the Indian country.

How does this story reflect so much significance about the asset-based development occurring in Indian country? This story not only tells where we came from, and of today, but a good deal about future development. These graduates constitute the largest graduating class ever at the college. More tribal members with an education can contribute to a more informed and involved membership. The tribal college itself is changing, developing, and growing yearly. The college is a vital tribal asset growing stronger and helping a tribal nation and its members prepare for the future, while at the same time instilling the culture. A radio station communicating far and wide to dispersed tribal members serves not only to bring the news, but to integrate the language and culture in its programming. It also serves as a forum for discussion and commentary on current affairs on the reservation. Immediate and extended family members of my relations came to support the graduates and acknowledge their achievements, not just as individuals, but as the future of the tribe. Government officials supported the college and the graduates through their presence. Private enterprise on and off the reservation was part of the day's activities.

When we think of the exercising of sovereignty we tend to focus exclusively on the role of tribal government, but being a nation in the fuller sense is

much more encompassing. It is about members who are engaged, productive and responsible citizens. It is about strong and vital government and other institutions. It is about a healthy and vibrant economy. It is about supportive and loving families and kinship networks all grounded in the wealth provided by a strong cultural foundation.

The people, our people, are our greatest asset. We are fundamental building blocks of our own wealth and prosperity. Youth must be engaged from preschool or Head Start to the tribal college students and graduates. Elders are the wisdom keepers and provide the foundation of the culture and values we need to move forward. Tribal members who live away from the reservation must be engaged for their knowledge and networks. Tribal government officials must help to provide an atmosphere conducive to broad tribal member participation. A strong healthy economy is about members who are engaged, productive and responsible citizens grounded in their culture. Development in Indian country must be for all, it must be inclusive. On that wind-swept plain last June I looked upon the 131 graduates of Oglala Lakota College and saw our future wealth.

Sherry Salway Black (Oglala Lakota) is senior vice president of First Nations Development Institute.

UNDERSTANDING OUR LIFE AS HUMAN FAMILIES WITH THE EARTH

CLAYTON BRASCOUPE

When I was born, the United States in general had changed a great deal as a result of World War II. This had a profound effect on our Native communities. Most of our communities that were agriculturally based changed after that. There are a lot of reasons for that change. One was the removal of our farming individuals—men and women—to the war effort. Then when the war finished, a lot of the war-type technology was geared towards agriculture and that changed a lot of things. It led to bigger, more industrialized agriculture.

But I got a small taste of what that life was like. I was born at a time when people were still farming and everybody had large gardens and we ate directly from the gardens, and life in general was fairly happy. The communities were fairly intact and doing fairly well. If you were looking from outside into our communities, you would maybe see that our communities were impoverished—meaning we didn't have a lot of material things. But we had a lot of other things. And one of the things that we did have was good healthy food, good healthy water, and so forth, which is very different from what we see today.

When I was growing up, I got to experience some of the farming activities. I also got to experience the people there in the community who fished in groups. We farmed in groups; we also hunted in groups, as the community gathered about

those activities. And what that has taught us is that everybody in our community was extremely important from our children on up to our elders.

That began to change after World War II. We began to see less and less of that, us helping each other, hunting in groups, fishing in groups. This also happened because of the environmental changes. Tuscarora suffered a great land loss. When they lost a good piece of land for a hydroelectric power dam, some of the smaller streams were also diverted, shallows were destroyed. And the ones who were fishing as groups, they could no longer do that. So not only our physical health became affected, but also that interaction with our uncles, our cousins, and fathers. And I really missed it and I wanted it, and I wanted it for my children.

So I went out travelling and I spent time in various Indian communities, Akwesasne for one, and Tom Porter was a great inspiration to me and a number of other people there. Mike Boots, an old Mohawk gentleman who farmed quite a bit—I worked with him and a number of other ones. But what I was looking for was the feelings, the traditions of the elders. I went to all of these people and I asked them, what was farming like? Because I wanted to learn about farming, first and foremost. Wherever I went I asked people—in Iroquois territories, farmers in Oklahoma, and when I traveled out west into Pueblo communities.

When I brought up this question of farming they would start reciting the stories of how everybody would help each other in farming and how beautiful it was and all these things. I wanted that for myself and I wanted that for my children.

And so I moved out West. Actually I think maybe the last time I had seen Tom Cook was at Wounded Knee in '73 and soon after that I moved out West and I made it my home. I always kept in the back of my mind when I was working with Mike Boots—he had a really neat tractor, and I said, when I get a farm I am going to try to get a tractor like that. I have got one right now. It is about as old as I am, but it works, it keeps moving. And we traded for it, we didn't purchase it.

We started learning, relearning how to farm, relearning how to work together. It is difficult, because of the loss of farming culture. There are only a handful of people actually doing it anymore, so it is very difficult to have that community feeling, that community spirit going on. But others like us, our generation also missed that and it became more and more obvious that one of the things that we did need was to have agricultural activity in our families, community-based and family-based agriculture. We believe that there's another type of agriculture out there that can destroy land, can destroy water, and destroy family and communities.

So this is what we are looking for and

we are meeting fairly well. And we are teaching our children these things. In the Iroquois and Mohawk creation story, the first garden was from one of our original mothers. And everything was planted all together in this garden that came from one of our original mothers—corn, bean, squash, pumpkins. I would recite this to my children sometimes when they were eating. That old Indian practice is now called “inter-cropping.”

So I was telling my children this and they said how come we don’t plant that way? I had to be very honest to them, and I said I don’t know why we don’t plant that way. So we said, the next

helping to support each other. The same thing when we do the garden in that fashion, but also other elements come into it—the insects, all these other things—and it becomes really clear. I got to thinking about it because in that garden and setting, there are three main components—the corn, beans, and squash. And then I start looking at the Iroquois-style government and how they break the Grand Council into the three houses, the three houses of democracy [elder brothers, younger brothers and fire-keepers]. So the garden becomes a great place to learn.

The other thing that I noticed in that garden was that if you are to tell that old story of Creation, the first garden is a grave—it is the grave of one of first our mothers. And from that grave emerged these plants, so the garden actually represents death, but also represents life. So when you plant in this manner you are doing the Creator’s work. You have become a part of it and you understand about Creation then, because there is life, there’s death, there’s nourishment, and it goes around and around.

We began to make some headway there, and other people wanted to learn about these things and we wanted to begin teaching—not just to my children but to other people that were of interest, so we developed a mechanism and a non-profit organization to do that. We started teaching mainly younger people because they have the ability to come and go, they have higher energy levels and so forth, they can learn very quickly. So we started developing certain methodologies to teach younger people. We conduct workshops not just on how to farm, but how to understand about farming and how to understand about how our life as human families would be, could be, with the Earth.

Clayton Brascoupe (Mohawk) is program director for Traditional Native American Farmers Association, based in New Mexico.

planting season this is what we are going to do, so that’s what we started to do. We started inter-cropping and all of a sudden everything that we had heard and understood from our elders became really clear. I thought I had understood it that, but at that point it became really clear.

Now we can see the interaction and how these plants help each other. From our cultures, you can talk about this on and on and on, how they support and help each other. So that was like our families, our children, our grandparents, our aunts and uncles—as a family we are

If you were looking from outside into our communities, you would maybe see that our communities were impoverished—meaning we didn’t have a lot of material things. But we had a lot of other things. And one of the things that we did have was good healthy food, good healthy water, and so forth, which is very different from what we see today.

WE ARE DETERMINED TO CONTINUE UNTIL WE HAVE A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

TOM COOK

I am Atonwah (Thomas) Kanatakeniate Cook, a Wolf clan Mohawk. Along with my sister Katsitsiakwa, our brother Louis, sister Sakakohe, numerous cousins and extended relatives, I am of the Seventh Generation from the Kanawake warrior Atiatonhiawakon, Louis Cook.

Our ancestor was a warrior of the first order during the wars of the 1750s, and was commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the American army during the Revolutionary War. He was one of some 495 Iroquois who fought for the American cause, opposite 2,900 Iroquois who fought for the British cause.

Despite the divisions, land issues, and frustrations brought about by that war, the ancestor lived in the pristine North America full of life and power. Two hundred years later, we witness the same environment heading toward imminent ecological catastrophe.

We were raised at Akwesasne, in the town of Hogansburg and the State Road area of the reservation, on the family's diary farm. This was near Sakowenonkves' home, Tom Porter, whom I have known since grade school. Many of us became attracted to the activities, councils, and ceremonies of the Longhouse, and were related to the families involved.

As a young man I participated with the White Roots of Peace [educational travel-

ling group] for two years. From that experience, I ended up in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. I learned when one marries someone of a different clan, you go live with her relatives. Since marrying Loretta Afraid Of Bear, I have lived among the Oglala Lakota of Pine Ridge for 27 years.

I was a journeyman ironworker for most of my adult years, beginning in 1968 in New York City when I was 20. My first job was in the foundation of the North Tower of the World Trade Center, and I continued from there as one of the many Mohawks who helped build this

country.

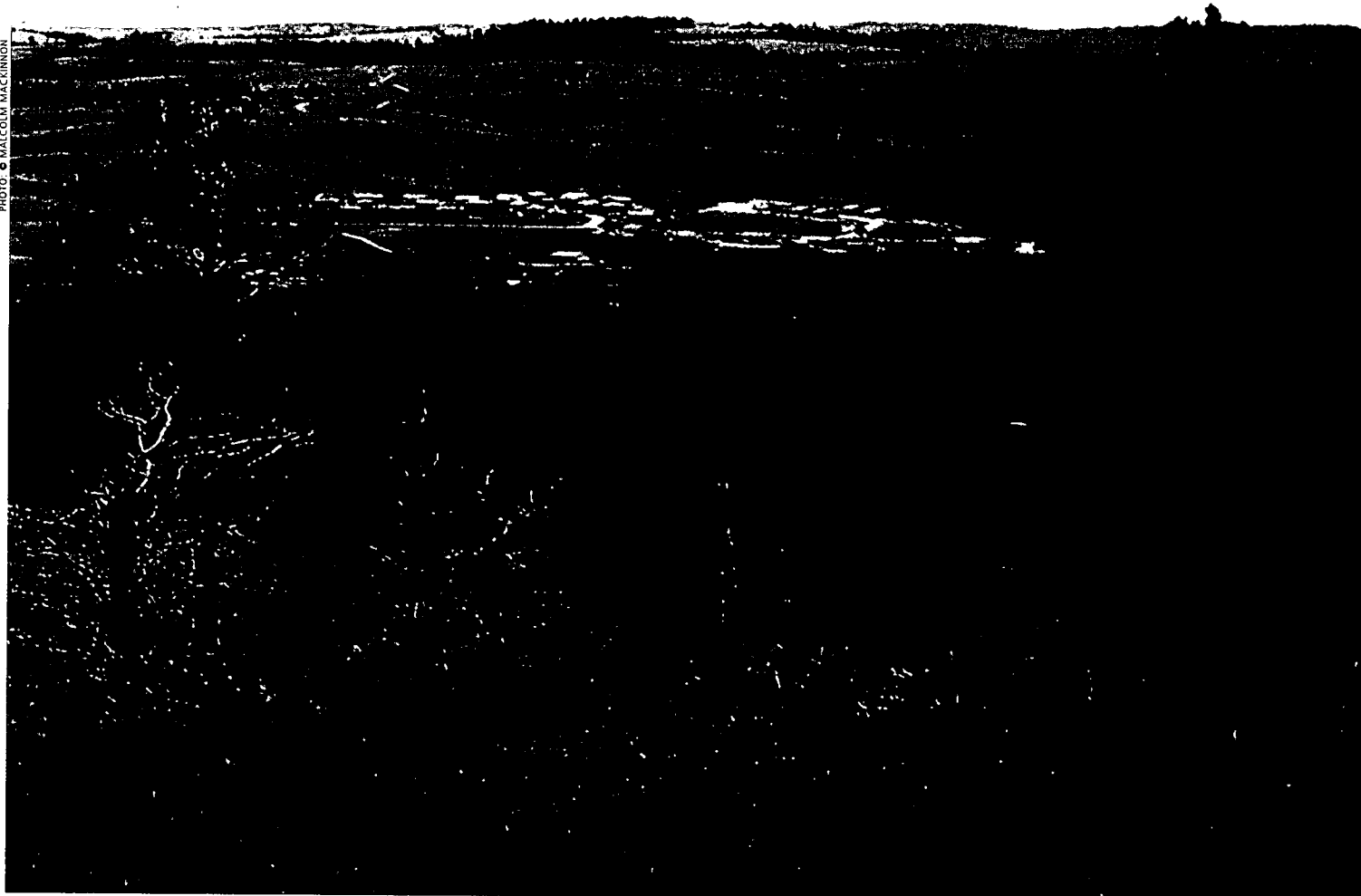
Most of my work was on raising gangs, following many generations of relatives at both Mohawk reservations, Akwesasne and Kanawake. Early along the journey, I realized I was learning this work from the best and most knowledgeable men in the trade.

On Pine Ridge, I began a gardening assistance project in the mid-1980s and stayed with it year to year with a determination to continue the teachings learned in my youth at Akwesasne. It was there I learned of relating to the earth as our mother, and to extend the practice of



Tom Cook, development director of the Slim Butte Land Use Association.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF TOM COOK



View of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota.

obtaining sustenance from her directly.

Much of this early learning was from Tom Porter's nation gardens project in the early 1970s, where I served for three years as an alternative to the military draft.

Slim Buttes Agri-Development began with six community gardens in 1985, and this year we prepared 331 gardens over most of the 5,000 square-mile reservation. The development of this work was made easier by my employment at Running Strong for American Indian Youth, a national non-profit organization headquartered in Lorton, Virginia, long active on Pine Ridge.

Our mission is to help the people with their immediate survival and nutritional needs, and help communities develop out of the poverty that surrounds them. Since 1980, Pine Ridge has had the dubious distinction of containing the most

poverty-stricken census tract of the 3,147 counties in America. Presently, it is number two from the bottom. Out of these dire circumstances, and the need for Indians to use their own land for economic development, arose a timely interest in industrial hemp as a viable and annually renewable resource.

We formed the Slim Buttes Land-Use Association, modeled after a community cooperative set up in the 1930s which fell by the wayside following World War II. We did this out of need because Pine Ridge Reservation is 5,000 square miles of very beautiful land, a very productive place, but with very little indigenous economy.

Our spokesman, former two-term tribal president Joe American Horse, petitioned the tribe to change its laws on the hemp plant. In July 1998 the Oglala Sioux Tribe amended its code to differen-

tiate agricultural hemp from psychoactive 'marijuana,' and provided the way for its members to produce hemp crops for industrial purposes.

However, U.S. federal law recognizes no distinction between industrial hemp and its cousin, and has condemned the plant entirely. For the past two years DEA agents have confiscated the tribally sanctioned hemp crops being grown in the Wounded Knee and Wakpamni Districts.

While the government maintains that hemp is something inherently dangerous and deadly, the fact is that cannabis sativa

American companies could continue to develop patented chemical and synthetic products. We are all familiar with the refrain, "Better living through chemistry." By crushing the competition posed by hemp manufacture, the hydrocarbon-based economy flourished to the extent of poisoning and suffocating our environment and our national life.

We think the nation needs to return to carbohydrate-based economies. The USA is the only one of the G8 nations that will not allow hemp to be grown. Thirty-two other countries do, and 19 states have

and responsibility to do what they're doing. Besides, beyond Pine Ridge, the USA needs another industrial revolution for the next twenty years, based on carbohydrates. As the largest biomass producer in the plant kingdom, containing the most cellulose and the optimum omega acids for the human body, the hardy hemp plant can fuel manufacturing jobs without end everywhere. Save the family farm, save the planet, and so forth.

I am privileged and honored to be involved with and to participate in agricultural development, land issues, and the lives of indigenous families, where we can count our blessings and mark our successes from our determination to be as self-reliant as possible, by creating processes and products in real and sustainable economy generated off the land.

We deal with the reality of our lives by participating in the struggles, the spiritual life, and the future needs of our people. This is the message most important to the generations ahead, which otherwise will lose more and more of the things important to their cultural survival.

Today we have heard speaker after speaker recount the things that have been lost. When you participate by fulfilling a role in a family, a community, and a nation, you rediscover your linkages, and ways to regain things that were lost. My wish is for continuing generations to continue to discover their past, and sustain our efforts to preserve our ways.

The more we are connected with one another, the stronger we all will become. Our connections are woven throughout, and across generations. If we continue the traditions and practices of our cultural heritage, all will be well with our people, our nation, and our planet. Each of us has the honor and privilege to carry forth with this mission. *Niawehkowa* (Thank you).

Tom Cook (Mohawk) is development director of the Slim Butte Land Use Association in Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

I am privileged and honored to be involved with and to participate in agricultural development, land issues, and the lives of indigenous families, where we can count our blessings and mark our successes from our determination to be as self-reliant as possible, by creating processes and products in real and sustainable economy generated off the land.

has been one of the most useful industrial plants in the history of mankind. In 1938, *Popular Mechanics* wrote, "Over 25,000 products can be manufactured from hemp, from cellophane to dynamite." The article went on to say this was so because of the newly-patented decorticator [pulp separator], and the fact that anything that can be made from petroleum hydrocarbons can be made from cannabis carbohydrates.

With propaganda and lobbying in the mid-1930s, combined oil, timber, chemical and financial interests manipulated the American government's policy through the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act, to ensure

enacted or are considering legislation to do just that. Just recently we heard President Bush proclaim in a radio address that American agriculture has to change from a food paradigm to a wider industrial paradigm, so that fuel and other products can come from renewable biomass resources, thereby lessening our dependence on foreign oil. Someday soon this will all come together, because in the words of Victor Hugo, "nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come."

With sovereign ownership of their land and with so many negative statistics about them, the Oglala Lakota have every right

There Was a Big Map in My Dream

ELLA MULFORD

In Navajo, I am my mother's clan, my father's clan, my grandmother's clan and my grandfather's. That is who we are. I want to share a little bit of who I am.

I am very honored to be here with all the speakers like Tom Porter, and Wilma Mankiller. I have heard these people speak in other places and to be invited to come to this conference and be able to speak among them is a privilege. I am truly honored to be here among these people.

I want to talk about who I am, because if we don't know who we are, we can't get to the next step. I grew up on the Navajo reservation in a very traditional way, mostly raised by my grandmother, with her horses, and her sheep. I helped her weave; she had us do the easy part of the weave. And now that I look back that's basically a lot of what I am coming back to. And I am also very thankful that I still speak the language and I have a grandfather to thank for that. My mother said that because we went to boarding school she wanted to teach us how to speak in English and to write our name in English. But my grandfather was the one that was very adamant about the language. He said you cannot teach these children to speak the English language because the English language is the easiest thing to learn.

I get emotional about it because now we see how important it is to know that language, because I am thinking of how I wish I knew this when my grandfather was still alive. My grandfather knew five languages. He knew Navajo, he knew how to speak Hopi, he knew how to speak Apache, he knew how to speak Spanish, and he knew how to speak English. He grew up very close to Ferrell's territory,

and the Navajos and the Hopi traded in that area very closely and got along. My grandfather said they had to speak Hopi because they were neighbors and engaged in trade and so he spoke Hopi very well.

Then he went to school in Ft. Apache on the Apache reservation, because they had to send them away so that they couldn't run away and find their way home. They couldn't go close by, so he was sent away to Ft. Apache, so that's where he learned to speak Apache. Then he went to work in California at the Sherman Institute where he learned to work in the agricultural teams and that's where he learned how to speak Spanish. He of course also learned English. So he knew how important it is to speak the language, because that gave the basis to whom we were.

So I have my grandfather to thank for learning my language, because he was so adamant. My mother said that he was angry when he found out that she wanted to teach us how to speak English and learn the alphabet before we went to school. He had success with me because when I went to school I learned English as a second language.

I would like to apologize to my elders here, because I want to speak about some of the words you taught me. I am educated as they say in the western system. I spent 22 years working in the environmental field on the western perspective and learning about the regulations, all the things that I thought that I needed to learn to help people. About 6 years ago, in 1996 or maybe in 1995 I started to have these dreams about home and leaving my western job, as an environmental program manager at Argonne National Laboratory. It was a good position, and I started to

have these dreams where ancestors pulled me in another direction, that led me to prayer.

As a result of those dreams I quit my job and started Red Horse Company. Red Horse is my grandfather. So not knowing what to do with this company I went home after I quit my job and sat for three months and prayed. I bought a computer, I bought a desk, and I was going to go into the consulting business, and so I sat for three months and prayed and tried to follow the dream as I had it. In that three months I finally got the first call for my first job. In the dream it said that I should not go looking for work. I was supposed to sit and then they showed me a map of where I am supposed to go. There was a big map in my dream. They said you will start from here and just take any other trails you see on the map, but don't take the trail on the very furthest left because that just goes around and around and it doesn't go anywhere. You need to go right to the trail; anything to the right is okay, it is all a good road, and there is a spot in the middle where it is brown. They said, that's okay too, that's the desert, but you go home. So that's what I followed.

I don't talk about this dream. I think this is the first time that I share details of the dream. My husband thought I was crazy. He was very upset and he said, "How could you do that to us and our family?" All of us, I think—I am crying because this is an emotional topic—we fight for our very survival. As women, we are closer to Mother Earth and the reason why I am in the environmental field is probably because of my grandmother was so close to Mother Earth. And in my 20-something years of doing conventional environmental

work I found that when they passed the Clean Water Act, that didn't mean our body was going to be clean; that only meant that you can pollute to this level. And in working with all these regulations, I realized it wasn't protecting our way of life. It wasn't protecting the environment.

You start to seek, like John said, you have to seek. So I prayed and that's when the dreams started to come. I said I was frustrated with the Western system because it was not working. They just found a different way to manipulate the system so that they can drill for more oil, so that they can mine more coal, that they can drive more cars. Even now look at the SUVs—everybody is driving SUVs, it's the thing to do, that's because SUVs are not regulated like the cars are. We always find that loophole as human beings, to go play, to go destroy. In my seeking I came about to these dreams and it was a matter of following those dreams. I didn't listen to them the first time. I excused them. I didn't listen the second time, and finally decided to act on them on the third dream because it was very loud and clear. So I think how I came around was the fact that I was seeking that new way of life. I was frustrated with what was happening in the world and how we continue to degrade our environment, no matter what regulations we were coming up with. I think that's the way it happened.

Well, I got my first job. My first job was to go work for the U.S. Department of Defense, helping the community understand about some of the effects and impacts of heavy artillery that had been used. I didn't know anything about artillery effects, but I tried to help them overall with their program in our communities.

That was the first job. From then on, I would receive a call, get a job, finish, and I would receive another call that would say, Can you help us? They told me in the dreams all the people you need to work with will be there. A lot of time Shawn was

there and Debra and some of the people that come into our lives and helped us with these projects. We worked at a lot of different communities, tribal communities in our country. In doing that we learned a lot about other people who understand the importance doing this work on their own land.

One job I got was so important; it was the research on indigenous knowledge. What did we know about indigenous knowledge? When we started off I bought a tape-recorder and a camera and all these things that we were going to take to the elders so we could record them on these tape-recorders. But when we went up to see these elders, it turns out that that was not the proper protocol. We learned—and sometimes we had to go back three times before the stories would finally come—about the old days and how it used to be then and those types of things.

That's why I apologize to some of my elders, because this is the understanding I came to in 1996. There's a common thread in all the stories, and these common threads are that they all talk about the original instructions. We all have been given original instructions and we all know what they are, and if we don't know then we need to go back to our families and see those things.

We went looking for the knowledge, wondering, how do we get this all back. We learned from some of our elders that certain things were preserved in different parts of the country. They told us that all things are connected; that's another common thread. All things are connected, as many of you have talked about here today, all things are connected.

The other thing that the elders said was that all things are sacred. It doesn't matter what it is, whether it be a rock, a tree, a bird, people, bad people, everybody, all things are sacred. They told us about the difference between knowledge and wisdom. They said, sometimes you collect data. Whatever you might collect from the

environment, that's just data. That's just a piece of information. If you don't connect that in any way, that's all it is. But when you put a bunch of data together, you make information. And when you take that information and analyze it it becomes knowledge and you start to live with that knowledge and you learn about the principle of it. They also talked about today as a critical time. Today is a critical time and they mean that our sun is getting hotter. They mean that the ice is melting. They mean that the trees are turning brown. Our people are weaker. Our people are going to the grocery stores. That's what they mean when they say we are in a critical time. We don't know how to help ourselves anymore.

One elder said we all need to come together. This here is a good example of coming together—sharing our stories. They talk about why we need to come together.

The message I have for the future generation is that we do need to come together and we must come together. One elder put it very simply—he said all we need is love, respect, faith in the Creator, and hope. That's all we need, and it seems very simple, but now that I am trying to live my life the right way, it really isn't that simple for me, but I think it could be that simple. It might be my own stubbornness. It is our own doing that doesn't make those words come, because those actions aren't simple.

My message to the generations is that we understand how we are connected to the whole Creation. Who are you, why are you, where are you going? Those are all connected. Hold all things to be sacred so that we can learn to respect all things. We know there will be a future generation, because we have leaders like Tom Porter, people like Wilma Mankiller and Charlie Soap that are here to help give us that future generation.

Ella Mulford (Navajo) served as a tribal liaison for the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency.

This is Not Good Enough

SHAWN MULFORD

(GREETING IN NAVAJO)

That's my self-identify in our language, our spiritual language. It is one thing that I am still trying to learn. I think it's a lifetime of learning just in those few words. It talks about my clan, the Tangle people. I am born into the Coyote Pass Clan. My maternal grandfather and then my paternal grandfather's clan, all four of those clans came together to provide me with life, and each one of those clans has a distinct responsibility in my development. The holy ones were the ones to provide that clan system to us, the Navajo people.

We, as the younger generation, are supposed to be the smartest group. They talk about the older times and the elders, but this day is the oldest day, today. Those were the earlier times and we should have picked up their knowledge and wisdom and carried it with us today, and so we could be the smartest. But it seems as though we are going the wrong way as a people. Presently I am an athletic director in Illinois, that's my primary job and I know a lot about the body and how it functions. I help people with their problems and their aches and pains and those types of things. That's currently what I do. I also work with indigenous youth, trying to provide an opportunity for them to gain indigenous knowledge. As we looked around at the educational systems, we saw what was available for our indigenous youth at this time was to assimilate them into the western way

of thinking. There are plenty of scholarship opportunities to go to this camp to learn how to be a scientist or engineer, plenty of opportunities for a scholarship to come to Cornell University, to other universities. But there were very few opportunities for these youth to go the other way, to gain indigenous knowledge. And that's the knowledge that we need to really go back to.

I took a group out. We went to see an elder. He sat in a chair just like this and we sat out on the earth in front of him and he looked at us. And when they get old, their eyes kind of come down and kind of get glassed-over looking. And he looked at us as he sat there and we told him we are seeking knowledge. And he looked and he said, "Well, what cloud am I going to talk to you about today? Which one? Which one?" And we sat there and we just looked and no one answered. No one had an answer. He just looked at us and he laughed. He said, "You all are just babies, just babies." He said, "Your knowledge is way down here," his hands barely above the earth. "That's where your knowledge is at," he said. He asked us again, "Which cloud?" No one answered, and he said, "I know you all go to a white man's school. I know about that. Their knowledge is right here." He motioned with his hands at the level of his knees. He said, "That's their level of understanding." He said, "What you are asking me for is Indian knowledge and that's up here.

That's what you are seeking." His hand reached as far as he could above his head. And he said, "You don't believe me. You don't believe me." The reason why the white people's knowledge is right here is because they refuse to believe that there is a spirit in a rock and a tree and a cloud and an animal and a fish and the air. Thus they limit their own knowledge. We believe those things have a spirit, and that the cosmos has a spirit and we can obtain that knowledge here. I think that's what this conference is about. I am still trying to figure it out.

There is an incomplete message here—where is the circle? Where are the elders with white hair, the ones that talk about the seven generations before and the seven generations to come? We need those elders, and that's where the answers lie; that's where the indigenous knowledge lies. It is not here with me as a young person. I am just a young man still learning. I am just a human being still learning. But also, the trees aren't here to talk about their Seventh Generation. The animals and the birds that we have been talking about all morning are not here to talk about their Seventh Generation. The air here has been filtered through to us and its voice is unheard. We have closed ourselves off to those spiritual entities. So the message will be incomplete. Cornell University provided this opportunity, but the answer will never be found here. But if we can go outside, and go into our traditional places

and talk about those things with our elders, the young ones, and the babies—then we can develop the complete message for the Seventh Generation. So just as the last speaker said, “Let me speak to you from my eyes, my lens, because my lens comes from the next generation of people coming up.” Let me do the same.

This is not good enough, this conference type environment. When we are there out in those natural areas, it will be good enough. When we are not

of the natural world, but we are trying to talk about it in here. We understand that we are a part of that natural world, but how do we go back to that? That’s what we are facing today. Those are the things that we have got to tackle for the youth and the Seventh Generation.

That’s what my elders tell me, that at one time we shared responsibility for this earth with the other entities, and we grew together. But now man has kind of gone off on his own. How can we bring our children back into that

There are plenty of scholarship opportunities to go to this camp to learn how to be a scientist or engineer, plenty of opportunities for a scholarship to come to Cornell University, to other universities. But there were very few opportunities for these youth to go the other way, to gain indigenous knowledge. And that’s the knowledge that we need to really go back to.

held prisoner in this building to talk about the Seventh Generation. When we have the opportunity still to go out and receive their message also, it will be complete. So I don’t know if that sticks to the format of this conference, but I noticed when I came here everything was divided: The land, economy, health, reproduction, government, leadership. And in our way it’s all the same, it is all put together. I will talk about the land. Indigenous knowledge says the land does not belong to us; we belong to the land, a shared responsibility. And as the next generation, I am going to ask how are we going to fulfill that responsibility? Today we have pulled ourselves away from everything

growth? Because the elders tell me, you are de-evolving. Look at your nails—they are weak. Look at your eyes—you need glasses. Look at your ears—you need a hearing aid, these type of things. We as human beings are indeed de-evolving. How can we again strengthen ourselves to go into the natural world and grow with it? They were tough back then. They were strong people. I have seen my great-grandmother. I am not as strong as her. She used to walk around with her hands in the fire cooking the bread, she would walk around without any shoes with all those thorns, she had a different strength. I am not that strong. And I notice the youth today are not that

strong either. We need to hear those birds. That’s what the Seventh Generation needs to know, they need to take those other things into consideration, not just the human being.

And also for them to learn patience. The Indian way is real slow and we have to have the patience to learn. The young ones now running around who call themselves medicine men, only maybe 30-40 years old, real young guys. In our way you don’t become a medicine man until you have white hair; that’s what they tell us. That’s when you have gained that level of knowledge. And so patience, be willing to go that full way. And the last thing I would tell the Seventh Generation is to take a chance and an opportunity to seek the know-how. You have to go out and seek the know-how. The elders are there. We need to go and ask the question. Seek it. There are some elders that are ready to pass away. They say, “I have a lot to teach, but no one asks me. No one wants us anymore. They just want the modern things. The knowledge is going to go with me, if the younger generation stops asking.” The elders won’t tell you anything unless you ask. No question is a small question.

Thank you very much for your time. I am honored to be here, and to my elders, I just thank you for your continued strength, to do the work that you are doing, keeping that knowledge. I appreciate that and thank you very much again.

Shawn Mulford (Navajo) manages the Oakbrook Terrace Park District Fitness Center and designs fitness programs that promotes mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health.



The Quality of Leadership

The first time I met Tom Porter was when the Mohawk Nation traveling group, White Roots of Peace, was invited to the University of Buffalo. Tom was one of the members of the group. Today, as I was scanning the people at this conference, I realized that there are quite a few of us in this room who at some time or another got on that bus.

The White Roots of Peace was an educational traveling group. Tom was one of the co-founders. On the surface, it looked like they went from college to college, that they gave classes, and showed movies and sold crafts and offered a great social dance. And it was in many cases the first time or even the only time that non-native audiences ever engaged Native people at that level. But I can't over-emphasize how much influence the group had in the years that it did its work.

I heard of Tom Porter before I met him, because already in the late 1960s, a phenomenon called the traditional Indian unity caravans went through Indian country. During the summers, groups went from community to community. At each stop they gathered the people from that location and there would be a several-day meeting in which people talked about traditional knowledge. It was the kindling of a traditional movement and a way to revitalize traditional culture.

I have to say that those traditional unity caravans had a great influence on many, many people. In my opinion, between the White Roots of Peace and the traditional unity caravans there was a spark that helped build a movement that would eventually be the impetus for the people

Honoring Tom Porter and Wilma Mankiller

JOHN MOHAWK

who occupied Alcatraz Island. In fact the White Roots of Peace was in San Francisco and Oakland right around that time, and there was a lot of energy in that moment in history. Tom Porter was already well known around the country because he was one of the main speakers at a number of the traditional unity caravan events, and he was the main speaker throughout most of the era of the White Roots of Peace travel group.

He did something that I want to share with you that is an important thing to know about. He has been doing it all his life, but I thought it was critically impor-

tant at that moment. In 1968, 1969, and 1970, it was not all that popular to identify yourself as a traditional Indian. In fact the years before that, the 1950s and the early part of the 1960s, had been a really painful time for Indian people.

I grew up in a traditional household community and you had to say that people were kind of feeling as though there was not a lot of energy in their lives. In a lot of Native communities there was not a sense of identity that was strong that said that the Native traditional people were going to be able to survive contemporary times. At that time the negative stereotypes about Indians that existed in the general public had a certain amount of influence and carryover, that went into the Native community. The stereotypes were that the Indians were backwards, they were immoral, they were lazy, they were not really capable of civilization—and you



John Mohawk, Seneca historian at Millennium gathering, 2001.

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wouldn't want one living next door to you. And then as you went further into the country where the Indian population was larger and the white population got closer, those kinds of stereotypes became more intense. When you were right on the border towns of Indian reservations, they were downright racist, overtly so. And most Indians who grew up on the reservations would experience some of that at some time or another. This is not to say that every single person living near an Indian reservation was infested with this, but there certainly were enough of them. As a result, a lot of young Indian people didn't have a lot of pride in themselves.

Tom Porter was a major figure, maybe the major figure at the time—young and intensely proud of being Indian. Whatever the stereotypes were of Indians, he was pretty much the polar opposite of that stereotype. He represented a really powerfully positive version of what a good Indian human being is like, and he told us stories that there were others like him, all his relatives. He was wonderful for his capacity to get up in front of all types—Indians, non-Indians—and in no time we would all feel we knew his grandmother. We all felt we knew his aunts and uncles. He told us stories over and over again about what it was like to live the life. And when he was done telling the story, he went home and he actually did live the life.

Many of us followed him home. I did that, tracked him down to see, what's every day life like? He was really doing everything he could to live that life. And it really is an exemplary kind of life. If you stop and think about it, we hear stories about Indian values. And by rights everyone who is from a Native community knows what those values are, even though you don't hear them spoken very often. Nobody is walking around with the Ten Commandments of being a good Indian on the wall, but you know what they are.

PHOTO: © JEAN YOUNG/AMERICAN INDIAN MILLENNIUM FORUM



Tom Porter and Wilma Mankiller, 2001.

And the fundamental in that list would be that we are required to have a very, very high degree of respect for the idea of “the People.” To work for the people is to take on very special work.

When you work for the people, what must you do? Among other things, you should try to set an example. To work for the people means you have to be a family person, and to be a family person you have to be a multiple family person, right? You have to be a family person as a son or daughter, and then you are going to have to be a family person as a spouse, then you have to be a family person as a parent, or as a grandson or a grandparent. You have to be many people in your life, and you want to ask yourself, what does it mean to be the best grandson or the best spouse? And is that really what is the most important to you? Is that your number one thing? And when you have accomplished that, what is your next number one thing? You actually have an obligation to be a

good neighbor, and you have the obligation to be a good community member. You have an obligation to engage community in some fashion that is responsible. A responsible person will add to and not distract from the mental, social health of that community. And you are going to try to do this growing up in a larger society that believes in possessive individualism.

Put differently, today's young Indian people are living in a society in which, when they are home, their values are about family, and center on a relationship to nature. You are supposed to carry on your ceremonies, you are supposed to be a good decent person, help your neighbors. We are supposed to do all of that, and then you go to school every day and compete with all kinds of other people where the requirements are that you take care of yourself. And then you graduate from that and you go out to work where your job is basically to cut anybody's throat that stands in the way between you

and a dollar. There's a paradox there, a contradiction.

Tom Porter made a generation of us respect being Indians. When he talked about family relationships, you didn't have to question whether he was serious or not. He was serious about that. He talked to young men about the way they needed to be with women. He wanted men to respect women, old women, young women, their mothers, their daughters, their sisters. He had a direct voice to young men, without any question. Beyond that, when we got home there was the problem of building a nation.

Now nation-building is very tricky stuff. I don't mean George Bush's idea of it either; I mean really building a nation, where you actually know, you actually meet the nation's people and you relate to them, and it is a very, very difficult thing to do. As time went by, Tom Porter brought to us the example that he had a love for and respect of the Mohawk traditions. He spoke eloquently in his language and in English about his language. And this was an important part of his message to people. But he did something else too, I thought—he actually represented those traditional values that we hear about, but are not articulated very often. Our own people often don't understand that without values we don't really have a nation. There is a whole issue of defining our personal responsibility. What is it that we are required to do and what do we require of other people? And how does that fit in the overall building of nation?

I have probably in my lifetime heard Tom speak more than 100 times, but what I remember most is that he could inspire us to be the best that we could be. He could do that with words, and after the words were done he did that with actions. He was a 24-hour-a-day model Indian, and I have to say that it is about time we honor people like that.

There is an ephemeral quality to leadership. Some leaders are people who have a

plan and a goal, and basically what they can say is, "let's go this way." And when people start going that way, well, they can figure out what they have to do to move in that direction. But there is another element that is a lot more difficult to define. It has to do with the idea that you can not actually preach integrity to people. You can preach it, but it doesn't work. How wonderful it is when you have leaders who are that, who show us that the most important thing that we can learn is integrity.

Now I want to say a couple of things about his work, but I want to put it in the context that everybody understands. Every Native culture from the Arctic Circle to Tierra del Fuego, everyone one of

Nobody is walking around with the Ten Commandments of being a good Indian on the wall, but you know what they are. You know the fundamental in that list would be that we would have and are required to have a very, very high degree of respect for the idea of "the People."

us has one thing in common—we all of us have a way of communicating with other life forms. We all do it. In the Iroquois country we burn tobacco to do it. In some other country, they burn other things to do it, so it must be there is more than tobacco that has this power. But it's a power and we all share that. When you want something from a plant you have to go to the living plant and you burn and you ask the plant for something. You ask the plant for its power; you ask that and you get that. Meso-American Indians one time went to a little grass plant and they did just that, they burned tobacco to that and they kept asking that grass for something. They asked that grass for 100 gen-

erations. They got corn.

Everybody in our traditional Indian world, we know that we have a relationship to the living world, to the life forms, to the life of the planet. When we lose that, when our memory of that is gone, then we are gone. You would ask yourself: what is the responsibility of our species to that multiplicity of species with whom we have inhabited this continent and hemisphere for so long? We don't just take in that relationship; we have to do something in return in that relationship. And of course our part of the relationship has to be our consciousness of it. A part of what

Tom Porter made a generation of us respect being Indians. When he talked about family relationships, family stuff, you didn't have to question whether he was serious or not.

we do is that we live in consciousness of our relationship to that, to what other Indians call "all our relations." And I say, when we don't do it anymore then we are not Indians anymore.

And it is a high level of responsibility that we have to do that. All through the hemisphere, these people who can do that and can carry that out for us and exemplify and live that way, we call those our spiritual leaders. They are the ones that bring that to us. And that is Tom Porter. And so I tell you this, for inspiring individuals, for being a spokesperson for the culture, and for being a truly exemplary human being, it is a real pleasure to honor Tom Porter tonight.

Next, I want to address my relationship and my long friendship with Wilma Mankiller. Wilma is a nation-builder, again, one of those leaders who has known how to motivate the people, as communities, to be the best they can be.

Here is some news that most Americans don't seem to get. The society is responsible for most everything that we have. I understand the principle of thinking that individuals are responsible for things, but I have to say, this is not true. It is as a whole that society provides us with the things that we enjoy and need. It does not provide our relatives and friendships and our relationships, but the other things that we need.

For example, all kinds of people in this culture will revel in an automobile. People look at it and they will say, "Well that's a nice automobile," but most people don't

have any idea where it comes from. Somebody has to have the skill to design that machine, and someone else has to have the skill to manufacture it, and the skill to finance it and the skill to sell it. And before that happens, someone else had to have the skills to dig up whatever it was that was made to go into that, and somebody else had to have the skills to manufacture whatever it was that made the material that went in. And then somebody else had to teach all those people how to do all that, right? The whole society did that. A society of people provided them with the schools to do it, society provided the teachers to do it. Society provides everything that we need to make the smallest thing in this culture.

This is kind of interesting because, in my opinion the Indians always knew that. Of course, in our world, it was always more visible. The nation provided the skills; the nation provided everything in

our world. In the middle of that we need people who have a consciousness to build on some piece of the nation, to add value to it and to build the bigger unit. It was what made it possible for us to keep old people in old age. The larger unit is what made it possible for us to cure sick people because when the families are overburdened they can't afford to do that. Often, we need bigger units than a family to do that. Sometimes we need very large units to do that, sometimes we need units the size of a nation. And in Indian country we have those nation-sized units, we value the idea of a nation.

The idea of a nation is an interesting concept because that word has had multiple uses in the English language. The word nation has meant different things to different people at different times. Some people approach their nation, and they ask themselves how can I get more than my share out of this unit, this nation? And in fact there are a lot of people in Indian Country that are like that, like there's a lot of people with their hand out saying, "Give me this, give me that, give me this other thing." And so in much of our world we find ourselves kind of inheriting something that we didn't actually create, this attitude of take and not give. This is something that we are having a bit of trouble trying to figure out how to reform.

But to reform such a value loss means that we have to look into our people. We see people are a nation and that people have several qualities about them. They have needs, they have capacity, they have sometimes talent. Sometimes they also have the ability to be greedy, they have the capacity to be lazy, they have the capacity to take more than their share. If you are going to build a nation you have to have somebody who has got it together about what they are looking for. Because to build a nation, you have to have a vision and your vision has to include people, and it has to include people in a pragmatic way. But at the same time, a way that has a soul



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Dagmar Thorpe and José Barreiro at honoring for Wilma Mankiller and Tom Porter, 2001.

to it, a lot of humanity in it. You have to find the ones that can get the job done. You have to give them the tools that they need to do the job. You have to encourage them along the way to get it done. You have to juggle ten balls at once and get everything to happen. The best way to do it is to get the people energized themselves so that they take over and do it themselves. This is the lesson in Wilma Mankiller's exceptional leadership quality. When you are in Wilma Mankiller 101, you learn that people actually have it

within themselves to solve most of their problems, and what they need is a facilitator to give them the basics of what they need in order to let them solve it.

Wilma's story and Wilma's capacity, what Wilma knows, should be a handbook for young people who are thinking about how to do public service. She has the kind of selflessness, the kind of giving of herself that really qualifies her as a real old-fashioned traditional type of Indian. That was, after all, what we used to value in our leaders. We didn't value our leaders

because we put them in office and they got rich in office. We valued our leaders because they were the ones we could trust not do that. Because we certainly used to value our chiefs, and all the early histories tell us this. Indian leadership was composed of those people that the society itself trusted the most, and everybody said those leaders were mostly destitute. They commented how they couldn't believe it. They went to see the chief and he had holes in his moccasins all the time. He wasn't living in the mansion, and you can go look this up in all the 17th century reports about North American Indians.

Just for a moment, since I get to rant and rave a little bit about leadership generally, I just want to point to three historical American Indian leaders. I think Wilma shares their type of quality. The best known among the better known Indians is probably Crazy Horse, but he is known for the wrong things among non-Indians. Because when we go to the Oglala Lakota and we hear about Crazy Horse, what we hear about Crazy Horse was that he was an inspiring fellow, not just because of his military capacity, but because he lived a very modest, honest, decent life. He was a hero because he was fundamentally a role model of an utterly incorruptible, utterly moral, completely trustworthy, absolutely wonderful human being. That was Crazy Horse. It just happened he also was able to cream the American army a few times.

Then there was Little Turtle. We don't hear much about Little Turtle. I used to think it was kind of interesting, but here is a fact you can spring on somebody sometime: the most devastating day in the history of the US military came at the hands of an Indian in Ohio whose mother was Mohican and whose father was Miami. One morning he and his men destroyed pretty much the whole U.S. Army, and hardly one American in a thousand knows that the U.S. army one time was pretty much utterly destroyed by an Indian army,

I want to say that in my lifetime, of the reasonably considerably large number of Native leaders that I have known, leaders especially of tribes, of whom there are some number of fairly good ones, Wilma's story and Wilma's capacity, what Wilma knows, should be a handbook for young people who are thinking about how to do public service.

and that Indian army was led by Little Turtle. No movie about this, by the way. There's movies of all these battles, but not that one. We should make one.

Anyway, here's another one. Little Turtle also had all those qualities of a leader. In fact, he had the disadvantage, you might have said, that on some levels he was too honest of a leader, or at least too honest for the followers he had in this time. When Mad Anthony Wayne started building an army and started marching his army into Ohio, Little Turtle told his people that he thought their Indian forces probably didn't have a good chance of winning a war with that second army. He counseled that they should go negotiate and not fight. The forces he was in charge of at that moment were headstrong and more willing to fight than not. Also, because they had won, they were a bit arrogant about it, and so they refused to heed his words. They voted him out of office and they put a fellow at the head of the army named Turkey Foot. And Turkey Foot of course was killed and his army was destroyed. We can still find the plaque to that battle just outside of Toledo, Ohio.

I would like to have us look at one other, and that would be Tecumseh. Tecumseh is more widely known. There are people who say that he was the best of them all, but I don't. I say he was good. My take on the people in my culture is that they have some flaws, but to be a good person in our world you have to live up to a few fundamental qualities. Among the fundamental qualities, you have to be

an honest person. We wanted to see a certain amount of a fundamental kind of integrity out of leadership people. In the modern world of politics that is almost a disqualifier, is it not? Nobody runs on the basis of, "I am honest," because if anybody says that, someone can prove they are not, so nobody bothers with that.

Now, it is hard to do the right thing. Anytime you really try to do the right thing—not the thing that profits you, not the thing that makes you feel good, not the thing that advances your personal adventures, pleasures, or fortunes, but to do what you know is absolutely morally right to do—that's very hard. It is a constant struggle. Even those who are really solid in that traditional culture can find ourselves forever weighing this and weighing that in our minds. Because to be fair is an active thing, you actually have to work at that. It doesn't come easy.

Now, my good Indian role model person, in my book of good role model Indians, without any question, is Wilma [Mankiller]. Wilma has some wonderful talents about her, one of which is, in my opinion, a really good instinct about what people's potentials are. And the determination to be faithful to those instincts, to give the person that you identify a chance to be what they can be.

Secondly, she has another quality—an absolute honesty that goes right to the center of the soul, the kind of person that you could trust your nation to and it will be just fine when you come back. To Wilma, I say, that very unusual quality is,

in my opinion, what makes you really an exemplary—not only chief, Cherokee woman, human being—but also a wonderful role model for our people. It would have been no surprise to people in our ancestors' time that a person would rise that had all those qualities who was a woman. Our ancestors would not have found that to be extraordinary. It is remarked upon, but it is harder, I am sure, in your day, than it was 300 years ago. Three hundred years ago many tribes had women chiefs arising all the time who had all those qualities. In fact even now I think when one's mind turns to the leadership in our traditional communities, one still finds those requirements or those expectations in our traditional societies.

Most of all, I wanted to say it has been absolutely an honor and a privilege to know you for all these years and to see all your work. I am so glad for this evening, and I want to say my heart is high and lifted actually for both of you. And I think it is a wonderful thing that this *Native Americas* journal could host such a meeting, to provide an evening to come forward and honor these truly exemplary people. For all of you that conceived that idea, to honor Tom Porter and Wilma Mankiller, my congratulations.

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To Persevere as Tribal People

WILMA MANKILLER

It is appropriate that we talk about leadership and governance as part of this gathering. After we exchange ideas, thoughts and feelings about where we are, where we have been, and where we need to go, somebody has to take all of this information, mold it into a plan and move it forward. It is also important to talk a bit about what constitutes leadership.

Following the format of beginning our discussion by giving a little background on ourselves: I am a product of every person I have ever spent time with, listened to and interacted with. I am also a product of all my life's experiences. Some experiences have been good and others not so good. I have made good decisions and errors in judgment and hopefully learned from those and moved on.

My identity, my sense of who I am, is derived from my family and my community. My family and community shaped my ideas and caused me to get involved in things around me. In our family no one sat us down and said, "This is how you should live your life and this is the way things should be." In our community we didn't have ceremonies where people told us how we should live. I learned about community, family and how people should treat one another from watching people from my community. Until I was 10 years of age, we lived in an isolated, rural, Cherokee community. There was no paved road near our house. We had

no plumbing or electricity. Our entire family worked to help our family survive. We grew crops for our own consumption and grew some crops to trade to neighbors for other goods, or to sell for cash. I can vividly remember my brother and me walking down the road to take items to trade to our neighbors or to my Aunt Maggie. We grew strawberries for cash crops, so whether it was strawberries to trade for milk or some other product, I saw that people survived by helping each other, by bartering, and by having a sense of community. The other thing I saw is that people, by and large, tried to look forward in a good way. Even when people were dealing with the worst circumstances, they would have something good

to say. If there was a bad snowstorm, they would say, "Well, that's okay, we can do things in the house." They were grateful for what they had and did what they could with what they had. They tried to find a good way of thinking about things. Growing up, I knew I had a different way of thinking, a more positive way, but it wasn't until I reached adulthood that I learned that I had a kind of Cherokee way of thinking. This good way of thinking is symbolized on a wampum belt by a white arrow going toward the Creator; the white line with the arrow and the beads going towards the Creator represents the White Path or the right way of living and thinking and being. That way of thinking in a good way probably also



Wilma Mankiller, 2001.

PHOTO: JEAN YOUNG/AMERICAN INDIAN MILLENNIUM FORUM

shaped my identity.

Besides Charlie, my family and community, a lot of other people came into my life and had a great impact on me. One was a Hopi woman. I don't remember her last name, but her first name was Mina and she was an elder woman, probably in her 80s at the time, who traveled all the way from Arizona to San Francisco in the back of a pick-up to attend a federal appeals court hearing on the traditional Hopi lawsuit against Peabody Coal Company. I was living in San Francisco at the time and I went to support the traditional Hopi. We spoke and I was so impressed and inspired by her. We took a photo together which I occasionally take out and look at. She had such a beautiful spirit. She and many others also helped shape who I am. So that's my biography.

With regard to where we are now and what I am concerned about—the most important issue we face commonly together is the issue of what older people at home call the old ways slipping away. You can call it anything you want to or describe it any way you want, but the way I would describe it is that the values are slipping away. While there is generally agreement that this is so, few people are

developing practical ways to maintain and preserve our value systems and traditional knowledge. That is the most serious problem we face.

I had an interesting experience one time about fifteen years ago, when I was serving in the tribal elected office. I went to a meeting and facilitated a workshop of the Council of Energy Resource Tribes, which were the resource-rich tribes, in which they were to define the most important issues of that time. Even though they were all big energy development nations, there was unanimous agreement that the single most important issue was culture, and how to keep the culture alive. I have always believed that if you are going to talk about culture, you ought to be able to define it. If you can't define it, don't talk about it. Very few people actually talk about the attributes of culture, or traditional lifeways though there is agreement that traditional lifeways are important enough to try to develop practical ways to maintain them for future generations. Everybody in this room probably has a different idea about what constitutes the most important cultural characteristic to preserve and maintain. My husband, who is very fluent in Cherokee, will probably tell you that the

single most important attribute of tribal culture is the language because there is a certain way of describing things in a Native language, and a certain way of thinking about things in a Native language, that is unique. Also, traditional Cherokee medicine cannot be practiced in the correct way without fluency in the Cherokee language. Others may say the most important cultural characteristic is traditional medicine. I believe the single most important attribute of our culture, that we all have in common, is a sense of interdependence, and a sense of community—a responsibility to help one another. The fact that we still live within a value system and culture that enables us to care about one other and help one another is the most precious cultural attribute. The survival of a system of reciprocity among our people is absolutely amazing given everything that has happened to us, and television and marketing messages we are constantly bombarded with that tell us to be greedy, vain and selfish. Despite these messages that tell us to only do for ourselves and not care about others, we still feel compassion, caring and responsibility for one another. We still feel very strongly tied to our extended families, our clans, our communities and our nations. Our sense of community is a very precious attribute of our culture.

So what do we do about maintaining that? Our discussion last night and today is about leadership, but what is leadership? To me leadership is simply facilitation. If you listen to the people, talk to the people, it is clear that they know how to do things. They know what has to be done, and what they need to do to accomplish their goals. Most of the time all they need is some help with resources, and somebody to help them develop timeframes or kind of move things along. Besides facilitation, it is very important for people who are perceived as leaders to be positive.



Evelyn Arce White, forum coordinator, and Wilma Mankiller, 2001.

A lot of people, including me, have told stories about how Tom Porter inspired and motivated them to stand for something, to do something meaningful with their lives. Think about this for a minute—the reason Tom Porter has had such a tremendous impact on so many people in this world, and in terms of leadership, has had a greater impact than most people who have held titled national positions, is that he is positive. It is because he is forward-thinking; it's because he tries to look at things in a good way. Nobody wants to follow a neg-

My identity, my sense of who I am, is derived from my family and my community. My family and community shaped my ideas and caused me to get involved in things around me.

ative leader. I can't tell you how many times I have seen our so-called leaders, men and women, stand up and go through this whole litany of every problem that has ever happened without any proposed solutions. We then all just leave depressed.

We know what happened to us historically, and we know better than anybody what the problems are in our communities. We want to hear about the good things—our strong sense of family, of community, the sense of responsibility for one another. What are the positive things that we still have? What are the things that are wonderful that we still have? Even in a nation with as many assimilated members as ours, we still have close families, we still have our language, we still have our medicines and ceremonies, and we still have core traditional Cherokee communities. Those are the things we should be talking about, not the whole

litany of negative statistics. We can deal with those; we do deal with those, but we also need to focus on the good things in our communities and I think we need more leaders who are positive, who think in a good way. We need positive role models.

If I could speak to future generations I think I would say to them that at this juncture I am optimistic. As Tim Johnson said, "there is no reason not to be optimistic." If you look at our history and think about everything that has happened to us historically it is a miracle that we survived. How could I not be optimistic about the future when we are still here, despite all that has happened to us? We are still here and we still have culturally distinct, viable tribal communities.

The United States government, one of the most powerful countries in the world, did everything it could to make sure our cultures did not continue. Among the Cherokee, there was a period when our ceremonies went underground. Now when I see Cherokee women strap turtle shells on her legs and go out in the circle by the fire, I can't help but feel it is almost a revolutionary act.

For future generations I would say that we did what we could in our time and it is now up to them to make sure our lifeways are continued. If we have persevered, and if we are tenacious enough to have survived everything that has happened to us to date, surely 100 years or even 500 years from now, the future generations will persevere and will have also have that same sort of tenacity, strong spirit, and commitment to retaining a strong sense of who they are as tribal people.

Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee) served as first woman Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation and as the director of the Cherokee Nation Community Development Department.

NURTURANCE IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE NATION AND THE PEOPLE

JOHN MOHAWK

If I was to pick the person who was most influential to me, it was my father. He was very modest—an electrician who worked for about 25 years for the state hospital. He was the treasurer in the Longhouse and a speaker in the Longhouse. He consistently maintained a connection to the way things had gone before. We always had gardens and we always had equipment, we always did farming. That was always there, and it didn't matter that you had other things to do. My father—for a man who had an 8th grade education, he was a great reader. The house was full of books and magazines. He was a very curious person. You could have a conversation with my father, with his 8th grade education, about the nature of the universe. You would find yourself looking for a dictionary to look up words as he talked.

When I graduated from high school I had some interesting experiences. I had done quite well in high school, and when it was known that I was accepted at a college they had a social dance one night and the people at the Longhouse lined up and they wished me well. They shook my hand and sent me off to college with the message: don't forget to come back. And so I went through what you go through when you go to college. Then I got a job. After awhile I had an opportunity to go to graduate school. Even in those days, when you took a job you went to graduate school and got more education and got a better job, or you could be stuck in that

job forever and forever. So I went to graduate school.

I planned to go into business management because one of the major problems that we had was that there were only a couple of employers in our community. There was no way we could really live at Cattaraugus because you couldn't get a job there. You had to move to Buffalo or someplace to get a job. I thought, maybe if I had a business education, I could build something and then hire people. So I was at the University of Buffalo taking courses in business management. One afternoon, I was sitting on the lawn studying some nonsensical micro-economics when the Indian undergraduates at the college came over and they said, "We heard that you did a thesis on the Clinton-Sullivan campaign and we wondered if you would be willing to do a course on Native American History."

At that moment, I had no intention of doing any such thing. But they came with an offer I couldn't really refuse: a fellowship. I could take the courses I wanted to take and get paid for it and all I had to do was teach a course. So I volunteered for what seemed to be a rather limited service. It wasn't long after a magazine article came out in November 1969. It told about Indian people who had shut down a bridge someplace near Quebec. We thought we should meet those people. So we sent an invitation for them to come see us and they came in a sort of bluish-green bus. They piled out of the bus, and

one of the persons who piled out of that bus was none other than the honorable Tom Porter, who then proceeded to tell us what's what. He said, "What are you doing here? You should be learning your own ways." That made sense to me.

It wasn't long after that I found myself at Wounded Knee, and at about 20 or so other armed confrontations here and there and around the Indian Country. I got used to sleeping on the ground for a few years, doing things that carried some risk. It was movement time. I met a lot of people doing that work, and forgot all about what I started out doing. I ended up actually becoming a graduate student for a couple of years in the American Studies Department. Since you didn't have to stay there to be a graduate student, I went around the country participating in movement activities.

In 1976, I was offered the editorship of *Akwesasne Notes* by the Mohawk Nation. By that time, our thinking had social revolution in it. We intended to have social change. We were willing to sacrifice for that. We were willing to do it whatever it took.

When I think back on those years at *Akwesasne Notes*, I must say that I learned a lot there. It was a school of hard knocks, but I learned a lot there. We worked and lived in a kind of a commune, at that time. José was there, and Katsi, and Clayton, and others. It was absolutely remarkable that the *Akwesasne Notes* did as well as it did when you con-

sider we did not have a business plan or a marketing strategy. One of the amazing things was that we survived so long. Year after year we spent a lot of time doing the magazine and we spent a lot of time chopping wood, because we lived way off in the mountains and we lived a self-sufficient life. We would make food for ourselves. At one time our budget for food was \$10 per person per week. Per week! I shudder. But I will tell you this too, we ate really well. We couldn't afford much

you open the door and he says "Are you Indians?" it gives you pause. But, he went on, "I have been working this mountain for 50 years...trapping beavers." I say, "Ah-ah," and he says, "Here's the problem, I have all these beaver carcasses. My wife won't cook it, nobody down the hill will cook it, nobody eats that, so I give it to people and they give it to dogs. But I don't like to give it to people that feed it to their dogs." He says, "If I brought that to you guys would you eat that?" Well

was happening to us on the big picture. I could see the small picture, but I couldn't see the big picture. When I left *Akivesasne Notes*, I consciously and purposely tried to find a way to understand the big picture. How did the experience that we were having parallel the experiences that other people were having, everywhere in the world? I am not finished yet. I want to synthesize it for everybody. I wanted to understand what was happening to us in the context of what was happening in the world.

The reality is that the process around us has been going on for 300 years. We are experiencing unintended and undesired changes. Each generation of our people has faced a pattern of change that could be devastating. It is very hard to grasp what you should do about those changes, and how you should prepare. But one thing is clear: ours is an environment experiencing a global change, a kind of global imperialism, which has kept growing; a growing imperialism of evolving technologies that were sometimes unimaginable. So that today, in the farthest reaches of the Americas, far from the roads, there are communities that were self-sufficient ten years ago that are facing ruin as we speak, utter ruin, as a result of globalization. The farming in the most rural communities can't compete in the global market. Young people are leaving those communities and moving into the cities. The old farmers are finding that they are losing money by raising crops for the market. The places that 20 years ago we thought were safe are not safe. No one is safe. No one on the planet, I think, is safe from these changes.

But we have to acknowledge this too: the generation before me faced changes, and the one before that, and the one before that, and sometimes they were devastating. Sometimes the changes were disease patterns, and sometimes the changes were losing land. We woke up with the land lost. Some of our people

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canned food and processed food; we had to buy bulk food and we had to get smart. So we had people in the region growing veggies and stuff.

Once a group came down from Penobscott country and we got to talking and they said, "We have canned moose." And we said, "Well, we got corn." The next thing we knew our cellar was filled with canned meat from the north and I am sure theirs was filled with corn. We were eating cornbread, homemade breads, veggies (some dried and some canned), and wild meats—moose meat and eventually elk meat, and it was good.

Another day, I always remember this, comes a knock on the door. It was this old guy. "I hear you guys are Indians," he says. Now we are in the middle of red-neck country. This is the Appalachians, upstate New York, where the John Birch Society was born, in the mountains. So when this bearded old guy comes, and

hey, we had a meat deficit thing going. I said, "Sure."

The next morning, I came outside and there was a stack of beavers on our porch. So we said, OK, anybody know how to cook one of these? We tried everything, let me tell you. People would come up and we would serve them beaver. They would be sitting there eating away and say, "What is this?" We tried it in slices, we boiled it, we baked it—there was no way that we could cook that that we didn't try. And we finally actually came up with a good dish. If you do the right thing with the chili you can make beaver taste pretty good. Arguably, it is an acquired taste.

I wouldn't have changed those experiences for anything. Whenever you are doing something, there comes a time when you have to ask yourself, what you are going to do next? I felt I understood what was happening to us in a microcosm level. But I didn't quite understand what

found themselves far away. There are only a couple of communities of the people of the Five Nations that are still where they were 300 years ago. Most of them are scattered. My own community doesn't come from Cattaraugus; it comes from the Genesee Valley. There are none of us living in the Genesee—perhaps an individual or two, but there is no community there anymore.

What do you have to do when you are faced with an avalanche of change? How do you respond to it? When things are changing around you, they change you. And you have to kind of ask yourself—“What things do I not want to change about myself?” Or, sometimes you wake up finding that you have already changed, and you might ask yourself, “What things do I want to change back to the way they were?” This means that you have to do a lot of thinking about—how did you get to be where you are now? And know that you can't backtrack. You have to find another way to get to where it is you want to be in the future. You have to figure out where you want to be in the future and you have to find steps to go there. There are obviously going to be a lot of different answers to that question and different people are going to take different routes getting where they would like to go.

I wanted to see what other people did, and here are a couple of lessons that I learned that I want to share, especially with the young people here. One of the things I learned is that we are not alone in the world. We are not the only people who are faced with devastating changes. There are other people in the world who have already undergone changes who are sympathetic with what we are experiencing. And we can find allies in unexpected places. The whole world is not hostile to Native peoples.

We are in an ocean in which the nature of the big fish is to eat the little ones, and you find out that there are bigger fish than you. Once you are really aware that

there are bigger fish out there that will eat you, it is advisable and possible you keep an eye out for big fish. That's how it works. Alright, that's a big fish. What is he doing? But at the same time, we discovered that there were people that we could ally with for some things. They wouldn't become our ally in everything, but in some things.

We have to figure out what are the things that are most valuable to us, and how are we going to nurture those things? Sometimes there is a viable Indian nation. The healthiest ones understand that when you have a nation that can nurture its

designed by the community and they are not community-service oriented. But there are ways to create community-service oriented institutions even inside that world. And there are ways to network those with other people who want community-oriented supports, inside that world.

When I went back to college in 1984, it was kind of an interesting thing. For a little while I was doing graduate work and had a full-time job, and then I kept getting promotions. This is true for the people who did the *Akwesasne Notes* work in the 1980s. Of the staff of nine or 10, four

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people, that the responsibility of the people is to nurture the nation. Nurturance as a two-way street is a very powerful thing.

Some of the Indian nations aren't really nurturing nations. They are institutions. That got me to the thought that none of us works in the world as an atom. We don't get anything done as individuals. We live in a world that looks to individuals as heroes. The biggest voices in the dominant society makes heroes of entrepreneurs. They make heroes of people who are fiercely individualistic. They uphold a whole network of profit-making institutions that will not serve communities because they were not intended to serve communities, they were not

now have PhDs. Hey, we were a smart group and we didn't even know it. We tended to explore the question: what is it that we actually have to learn? What do we have to look at? We have to build institutions that serve human needs. We have to do that from already existing templates that are out there. There are templates out there of all sorts of institutions you can build, but they don't do what we need done. And we haven't been as experienced at building proper institutions as we would have hoped to be by now. But having said that, let me state that it is not for lack of effort. We, as Native activists, in fact have made a lot of effort to find those models. We are experienced enough now that we can share some

thoughts about which sorts of things have been positive and what sort of things need work.

The one thing that really scares me is being mystified. We are getting that cleared away. We are going to open the door to new ideas and new skills that can be adapted to needs that we can identify and create institutions to address.

My first reaction to globalization was that it could be our death knell. Globalization looked extremely corrosive. It seemed to me like they were just going to make a whole bunch of rules and when they got through making their rules the people with money were going to have everything, the people without money were going to have nothing, and there was going to be very little in between. It turns out it is not that cut and dry. It turns out that globalization is a huge problem for the globalizers. We want to make it a bigger problem for them. There are all sorts of human rights issues and environmental issues. There are all kinds of people who see this coming and are thinking "Gee, we can't just let this happen, because if we do let it happen, all the good things in the world actually will disappear." The reality of world market economics is that it is not a human thing at all, it doesn't serve humans needs. What it does is create a pattern of winners and losers, and among the losers are our peoples who have the cultural heritage of the species of the planet in our hands. We are the losers. And on the other end of the scale are institutions and entities just dying to own everything and steamroll everybody in the whole world. The trouble is that for them the battle isn't over with yet. The people are putting up barriers and fighting back. There are a lot of people in the world who are on the side of the small farmers and the indigenous peoples and peasant peoples.

There are two points that I must mention. Number one is that you can't have a sustainable institution unless you are able

to generate enough dollars to pay enough money so that the people who are holding the institution up can survive. This is crucial. The second point is that if you have people in your institution who are in decision-making positions who do not suffer the consequences of their own irresponsible decisions, they will make irresponsible decisions every time. Sometimes, they will hold you to such high levels of performance that no one could possibly succeed. You can't let the people who don't have to suffer make the decisions. We need to build institutions that respond to people's realities. And

We have to figure out what are the things that are most valuable to us, and how are we going to nurture those things?

you know what? That's not that different from the institutions that were in Iroquois country in the year 1680. That's exactly the way the Iroquois world was in 1680. The people who did the work were the ones that made the decisions about what was going to happen next.

Now once you have made those decisions it is up to that group to share their bounty, which was always our traditional way. It was always our way that people who had the bounty shared with the people who didn't have it. This is one of the things that I say you don't want to lose.

Thirty years ago the most immediate need that traditional people saw was around maintaining the religion, maintaining the language. When that is in danger of disappearing, you have to pay attention to that. We are now at a time

when it seems that we can pay attention to some other things in addition to that. I am not going to stop paying attention to the culture and language loss, but we can pay attention to some other things too.

I wanted to mention that to the young people that are in the room: it isn't that I think business skills are not important. Business skills are absolutely necessary for institution building that is going to support people. Without marketing skills and economic skills, it is hard to imagine success. I just don't want Indian people to go get business skills and run out and get into the market and disappear into Silicon Valley. Rural life in the world is under tremendous pressure. But it is also true that things like the Internet and the North American-wide marketing network now—UPS, FedEx, fast transport—make it possible for people who are living in rural areas to participate in the market on an almost even keel with people in the more urbanized areas. There are ways to find and exploit these market niches, and to create institutions that help support people while they learn their language and get back to their ceremonies. Some are better than others.

In 1984 when I first got home I had an opportunity to be on the ground floor of the cigarette business. A friend of mine came over and said he didn't have a home on the reserve, but he needed a reservation base to sell cigarettes. And so for a week I did that; I warehoused the cigarettes. In that week I learned something about myself. It is not my destiny to do that. It is not my destiny to exploit that kind of opportunity. And it is not because if I do it will turn me into a horrible person. But I felt, what we need are things that are founded on long-based principle, and that are not going to be subjected to a lot of profiteering on the part of individuals. It is just not the way it needs to be done. So I declined.

I am not criticizing the ones who did it; I am just saying that it wasn't for me to

do that. I wasn't going to do it. One argument to do it was, "Well, you just do that for a little while and then you get the money you need to do the other things." It never happened. Never seen it. I can see the faces of those guys standing in front of me in the Longhouse saying, "We are only going to do this for just a little while." They are still doing it. Some of them just got back from jail and are still doing it. Well, I don't want a mafia society. That's not the future I want on our reservations. I don't want our people killing one another, chasing each other in

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the middle of the night, smuggling stuff across the river. If that's their vision, then stand right up and tell us that that's your vision.

Remember, those of you who are listening. We have to have a culture that demands a high standard of behavior—honesty, integrity. Look in the mirror and what do you see? If we don't have integrity we are not going to build anything that lasts. All we will be able to do is put together little things that work for a little while and just work for a few people. And I want to raise another caution: not all of the institutions that we are told belong to us actually belong to us in any real continuous way. There are institutions in our communities that control nations, but don't represent the best of the people. So we have to work around that. For myself, I don't want to spend all my time fighting against that; it just takes up too much time and energy.

Now I have to admit that things will change. Thirty years from now, there won't be the same sort of problems. But this is our moment to acquire the problem-solving and organizational skills that we need, because if we have those, we will have a strategy to deal with the changes. So those of you who are out in the world getting an education, I recommend to you to plan to go back to your community. Get an education that gives you the skills to do the problem solving that will address the new changes that will come. Don't expect the world to be the way it is

today; prepare for a changing world. I can't even tell you how much things have changed since I first became politically active. The world is so different now than it was 30 years ago. It is unrecognizable, unrecognizable.

The first time that I ever paid attention to the Seneca Tribal Council, a white lawyer from Washington was sitting there with his feet on the table, sound asleep, and our Indian government didn't do a thing until he said "Okay." Sometimes, they had to wake him up. Can we please do this? If he said "yes," it was yes, and if he said "no," they didn't do it. Everywhere, when I first came to political consciousness, the Bureau of Indian Affairs sat in on all the council meetings and said yes or no to everything that went around the table, everything, just 30 years ago. In the space of a few years we just embarrassed so many tribes that they began to take control. They did their own thing.

Some of them kept doing what the BIA wanted to do, but most just did their own thing.

I couldn't help last night running into Tim Coulter [Indian Law Resource Center] over at the honoring thinking how optimistic he is. He is very optimistic these days that Indian peoples are making real progress. The first time that I ever published an article by Tim Coulter was more than 25 years ago. And the name of the article was "Indigenous Peoples Have No Rights." That was the name of the article. Well, today we could say indigenous peoples have a few rights, and they have a bunch more on the table, and on that end, things are moving forward.

I have to say too that it would have been true 30 years ago that the people in our Indian country had no institutions that generate dollars. That also is not true anymore. Things have been changing in more of a positive way. There is a direction going on. Our communities are not static and they are not sitting under the thumb of the government anymore. To get an idea of what this was like, read a book called "Our Brother's Keeper" and you will see that not so long ago people on some reservations had to get a pass, a permission from the BIA, if they wanted to go shopping in the city. There are people alive that remember that; it wasn't that long ago. It wasn't that long ago that our people were living in horrible conditions in boarding schools. So I am saying that things are changing in some ways; they are progressing. We have more power in our hands, but that means we have to do more thinking. We can do things now; we are not powerless. We can plan for the future. Thirty years ago we were thinking we were stuck at just about zero. It is not zero anymore.

John Mohawk (Seneca) is an associate professor of History in the American Studies Department at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is also director of Indigenous Studies and co-director of the Center for the Americas.

LIFE CHOOSES THE JOURNEY FOR YOU

CHARLIE SOAP

WILMA MANKILLER: Charlie it is time for you to speak. No one has had a greater impact on me than Charlie. He is one of the most unthreatened men I have been around. He has always been supportive of me and my work. We have been together for 20 years and have a perfect relationship; I like to cook and he likes to eat!

I am glad to be here this morning and hope I can say something that will be useful to someone. My name is Charlie Soap; I am a full-blooded Cherokee. I speak Cherokee fluently. Our people are located in the northeastern part of what is now the state of Oklahoma. When some people think of Oklahoma, they think it is all plains country but where we live it is very beautiful, with a lot of trees, hills, lakes and wonderful people.

I am from a large family of eight brothers and 1 sister. I am in the middle of the children. My father, Watt Soap, was a good man and a hard worker. He spoke mostly Cherokee and very little English. He had very little formal education and only went to the second grade but he was intelligent and could figure things out. My father was a farmer, a blacksmith and a carpenter and he also worked on the railroad. He could make horseshoes, plows and several other things. He taught my brothers and I how to plant and cultivate crops but most of all, he taught us how to focus on completing tasks we started. He always amazed people because he could come up with a solution to a problem like putting on a roof or building a house, just

by looking at it or as some people say "eyeballing it." In his own way my Dad was a leader and a teacher who taught us the value of hard work.

Wilma reads a lot. By the time I get through talking, she will probably be back there in the audience reading something. When she was in hospitals, I would bring her a stack of magazines and newspapers. About mid-day she would be through reading everything I brought her. One time she asked me why I didn't like to read; whether something had happened in my past to make me not like to read. After giving it some thought, I realized my Dad taught us that reading was a waste of time. If he saw us reading a newspaper or magazine, he would say, "You don't have time to read. There's work to be done." Dad's philosophy was similar to what Tom Porter said last night, "Let's get in gear and get to work. Let's get it done." That's the way my Dad was, "Let's get it done." I was raised in an environment where getting things done was instilled in me and we lived by that. That's why I have a reputation for getting things done. Dad could do a lot of things. He was an excellent baseball player. Older people still talk about how well he played baseball. And he knew a lot about Cherokee medicine and was active in ceremonial dances; he was stomp dance leader.

My Mother, Florence (Fourkiller) Soap, used to work right alongside my Dad. She planted and plowed the fields with a team of horses, and could drive a team of horses and a wagon. She could do any job

a man could do in the fields. She would then go back to the house, cook a noon meal, return to work, and that evening, cook another meal. When my Dad was off working, we helped Mom take care of the farm. She helped my Dad cut down trees with a cross-cut saw. They sometimes made railroad ties out of the wood and other times, we used it for our wood cooking stove or wood heating stove in the winter. Mom was also an excellent seamstress who made dresses, shirts, quilts, and she was a skilled weaver. I don't know how she did all this. Like Wilma always says, she is a talented lady. She taught my brothers and me about housekeeping and cooking. Our household chores included helping her cook, wash dishes, or wash and iron our own clothes. Now, when people come over to our house and see me cleaning up the kitchen after a meal, they sometimes say that is women's work. I don't think that way. I think everybody should help in keeping up the house. That's the way I was raised.

My Mother knew about medicine plants and she taught us how to appreciate plants and to make medicine, using those plants. This was passed down to her from my grandfather and grandmother. Until I reached adulthood, I didn't realize how much influence my parents had on my life.

I started school in a very small rural school. I could not speak English. I had a difficult time with the classes, especially math. I hated math and could hardly do

math. When I was in the 3rd or 4th grade, I remember the teacher told my Dad I was failing math. My Dad was determined to help me. Usually by nightfall, when we had completed the evening meal and all our chores, Dad would light the kerosene lamp and we would sit down at the kitchen table in the dim light of the kerosene lamps to work on my math problems. He did not work out the math problems the way the teachers showed me but somehow he came up the same answers. I never did figure out how he solved the math problems. But that

describe people helping each other in a community. I remember the days when families, kinfolks, neighbors would help one another. When my parents got older and their health started to decline, they were no longer able to work the farm. We had to move to town, away from the life style we were accustomed to, and everything changed, and we began to drift away from the *Gadugi* way of life. We no longer went to stomp dances or were able to interact with other Cherokees in rural communities. We started attending church in town and made new friends. I

of Oklahoma. I didn't really like that part of the country so I came back to Tahlequah after being offered a job with the Housing Authority of the Cherokee Nation, and that's when I returned to my roots. I started working with a lot of the elder Cherokee people, my own people. In the Housing Authority job I was able to use the Cherokee language again. I worked at the Housing Authority for five years and then I went to work for the Cherokee Nation. That's where I met Wilma. I had heard about Wilma. She had a reputation for getting things done. I heard I may be working with Wilma on self-help projects. I was asked to attend a meeting with Chief Ross Swimmer, Wilma Mankiller, the Housing Authority Director and legal counsel. When I walked into the room, Ross Swimmer said, "If any man can do it, that man can." I sat down and they started talking about the Bell Project, a proposed self-help project to help a Cherokee community build a waterline and new homes. I thought, "My God, do they know what they talking about?" That community was considered a real rugged community. It is one of those places they say, "If you are not from that community, don't let the sun go down on you." They were talking about going there, and organizing the people to build the waterline themselves. I said, "It will never happen because you don't know the people."

When I walked out after the meeting, the first time I spoke to Wilma she asked what I thought about the project. I said, "I don't know if it can be done or not; I don't think it can be done." She said, "Well I think it can; you had better change your attitude." I thought who is this lady telling me to change my attitude.

So Wilma and I started going to meetings in the Bell community. We heard a lot of negative comment from the tribal office and Housing Authority about the community and the project. The more negative comments I heard, the more

Gadugi is the word we use when we describe people helping each other in a community. I remember the days when families, kinfolks, neighbors would help one another.

was okay because I passed the class and moved up to the next grade.

Among all my brothers, my Dad always chose me to go with him to do chores, and he was a very hard man to work for. He was tough and he made us work. He was one of those guys that thought you should do things right the first time. He didn't like to tell you how to do things over and over. I once asked my Mom why my brothers didn't have to go work with my Dad, and I always did. She said he took me because I was a good worker.

Even though my mother worked hard, she was ill quite a bit and a medicine woman stayed with us to doctor her. When the medicine woman went into the woods to get medicine she would take me with her. She was a good healer. I was just a small child going out with her to gather medicine plants. As a child, I could not understand why she chose me to go with her but later I understood what that was all about.

Gadugi is the word we use when we

attended school in town, which was very different from the rural school I used to attend. It was very different even though our new home in town was only about 12 miles from our old rural home. We didn't like living in town and on the weekends my brothers and I would walk back to our old home place, which was still home to us. But the longer we lived in town, the more we drifted away from that and slowly became adjusted to the mainstream society.

After graduating from Stilwell High School I received a basketball scholarship from Bacone Junior College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. I was not prepared for college and after struggling with the courses at Bacone, I joined the Navy and completed four years of duty with the United States Navy. Then I came back to Tahlequah to continue my education at Northeastern State University where I received my college degree in education with a minor in sociology. I accepted a position at Southwestern State University the Western part

What I would like to leave the Seventh Generation with is: we need to know who we are. The old people always say: know who you are, and know your ways. I guess that's what people mean when they say culture, know the ways of your people, know the Creator.

determined I was to make it happen. Due to Wilma's reputation I was really intimidated by her. We didn't carry on much conversation for the first couple of weeks we worked together. As we moved forward with the project, we became more comfortable with each other and focused on our job, which was to organize the people to get the self-help water line built. We will make it happen.

I remember my first date with Wilma. My marriage had gone bad and I thought well, Wilma and I have been working together for almost a year, I think I will ask her for a date. I asked her and she accepted. I took her to Tulsa to treat her to a good meal and a movie. I took her to Coney Island; I love hotdogs. I ate four or five of them. I think she had one. Afterwards, we went to a movie, a Rambo movie. After the movie, I was excited about the evening. As we were driving back to Tahlequah, I said, "Boy those were good hotdogs weren't they?" She said, "I hate hotdogs." There was a long pause and then I said, "It sure was a good movie though wasn't it?" She said, "I hate Rambo." Well, I sure struck out. But I must have done something right. The Bell self-help water line was successful and Wilma and I ended up together.

Our people at home struggle with a lot of problems in health care and education and there is a pretty serious problem with young people using drugs. I worked on a project in the Cherry Tree community where there was a lot of drug abuse among the youth. Our goal was to bring the young people together to develop programs that would steer them away

from drugs. They wanted to build a ball field and a gym so they would have recreational space to play ball. We obtained some land from the Cherokee Nation and began to clear the land for the ball fields. Young people, even the very young, helped clear the ball fields and encouraged their parents to become involved. Over the course of two years we built a ball field and a gym. One of the things that really helped with this project was a meeting between young people and their parents. The youth did not feel like they were being listened to or cared about. The parents said their children didn't understand that they were tired when they came home from work and did not have time to spend with their children. That meeting opened dialogue and both the youth and their parents began to understand each other better and most importantly, know that they loved each other. That meeting was one of the most successful meetings because the parents came to help them build the ball fields, not just one ball field, but three. They also built a gymnasium.

Together Wilma and I have done an incredible amount of work in Cherokee communities helping them organize themselves to build houses and water lines, develop youth projects and community buildings. People can find their own solutions. We would go to meetings and help them identify their problems and decide how to remedy the problem and people would do it. It was incredible to see dozens of bilingual Cherokee communities, taking things into their own hands, and making things happen.

We need to work more with youth. They have so much untapped energy and so many good ideas. I have worked with parent committees. Sometimes, it would take us two months just to outline a program for young people. But the young people could meet for 30 minutes and have a program. When parents and youth come together, they can do some great programs and the young people have a lot of good ideas.

What I would like to leave the Seventh Generation with is: we need to know who we are. The old people always say: know who you are, and know your ways. I guess that's what people mean when they say culture, know the ways of your people, know the Creator. One of the most important things is to know your Creator and reach out to the Spirit World. It is there but you have got to be able to go there. You have to sacrifice but it is a wonderful place; it's a wonderful place. It is also important to value and care for your family. Another important thing is, as Tom Porter says, "Be yourself. A buffalo is a buffalo, a deer is a deer, and you are who you are. Be yourself."

Charlie Soap (Cherokee) served as interim director of the Cherokee Housing Authority and director of the Cherokee Nation Community Development Department.

To the Seventh Generation: We Did This For You

KELLER GEORGE

I was born in 1935 on the Onondaga Indian Reservation near Syracuse, New York. I am Oneida. My mother, my father, grandmother, and great-grandmother were all Oneida, but because of historical circumstances we had lost the majority of our lands. My mother, grandmother, my great-grandmother all resided on the Onondaga Indian Reservation. My great-grandfather was an Onondaga chief that married my great-grandmother, and that was my inspiration, I guess, for why I stand before you today. My great-grandmother was born in 1850 and I had the opportunity to be with her about 16 years before she passed away. Probably the last eight or nine years of her life she taught me the ways of the Oneida people.

It seems like an awful long time ago when I think back on things, the upbringing that I had in the Longhouse and the teachings that were given to me, the stories. That's the way she taught me things, she told me a story about a particular tree or a particular animal, taught me the ceremonies and the reasons for these ceremonies through the years. In these ceremonies she drew a circle with a stick in the ground and said we have all these ceremonies starting with the mid-winters. There is no beginning and no end for a circle, just a renewal. The time to rededicate yourself and to ask forgiveness, and all of those subsequent ceremonies as you go through the year, are all done in thanksgiving to the Creator

for having us here.

Those are some of the things that were my inspiration, but as I grew older I joined the military. I was 17 years old. I couldn't wait to get into the fight in Korea because my older brother had joined the Marines and left and was writing letters telling some of the things that were going on. I joined the Army and became a paratrooper and in August of 1952 arrived in Korea, and it was not at all what I had thought it would be. Although I did not see a lot of combat like my older brother did, I did experience a little bit and it wasn't nice, it wasn't pretty. I guess you could say I abandoned my traditional teachings of my dear grandmother in that period of

time. I started using alcohol and cigarettes and all the things that were out there. I stayed in the military for 22 years and in 1974 I retired. I had lost my wife in a car accident and I had three young children, so my mother said, why don't you come back to New York so that the family can help you? So I did—but doing that was just further enabling me, because with the help of my mother and my brothers and sisters it gave me a lot more time to get out there and raise Cain, if you will.

On my 50th birthday I had a heart attack, and I went to the Veteran's Hospital and they transferred me from there to the Bath Medical Center, to the Old Soldier's Home that was there. It was a



Keller George (Oneida) at Millennium conference, 2001.

PHOTO: JEAN YOUNG/AMERICAN INDIAN MILLENNIUM FORUM

nursing home. And there was a Navajo lady who was a nurse. She was one of the people that took care of me. She said, "While you are here why don't you join this program that they have on alcohol abuse?" And I said, "Well I don't have a problem with drinking; I don't have a problem with alcohol. Gosh, I can quit any time I want to, I have already done it about 10 times." I was serious. I didn't think I had problems. But then she got me on the program. She said, "Well if you go over there you can have your own little room and you can have coffee in the morning, you can go to the cafeteria and you can go to the service club and watch television, movies, go bowling, bingo, whatever you want to do." Hey, that sounds pretty good, I can take that for 30 days. So I went. While I was there, what the people were teaching in the classes made sense.

I was not willing to abuse myself any further. That was the whole reason I decided to quit drinking in the first place. They used the concept of Alcoholics Anonymous and the 12-step program. What they told me is that you have to look at a higher power than yourself and I did—the Creator. That's when I started remembering the teachings that I had as a youth. And that's when I was able to quit. I could go on and tell you stories and call it a coincidence, the way things happened, but they weren't. To me they weren't coincidences. It was the Creator stepping in and making me do what I said I would do.

After a number of years being home, the elder women of my clan, the Wolf Clan, led by my mother, came to me and asked me to be a leader. I never can remember refusing too many times when my mother asked me to do something. But when they asked me to come into a leadership position I said, "Hey, I don't know too much about being a

leader." They said, "Well, you served all those years in the military and you had your troops that you led and you learned how to step up in front." So basically, my traditional teachings from grandmother and great-grandmother and those military experiences are what helped me. If I am a leader, that is what has inspired me.

I was a VP for the National Congress of American Indians for six years. I have been in the position of president of the United South and Eastern Tribes. I am going in my 8th year. So I have learned to understand what the people want

There is no beginning and no end for a circle, just a renewal. The time to rededicate yourself and to ask forgiveness, and all of those subsequent ceremonies as you go through the year, are all done in thanksgiving to the Creator for having us here.

from you—direction on the things that they need. What a lot of people don't know is that the Oneida people had lands that diminished from 6 million acres to 32 acres. When I was a young man, we didn't have one little square inch of land that we could call our own.

There was this old gentleman that I met—his name was Bill Rockwell—he had managed to hang on to 32 acres of the original Indian lands. And in the 1960s when he became ill and was going to pass away, he knew that that land rightly belonged to the Oneida people, so that's when he deeded it back to the Oneida Nation. It started out just a little old road down the middle of this field with trailers put on each side. In this particular area, they had these trailer

homes that they used for temporary housing and then they gave them to us. That was the beginning, and then we had to do something to help our people.

That's some of the realities of today. In the early 1970s there was a trailer fire and two individuals perished in the fire because the fire department from the city of Oneida refused to come down and put that fire out. That's when we started talking about how we had to do something; we just had to do something to be able to help ourselves. And one of the ideas was to start a small bingo hall, and it was started in a doublewide trailer. I wasn't there at the time, but what I was told was that the first night they netted \$14. It doesn't sound like a lot, but it was a start. And as it grew we went into other businesses and, as I said, in 1985 I was asked to become one of the leaders and started going out and trying to get federal funds, and we started trying to gather the resources to do things for ourselves.

In 1987, we got a grant from the Indian Health Service to do a feasibility study on what is today the health clinic for the Oneida people. In 1991, we opened that health clinic, although we had to build it with our money because there was a moratorium on new construction. Indian Health Service didn't have the money to do it, so we did it. But we opened that and today we serve almost 7,000 clients and we only had about 1,500 members in the Oneida Nation. We would take any federally recognized person for health service in a six-county area.

We now turn our BIA dollars back for use as seed money for other tribes. We no longer get the tribal priority allocation monies. It is allocated every year and then we always turn it back. We have been doing this since 1999. The only stipulation is that we ask that it be used in the eastern region for those tribes that may not be as successful as

we are. There is a band of Choctaws, in Louisiana, for example, that is a small tribe. You may think you are in bad shape, but they only have 3 acres. So we give them part of that money every year to try to help build up their infrastructure, to purchase new lands. They are going to be having an opening very soon, I think within the next month or so, of the first administrative office building that they have been able to build. Things like that, to me that's leadership—taking what you have and getting out there and helping others if you are able to do it.

You asked us what would we say if we could actually send a message to the

At the time of this writing our nation has re-acquired 15,000 of our acres of our ancestral lands. Each acre we purchased we purchased for the betterment of the Seventh Generation to come.

Seventh Generation. I took that suggestion and I wrote a letter, and I would like to read that letter. I always try to say that in my nation we have two natural resources that are the most precious to us, and that's our elders and our youth. Our elders is where we come from and our youth is where we are going, our future. So I think we have to take those two segments of people and really pay close, close attention to them.

We have some programs now for our seniors like getting a hot meal every day, getting a nice place to go and be with their peers and teaching the youngsters about making the traditional wear, the ribbon shirts and the dresses and the moccasins and those types of things. Learning the language and learning the

culture and having those elders interact with the youth, to teach the things that we were taught.

The process of learning is different now than it used to be. In times past, we used to all live as one huge family together in a Longhouse and as the mothers and the fathers went out about their daily business the grandmothers and grandfathers did the teachings of the stories and the history of the nations with the kids. We were all together, interacting. That's what we have been doing for the last three years, using that same concept, the elders talking to the kids in Oneida, teaching them pottery and different things like that.

So this is the letter I wrote and I addressed it to the Seventh Generation to come from Keller George, Wolf Clan representative of the Oneida Indian Nation:

"I am writing to you from across the decades and in my serious hope that all we accomplished in my generation continues to benefit yours. At the time of this writing our nation has re-acquired 15,000 of our acres of our ancestral lands. Each acre we purchased we purchased for the betterment of the Seventh Generation to come. We did this for you. Each development, every investment, every decision we made, we made with the faces yet unborn in our mind. You are those faces. For you we took great care to protect our language, our culture, and our traditions. We passed on our ceremonies, our dances, our songs, our legends, so that you may know whence you came and in your turn preserve them for the seventh generation from you.

"Our dream was to educate all our young and we provided scholarships to achieve this goal. Education is the key to survival. My generation performs a balancing act, as I believe yours will as well, balancing our culture with that of the

dominant society. This is not easy, but it can be done. It must be done. We can go forth in the outside world and make our mark and achieve whatever we want to achieve, but we must be mindful that we are a distinct people who must remember our past to protect our future. To help our own members to fulfill their goals, the Nation established a fund. This fund was designed for every enrolled Oneida for whatever they wished. This fund was designed for you. We hope that we will continue to add to this fund so that the Seventh Generation after you will reap the advantages you have enjoyed.

"It cannot be reiterated enough that education is paramount to the success and continuation of our people. But it is not just the academic education to which I refer, but also advancing the cultural aspect of the Oneida Indian Nation. Remember to educate the young in the age-old traditions, the language, the culture of our people. Remember to look to the past for direction while keeping a mindful eye on the future.

"Finally, and perhaps most importantly, never diminish your land. In my generation we struggled to acquire our lands for you, for your children and your children's children and beyond. Our land is sacred to our people. Indian people are survivors and it is my hope that with the guidance of the Creator, the Seventh Generation after you will continue to prosper based upon the solid decisions you have made. To you, the Seventh Generation, I send my heartfelt regards, and my spirit is with you as the spirits of my ancestors were always with me."

Keller George (Oneida) is a representative of the Men's council of the Oneida Indian Nation of New York and president of the United South and Eastern Tribes.

TO DO THE JOB THAT WE NEED TO DO

TONYA GONNELLA FRICHER

I am Tonya Frichner; my name clan is Gawanas. I am Snipe clan. That name belonged to my aunt, my mom's sister. Our names are, I guess you could say, recycled throughout our clan, so most of us have names that belong to our relatives and get passed down the generations.

To begin with, I want to tell you a little bit about what I do. I am president and founder of the American Indian Law Alliance. I started the Law Alliance about two years after law school. I went to law school for that particular reason. I knew that I wanted to do it. After being in a job that I didn't necessarily care for, I said this is enough—I have to do it, I have to figure out a way to make this happen. So I did.

We are a non-governmental organization, and we are part of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This gives us access to the United Nations, not only in New York, but in Europe as well, and it gives us access to documents and also lets us on certain occasions hand out documents at meetings, so we are able to have a more direct contact with governments.

We also do some local work. As Wilma Mankiller said, the community will tell you exactly what they want and they will tell you when to do it. My community said we need a legal services project and we need someone who is here all the time to help us deal with landlord/tenant issues, family issues, benefits, health, Medicare and Medicaid, food stamps,

anything that affects the health of our community. So I put together that project with lots of help and lots of community support, and now we have that in place and it has been in place since 1991.

We have a staff that deals with those issues and I am proud to say that the project has been able to do several things very successfully. We have been able to keep a young man from having to cut his hair, so he could wear it long on the job, we saved elders their homes, we saved them their medical benefits and food stamps. We got involved in cases where racial slurs were happening on the job. One eight-year-old child in our community no longer has to leave the classroom when the Pledge of Allegiance is being conducted. Her teacher was making her stand outside the room behind a closed door because she chose not to participate. So we have been able to do things on a small level that have a big effect on our community and on individuals.

We also published the "Border Crossing Booklet" not too long ago. This is a handbook for our folks who cross the Canadian and American border. There is a treaty, usually referred to as the Jay Treaty, which gives our people access to the United States and to Canada, and our people can go back and forth on that border. Our aboriginal people from Canada are allowed to work in the United States; they don't have to have a green card. They can receive unemployment benefits. It is pretty negative when a social worker tells a Native person that

they have to go get a green card. Now they have this book. And having something called the American Indian Law Alliance exerts some clout. When someone gets a phone call and we leave a message with that title, and the attorneys call from that office, the problems seem to disappear, or they seem to resolve themselves a lot quicker.

I am very fortunate to work with people in New York City who have a great commitment to our people. I am a citizen of the Onondaga nation. Onondaga is where I am from. I am a wife of over 20 years, married to a great guy, and a stepmom and auntie, a sister, a daughter. I am an auntie several times over. I am the oldest of eight children, so I have lots and lots of nieces and nephews. I moved to New York City some time ago to go to school. I also met my husband there and stayed. But I do come back quite a bit. I have a close connection with my nation. When they need me, I am there for them.

I wanted to share with you some things that happened when I was a young girl. Like everybody else in this room, I had to deal with racism. When our family moved to Syracuse, my mom had three kids at that time and we were all under five. My mom remembers this incident very clearly, naturally, but I vaguely remember it. The children in the neighborhood wouldn't play with my sister and my brother and myself because we were Indians. And I vaguely remember that, but fortunately because of my



Iroquois singers performing sweetgrass songs.

mother—she is a very dignified woman—that changed. The racism subsided, and after a few years our home became one of the more popular homes to the kids in the neighborhood.

But I still remember being in my school having to endure the comments, the history books and the teacher saying, “Wild Indians, all Indians are wild Indians,” using terms like “savages,” and also saying “The only good Indian is a dead Indian.” You know, after a while you stop pushing that down and it starts to come

up like a volcano. I was around 13 or 14 years old, and I was walking home from school and two young boys were behind me, same age, and they made the mistake of saying, “The only good Indian is a dead Indian.” And I am until this day not too sure that it was directed at me, but it didn’t matter because I heard it. It had rained that day so I was carrying an umbrella. And yes, that’s what I did. I beat the stuffing out of those two boys. These whiny, sniffling boys—and they were big guys—but I had had it.

I think young people call it now, sucking it up—that’s what the athletes do with pain, suck it up. Well, I wasn’t good at sucking it up anymore. So I let it out and, boy, did it feel good. And I never got punished for it. I told my mother what happened, because the other mothers showed up at our door soon after that with their battered sons. And my mother, who is very elegant and very diplomatic in her demeanor, she politely shook her head and she listened very intently that her daughter had beat up these boys. Finally I remember my mother saying, “You know, your boys are a bit on the large side and I was wondering why they would let a girl beat them up?” That was the end of the conversation. That was it. I never got punished. And I know that it was always my mother’s determination that we not forget where we are from, that we not forget we are Onondaga. That has kept me grounded and helped me move on with my life. She has been my mentor.

My mother is an elder. I would share with you my mom’s age, but she might hit me with her umbrella if I say it, so I am not going to tell you. Let’s put it this way, when I turned 39 my dad called me and said, “Well sweetheart, happy birthday and today you are as old as your mother.” So I can’t tell you her age. She will find out and I will really get in big trouble. But I will say that when I am her age, I would just like to have half her dignity, half her compassion, and half of the love that she expresses to our family, to her children, and to her grandchildren, and to everybody that comes in contact with her. So that’s my role model, and I try very hard to do her justice as best I can. I know I trip a lot along the way.

I have been very privileged to witness self-determination and expressions of sovereignty by a very strong people and nation, and that is Onondaga. And especially the women, clan mothers and faithkeepers who have influenced me because

of their strength and their dignity. The matriarch of our family is one of those really special women. She is the one that keeps the family together. She is not Elmer's glue; she's the Superglue. She's just an amazing woman. We celebrated her 75th birthday a couple of years ago, and there she was up on the dance floor, didn't let up. She and my other aunts and my uncle taught me by example. Nobody ever sits down and tells you this is what you have to do. They tell you when you are doing something wrong and they kind of leave you alone when you are okay, when you are following that right road.

What I have been very privileged to witness is self-determination, expressions of sovereignty by a very strong people and nation, and that is Onondaga. And especially the women, clan mothers and faithkeepers who have influenced me because of their strength and their dignity.

It wasn't easy sometimes to be the oldest of eight children. I had a lot of responsibilities. I am not complaining, that's just the way it was and it made me a better person. But my aunts knew that every once in a while I needed to have my own time, to be with them, hang out. They would take me shopping, buy me some school clothes, and act like my moms, my surrogate moms, and gave my mother a break. And I will always appreciate that. They taught me how to be a good auntie. When I take care of my nieces and nephews, they are the role models that I have. I know how to be a good aunt because I had good aunts in my life.

What my family wanted to make sure I learned was the role of women in our

community, and the role of women in our government. And the role of women in our government is institutionalized in our constitution, the Great Law of Peace. This is not just something that we talk about that is nice, that is an interesting phenomenon. No, this is the law; the role of our women is something that is institutionalized in our laws. When we talk about democracy, this is one of the principles that the Great Law of Peace is based on.

Many of you know that the Haudenosaune has that tradition of democracy institutionalized in our ways. Democracy is direct access to leadership,

and leadership is the privilege to serve. Those are the two points that are important for our concept of what leaders are and what they should be in our community. This unbroken line of tradition in our society has given us the strength to survive hundreds of years of upheaval, of tribes being terminated, of being relocated, and our land stolen away from our people. The continuity has left us strong. There have been laws, policies, executive boards, over and over again, that have done nothing but that—steal our land, relocate our people, terminate nations by a congressional act [1953]. As someone said earlier, it is a great gift from the Creator that after all of this we are still here.

Dagmar Thorpe asked me to speak about wisdom, and I should say that wis-

dom for me is something that comes very slowly into the deep reflection of your world and what you are doing. I still look to our elders for that wisdom. But I will share with you some observations that I would like to go to our young people, to all the young people that are here with us today, and to the Seventh Generation. I would urge you to help one another develop a generosity of spirit. I would like you to tell the privileged that they should be more duty-bound, and encourage them to share what they have. This world should be about humanity and not profits. So remind your children and your grandchildren that the United States of America became rich off the bounty of these great territories.

I know that you are going to need courage to right this world, because it is moving in the wrong direction. And that's going to take a lot of work. It's moving in a direction that is away from stability, away from treating Mother Earth in a respectable way, and each day you don't move forward you are going to lose an option. Never forget that the land is always the fight. Peel away at the layers, peel away at the next article you read in the newspapers about our people, peel away at the next Supreme Court decision or federal district court decision, and you will see what's underneath all of that jargon, all of the fancy footnotes and quotations, is a fight over our land. And that fight will always be there as long as we hold on to our territories, so be prepared for that fight.

I liked when the panels talked about our original instructions. Our original instructions teach us how to live and how to treat each other. But don't forget one of our original instructions is also to have fun, to enjoy life.

Tonya Gonnella Frichner (Onondaga) founded the American Indian Law alliance, a community-based organization that works on Native legal issues. She is also a lawyer and activist whose professional life has been devoted to the pursuit of rights for indigenous peoples.

One Day Today's Youth Will Be the Elders

MAEHKIWKESEC EL-ISSA WASHINAWATOK

Leadership is important for Native youths. Fortunately I have been around a lot of people, being in an urban area and not on a reservation. I have spent most of my time with my mother, Ingrid Washinawatok El-Issa, traveling around the country and parts of the world where she would speak about different issues that were affecting Native peoples. I learned a lot being with my mom and dad. Even though they came from different backgrounds their situations were very similar, because of Native Americans being colonized by Europe and Palestinians having their land taken over by Israel. A lot of culture can be lost and has been lost by these colonizations. Our link to our culture and tradition is our elders. They are very important people for the future because there is so much knowledge they can pass down and there is so much you can learn. It is important for the youth to receive this knowledge and to continue our culture, because that is who we are. And having this knowledge will help us to be who we are supposed to be. We have to realize that our elders will not be here forever, and responsibility must be taken because one day today's youth will be the elders and we will

have to teach our culture to the future youth.

This is the responsibility of elders, to teach the youth and give them knowledge and pass down the culture, and it is the responsibility of the native youth to take this knowledge and learn it and continue the cycle 400 to 500 years. Thank you.

Maehkiwkeseec El-Issa Washinawatok (Menominee and Palestinian) has spoken at the UN's International Day of Peace and Prayer. He also participated in the Annual Interfaith service of Commitment to the Work of the United Nations.



Tonya Gonnella Frichner and Maehkiwkeseec El-Issa Washinawatok at Millennium gathering, 2001.

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BORN INTO THE HANDS OF OUR OWN PEOPLE

KATSI COOK

It is on behalf of the coming faces and the grandchildren who are already here among us that I share my voice.

My personal portrait as a Native American woman draws from a source deep in the earth of my Kanienkehaka ancestors and the waters of my extended family. I was born to Kawennaïen Evelyn Montour Cook, who came from Kanawake, an old Mohawk village located directly across the St. Lawrence River from Montreal, Quebec. When she was seven years old, my mother fell into the icy rapid waters of the St. Lawrence River in a sledding accident. In the days when antibiotics did not yet exist, the rheumatic fever she developed quickly consumed the mitral valve of her heart. Too delicate to attend school, she was educated at home by Catholic nuns. By the age of twelve, she spoke Mohawk, Latin, French and English. Her maternal uncle, the first Mohawk physician at Kanawake, told her that she should spare her fragile health and never bear children. I was her fourth child, born at home.

I was born into the hands of my paternal grandmother, Kanatires Elizabeth Herne Cook, a midwife who delivered me and many of the children in my generation at Akwesasne. Grandma delivered me at home in the big white iron bed of her farmhouse bedroom in 1952.

I was told that when I was born, my grandmother bundled me and placed me in a basket. Concerned about my mother's condition, it was another hour or so before she checked me again and found that I was bleeding from the cord stump. My grandma raised 15 children in the time of the Great Depression of the 1920s. Her colorful quilts were sewn from the worn clothing of her family, and she was an excellent seamstress and needle-worker. Using her common sense, she took a needle and thread and sewed up my belly button. Growing up in her care, my cousins and siblings would tease me: "You'd better not make

Grandma mad or she'll take her thread back!" I used to sit in my little bed next to the big white iron bed she slept in, the bed where I was born, and search my belly button for that thread.

When I carried my first child at the age of 23, I found my Grandma's thread in the quickening that a new mother experiences. I found my path, my awakening, in the transformative power of birth. In the 22 years of my aboriginal midwifery practice, I have come to see that birth is a ceremony—it fulfills the possibilities of expansion of relationships and identity. It is transformative and purifying. As Oglala Lakota Elder Black



Katsi Cook, traditional Mohawk midwife, and Michael Arredondo at Millennium gathering, 2001.

PHOTO: © JEAN YOUNG/AMERICAN INDIAN MILLENNIUM FORUM

Elk said, “In the night of the womb, the spirit quickens into flesh.”

In the Mohawk language, one word for midwife is *iewirokwas*. This word describes that “she’s pulling the baby out of the Earth,” out of the water, or a dark wet place. It is full of ecological context. We know from our traditional teachings that the waters of the earth and the waters of our bodies are the same water. The follicular fluid which bathes the ripening ovum on the ovary, the dew of the morning grass, the waters of the streams and rivers and the currents of the oceans—all these waters respond to the pull of our Grandmother Moon. She calls them to rise and fall in her rhythm. Mother’s milk forms from the bloodstream of the woman. The waters of our bloodstream and the waters of the earth are all the same water.

In the early years of my work at Akwesasne, I was confronted with one mother’s question: Is it safe to breast-feed? In 1983 vast contamination of our local environment with industrial organochlorines—PCBs specifically—was disclosed by the General Motors Corporation, the second largest employer in the United States. Earlier veterinary research in the 1970s by Dr. Lenaart Krook of Cornell University’s College of Veterinary Medicine revealed disabling fluorosis in local cattle as a result of atmospheric deposition of fluoride ash spewing from Reynolds Metals smokestacks on pasturelands on our reservation. Ensuing years would see the community’s continuing struggle for remediation and restoration with an ever-expanding circle of polluters and pollution sources throughout the Great Lakes Basin.

If you look at a map of the world, you can easily see that 25% of the earth’s available fresh water is located in the sweet water seas of the Great Lakes Basin. We quickly realized that Akwesasne is a veritable sink of the Great

Lakes Basin, downstream and downgradient from some of the world’s most persistent and problematic pollution. On its way through the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic Ocean, contaminated sludges and sediments bioaccumulate and biomagnify toxic contaminants in the food web of which we are all part.

In what would become the first Superfund site in the country to include human health in its’ environmental assessments, Akwesasne emerged a

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leader in environmental justice practice, engaging community members, health care providers and leading scientists and institutions.

Women are the first environment. We are privileged to be the doorway to life. At the breast of women, the generations are nourished and sustained. From the bodies of women flows the relationship of those generations both to society and to the natural world. In this way is the earth our mother, the old people said. In this way, we as women are earth.

Science tells us that our nursing infants

are at the top of the food chain. Industrial chemicals like PCBs, DDT and HCBs dumped into the waters and soil move up through the food chain, through plants, fish, wildlife, and into the bodies of human beings who eat them. These contaminants resist being broken down by the body, which stores them in our fat cells. The only known way to excrete large amounts of them is through pregnancy, where they cross the placenta, and during lactation, where they are moved out of storage in our fat cells and show up in our breast milk. In this way, each succeeding generation inherits a body burden of toxic contaminants from their mothers. In this way, we, as women, are the landfill.

Realizing that mother’s milk contains an alphabet soup of toxic chemicals is discouraging stuff. Every woman on the planet has PCBs in her breastmilk. Even in the circumpolar region of the north, our Inuit relatives of the Ungava Bay region of Nunavik have the highest documented levels of breastmilk PCBs in the world. Community leaders there state, “We will continue to do as we have always done,” and consume an average nine fish meals a month, including sea mammals like whale and seal. The essential fatty acids of this subsistence diet are highly protective of the cardiovascular system.

It is well established that the integration of valued lifeways and cultural acts like midwifery and breastfeeding into health care delivery systems are fundamental steps towards good health. In creating how we live, we also create how we die.

At a Circumpolar Conference in the early 1980s, Inuit women expressed their opposition to a provincial evacuation policy for birth which was begun in the 1970s. Having only been settled in villages by the government since the 1950s, the Inuit were accustomed in previous generations to giving birth in

igloos, with assistance from community midwives. The evacuation policy obliged all women to give birth in distant cities to the south, separated from their families, their language and food customs. The cultural and social significance of birth to the strength of the social fabric and community health was severed. The Inuit midwives there, among them Mina Tilugak who herself was born in an igloo, say that, "To bring birth back to the communities is to bring back life."

In a recent document from the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services to the Quebec Minister of Health and Social Services, the Inuit midwives say: "There are few issues more fundamental to any people than birth. This intimate, integral part of our life was taken from us and replaced by a medical model that separated our families, stole the power of the birthing experience from our women, and weakened the health, strength and spirit of our communities. Over the last 20 years, however, we have developed a midwifery system that has restored birth to our culture. Birth has come back to Nunavik, and with it, a sense of meaning and identity that can serve to rebuild the health of our communities."

When I first started on my path as a midwife, I asked my clan mothers in the Longhouse: "How do we teach the young about birth?"

"Begin with the story of the first birth," they said.

Our creation stories contain threads of a world view, a relationship to the universe which is the base of our belief systems and ceremonies. Creation stories are usually referred to as myth. But it is also said that myth is the accumulation of a people's dreams. The Iroquois creation story tells of the dream of a chief of a Sky World inhabited by spirit beings. A celestial tree growing from the floor of the Sky World was dying. The Chief dreamt that the blossoms and

fruits of this sacred celestial tree were withering. He called for a dream-guessing feast. A young woman named Iotsitsisohn, which means Mature Flowers, traveled to attend the feast, enduring tests along her path. Iotsitsisohn came into relationship with the Chief and became heavy with child. In my interpretation of the rich archetypal imagery, she leaned to gather a yellow flower growing from the base of the tree to assist her in her puerperium. In doing this, she uprooted the sacred tree, creating a large hole in the floor of the Sky World. Iotsitsisohn leaned deeply into the hole to peer into the vast blue expanse below. She fell. As she grasped

*When I first started on my path as a midwife,
I asked my clan mothers in the Longhouse:
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the earth at the rim of the hole, trying to break her fall, seeds and bits of sacred things from the celestial tree became embedded under her fingernails. With the assistance of the winged ones, Sky Woman landed on the back of a great sea turtle. Muskrat succeeded in bringing a clump of earth from the bottom of the ocean to put on turtle's back. Iotsitsisohn planted the seeds and bits of sacred things she carried under her fingernails from the other world in this clump of earth. Dancing in the direction the sun goes, she put into place the cycles of continuous creation, continuous birth.

When her time came, she gave birth to a daughter, Katsitsioni, who followed her mother's ways upon the earth. Upon becoming a woman, Katsitsioni became

pregnant by Turtle. She carried twin boys who represent the balance and harmony of life, the archetypal struggle between light and dark, birth and death, integration and disintegration, good and evil. The evil twin chose to be born from a hole he created in his mother's armpit with the flint knife growing from his forehead. The good twin, born the usual way, spent his days misunderstood by his grandmother and creating the earth as we know it in opposition with his evil brother.

From the severed head of Sky Woman's daughter, mother of the creator twins, the moon was created by the use of tobacco, red willow and ceremonial fire. From her breast grow our life sustainers, the corn, beans and squash, our Three Sisters complex.

As human beings we have been given original instructions to follow to maintain the cycles of continuous creation, of continuous birth, put into place by Sky Woman. At each birth I have attended I have seen that new life falls from the hole in the Sky World of its mother's body, and embedded under its fingernails are the seeds and bits of sacred things that it will need and use in this life to fulfill its destiny. Like a dream, a fingerprint, a snowflake, each birth has its own interpretation.

Among the gifts of indigenous intelligence I use in my work with families is a knowledge of the Maya people of Guatemala—the Ways of the Days, or the Tzolk'in. In working with the Maya spiritual people to help the women, this gift of the days has come into our home and our work. It was a shared knowledge and we find that it transfers into the inner logic of our northern cycles, because the basis of the belief is very similar, very similar. We use it as a family, my husband and I, our children. As my husband says, "Nature responds to human sincerity." This family calendar is a sacred gestational calendar. It is also an

PHOTO: © MALCOLM MACKINNON



A young Southern Ute child rests after the Sundance at Ignacio, Colorado.

agricultural calendar which human beings use to relate to the spirit, the energy, or day-lord of each day of a cycle of 20 days that rotates with a corresponding number system, a count from one to thirteen. The spirit guardian of each day is related to a power of nature—wind, fire, sun—or a specific animal—dog/wolf, snake, jaguar, monkey or bird—or to a family instruction, so that human beings can understand and relate to the spirit of the day. Through this sacred count of the medicine of time itself, dreams, visions, ceremonies and births can be interpreted.

Our inner workings, our natural way of knowing, which is our intuition, can be awakened through the use of this sacred calendar.

When we Mohawks recite the Thanksgiving Address that our uncle Tom Porter expressed so beautifully when he opened this gathering, for example, we express our love, appreciation and relationship to the many elements of nature. The Maya further ask nature to move with us to create desired change. Thus ceremonies are held on certain days of the 20-day cycle to gain their fullest efficacy toward the purpose of the prayer. In this

workaday world, ceremonies are commonly scheduled for the convenience of the participants, but the actual day the message is put through is very relevant. It is possible to see the medicine of time at work in the interpretation and fulfillment of the ceremony over time, with a women's cycle as well as a set of days corresponding to male energy. In all of this, the following of the dreams is given utmost care.

I'd like to share a story.

In one young mother's prenatal dream, an unresolved fright/flight response from a traffic mishap precipitated powerful dream imagery within weeks of her due date. It combined with the public demands of her mother's spiritual energy, in whose home she lived during her pregnancy.

In her dream she was shut inside a two-room tent surrounded by black snakes. Peering through the nylon mesh that separated the two rooms, she could see an older woman in the other room standing, handling the snakes. Regarding her own space, the black snakes were thick around her feet.

"What did you feel at that moment?" I asked her.

"I was aware of the snakes but I was not afraid of them. I knew I wanted to get out of the tent," she said. "So I unzipped the zipper of the tent to get outside. When I stepped out of the tent, a huge white snake was reared up in front of me. I've never seen anything like it. It had a big head with white feathers coming down alongside its head."

After years of such interpretations, I sensed how the keys to her dream told the story of the cesarean section she would ultimately need to get her baby out safely (in the movement of her opening the metal zipper door of the tent). Later consultation with our Day-keeper would prescribe the long ceremony she would need to have done for her and her baby.

In dreams, black snakes represent the problems of the people. The great white feathered snake of the woman's dream represented the archetypal white feathered serpent Cucumatz of the Maya people. It augurs powerful ceremony. There is a snake day in the Mayan calendar. The snake is the Mother of the Waters, both protector and justifier. Customarily our people are matrilineal and matrilo-cal. It is good practice to keep an expectant mother happy, contended and away from fright. Sometimes her own mother is her best protector. Often you will see

concerned with the influence of time on our identities as indigenous people, on the knowledge we continue to hold, and the responsibility we have to maintain our lifeways for the benefit of future generations. Today, for example, is the 9 Ik on the Mayan calendar. Today the wind can be soft or strong, representing life and the flow. Wind has the capacity to penetrate anywhere, through our noses, through our lungs, through our blood streams to each cell of our body. It can heal you. I would say to you, grandchildren of the Seventh Generation,

At each birth I have attended I have seen that new life falls from the hole in the Sky World of its mother's body, and embedded under its fingernails are the seeds and bits of sacred things that it will need and use in this life to fulfill its destiny.

in traditional families that the expectant mother lives with her mother, or at least with her mother close by, re-living the "downfending" you hear that Sky Woman's mother did for her daughter as a young girl. Literally, the young Sky Woman of our Haudenosaunee creation story was covered with cat-tail down, kept away from the petty concerns of the people who visited her family home located far from heavily-tread trails. In the dream of the young mother, the old woman working with snakes reflected her mother's home, full of the myriad political and spiritual concerns of community people seeking her advice and ministrations.

I share these teachings of my mentor and brother, Don Roderico Tèni of the Q'eqchi Maya, because we who are con-vened here over these several days are

from this day of the Wind, listen carefully to what is being told to you. Those things that you miss are carried in the swirling winds. I ask the spirit of the wind to swirl through this place, carrying our words, our teachings and blessings to you, echoing into the future to you, using its power to penetrate your minds, your bodies, your spirits, so that these words, these seeds and bits of sacred things, become part of who you are and will continue; will remain with you, our beloved grandchildren.

I give thanks, and pray that peacefully you will be born. I pray that your life will be ongoing, peacefully, knowing you will always be loved.

Katsi Cook (Mohawk) is a traditional midwife that has been involved in community-based environmental health research and communications for more than twenty years.

My Childhood was Filled with Stories

BIRGIL KILLS STRAIGHT

Over the next few minutes I would like to talk to the future generations. I will not stop at the Seventh Generation, because I'm hoping indigenous peoples will live forever, as they have from the past.

My name is Birgil Kills Straight. I am an Oglala Lakota. I come from an area in the West, in the state of South Dakota called Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. In the middle of that reservation is Pejuta Raka. I am a Kiyaksa. I am an Oglala. I am Titonwan. All of those are part of the great Sioux nation, the Titonwan. Titonwan is one of the 7 major nations of the Lakota Nakota Dakota speakers. So I'm not a Lakota, I only speak Lakota.

I am 61 years old. I've been through a lot in the past several years, but my life really started with the time when I can remember my grandmother. She was actually a great-grandmother. She was 102 years old. She was blind. I was about 4 or 5 years old and I had to take care of her. As she goes to the outhouse, or I would bring her in to eat or bathe, or whatever. So that was what I did. I took care of the grandmother, take her food and water, medicine, whatever.

She told many stories. This was in the 1940s. I also have a grandfather who also told many stories. His name was Iron Hail. Iron Hail was the brother of White Lance, my mother's father. There were several in the family. One of their brothers stayed in Canada. They moved there for a while and then came back and most

of them were killed in 1890. White Lance, Iron Hail, and Horn Cloud survived the Wounded Knee Massacre.

I had a traditional background and it was filled with many stories, stories that a young child, a young boy, would like to hear about wars and battles and stealing horses and so forth. There were other stories that they told also of the world of our people, stories that we called *ohunkankan*, stories that were told primarily to the children by their elders. These were stories of creation, origin stories, the stories of animals, and our relationship to all of that.

So I grew up that way. My grandfather, Iron Hail died in 1955 when he was 98 years old. He had a perfect set of teeth, a

20/20 vision and he died a natural death, in spite of the fact that he was wounded many times in battles.

My grandfather, my mother's father, was in battles too, and died before I was born, so he died of his wounds that he received in war.

I had a rich history, as told to us by my grandfathers, my grandmothers and my aunts and uncles and the older people of the *tiospaye* group.

When I went to school, I went to a BIA school in Kyle, South Dakota, and later was sent to the Holy Rosary Mission in Pine Ridge. There I stayed four years, and it was where I saw a little bit more of the world outside of where I had lived. There I was instructed in many different



Birgil Kills Straight, Millennium gathering, 2001.

PHOTO: © JEAN YOUNG/AMERICAN INDIAN MILLENNIUM FORUM

things, such as forgetting my language, that I shouldn't speak this language, and I should be ashamed of a name like Kills Straight.

At ceremonies my father sang, they said it must be for Satanic worship, that they were worshiping Satan, and so our songs were bad and evil. I almost forgot those songs. But I stayed in school, learned, and received an education. And I decided that I should go to college and I would leave home—go make \$10,000 a year. This is in 1955, so you can imagine \$10,000 a year was a lot then. I would own a 1955 Chevy, wear a suit and tie, and marry a beautiful blonde white woman. That would make me a successful Indian.

So, I tried, I spent a couple of more years in college, and joined up with the Army. All of a sudden you become a big shot and you would want to go out and kill somebody.

I wanted to prove myself. I joined up with the Army and within a year I was made part of the general staff, spent my time at headquarters in Europe. I went with the brass and we went to the Black Forest and so forth. This is right after the Berlin crisis. Once, President Kennedy went to the region and I was on the front line, and he stopped and acknowledged me. It was a moment of real glory for me.

It was also in the Army where I realized that I was different. We were training Green Berets, I was temporarily assigned to the Long Range Recon Patrol. These were the original commandos. We trained Green Berets that were going to Laos at that time.

After a couple of years I came out as a pacifist. By that time Jane Fonda was demonstrating against the war and I was part of the group that opposed the war in Vietnam. I continued my education and in 1969 I was teaching at the University of Colorado. I connected there with the Hispanics and blacks, as well as other Indian radicals. They were also raising hell and we supported them.

Finally, I went back and became serious. My background was in education and I was involved in developing curricula, materials, and school boards. I helped to start schools and Indian colleges throughout the United States.

It was not long before things were happening to me that I couldn't understand. I went to ceremonies and found out that I should pay attention to the spirits.

Movement. It was a violent world at the time. My nose has been reshaped several times. Violence was nothing new to me.

I had to change, which I did. I became much more aware of spirit. I lived a different way after 1984. Most of my time was spent in ceremonies, rituals, at least once a day, sometimes three or four times a day. It was a beautiful time in my life because there I really began to understand

I had to change, which I did. I became much more aware of spirit. I lived a different way after 1984. Most of my time was spent in ceremonies, rituals, at least once a day, sometimes three or four times a day. It was a beautiful time in my life because there I really began to understand who I really was. I knew that from Tunkasila, the Creator. I met the Creator.

First, I must cleanse myself. It took me two years. For two years I lived by that purification lodge, stood up on the hill alone on vision quests, and participated at Sun Dances. Later, I came back to a ceremony and there I was given instructions that I had to follow.

It was hard for me to understand all the instructions, but I tried my best. For the next thirteen years, or until 1997, that was the kind of life I lived. I had to leave the old past behind me and that was part of the admission into a whole new world.

I took part in many things on my reservation in the '70s. By that time I was also involved in developing policies and laws. On the tribal council I challenged the corrupt administration and for two years it was a one-man struggle against the BIA government, until my support called in Russell Means and the American Indian

who I really was. I knew that from Tunkasila, the Creator. I met the Creator.

Tunkan is a stone that we heat up in our ceremonies and a spiritual interpreter will pour water on *tunkasila* so he can take you back into time, into the beginning and continue to the future beyond a certain generation that we speak of here today. They can take you into the past and the future and as you travel with them you can relate the stories to the people that are there with you in the purification laws.

It was a profound experience for me, so I continued to do that. Part of the instruction was to work with animals, our little brother the horse was supposed to guide us through many of these journeys. Being a horseman, I followed that route very easily. The journeys that I went on were dangerous ones. I began then to

understand a little bit about who I was.

Inyan in our language is a piece of stone. *Inyan* gave life to *wi*, the sun that we see above. *Wi* and *inyan* combined is *winyan*. *Winyan* in our language is women. It is the first being in the universe.

From this woman comes the first born, that is *tunkan*. *Tun* is birth, *kan* is old, *tunkan* are stones that we heat up. At the beginning of creation, after the women, are the stones.

Understanding that from our own culture, it was hard to communicate that to others until some scientists began to document creation.

The journeys that we made into our bodies means you travel through your own blood, your own veins. In later years it's easier to talk about all this because scientists have been able to explain creation and DNA.

Over time, I realized what my grandparents talked about.

In the first world, they lived in a spirit world, the one *wanagiyata makoce*. In the second world we lived in what we call *wahutekan oyate*, as root nation people. In the third world we lived as *wahutopa oyate*, the four-legged people, four legged nations. At the time, we were the Buffalo, the *tatanka oyate*. Today in the fourth world we live as *wahununpa oyate*, the two-legged people. After this world we would return back the beginning world, the spirit world.

Approximately seventeen and a half-billion years ago something happened in the universe, a little stone exploded, and out of that life started. *Inyan* gave life to *wi*. *Winyan*, women, is created.

In this particular world, sun was created. Creation continued for eleven billion years, until all that was created started to come together and started to form a shape that in later years we would call it Earth.

Six billion more years, it continued until the masses, the gases, the waters, all of these that had been separated at one

time, came together. 500 million years ago, the first living being that came out of this being, out of this woman, was a little blade of grass. But it had a root out of that, and another blade of grass with a root, and all of the vegetation started coming.

500 million to 300 million years of life had gone by and we began to see where we were. We lived in *Mniblasaka*, the *wamnitu oyate* of the Sun Dance Sea that started in the Arctic area all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico.

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250 million years ago popped a little piece of ground, like a pimple, called the Black Hills. As the waters receded, the Badlands were formed, and our older brothers started to come to life, the pre-historic creatures, animals that are our relatives.

250 million years ago, it finally established itself, but with no people yet.

For us, land was the mother. We come from that land, we come from that Earth, the *maka*, the *wamakaskan*, the form that is coming into being, *wa* is the matter in its purest form, *maka* is dirt, and *skanskan* is

something which moves. A sacred Earth which moves. That's what the animals and the people are. We come from that.

In our language, the Lakota language, the understanding of history and spirituality is all equal. If you can say *wi*, *wa*, *we*, and *wo*, in four different ways you can speak Lakota in a minute. *Pi*, *pa*, *peh*, *p'o*, for *si*, *sa*, *s'e*, or *so*.

That little explosive sound between the "t" and "e", it is the finality of life, death, *p'o*, is fog, or fog seen spiritually is a metaphysical connection, the physical plus another plane, the spirit world.

The tipi that we live in also tells a history of who we are. First the tipi, when it was constructed was put up with three large poles tied in the middle. Those three represent the past, present, and future. Six poles are added and one lift pole with a cover, the seventh. All of these are put into a circle around the frame and the poles that are extended out beyond the covering represent the metaphysical abode, or spiritual abode.

They represent the sacred sites around the Black Hills. It also points to the sacred sites above, the stars and constellations, where we originate from and where we receive powers from.

Everything happens in a series of fours, or clusters of fours. So, when you look at those seven poles you come up with 28, it becomes a calendar, every 28 days it is a new moon, a new world, a new time. The ten that are there, the seven plus the three, a ten plus two, that controls the intake of air and it pushes out old air, that twelve represents the twelve moons that we call a year.

These are very simple things. I had that opportunity to understand these things when I was five and six years old, except I didn't know that it was the history of my people.

In later years after studying all this, I realized that's not what I want to be. America means "loves wealth." "Ami" is love and "rica" is riches in Latin.

My mind was warped and it probably still is. I had a beautiful childhood, given understanding about woman by my old grandmother, my mother who raised me, and my sisters, all of these people, my daughters, granddaughters—these were the life givers. But I was told at Holy Rosary they were evil.

In speaking about the Seven Sacred sites, they also mention the seven laws that were brought to us by a woman who gave us a pipe, who became a Buffalo and went back towards the north.

The understanding of the seven laws would be something that I think every one of us, but especially I as a Lakota, should know.

Wacante ognake, means to carry the welfare or the people in your heart, the heart strives to be generous and to be helpful and to share and to give.

Wowaunsila, means to have pity and compassion for everything that moves. Everything does move, everything has a spirit, from the smallest blade of grass or the smallest grain of sand to the largest mammal. They are all people, part of the Creator.

Wowauonihan, means to have respect and to honor those things that we respect. That means everything that moves should be respected.

Wacin tanka, means to be patient and tolerant because the things that I mentioned are the things that have moved. All have their own language and all have a reason for being there, these are the people, these are nations we call species. But they are nations, they are people, they are not people like you and me, but they are still a nation. They are a species of life that the Creator had made.

Wowahwala, means a state of silence. It talks about a state of being humble, or to seek humility.

Woohitike, means to have principles and

to discipline ourselves, to be brave and courageous. Every person must have their own set of principles and must be self-disciplined. A long time ago we had no reason for law and order, because everybody knew what to do, they learned that from their mother, their *ina*. “I” is the mouth and “na” is to give in our language.

Woksape, means understanding or wisdom.

These are the seven basic laws that were given to us by a woman whose name was law. She came with a pipe and gave it to us with these instructions, turned around and became a Buffalo.

These were some of the sacred sites around the Black Hills that had been used in different ways. Today, Hells Canyon, Mayaska Kakun. On the other side, the Pte Heolokeca San, Gray Buffalo Horn. Today it is called Devil’s Tower.

All the things that were sacred to us, Christianity, Judeo-Christian, and American ideas came and gave them a different meaning, unlike what I learned as a boy, that the Earth was a sacred life giver.

Women are life givers. They are sacred life givers. Something happens mysteriously inside of them and they give life, they nourish life. This was the Lakota belief before Christianity arrived or before I went to Holy Rosary Mission.

At Holy Rosary, I was told you don’t look down below the neckline of a girls dress. From the neck to the hemline, which is below the knees, because it was evil.

My mind was warped and it probably still is. I had a beautiful childhood, given understanding about woman by my old grandmother, my mother who raised me, and my sisters, all of these people, my daughters, granddaughters—these were the life givers. But I was told at Holy Rosary they were evil.

So, that was the education I had. That would be my message to the future generations: that your future generations are people, and those of you who can understand Lakota, if you can carry this forward as I have, into the future, there will be no ending.

The tipi explains that, there is a physical abode and a spiritual abode. The spirit, the metaphysical, and the physical world combined by that vortex. Everything that happens, it happens in a clockwise manner. There is also power in the counter clockwise manner in which it is being moved.

That is what I would tell the future generation: be proud, try to understand who you are, learn about nature, about the natural forces. You can learn about God just by watching the sun come up, you can see God in action as that little dew drop on the grass begins to dry off or drip.

Everything that we touch, smell, and hear are the works of the Creator. As a Lakota, that was what I must believe, and I do.

Birgil Kills Straight (Oglala Lakota) is the executive director of the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority in Kyle, South Dakota.

One of Your Greatest Challenges Will Be to Distinguish Between Natural and Unnatural Life

DEBRA HARRY

I never would have guessed that I would be doing work on biocolonialism today. There couldn't have been a better introduction for my work than hearing Katsi Cook talk about birth and life, plants, medicine, all those things that it takes to sustain us as people. Genetics is simply a study of heredity. It's deconstructing the body, or the seeds of life, and looking at its components at a molecular level.

Genetic material is passed on through reproduction. We are a physical composite of our mother's and father's genes through the merger of the egg and the sperm. And we pass on that composition, along with our own genetic contributions as parents, to our children when we reproduce.

Katsi shared some of her family lineage with us today. Our parents were composites of their parents' genes and their grandparents and so on. And so genetics is looking at our molecular physical selves, examining the DNA that exists within our bodies and analyzing it. Depending on the researcher's interests, they might be looking for genetic differences, links to health conditions, or just examining genetic structure. Some are simply motivated by curiosity. I've asked geneticists "What are you looking for?" The answer was "We don't know, that's why we have to look."

They think about cells as just that, cells. As if cells are some kind of mechanical process. They talked about genetic codes as if it is simply data. They talk about finding a gene for this or a gene for that, and

lead us to believe that if they find it they can snip it out or fix it somehow. But a cell is a part of a living human body, or the seed of a plant that produces the corn, the squashes, or the medicines that we use. They are part of a living body. As Native people, we know also that living organisms also have a spirit. So our cells still carry that essence of life.

When they do isolate cells and keep them in their laboratories, they keep the cells alive by feeding them the right medium and keep them at human body temperature. They can grow the cells in perpetuity. Genetic material can be manipulated. It's possible to take genes from a tobacco plant and mix it with human genes. This is called genetic engineering.

But when you think about it, do we want to have our living cells manipulated by anybody? Does anybody have that right? What does it mean when someone interferes with this long, human lineage, that also has a long future that we pass on to our children?

We know that there's this physical process of reproduction, the merger of the egg and the sperm. But also there's a spiritual process in reproduction. So you have a fertilized egg, but something else happens that brings new life into this world. And that's when the Creator breathes life into it. So you have a spiritual being at that point.

Today's technology allows scientists to produce and reproduce living organisms. When these changes affect germ cells, it is

a manipulation that will carry through all future generations from that point forward. When I first talked to Dave Pratt about germ line changes, he said that this is an act of war on our children and we can't let that happen.

We'll just talk a little bit about what cloning is. It's a fundamentally different way of creating a human being because there is no sperm. Cloning is done by removing the nucleus from an egg and putting the nucleus from another cell into that denucleated egg. Its treated with electric shock. It starts to do what cells do, starts to divide, and develops from there.

So any cloned entity starts from two damaged cells. You don't know what you're going to get and you don't know what kind of damage is going to be there. It might look normal. It might not. It's pure experimentation. And I think that we are going to see human clones being brought into this world very soon.

In terms of health, we are being tricked by a massive media campaign. We are led to believe that a lot of this research is good, that it's going to cure diseases, that it's going to cure cancer, heart disease and so on. But the reality is that this research is driven by different motives including greed. What scientists are able to do now is to identify genes that they think are associated with a health condition or that they think might be commercially profitable and useful in genetic screening techniques or products. I'm talking about both private and publicly-funded research. And

the beneficiaries are shareholders, because the minute anything that's potentially valuable in the market is discovered, it's patented. That means that you will have to pay to have access to anything. So it benefits shareholders and not society.

They use human suffering as an excuse to get at our DNA. It's a real zookeeper's mentality. They want to have Hopi DNA in their collections. They want to have Anishinabe DNA, or Northern Cheyenne DNA in their collections.

But the reality is, we're not dying from our physical selves, or from our ancestral makeup. In fact, I think we're perfect the way we are created to be, because our bodies are a result of centuries and eons of adaptation in order to live and survive and to be healthy in our environments. What is killing us is environmental contamination, bad food, economic oppression, and a lack of access to basic health care.

Diabetes continues to be the number one excuse that they'll use to study native people's genetic material. But our bodies were not meant to process the refined sugars, white flour, or macaroni in our contemporary diets. Our bodies were meant to process the natural foods that existed in our environments. I was at the Indigenous Women's Network Gathering this summer and the Akwesasne women shared a food chart. Their food chart was a circle. On one side of the circle was the lean meat, deer meat, fish, and game. And on the other side of the circle were the seeds and the berries and maple sugar. That was their food chart. That's really what we all need to be doing if we want to do something about many of our current health conditions, including diabetes, We have to pay attention to what we eat. Bad diets and lifestyle factors are causing the diabetes. It's not some inherent flaw that flows in your blood.

Today many scientists are mining our minds. They're coming in to find out what we know about our plants, our medicines. They want to identify the pharmaceutical

qualities of those plants so that they can patent them and exploit them for themselves. They're mining our plants, our seeds, the food, the corn, and the squashes. Everything that it takes to sustain life is at threat of being expropriated and permanently manipulated.

If they do genetic engineering and that organism gets released into the environment, it has the potential of permanently contaminating all of those original varieties. This has happened in Mexico, where genetically modified corn has contaminated original strains of corn that they've nurtured for centuries.

That's why the work that Clayton Brascoupe and all of the other traditional farmers are doing to protect the old varieties of seeds and foods is so important. You've got to continue to do that and to keep those resources out of corporate control.

The other problem that we're up against is one that we know all too well, and that is racism. We're treated like objects by the scientific community. It's no different than what went on in the past. They look at us through a racist lens, as dehumanized people, less than them, and treat us as if our knowledge means nothing. They consider us as some inbred, pure blood groups that they want to study and analyze and put into their collections. They're not worried about us, they're not worried about our continued survival in the future. They're sitting there dreaming up their research projects based on their interests, not ours. All we are is the place that they go for their sources of DNA.

Genetic technologies are yet one more thing we have to try to protect ourselves from. Our genetic materials are just one thing more they want. They want to mine the interiors of our bodies and our minds for their own benefit, not ours. The only protection that anybody has is a concept called informed consent.

We are giving people, and that makes us very vulnerable. When our people are

told, "If you participate it will help our research project, something good will come out of it, something might be discovered that will alleviate human suffering and so on, " we're more than willing to give. But, it puts us in a really vulnerable position because they don't tell us all of the information that we need to make good choices. They don't tell us that they can manipulate genes, that they can store genetic material forever as immortalized cell lines. They don't tell us that they ship vials of DNA from one laboratory to their colleagues at a different institution or even a different country. They don't ask the community's permission, or tell you about what they're doing with your cells.

In terms of my message to the Seventh Generation, I want to tell them that today's technology has made it possible to manipulate living beings. My current generation, our current generation, is making some of these decisions now that undoubtedly will have an impact on your life in significant ways, both in human life and the environment.

One of your challenges will be to distinguish between natural life and unnatural life. You must protect the integrity of nature and natural life.

You have to make deliberate choices, and be careful not to discard our ways and adopt Western thinking as a guide to your lives.

Our generation continues to struggle as peoples for the right to exist, to live as distinct peoples and to be free. We struggle to be free to determine our own futures and protect and manage all that is ours for our future generations, just as our ancestors have done for us.

You undoubtedly will have to continue the struggle for the next seven generations so that your children and grandchildren, will be free to be who they were created to be.

Debra Harry (Northern Paiute) is the executive director of the Indigenous Peoples Council on Biocolonialism.

THE KNOWLEDGE YOU HAVE, UNTIL IT IS USED WISELY, MEANS NOTHING

ANGAANGAG LYBERTH

My dearest great grandchildren, by the time you read these words, you have understood why I act so scared. I make a mistake today because I allowed other people to speak for me, that is even scarier. If only you could see who I am looking at, then you would understand why I am scared. I am looking at incredibly scary people, but not as scary as Tom Porter. It is not that these people want to be scary. These are some beautiful people, but they scare me because they know so much, and have so much to offer. But I will do my very best to be in a good way, always. My dear grandchildren, when you have a chance to meet your great-great-grandmother, my grandmother, I want you to talk to her in such a way that you will comprehend what it is that she taught you. You see, I was given the task of giving it to you, but often I wonder what it is that my grandmother gave me to give to you, my grandchildren. I remember when she told me, "son, don't be shy, take a deep breath." I did, and the shyness went away. The beauty is in front of me, if only you could see.

My intent in carrying a message for you, ancestors, is so you can have a life that will make you stand tall and powerful, as you were meant to be from the very beginning. Not the way I did it, because I ran away from it. It was so hard, incredibly difficult to be an

Eskimo. Many a time I was spat upon just for being an Eskimo. I stood under the shower for hours and hours on, just to get rid of the smell that they claimed emitted from me. And after many hours under the shower, just to be called again, the dirty filthy Eskimo, I would go back home and go under the shower again, and even wash the towels under the shower, extremely hot, just so I could try to get rid of that smell, which made me so bad a person. Until I realized that I forgot to listen to my grandmother, and I traveled back home.

I do remember in 1953 in the month of October, when the government agent came to our village to announce

that we had all become Danes. We were so excited. I remember sitting on the mountain on the side of the village, amongst my brothers and my cousins, and discussing when it is that we are going to become blond and blue eyed. I looked at my brother. I tried to think how he would look when he becomes blond-haired. And he turned around and looked at me. I sort of became scared of becoming blond and blue-eyed because I didn't want to be scarier than I already am.

So, I went home again, I started to speak my language and I started to take on the teachings from my grandmother, my mother, my father, my aunts and my uncles. My dear



Birgil Kills Straight and Angaangag Lyberth, 2001.

PHOTO: JEAN YOUNG/AMERICAN INDIAN MILLENNIUM FORUM

grandchild, you are a direct descendant of the last Eskimo shaman of West Greenland. I want you to enjoy it in your heart. Also, I want you to know that you are a direct descendant of the very first Eskimo ever to be ordained in the Christian ministry, from my mother's side. Also, I want you to know that you are a direct descendant through your great-great-great uncle of the very first Eskimo, Mohada. I don't know what it means to you, when you learn it, but for me what it means is that you have been given the teachings of all elders, the teachings of the world which brings joy to the heart of the Eskimo tribe. You come from a place which is so isolated that no one knows.

I gave some talks over the years to people who I thought would listen to me, but I realized that they were just pretending. How do I know that they were pretending? By what they said. I know they were pretending because nothing changed. I told them that if we carry on the way it is today, they would lose their place of home, because it will be under water. I want you to know that I am speaking seriously, that the ice is melting. Yes, I noticed in the newspaper that they put it on the front page some places. No wonder one of the grandfathers said, "Oh, shit, they drowned in their own shack." What I want you to know is that one of the great grandmothers stood up in fury, and said: "The time has come for you to help these white men. If you don't help them now, they won't have a home to go to." So, I am trying to help the white man, so he can have a home to go home to. I don't think he understands what it means to be made homeless, because many people have taken other people's homes and people's land. To have a feeling of taking the land that does not belong to them.

The wealth that can only be measured by the spirit of heart. My niece

over here, Debra, was telling us about DNA. And I was so happy that she was able to say that the gene is a spiritual element. How proud I am to have a niece like you. You see what happens if there's no spirit. All becomes dead. My son, the other day when you and I were young we were part of the animal world everyone has spoken of. Except you could not determine what kind of

dream about you I think of all these things, the teachings. And I pray that you will have the skill and ability to grow to a new level of reality much faster and much easier and much more comfortably than it's been for me in my growth, which has been so incredibly difficult and scary at times. I look forward to the day when we answer questions about the sacred. I won't

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an animal we were. We were not the polar bear, the wolf, the caribou or the walrus, the seal. But we were part of the animal world. So now, my son, you and I, we have two sets of eyes. Your instinct, like the animal world, and your higher self. Never forget it, my son. This is the way you've been created and it is the way you'll be for times and times to come, until one day you come to a new level of reality. I pray and I ask the Great One that you will get there before it's too late for you. When I told you the new level of reality, you probably were wondering what I meant. As you listen to the tape, I hope you will understand what I mean. You see, our ancestors spoke about the circle which has no beginning and no ending in which we all belong. Look at the picture carefully, my dear, and look what I have in my hand. I'm holding in front of you a circle which has no beginning or ending in which we all belong. Often when I

have time today to talk about it, but another day I will tell you. You see, the sacred point of death is the most sacred spot a red man can have in his life.

That's the teaching I've been given, and I'm giving it to you now. Because it is Mother Earth. I don't know what other people call it, but this is what we say, that I enter again the womb of Mother Earth. I go there to find myself in the midst of the dark. A grandfather stone is brought into the sweat lodge, which has been burned in the fire. A sacred fire. And when that grandfather walks into the lodge, then I will pour the lifegiving source of all, water, on the grandfather. And the latent energy within that emerges. I can hardly wait for you to experience that so you can have a chance to understand what I mean. You see, my dear, all I want is to lift up your heart so you can have a chance to see that the future will be so incredibly beautiful. I wish I could be

there with you. I know I won't. Sometimes when I cry myself to sleep, I wonder where the Great One is. Sometimes I get angry at this Great One and call him names which I will not repeat here, because I get so angry for having been left alone on my own in this world. Sometimes I wish that I could just join your great-great-grandparents, so I can start the journey, and maybe receive a smile from my grandmothers and my grandfathers, instead of looking at a horrific life on this earth. The pain in which the people live is like a horrible test. I know, I know, I know. Your grandmother told me that the knowledge you have, until it is used wisely means nothing. If that is true, that means that wisdom is the key to pros-

The pain in which the people live is like a horrible test. I know, I know, I know. Your grandmother told me that the knowledge you have, until it is used wisely means nothing.

perity. Son, I wish you would remember this at all times. Wisdom is within you. You see, I have listened to incredibly beautiful words spoken over centuries, beautiful, powerful words that say we have a chance. I get scared when I hear people from my part of the world who speak those beautiful words without the spirit. I ask for forgiveness from the Creator to make me different. My prayer is to learn to make the difference in this world. We all want to make a difference. I don't want to speak the same words over and over and over, as my grandfathers and grandmothers have done. I want to arrive at the level of new within me, so I can become tall and powerful as I'm meant to be. So I can learn to soar like

an eagle and realize my immensity within.

My great grandson, as of today, I made a pledge to myself, that I will begin the process of change so I can arrive in a place where I can become truly taller and powerful. My son, I'll ask for your prayers, because one day I hope I can truly arrive in a place of beauty. I love you. I respect you. Just like your mother loves you and respects you, just like your father loves you and respects you. I want you to take care of your brothers and sisters in such a way as your great-great-uncle did. He is now homeless in the city of Copenhagen, drunk. He is a man who had greatness. He knows every one of our children's names and birthdays. He knows your great-great-great-uncles' names and birthdays and how many children they had, and their birthdays. And now he's homeless in a big city under great lights. How he arrived there is a bad story. I'm hoping that you will never do that. I want you to pray for your great-uncles and nephews. When you pray, ask for forgiveness for them. Because they are part of this world of today which keeps changing, and yet nothing ever changes. The wrong in the world continues to exist just because people mainly only keep to their ideas and do not strive to put them into action and practice. Oh, my son, how much I pray to be different.

Many years ago, my great-grandfather was sentenced to death. He was declared tuberculosis-infected. That was back in the forties when he was a young man. So he had the foresight to write things down. And I wanted to read to my grandson what he wrote down. What he wrote is the legacy I want to leave to my grandson. That's what I want to do. I have traveled every single Eskimo village in the world, except for Siberia and East Greenland.

Alaska, Canada and Greenland, I've traveled to every single Eskimo village. I literally landed there. I went to visit with the elders and spoke to them and listened to them. I prayed with them, I chanted with them. Every single village. That is not very many. Just about 200 villages, maybe 300. One time I went to 56 villages in three continents in a year. Now I can say that I've traveled. This year I traveled to show my people the indigenous world for more than 20,000 miles. Why did I do that? I want to grow to become that man I was meant to be. In the teachings of the Eskimo people, we talk about becoming tall. I am a very tall Eskimo, by the way. I'm the second tallest in my high school. Why do I have a nephew who is six foot two? I'm not quite sure how my sister feeds him, but probably seal fat. That's what he ate.

The summer season has passed once again. The earth is covered by the snow. Snow, so silently clean and pure. The mountains all around are putting on their best regalia, so to welcome the arrival of the fall. Snow. The one which is so clean and white, to cover up my path of old, lay out my path to come, because so often in life I do not know which way to go.

My dear son, as my training tells me, I cannot live here alone until I have remembered your great-great-grandmother, my mother. When she left me I was wearing my hair long, because I'm an inheritor of medicine. A year after the passing of my mother, I cut my hair. I braided my long hair and gave it to her. Because the Inuit nation, we believe that it gives her strength in her journey in the next world. It's really funny when you look at the Old Testament, what it says about the hair. Isn't it fascinating that in that particular book it mentions the strength of the hair? I always find that fascinating, because when I looked at this particu-

lar sacred book, give or take a few years here and there, maybe it's about 4,000 years old. Do you know what? I am, as a modern Eskimo, probably about 6,000 years old. But my tradition is to cut my hair to give my strength to my mother. And in that sacred book is the same thing.

I get excited about these kinds of things, but that's another story. I remember my mother, because when she passed away on September the 2nd, a bit more than a year ago, for the first time in more than 200 years in the

The wrong in the world continues to exist just because people mainly only keep to their ideas and do not strive to put them into action and practice.

land of the Eskimo peoples an Eskimo drum was used for a funeral service. In more than 200 years the Eskimo drum had not been used. How painful it is that it was never been used for so many years. My great-grandson, when you grow and become a man of age, I pray that you will be able to use the drum much better than most can ever dream. When your great-great-grandmother died a year ago, I realized personally how little I'd been able to say thank you, as my brother, my nephew, my elder, Tom Porter, taught us to say thank you when he opened the gathering here.

When I realized how little thanks I

had given to my mother for the gifts she's given me to carry the teachings of my people, I started building a song, a chant of gratitude in prayer that it will become well known in every heart around the globe. So I would like to leave it to you, my grandson. Because when you grow up, this chant is yours to have. And it is built around thanksgiving to the Great One for having blessed me with such a mother, without whose strength the old teachings of our ancestors will never become part of our life again. So when I chant and you listen to it, close your eyes and remember the people who are going to the next world, who you love and who loves you. Ask for help, if that is what you need. Offer your help if you have the strength. But if you don't know how to speak, just smile and let them know that you're well. As I'm closing my eyes to chant, I'm thanking the people who have asked me to come to this place of Cornell University and I want them to know how privileged I feel to stand in front of them talking, how tall I feel, how powerful I feel. I pray that I will be able to do so in a good way. My dear son, my dear beloved grandson, how much I love you and respect you. I wish you all the very best of life

Angaangag Lyberth (Inuit) serves on the Special Advisory Council to the Jane Goodall Institute and is a member of the North American Indian Institute of Elders and Youths.

WORKING THROUGH OUR PAIN SO WE CAN SERVE THE PEOPLE

DEBRA LAFONTAINE

I am trying hard not to cry because Wilma said, “You cry at the drop of a hat.” But I realized if I don’t cry, I would have to talk about something that has no meaning to me. And I didn’t want to dishonor you by talking about something that had no meaning to me. So, Wilma gave me permission to cry.

I really don’t know how I ended up here. I heard about this conference from Wilma. I really didn’t have any intention of being here. But once I saw the list of people that were going to come, I was anxious to come, because I have so much respect for all of the people that are here today.

I don’t know anything compared to what I heard so far. You are known for helping your people. It is like you are all warriors, and I feel like I am still in boot camp and I shouldn’t be here. I am still trying to figure out how to tie my shoelaces. I know you have all been out there a long time. I know Wilma and Charlie and Dagmar and I heard of people like Birgil and Tom Porter and John Mohawk, and for me it is like being with movie stars. I would rather be here than with George Clooney. I say thanks to all of you for not turning your backs on your people.

You have to do for yourself. But when I feel like I can’t contribute anymore,

there will be Dagmar crossing my path. I have never heard her complain, or say “I can’t do it” or “It can’t be done.” Wilma is like that for me too. She will cross my path again. They are older sisters who say, “I am going to show you.”

I was trying to think about what I would say this morning, I was sitting in my chair thinking, “Creator, what would you have me say?” This morning when we got up, I was with Ella Mulford. She said, “You know, I forgot to tell them about the journey within. I forgot to tell them that.” And I said, “Oh, God, He wants me to do that.” I didn’t think I wanted to do that because I would have to expose too much of myself to you and I was afraid of that. So, I said, just give me the strength and courage to tell you who I am. And I was sitting there and I had firmly resolved that that’s what I would do.

Then my sister from Kenosha, Sherry, put this poetry in front of me. She is a wonderful writer, and the title of her poem that she passed to me was called “The Journey.” That’s how I knew that that’s what I need to talk to you about, my journey, because I think that’s all I have to offer you.

I am a Turtle Mountain Chickasaw, but I was not raised on the reservation, I was raised in Montana. I don’t know

a whole lot about my family other than my immediate family, my grandmother, aunts and uncles and my father and mother. My mother is Blackfoot-Chippewa and Scottish, and my father is French and Chippewa. My grandmother—my father’s mother—didn’t speak English in her household. They spoke Ojibwe. I grew up understanding the language, but not speaking it, because my parents came from a time when it was not safe to speak the language. They wanted no harm to come to me, so they didn’t encourage it.

This was a disconnect, and I lost a lot of things. I think of that disconnect, and of the boarding schools, and I think it is the same story, so I don’t have to go into all the abuses we have all grown up with—the substance abuse and physical abuse, et cetera. I am not trying to diminish that. I am just saying that because of those experiences, I didn’t get the positive part of our life—the ceremonies and the values and the language and the culture. I only got the other part.

I have to say too that I love my parents, and I don’t want to dishonor them by saying they did anything wrong. I was sent to a lot of foster homes and orphanages, while my parents got their life together. We got back together and became a family again.

During that process, I don't know that I had faith or belief in anything. I decided it was best to walk away from being Indian, because it meant negative things to me. I decided to educate myself, and I did that. I think my dad made it to sixth grade and my mom made it to the eighth grade. I had decided that I would do something bigger. I think mostly it was out of anger.

There was a disconnect, and I lost a lot of things. I think of that disconnect, and of the boarding schools, and I think it is the same story, so I don't have to go into all the abuses we have all grown up with—the substance abuse and physical abuse, et cetera. I am not trying to diminish that. I am just saying that because of those experiences, I didn't get the positive part of our life—the ceremonies and the values and the language and the culture. I only got the other part.

I went through school and got a degree and worked in the non-Indian world. And it is a very competitive place, a very stressful place. I started to learn the values of that world. I hate to say "white"; I hate to say "color." I don't want anybody to think the wrong thing. I really don't have a problem with the way that world functions. I think it has some sort of purpose as well.

But what I found was that in that value system, I became very competitive, very selfish. I always worried

about me, my next promotion, my career, the ability to gain material things, so no one would ever look at me and see me as unsuccessful.

I saw women as weak. I patterned myself after what I thought it was to be successful, which was competing with males, and I was good at it. I worked in fields where there were a lot of men. I learned not to feel any emotion. There was nothing you could do to make me

cry. I used to work at winning arguments—not out of a sense of truth, but of a sense of winning, a sense of being one up on somebody else.

I was extremely judgmental and critical and unforgiving. I was a human being you wouldn't want to know. I think I was what you call a workaholic. My father was an alcoholic, so I never drank. But my addiction came through work and never doing any self-reflection whatsoever. I worked and competed out of a need to run away from myself. But I thought, too, this can't be

what life is about. And so I prayed and I asked for something different. I asked to be of service; that was my prayer, and I didn't know what that entailed. That's when my journey began. I think I was about thirty-six years old when I said that prayer. And I got a call, and things started to happen.

One of the first people that interviewed me after this prayer was John Echohawk with the Native American Rights Fund. The interview was intimidating. They sat me in this one chair in the front of the room and nobody was smiling. He asked one question. I was used to being interviewed by lawyers, engineers, the mayor, city administrators, all those people, so that didn't intimidate me. But he asked this one question and it killed me. He said, "What have you done for your people?" And he was talking to somebody who has never done anything for anybody but myself. I was just stone cold speechless, and that's not like me either. I couldn't find a way around that, because it caused me, at that moment in time, to question my motivations about who I was. And I couldn't give him an answer, because I had done nothing for my people.

Needless to say, I didn't get the job. That question has never left my mind though. I did get a job with another Native American non-profit organization, and began to serve people. It had to do with fund-raising and scholarships for students, and that sort of thing. Then it went into wellness programs and any kind of need that seemed to be out there, I was willing to fill, if that is what I was supposed to do. Within that journey, what I realized was that I was still an arrogant, judgmental, critical, unforgiving person. And so there were a series of events that now I see as the Creator and the spirits putting me through life's school. They could not use me in a good way

until I could get rid of some of that stuff.

Along the way, I met elders. I had this issue with my father. I really hated him and I wanted to stop hating. But how do you forgive? Everybody says, forgive and forget, but how do you really do that? An elder said to me, “All you have to do is pray for the well being of that person that you hate.” But, you know, I would die first, before I would do that. I can’t do that. And he said, “You just have to be willing to maybe mean it just a little bit. You don’t even really have to mean it.” He said, “Just pray for the wellness or the happiness of that man.”

And so I started to do that. I don’t hate anybody, but I really hated my father, because he had put us through so much violence. But I started to pray every night and I wished my father well. And I wished for him good things. And I didn’t mean it. And I did it night after night, after night, after night. Every time my father called, I would do it again. It took almost a year and a half. Then, one time I said that prayer, I realized that I really meant it. I meant it. I knew I had reached forgiveness. So now I know what forgiveness is.

An elder told me one time that I was looking at life wrong. “Those tests are all gifts,” he said. “You always have to understand that every trial that you go through, there is a gift on the other side.” That gift for me was learning how to forgive. He said, “How could you ever learn that lesson if no one ever did anything to you to forgive?” That was pretty profound for me. How would I know about forgiveness if no one had ever done anything to me to forgive? It made sense to me. It was starting to come together just a little bit more. It was then the Creator sent me out on that little job, and I said to myself, I am doing what I always

wanted to do. I have something of myself I can give to somebody else.

Then came the next obstacle in my way. I thought, I am not a very compassionate person. When people would whine and complain and feel sorry for themselves, I was just not ready to hear them. I hadn’t understood the depth of their pain.

So, my Creator gave me another gift. He took everything away from me completely, and I felt shattered. My life

And I remember an elder saying, “Everybody has a path that is laid out for them and they are accountable for their footprints.” He said, “Life is truly easy, you just pick up the corn, it is always there to guide you.” That has been true in my life. And I see that when I was in that place of selfishness and unforgiveness, I couldn’t see it. It is like a pair of foggy glasses; you can’t find your way. It is like He is cleaning off the glasses, so that you can see.

I saw women as weak. I patterned myself after what I thought it was to be successful, which was competing with males, and I was good at it. I worked in fields where there were a lot of men. I learned not to feel any emotion. There was nothing you could do to make me cry. I used to work at winning arguments—not out of a sense of truth, but of a sense of winning, a sense of being one up on somebody else.

went to pieces, everything was gone—relationship, work, house. Everything that meant something to me was gone in one day.

From that moment on, I understood more about pain, more about compassion. As I started to understand the pain, it was kind of remolding me, rebuilding me, so that I could be of service. I realized that with my arrogance and my criticism of others and my unforgiving attitude, I couldn’t serve anybody, not even my Creator.

So He was lowering me. He was helping my recollection of my past.

In each separate way, there is always something deeper, so I don’t have a great expectation that my life is going to be perfect and smooth. But I do have an expectation that every obstacle that comes my way, every pain that comes my way, has a value to me, and that there is a gift on the other side of it. Where I used to pray for things, now I pray for understanding. I don’t even pray for the release of the pain or the feelings that I have to go through to get to the situation, I just ask to understand, because I want to learn what life holds for me. Because I am doing that,

But he asked this one question and it killed me. It was that only question to me. He said, "What have you done for your people?" And he was talking to somebody who has never done anything for anybody but myself.

I know I can serve the people better.

There is one message I wanted to get across. In the process of working with the people, I ended up doing hundreds and hundreds of talking circles. And in those circles, everyone from the youth to the adults was involved. I found that we were not very good at allowing our children to express their feelings. Even some of us adults had a hard time expressing our feelings to our children. In one situation where we were trying to build the self-esteem of a group of children that had put a play together, we came up with a plan that each adult in the community would go up and say something about that child, something positive about what they had done.

We found that as the adults, we had a really difficult time telling each child how special he was, how important he was, what a good job he had done. Some of us had grown up in such anger and we were definitely criticized and judged and abused verbally, so we were pretty good at that ourselves. But we weren't good at positive reinforcement. We were really uncomfortable with it. We had a hard time saying "I love you, I love you, I think you are special, you are important."

I think sometimes you need to cry when you say that to them, so they know you mean it. I am really grateful that I can feel now, because I can show you who I really am. I don't think I could be who I am supposed to be, to do and to walk like I have, if I couldn't feel.

It takes a lot of courage to show

emotion. To an extent we don't give our young men the permission to do that. We give them the permission to feel angry. That seems to be acceptable for boys. But we don't allow them the ability to express their emotions in joy and in sorrow.

A friend brought me some tobacco from a holy place where the women go in New Mexico, and he said to me "I have some tobacco for you." Holding that tobacco, I knew he brought it for me because I needed help. I really work hard when the elders tell me how to be the best person that I can be and how to be of service to my people in a good way. I know that I can only get better if I am willing to have the courage to go within myself and to look at myself and to make the changes I need to make.

I just have one last little piece of information. In working with the youth, I found that a lot of the kids are having visions; they are having their dreams and the ancestors are coming to them. I know of a couple of young people in this room work with those visions and dreams through which the young people are being told what to do. Tribal officials are involved with youth programs, and they are being guided through those dreams and through those visions. I would encourage our people to talk a little bit more about that, to give our youth the permission to come to you, and to tell you what they are dreaming, what they are feeling, what they are thinking.

As my faith gets stronger, I think that

I will be showing more of myself, because sometimes when the doors get open for you, it makes it a little tougher, not easier—tougher in the sense that it requires a deeper faith. And for spirits to get you there, sometimes they have to take you to places that have pain.

To the people here who really understand what I am saying—because you have all been there a lot longer than I have—I know that you had your own pain and had to work through it, so that you could serve people. I just wanted to thank you very much for doing all the work that you do. I appreciate it, and I am finding my way back because of you, and being a part of you.

I want to wear those glasses that you guys wear, to say there is a goal and not just see an obstacle, to see a resolution. That's how I want to be.

Debra LaFountaine (Chickasaw) has extensive experience in the physical, social, and organizational development of communities through the implementation of teachings by Native American elders.

We Owe Our Existence to Our People

RICHARD MONTAGUE

First of all, I'd like to honor our elders because without you we would not be here today. I'd like to honor your true survival and instinct to live, and the right that you gave to us to live also. Thank you very much.

The Quechan tribe is actually in Arizona and California, and we have about 75,000 square miles of reservation land. And we share land through Arizona all the way up through the Grand Canyon, with approximately 30,000 people. So we have quite a bit of territory in that area.

In talking about health and reproduction, I draw on my role as a registered nurse who has worked on the reservation. I'm actually a part of the system. I grew up there and learned a lot of what I know in the general health care field through that. I'm presently a Cornell undergraduate transfer student.

In dealing with health issues on reservations, I had to look at my own life. My first experience dealing with health issues was when I was approximately six years old. I grew up in a household that was riddled with alcoholism and drug abuse. My first experience was actually trying to help my mom resuscitate my father, who was on the floor with a heroin needle stuck in his arm. That was my first experience, and it's a true life experience. It happens on a daily basis in reservations.

That's a reality of our life.

Growing up, my father's problems taught me that within this life we all live to live, but we also live to love. I learned that through my father, through his recovery. There are a lot of health issues that we've had to deal with as a family, and that's just one of them. My father did spend some time in prison, and I was summarily shipped off to my grandmother's house, which was one of the greatest things that ever happened to me.

During this time transition, my grandmother told me, "You know, you live in my house now. And if you want to eat you're going to learn to speak Indian, because I don't listen to English." So I learned my language. And I've been grateful for that gift that my grandmother gave to me. So I come to you with a strong heart to speak to the Seventh Generation, to say that it's okay to go out there and try and not be afraid to fail. I also come to say that we as people must take care of our health, because it is the most precious resource that we have to give to other generations. We must take care of ourselves, and with this we take care of others.

I'm studying human biology, health and society, which is an integration of different models of teaching. Mostly, it is science-based curriculum that I deal with on a daily basis. It's a discipline

that is growing and evolving in ways that I really don't feel too comfortable with. But within that reality I try to use my traditional teachings that my grandmother and my grandfather had, and look at things a little differently from my colleagues.

I worked on a research project at Harvard University dealing with SIDS babies—Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. And lo and behold, they brought out a specimen that we were supposed to do some testing on. The specimen was labeled: "Native American infant, female, age two months." Now, I tell this because what I believe is that there is an importance of being. I think at the time that my importance of being was to be there. I felt as a Native person that there should be some respect given to this—it was a living being. It wasn't just a piece of tissue. And if I wasn't there, who else would be?

I asked, what's going to become of this being once this work is done? Apparently they had really not thought that far in advance. They were going to destroy the tissue. So what we did, myself and the other Native students there, we got together and spoke with the university and spoke with the family that donated the specimen and made an arrangement for that baby to be brought back to the family.

So these are issues that we deal with

as young Natives in these colleges. Where we are, sitting in Cornell University, one of the Ivy League schools, we're aspiring to what most people on the reservation say—go out, get an education, become a scientist, become a doctor, become a lawyer, help your people. But these are the Native issues that we deal with when we come to this place. We have to deal with another way of life that is not Native to our own type of thinking. Within the system we have to deal with educa-

I was at an American Indian Physicians Association conference. The main theme that Indian students indicate on their applications when they apply for medical school is to "help my people." I think that is pretty consistent throughout. And it makes me proud to say that. I don't think it's a cliché at all, because who else would we owe our existence to but to our people?

tional issues that are far more complex, I think, than our non-Native counterparts who come to these schools. Of course, in mainstream education, I believe we start behind most of our colleagues.

And within the system, we truly deal with prejudice. We have to deal with financial burdens, we have to deal with family issues that affect our own psycho-social make up, our own cultures, our own values.

They celebrate Columbus Day, and we were trying to get that reversed here on campus. We were all standing in a protest line. There are signs pro-

claiming our proud heritage that we have. And we were harassed and attacked vocally by some of the Cornell student body. And it came to a point where one actually flicked a lit cigarette into the face of one of the individuals holding a sign. These are issues that we have to deal with on a daily basis.

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At that conference there was this comedian that came up, and he said, "Jeez, it's so nice to see all you Native doctors here in this conference. It's too bad we don't see you on the reservation." Which has an element of truth to it. And I think in my life, in serving my people, I think I want to return, and I know I will after all of this.

So it's time to go back. For future generations—look at yourself and your commitment to your people. And don't only say the words, but live them. Go back and do some good.

Now, the last thing that my mom told me when I graduated from community college, was, "Son, I'm really proud of you. But I have to tell you one thing. You're a Quechan Indian, nothing more and nothing less."

Richard Montague (Quechan, Maricopa, and Digueno) studies Human Biology Health and Society at Cornell University and works as a registered nurse on the Ft. Yuma Indian Reservation.

Work Consciously to Remove the Trauma that Has Passed Down through the Generations

SHERRI MITCHELL

I want to start by reading something I wrote right after one of those pinnacle moments in life—getting a little bit closer to realizing who it is that we are. We've heard everybody talk about some of those moments. I've had the good fortune of having a really interesting life. And it's helped to make me someone who I like when I look in the mirror today. So this is a part of getting to that point where I can wake up in the morning and know that I'm going to walk in integrity with every step that I take. Because I understand what it means to not walk that way, and how it feels to be the recipient of behavior that is not based in honor and integrity—and also to give that back, which is more damaging, I think, than receiving it.

So I want to share a little piece of this with you. It's called "The Journey."

"There's something about the journey that reveals your soul to you, that can in one moment encapsulate all emotion. It is not in the trials alone, nor moments of pure joy, but in the understanding that arrives when you are able to peer over your shoulder and see the two meld. The sweet mingling of beauty wrapped in sorrow, of a lesson learned from crushing pain, delivering you to a place of new found peace. This is the magic of my journey. Each deep soul wound carries me closer to my spirit, opening me to greater love, preparing me for the true essence of my being. Each day I am

thankful for the experience of feeling. In order for me to fully participate in this experience, I must allow the wounds of life to cut me wide open without shutting down my heart, allowing the feelings to flow through me, feeling without restraint, surrendering to their fleeting nature. Then, when it has passed, I realize that I have grown deeper, stronger, able to hold feelings greater than I had imagined, and able to give them in return, bearing witness to the paradoxical wisdom of the creator, the giver of life."

I grew up with John Mitchell on the homelands of the Penobscot Nation. I was the second daughter of a single woman. And I was the second child that she gave up for adoption. But I was also fortunate that I was the second child that my grandfather kicked down the door of the hospital to retrieve and bring back home.

There are a lot of interesting stories in between about the shame, helplessness, guilt, fear and anger that my mother felt over having to raise those two girls that she gave away. Today, I love that woman with every ounce of my being, but I had to lose my own son in order to realize what she must have felt when she gave us away. In order to really understand what it is that we need to understand in life, to not judge people. For me to not be angry at her anymore, I had to walk in her shoes until I realized that I could

learn in a different way from her mistakes.

My grandfather is one of the most important people in my life. The man is a rock. My older sister and I were pretty much raised by my grandparents. They were our foundation, along with John, my aunt Natalie, and my uncle Carl. If it were not for my grandparents and John, Natalie and my uncle Carl, I wouldn't be standing here today talking to you. Because I wouldn't have survived my childhood.

When my grandmother died, it was really hard for me to go through the loss. I was terrified. It was ten degrees outside. It was March 1. The wind was blowing and they had just taken her out of the house and they were driving away with her. There was so much respect in the way that the family had treated her before they took her out of that house that I thought I was alright to let her go. I wish I had the time to explain that morning to you. It was one of the most magical and sacred times in my life, to witness the women coming forward to care for their mother's body. They all bathed their mother. Because half of our family is traditional and half of it is Christian, they bathed their mother with cedar boughs and holy water, to honor both sides. I felt peace about that until they put her in that car and they were going to take her away.

There's a place where we live, and it's

called Oak Hill. And it's where we grew up. It's where we come from. It's our place. Our future and our plans are there. The wampum that was carried for the peace accords between the Wabanaki confederacy and the Iroquois confederacy is buried on that land. All of our history, the medicines that we carry are in that land. I walked back to this place where we used to play when we were kids. It suddenly occurred to me that my grandfather had had three heart attacks. I stood there on that land and I dropped down to my knees in that snow and I cried because my home was being taken away from me. Because that woman was 50 percent of that home and the other 50 percent, my grandfather, was recovering from a triple bypass in the house. And when that other 50 percent decided that it was time for him to leave us, I wasn't going to have a home. Because that was the anchor that I clung to, the certainty of always having them in my life.

That land spoke to me while I was laying there at ten degrees in the snow, with the wind blowing on my face, crying. Her message was: you will always have a home because your blood runs through this land, and whenever your feet are on this land you'll always have a home and you'll always be home. And I felt that. I understood it here [in my heart] in that moment.

I share that story with you because that's who I am, that's where I come from. That's my introduction to you. From that place I went into the world that Debra talked about, the world that so many of you have talked about. I went to school and I got a job. I had a solid career. I received four promotions in as many years. I was on the fast track at a very young age.

I was born with some rather strong intuitive abilities that were fun for people to play with until my mom decided to become a born-again Christian. Then

she tried to have that intuition exorcised out of me. So I stifled a lot of those gifts and a lot of that vision for a lot of years. Because I had the good job, I had the car, had the nice things, I had all the fancy, trendy stuff. I had all that money, but I'd go to bed at night and I'd cry. No matter where I looked I couldn't find what I was looking for. Finally, after the last important relationship that I was in ended, I found myself broken in half. And I didn't know what to do anymore

until you welcome him." I thought I was nuts. But about six months after that, I started saying "OK, I welcome you, whoever you are. What is it you have to say?" And I'd sit there and I wouldn't shut up for two minutes. "Give me your answers, tell me what it is you need to tell me. I'm ready. How many different ways do I have to say this? Just come on, let's get it over with."

One day I was sitting out back and there was a serene quality to the day. I

I ask the future generations that they get to know who they are, not just in a sense that they can identify themselves by their tribe, by their clan, by where they're from—but to know who they are intrinsically as children of this Earth.

and I finally gave up. I told the Creator, "I'm not going to do these selfish prayers, I'm not going to ask for you to bring him back. I'm not going to ask for you to heal the damage that caused him to leave. What I am going to do is I'm going to lay here on this floor face down and I'm going to say to you, do with me what you will because I don't know where to go anymore."

Almost overnight my life changed. It was literally almost overnight. People I'd never even met would come up to me and say, "There's somebody that's trying to meet you." I went somewhere one time and this old lady sat down beside me and she said to me, "You know, there's this man that's trying to meet you and he's standing right around you all the time. He keeps trying to tell you that he wants you to welcome him so he can come in and talk to you. But he's not going to come in and talk to you

was sitting there and all of a sudden everything lit up. The grass lit up. The trees lit up. Every little bird lit up. Everything turned on all of a sudden. Everything changed instantly. My vision changed instantly. And I could feel someone walking up behind me, but I was so mesmerized by what was going on in front of me that I didn't pay attention. It was a man's voice that spoke to me. And he asked me to walk with him and he put his hand up. And I looked at him. And the minute that I looked into that man's eyes I knew that he knew who I was long before I ever knew who I was, long before my mother ever existed, long before my grandmother ever existed. And I was never the same from that moment on. I was evicted from my life. I have never gone back. I walked with that man for a while and he told me what I needed to do. And I listened. I quit my job, I cashed in my retirement. I

paid my bills as far in advance as I could. And I said, “OK, here I am. What will you do with me?”

I started working with the kids. Whenever I’d get down to the point where it was on the wire—the bills would be paid but maybe we wouldn’t have any food—I’d come home and there would be groceries on my steps. The kids needed new clothes, somebody would send something. I got down to the point where I was almost broke, when my bills were running up, I had like a month to go on the money I had from my saving and retirement. I had written five grants in that time. I had gone and talked to a million people. It was a little nerve-

American Indian Ambassador Program. I applied and I was selected. I was flown to Albuquerque, New Mexico. And I was brought to the house of this woman who is the epitome of silent grace, an incredible visionary, my personal mentor, and one of the most remarkable women that I have ever had the opportunity to meet. When I graduated from that program, I said to her, “There have been things that have happened to me in my life that have been magical and that have been important. The ones that are most important to me are having my children and looking into their eyes for the first time, and meeting you is the second.” It was an affirmation for me for quitting my job,

with their land, directly connected to the roots of who they are intrinsically. When I was in Guatemala I got sick. I had altitude sickness and then when I came home, I got really sick. It took me about a year and a half to get well. In that year and a half there were quite a few times when I sat down and wrote things down because I thought I was going to die. I wrote things down for my children, all the people who had ever touched me, and put them away in a filing cabinet, so when they were cleaning up my stuff they’d find them. My kidneys started shutting down. My whole endocrine system was shutting down. I went through thousands of dollars worth of tests. Nobody could figure out what was wrong with me.

Then I had this lady come to visit us. Her name was Patrizia. She held my hand and said, “I want to talk to you. I need to talk to you.” She looked at me right in the eye and she said, “Don’t be afraid.” And I knew exactly what she meant and I started to cry. She said, “You’re just traveling the journey of the classic wounded healer. You’re going to be OK. But you first need to learn how to heal your own body.” So she started to work on me and she said, “Have you been to Guatemala?” And I said, “Yes, I have.” And she said, “This is what’s wrong with you.” She explained to me the type of parasite that I had in my body, which organs in my body it was attacking. And that began my journey into understanding the physiology of my body, spiritually and physically, understanding my energy system, understanding the way that that energy flows through our bodies, the blockages to that natural flow and how a lack of this natural spirit that flows through this land, flows through our bodies, is making us sick. And understanding my ability to connect with that power and that energy to heal my own body. All of those things I learned as a result of that trip to

*The young people need to know that.
They need to be encouraged to look within
them, to understand what gives them the
power they have within them...*

wracking, but it was comical at the same time. I didn’t doubt for a second that things would work out. Even if I got kicked out of my house and I lost my car, I didn’t even care, because everything was going to be OK, because I was doing what was in my heart to do. I went to my mailbox one day and, sure enough, there was a check. I went back the next day. There was another one. And I went back the next day, and there was a letter saying there was another one coming. Every one of those grants I got, and that’s how I started doing the work that I do. I had the realization that once you align yourself with your path and with that truth, then all things are going to be taken care of for you in your life. That was a big lesson for me.

I had another pinnacle moment in my life. A woman in my community nominated me for a program called the

working with those needy kids, and being there every day in their lives, seeing them smile from doing something that they never thought they could do. That was significant.

I had the privilege through the Ambassador Program to go to Guatemala and to spend some rather remarkable time with the Maya. Those of you who have been there know that the air is charged with both the trauma and the sorrow that’s befallen that land, but also with the sense of hope and regeneration. And if you’re at all sensitive to that kind of stuff, then it’s a very intense and emotional and exhausting experience to be in Guatemala. I wrote a paper about that experience, about how I kept having to remind myself not to take on a paternalistic attitude toward these people who were living the way that I was claiming to want to live, simply, in direct contact

Stay with the awareness of the connection that you have to this land, to all other people, and to all other creation. Place your feet consciously. Walk the path you choose for yourself solidly, without fear and without hesitation.

Guatemala, as a result of being introduced to LaDonna Harris, as a result of starting these programs in the communities and all of these synchronistic events that led me to being at that place in time.

That's what I wanted to sum up here for future generations and for us today, to understand the way that our thoughts, our actions, our words, everything that we put into our body, everything that we come into contact with—how that affects and alters our spiritual makeup, and our physical makeup, and how that attracts atrocity to us. We really need to learn how to protect ourselves from those things. You need to understand how to do that spiritually. That's the only way that you correct the damage that's been done to your spirit, which is going to continue to make your body sick no matter what medicines you take.

If there's one thing that I can teach the future generations with regard to health and reproduction it's an understanding of that. When we allow ourselves to stay sick, when we allow ourselves to be unbalanced in our relationships, when we allow ourselves to hold within us all of the trauma that's been passed down through the generations and we don't work consciously to remove that from our bodies and from our spiritual makeup, that we're going to continue to pass that on generation after generation.

I ask the future generations that they get to know who they are, not just in a sense that they can identify themselves by their tribe, by their clan, by where they're from—but to know who they are

intrinsicly as children of this Earth. That connection that they have to each other as children of this earth and to the natural spirit gives them a power that's going to help them to heal this world. The connection they have to each other is the key to healing our relationships and to healing our bodies.

We have to do it spiritually. If those young people can understand that they have that power to connect with what we're calling indigenous knowledge, which is truly sacred knowledge, our ability to remember our connection, not only to this land but to this universe and all of creation. Those are the things that we need to be able to instill in our children if we hope to survive the future. The young people need to know that. They need to be encouraged to look within them, to understand what gives them the power they have within them, so that they don't have to get sick, so that they don't have to get beaten into a carpet where they're laying face down. Let it be a part of who they are as they grow. Because we need them to lead us, we first have to guide them to the place where they remember who they are.

For the Seventh Generation, I have this message:

"Know who you are as children of this earth, as children of creation. Nurture and feed that umbilical chord that ties you to this land, to all other beings that you walk with and to your creator. Heed that connection to spirit. Understand that all of the knowledge that we need to move forward in a way that honors our

past is being held for us in the world of spirit. Understand how your connection to this land ties you to all other people and see the equality in that connection. Stay with the awareness of the connection that you have to this land, to all other people, and to all other creation. Place your feet consciously. Walk the path you choose for yourself solidly, without fear and without hesitation. If you do these things you'll have access to the sacred knowledge of your past while being guided to the place you need to be for your seventh generation. You will move with an understanding of who you are, how you fit into this world, aware of all of your connections, you will naturally live in balance. You will naturally be more kind. You will naturally be more generous. You may naturally serve your people. You will be healthy in your body, your mind and your spirit, and you will be balanced. And this balance will be reflected in the bodies and in the spirit of the children that you bring into this world, continuing on with the life that we've all been given."

It is like a drop in the pool. If you drop a pebble in the pool from that central place, everything else ripples out. And if you heal from within yourself the basic structure of your spiritual being and your genetic being, then it's going to ripple out. It's going to heal everything that's around you.

Sherri Mitchell (Penobscot) is an advocate for Native youth and woman and is program director of NACHME, Native Youth Leadership and Community Building Program.



To Make a Bundle I Could Live By and Pass On to the Future

JIM DUMONT

I am going to introduce myself as briefly as I can. I do have a hard time being brief about anything. I have found that I have a hard time being brief about talking about my life, which is a good sign. It means that I think of my life, and I have the feeling that so far what I have done is important to me and I think that it has some significance in the universe.

My real name is Wonobisnise. In the proper way of doing things that name would have been given to me at birth. But I was about 31 years old by the time I received my name.

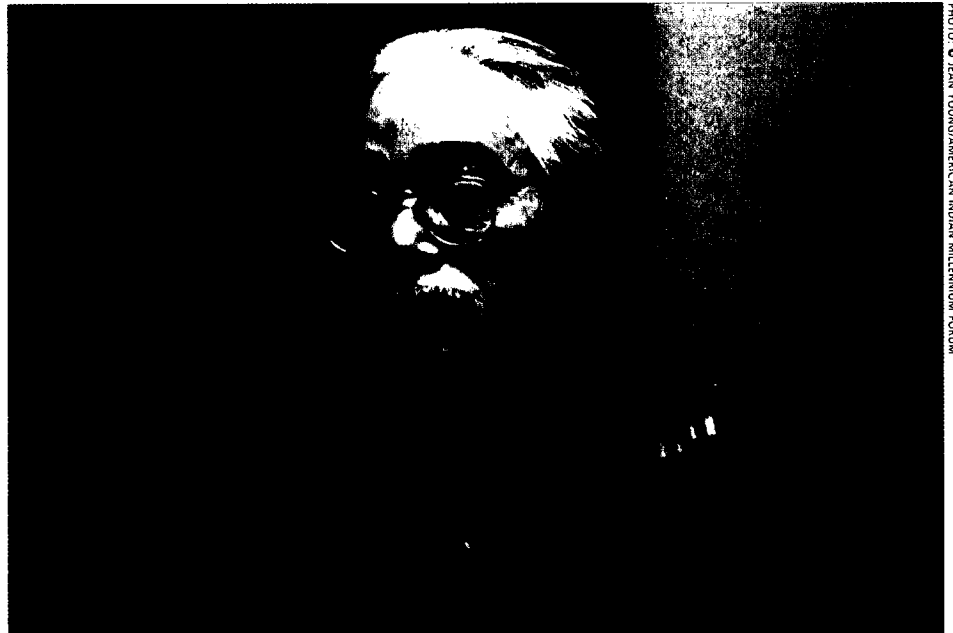
I was given my name by a grandmother. Her name was Susan Anose, and the name that she gave me, Wonobisnise, literally means "the one who walks on top of the crusted snow." When she gave me that name, she said the real meaning of that name. When you are walking on top of the crusted snow, your feet are not touching the ground. So the real meaning of that name is "one who walks above the ground." She said when you see someone coming and you see them for who they really are the way you see them is as a spirit who is walking. You can tell if you are seeing the spirit because their feet are not touching the ground as they are walking toward you. She said as long as you carry that name in a good way and live out that name, when people see you, that is the way that they will see you

Before I was given the name, I had started out to seek a name. But before I got started, these old people, a grandmother and grandfather, had approached me. They told me, it is time for you. You are long overdue to have a name. And then I had to go through the usual protocol of presenting tobacco, after the fact. The name the old man gave to me is Nigon Iyisya, which means "the leading sky," and he said the same thing to me, that I was destined to be someone who is a leader and so I needed to carry this name. I have always gone by Wonobisnise and I have always reserved that other name for the time that I felt that I would

be able to use it. It is only in the last year or two that I started using that name, privately, when I spoke to the spirit.

I am of the Wabageshi Goaden, which is the Martin Clan. If anybody knows anything about animals and clans, the Martin is a warrior clan, and the seekers and the hunters. Of course everybody knows that Wabageshi is a really beautiful animal. So the most beautiful people, of course, come from Wabageshi Clan. Of course I stand here before you, the greatest mind; of course, the greatest minds come from the Wabageshi Clan. [Laughter from audience]

The Martin Clan are the protectors of



Jim Dumont, Millennium gathering, 2001.

PHOTO: © JEAN YOUNG/AMERICAN INDIAN MILLENNIUM FORUM

their territory and of their way of life. They won't back down from anything that threatens that. I often wondered how I am a warrior because I am not a fighter in the sense of how we conceive of warriors today. I am not a defender of territory and so on in that way, but I am I guess a relentless pursuer of knowledge; and I will not back down from anything that threatens our knowledge—even ourselves, such as the way we have come to be controlled by this life that surrounds us and dominates us so much.

I had a dream one time. This bear came to me. Well, he did not actually come to me. Someone took me above the earth. And he told me to look down on the earth, and there was this bear walking. I could see the whole globe, and there was this bear walking across the northern part of this continent, and the bear was saying "I am making my tracks on the earth to let you know the extent of your territory, of your land; and where I make my tracks, I am healing and blessing the earth and I want you to take care of this."

The bear used English, maybe for my sake, which surprised me. He said, "Watch out for accommodation because it is the greatest weapon that they have and that is your greatest weakness," meaning generally us as a people. "You have to stop accommodating because every time you accommodate, you lose another little piece of this land where I am making my tracks."

It is true that we keep doing that in every way, and I think one of the ways we do that is we keep on being apologetic for who we are as a people, for our language. We apologize by giving way to what people from outside our culture say, because they claim to say it better. They write books about us and they use us as informants, and they put what we say into a language that is acceptable to their people; and then we read it, and we think that is really profound.

So we validate their thinking. We vali-

date their way of expressing it. Every time we do that we accommodate. We let a little more of our own thinking go and our own belief in ourselves. I do not have much patience for that anymore. There are a lot of things that we need to think about. That is not what I am up here to speak about, but I think we need to remind ourselves of that. Listening to the speakers in the last few days, I was thinking this is what we have to tell ourselves and tell each other.

We have to stop letting the church or the priests—I don't know how you say it—touch our people. I do not mean only in terms of physical/sexual abuse. I mean spiritual abuse. From the time that our children are born—and I am sure many in this room are exceptions—the first thing they do, when the baby is hardly out of the womb, they are already planning to take that baby to a priest and have the priest baptize that child. I believe we should be out of that, from a long time ago, but we are still there.

We still give allegiance and attention to this other way that has destroyed us, controlling our thoughts right to the time that we are ready to go into grave. Who is it that puts us in the ground? What ground are we put in? This is important. In any Indian newspaper, *Indian Country Today*, whatever, the obituaries are on the back page at the end. When I read through them, there were only two or three that did not mention the church. These were perhaps buried traditionally—everybody else was buried in some holy mission cemetery, presided over by some Father somebody-or-other. We bring our children into the world in that way, and when we bury and send our people off through a foreign way of life -- we just have to stop doing that. That is a great concern to me. The answer is not burning churches down or, as in that movie, *The Mission*, send them over the falls. The answer is different, and because it is different it is harder to do. Somehow

we have to reach our people and we have to reach them in such a way that our way of life becomes the first thing, the first thing that touches you from the moment you come out of the womb.

So that the first words that are spoken, and the first words that you hear from your mother while you are still being carried around in the womb are the words of your language. When you are introduced into this world, that is the language that you hear and you are identified through that language and that is your name. We need to relentlessly pursue our way of life and the knowledge of that.

Around the time that I was born, my community, Georgian Bay, which is on the eastern shores of the Central Great Lakes, at a great bay on the eastern side of Lake Huron, was already affected. It is actually called the Spirit Bay, associated with the spirit waters. It is at the center part of that central eastern bay. That is where I am from. It is the most beautiful place. In that area, in that territory my people resisted Christianity and acculturation until about the 1890s. They refused anything into the community. After that time, by the beginning of the 1900s, Christianity had taken a hold. The education snuck in there through the church or the church snuck in through the education, however they did it. Within 50 years, the language was hardly spoken.

When my mother did not speak to me in our language, though she knew the language, it was not a conscious choice. She just did not speak the language because the functional language of the community was no longer Anishinabe. The functional language around here was no longer ours. My mother gave me everything that is in our culture but she did not give me the language. She did not give me the language because we were not living by the language, but her whole way of living was the culture.

The ceremonies no longer existed except in hidden ways. I only found out

after, long after I had grown up and started pursuing my own ways, looking for my own ways that my great aunt was a medicine woman. She knew all these things. She was already gone on, and some of the people who were related to her did do the ceremonies secretly somewhere, at the back of the community. These things were going on when I was a child, but by the time that I grew up, they were entirely gone. Naming of children had disappeared about 75 years ago.

I grew up in the bush, out in the middle of nowhere. My mother was raised a Protestant. She was Methodist at that time. But my father was raised a Catholic. The priest refused to marry them because they were a different religion and so I was never indoctrinated into those things. That indoctrination from the time that you are born—Sunday School and

guitars forced us to see the world as a picture, as a total picture; and we do not break it up into all its parts; but we know all of the parts. All of the parts only have meaning when they are understood in relation to the whole.

I stayed in school; and I was determined to get out by grade 10, but my dad advised me to stay. He worked hard all of his life. I know in spirit I wanted to do his work because he had me working from a very early age. But I stayed in. I made a decision to stay in school. They told me I had better not go into the general program, where you go right through high school and go on to the university, because I probably would not be able to do it. That was because I was a Native person. They channeled us into all the other kinds of programs they had in high school.

The bear used English, maybe for my sake, which surprised me. He said, "Watch out for accommodation because it is the greatest weapon that they have and that is your greatest weakness," meaning generally us as a people.

all that, plus what comes from your parents—it becomes seriously embedded in our psyche. It takes years and years to get that out of our system, all the things we are afraid to doubt. I was fortunate in that way.

I was put in school because that is what you did, you went to school. So from the time I was six years old, I was in the white man's school. Once you go to school, you are being indoctrinated; you are being socialized. You are being trained to think in a certain way.

You cannot learn how to read and write without learning how to think in a certain way, and it is a linear fashion. Our lan-

I defied that. It was probably the best thing that happened to me. Because the counselor said I could not do it, I was determined to do it. I spent most of high school proving that I could, just to prove this guy wrong. So I made it through high school. I went on to the university, and I got a Bachelor's in Philosophy and an M.A. in Theology, of all things. I really got to like school by then so actually I became an A student by the time I got to my sixth year at the university. I was interested in thinking and putting thoughts together.

I was 19 years old, being trained to think in the western way of thinking.

Right at the end of that schooling I determined that I was going to find out what Anishinabe was, and who I was going to be.

I started going to Anishinabe school after I finished university. It has been about the same length of time. This is the where I am now, 20 years later, pursuing our own teachings, and that is a long story.

The Ojibwe people still have Middewiwin. Middewiwin contains all of the teachings, all of the knowledge, all of the songs which means it is still there. It has a whole educational system where you move by degree to increasingly higher levels of learning and of spiritual growth. So I pursued that. So in 20 years time, I was fourth degree. So I have four degrees from our university and just two from the other.

When I started out, I did that without the language; and I have been pursuing the language ever since. That is what I said in my introduction. I am chasing after the language and I asked the Creator to—I don't know what the word is, the English word is "forgive," but it means something different—forgive me for having to use this other language to talk about the things that are sacred to us that the Creator gave us in our own way of speaking. But it has been a constant pursuit and it has been really hard. I did it the hard way.

In our prophecies, they said we were going to have to go through all of these things after strange people arrive on the shore, and we were going to reach a point where we would be on the verge of losing everything, everything that was in the bundle that caused us to live; and that our language is one of them. You know our culture, our songs, even the knowledge that tobacco is our communication with the spirit. All of those things, we have just about lost them.

Then a generation would be born, and they would be the children of the sixth

fire. There are seven prophecies and each one of them is a fire, meaning it is a duration in time. So the children of the sixth fire would be my parent's generation, my grandparent's generation.

So the Seventh Fire Prophecy is talking about me. It said the children of the sixth fire would be the product of what was lost in the sixth fire—what was given up, what was abandoned, what was left along the trail. So we would come into the world without our language, without our culture, without knowledge of how to live according to the ways that we were given. We would almost lose touch with the spirit.

We have to stop letting the church or the priests—I don't know how you say it—touch our people. I do not mean only in terms of physical/sexual abuse. I mean spiritual abuse.

That is how I grew up. That is how I knew I was the one who was being talked about in the prophecy. My generation—I do not think we have done enough to make sure that the generation after us is not a product of the sixth fire. There are still too many of us—even amongst the young people—who are still affected by what we have lived through and never dealt with or our parents or our grandparents. There are not enough who are trying to find the way, or who were born into this world with our ways.

I was so conscious of what I had missed, it took me a while to get over being angry at all the people who deprived me of this—the government, the white people, the church. Anger and retaliation does absolutely nothing for learning your culture. It just stagnates you in a place where you are angry all the time. All you are doing is just reacting to the way that you have been treated, which

gets you nothing other than a little bit of release, or relief. I had to get through that. Then I went after my culture and I pursued it just like Wabageshi, the Martins. I went after my language. I went after the teachings. I went after my way of life. Today I am recognized as a teacher in the ways of Middewiwin because I know the teachings and I know the songs. I do not know all that I should know, but I hold the sacred drum, the one that they call The Traveler.

I have come to see that the world is a lot bigger than myself, that I am a part of something that is much bigger, and that this is The Creator's plan. This is The

Creator's dream about today. That there would be a people who emerged in this time of the Seventh Fire who would stop in their tracks and say, "This is not who I am," and go back looking along the trail for who they were. And that is who I am. I am one of those people who stopped in his tracks and said "There is no future in this other way of life."

I have to go and gather up those things left somewhere scattered along the trail. For me that was just about everything, to make a bundle that I could live by and that I could pass on to the future. That is what the Prophecy said that we have to do. That the ones who have lost the most, who were the product of all that was lost, they are the ones who have the responsibility to put it back together; and that is why they are born into the world at this time.

It is a huge responsibility. How can somebody who knows nothing put every-

thing back together, enough at least so that our children are born into a time when they have some of what has been lost? I was able to raise my children in our way. I even started a community so that we could do that. We built our own houses, created our own school, educated them according to our teachings and our culture, and graduated our children from that.

They never saw the inside of a church. They never met a priest. They never heard the Genesis story from the Bible. They didn't even know what the Bible was. They thought the world was created by The Creator. They thought The Creator from his own thoughts made the whole universe. Imagine that? A generation of children growing up believing that The Creator loves his creation so much he calls us his children. That is what they grew up with. They grew up with life skills and life studies around that.

So I can say I was a significant part of applying what I had learned by making sure that my children had that knowledge and the children were of that community. As a result, there are 15 or 20 kids out there somewhere who are adults, who have children of their own, who are a different generation. We have people like Tommy Porter, other knowledgeable people in this room. I know that they have done the same thing. So I know that there are children out there, children who are a different generation. They are the children of the Seventh Fire. They call them the children of the children of the sixth fire. The children of the sixth fire, that is my generation. We have got to somehow get it together. That is the people in this room. The children of the Seventh Fire are like the young people who come to speak to us here. Maybe not all of our youth today are children of the children. Maybe they are children of the sixth fire like us and they have to get there, but there are enough people and we hear the voices that speak to us. We

can tell that they are the children of the children of the sixth fire because they are speaking the language of our way of life. What they talk about is the spirit of our way.

That, in a nutshell, is my life. It is not over, since I am going through my 40s, of course I still am here. They say men go through all these things in their 40s, and one of them is that you reach a place where you say, what have I done by staying in this job? I have reached the ceiling. There is nowhere to go from here. Well what have I achieved? You have the feeling you are on the other side of life. It is going downhill from here, you don't have a chance to start over again. Men are supposed to go through that thing.

So I was wondering, am I going through this stage in life? Why am I not going through that? So I got really reflective one day and I started to think about it. This is not a way of bragging about myself, but the little boy drum, the drum that is the teacher, the one that goes out and looks for the people—that drum was placed in my lap in 1979. I know that that little boy has been able to do his work because I got him dressed and I got him ready, and I went out there with him. I learned the teachings and I have taught those teachings. I have learned the songs, and I pass on the songs. Somehow in The Creator's dream for this time, I have a little—that for me is a huge—part, that is important to what is going on.

I thought if my life ended today, and I look back on my life and what I have done, I would feel good about myself because I have achieved more than just what one lifetime should expect of me. It is a good feeling. And you can only feel that way if you do what we have been talking about here for the last three days. You do not just talk about it, you do it. If you can do that and achieve something, that is how you cause the spirit to smile. That is the greatest thing you can do in life.

A SPECIAL DELIVERY: WORDS OF A SPIRIT

I want to deliver something that was given to me as a message to the young people; it talks about something that I think that I am supposed to be talking about this morning and that is the spirit.

This message came from a person who is no longer here. She was a beautiful young lady who did not take her life; she left as a result of a drunken driver who one night sped through an intersection with the lights off and smashed into her car, which was loaded with young people. She was the only one to die in that crash.

She was a beautiful young woman who called my daughter her sister and called me Uncle Jim. We are very close to that family. Her father is the teacher in our life. He is the chief in our life. On my way out from the funeral to the wake, I was driving, but there was a period of time, about an hour, [when she spoke to me]. I only know this because I remember my last thoughts before this happened and then I came back to consciousness in this world an hour later. In between that time she came and spoke to me.

Somehow the rest of my body took care of driving the car. I had a navigator with me, my buddy; and he fell asleep. Whenever we have traveled together since, he always insists on driving; but he slept through that time. Anyway, this young woman talked to me all during that time. I tried to remember what she said; and that is how she delivered this message to me.

She told me to make it sound good. Put it in poetry, she said. She said put it in words that people will listen to because people have to hear this; and I can't, she said I can't touch the world anymore. I am a spirit now.

I was able to remember this much of it. And I tried to put it as a poem. This is what I want to read. It says something very important about the spirit. It changed my way of even talking about the

Creation Story and about the teachings. It is in the traditional teachings, but I never heard it quite this way before: The Creator created this world for us to enjoy and the spirit comes into this world to enjoy this life. So live it fully and enjoy it and touch this world and touch the people and take care of them.

That is the message that was there from the beginning. This young lady's words have influenced my way of thinking and I think has changed the way that we do things and talk about things in our lives. And the other reason I wanted to read it is because she told me to make sure that it is heard.

Here is what I heard:

The spirit is the cause of everything, it is at the center of everything, and it is all-pervasive. The spirit is everywhere and we are related to one another, as spirit is related to spirit. That changes everything about who we are, how we think and how we relate to one another. What this young woman was saying to me was we have lost a part of that teaching. She said that we keep on saying that the body-- our vessel the body--is so privileged because the spirit comes and becomes a part of the body so the spirit is such a great blessing to the body and so we should pay attention to the spirit and recognize the blessing that it is.

Then she said, but that is only half the teaching. The other half is the spirit is so thankful for the gift of the body because the only way the spirit can express itself in this world is through the body. There is no other place in the whole universe that the Creator made where spirit can actually reach out and touch the world directly except here on this earth. There is no other place you can actually physically hear the sound of the birds singing, the sun up in the morning except here.

There is no better place you can cradle in

your arms that first life as a mother can when she holds the child just after it is born and she said you know the spirit just revels in that feeling. The spirit enjoys the feeling of that so much, longs to feel that; but the spirit waits for you to reach out and touch that first leaf unfolding in the spring, and the spirit says, "Oh that is what life feels like.."

She said, the spirit looks forward to coming into this world, is anxious to be here, and waits for our mind to develop so that the spirit can think spirit thoughts and dream spirit dreams in this world. The spirit waits for us to coordinate our movement so that we can reach out and pick up a little bit of earth and maybe put it in our mouth to see what it tastes like, you know. The spirit looks forward to the first taste of that first berry when it comes in the spring, the strawberry... it makes the spirit happy. She said, tell them the spirit looks forward to being in this world and living in this world. The spirit enjoys this life.

That was her message. She kept saying, make sure the young people hear this, and make sure that their parents hear this, because there is something that they are not doing that is causing the young people to turn somewhere else. If only they could hear this, then maybe they would stop and they would look around at what they have around them in their own way. She said, if I would have known this, maybe I would not be missing from the earth

She said: Like the young man who looked all over the meaning of his image in rivers and streams, I, too, have often asked, where does life flow from? I know now something of the answer, reflected in life's every finding. The answer is the spirit. It's the spirit that gives shape and form and beauty to life's many images of itself. After all, what urges the seed to open and stretch its arms to reach the sun? What

informs the buds, the flower, and the leaf to bloom? What makes the unborn of animals and birds want life and desire to live? The spirit.

It's not true that when you are born you are already beginning to die, but rather that the spirit wants life. The spirit is the life force that makes everything want to live. The spirit imparts meaning and intention into all that is and all that wants to be. The spirit changes into being. It makes an essential difference.

It's the spirit that takes the dull green of grass and leaves and changes it to the vibrant lively hues of growth and change. It is the spirit that takes the musty smell of the first spring rain and changes it to the clean and refreshing aroma of earth, giving birth.

It's the spirit that takes the neutrality of air that we breathe and changes it to the vitality of grandfather's breath, blowing in the wind. And you know what? The spirit loves life. And delights in its many shapes and shadows.

The spirit cherishes every moment of its sojourn in this reality of space and time. That's what I want everybody to know. The spirit is not condemned to this place or imprisoned here. It is not sentenced to this world to spend the rest of its time enduring it and waiting to shed its mortal frame.

The spirit delights and even takes gleeful joy in being in and enlivening this world. The spirit looks forward to living every day in this world. The spirit loves the rhythmic mother's heartbeat inside the womb. The spirit cherishes the trickling, flowing, surging sound of blood streams coursing through arteries and veins as Mother Earth does of rivers and streams and brooks rushing above and below the surface of the ground.

The spirit delights in the vibrancy and resilience of flesh and bone; revels in the feeling of physical life through the many fingers that touch the world; enjoys the wonders of human eyes that see every color of every miracle of life's unfolding.

The spirit marvels at the mind's ability to imagine, make concepts of seed thoughts, to ponder and to dream. The spirit likes to send a message in the wind. The spirit likes to sing its songs through the bubbling flow of water over rocks. The spirit likes to feel the emotions of the heart, likes to shape its rhythm into dancing feet, likes to make sounds and images, colors and sensations into ideas and visions not yet dreamed.

People agree that spirit is a special gift to life. What I want people as well to see is that seeing, hearing, touching, tasting physical life of sight and sound, sensation and passion is a living, cherished and precious gift to the spirit.

As I look back on those seeming few moments of life that I had, it seems to me now a forever time. I can say truly I have touched life. But from where I am standing now, from where I am looking now, I am a spirit. Now, I can't touch this life. I reach out to take hold of it. I rub my fingers together to feel it and all I can feel are the memories of sensations.

I stretch out my arms to grasp onto loved ones, and all I can taste is the sweetness of remembering loved ones. I remember my father's firm, but gentle teaching voice. I remember my sister, mother's song. I remember my brother's teasing laugh. I remember my large family's joy of new things found.

She said, I have touched life equally, but I can not touch it now. So, Uncle, tell my dad to reach out and touch life for me. And when he does tell him to reach out

Somehow we have to reach our people and we have to reach them in such a way that our way of life becomes the first thing, the first thing that touches you from the moment you come out of the womb.

and embrace it for me. Tell him to give the choice words to the little boy's snoring. Tell him to hear each message in the bluebird's song.

Tell him to behold the bluest sky, envision the greenest earth, and admire the rainbows of changing colors in between. Tell him to sense every joy, every love, every passion. Tell him to feel life and to feel every part of it.

And say to my dad, reach out and touch life for me. And when you do, touch life deeply. I can say truly I have touched life.. But where I am looking from now, I am a spirit. When you sing those beautiful songs, that I might dance to their melody in the Sky World. So that when you give voice to the sacred teachings, I might hear the knowledge of the stars. So that when you savor the deepest love of life, I might feel the throb of the heart of the universe.. So that when you hold someone you cherish, I might sense the embrace of loved ones. And when you touch life I might feel through your fingertips the memories of the beautiful earth.

Those particular last words, that was in my message to my great-great-great granddaughter of the future. That's what I wanted to say to her, that if she lives her life in such a way that the spirit is still there, so that when she dances I can feel the rhythm of the whole universe around me as she is dancing.

That when she truly loves her mother and loves her grandmother, and loves the earth, the truth of her love in the heart-beat of the universe, which is the heart-beat of The Creator. And then I can know

that what I put together here reached to where she is.

And so I just use these same words that were in this message. And though I can not touch life now from where she is in the future, I can still feel them. And I can know that, I can remember them so well because of the way that she is still living the life that is our life. That those memories will be so real to me that it will be like I am touching life.

The last words that she said was, "Uncle," she said, "take these words from me. And dress them up into the finest clothing. Take these words from me and when you tell them, make them sound like poetry. Make them alive in the world."



I am foregoing all the other things I was going to say. So that through my words a young person can speak to us about the way that she can see life. And that is true to the way that we believe and know that life is. But in such a way that it causes us to reflect on the things that we are doing. And to ensure that when we do the things that we do that it truly comes from our way and from the proper understanding of our way.

It's one thing to have the teachings. It's quite another thing to know what the teachings mean and how they instruct and inform us in our reality today. We have to learn the teachings. We have to know our beliefs and our way of life so well that when we pass them on to our children, they will know how to live.

The other message here is, if we have done that well and if we really know our way and our way of teaching, we will hear

the the truth of the teachings in our children and in our young people. There are two sides of sharing. One side is the ability to give, the other is the ability to receive. When we give of what we are able to put together and we see it reflected back through our children and our young people, and we learn something from that, then we have fully received. We have exercised to the fullest that gift of sharing.

I always feel in the words of this beautiful young woman that she left a living message with us, though she can not express herself in this world. She left her words with us so that they would be alive in the world.

I hope that that reaches you somewhere, it charges your spirit with even more determination. It's been nice to hear from those young people here who have spoken, who said, thank you. That's good, because it causes you to feel that yes, maybe I did something. And what I did was enough to make some changes somewhere. Somebody said thank you. And when our young people say, thank you, that's a big thank you, because even in the energy and distractions of youth, they can see through all of that and see some of the things that we have done to reach. And that they place on those things a value that comes from a place of youth.

And so I always feel when the young person thanks me that's a huge, huge thank you. So, I say thank you back to them.

Jim Dumont (Anishinaabe) is a professor, co-founder, and chair of Native Studies at the University of Sudbury at Laurentian University of Ontario, Canada.

MY GRANDMOTHER WAS A SEER

TOM PORTER

I am going to try to be just as brief as I can be. And that's going to be a miracle. Sakokanonkwas is my birth name. And I belong to the Bear Clan. My grandmother gave me that name before I was born. I already had that name before I even saw the light of day.

My grandmother was a seer. She could read things and tell you what's tomorrow and what's yesterday. Or if you had a pain somewhere, she could tell you without you telling her where it is. She'll tell you where your pain is and why it came. Those are what we call seer people, men and women. They are born like that.

Everybody is born with it, I guess, but some are born extra strong in it. Our job is to recognize those little ones when they are born. Because you already know that when you are born. The minute you are born, you are going to be a seer or you are going to be a great dancer. It's already there when you are born. All you have to do is find out what it is you are supposed to be, and then water it. Nourish it. Cultivate it. That's what makes the champions. That's what makes the good runner, good lacrosse players, once you can identify that. That's why it's important for our young girls and young boys to have uncles and aunts and grandmas and grandpas that are healthy so that they can discover who they are and nourish it. Start watering, start cultivating them, start molding them, start patting them on the back, start encouraging them. So by the time they are twelve years old they

are ready to be men. They are ready to be women. And then when they make decisions they make informed decisions. Decisions that are real and going to last a long time, because in the Indian business you have to be tough. In every way, we have got to hold on. We have a long way to go. So, we have to be tough. But we can give young people these things rather than a lot of junk we carry. Somebody addressed that here, how to start throwing that bad stuff out, because life is already hard enough as it is.

So, my grandmother gave me that name. And when I was a little kid I hated that name. One time I told my grandmother and my mother. Grandmother didn't know how to speak English at all. She just always talks Mohawk. She never went to school in her life either. And my mother didn't go very far either. And my mother's main language is Mohawk, too. She spoke English, but in Mohawk she was eloquent. So, I had the good privilege of being born there. Actually, I started to learn my English when I was about probably five or six. Prior to that I was just like grandma, I don't know how to talk English either. So, my first language was Mohawk and I think my grandma and my mother—I don't know if they did that on purpose—but I was lucky enough to win that \$64,000 jackpot right there.

That's why in later years, my clan leaders in the Longhouse asked me to be interpreter for them. It's just my inter-

preting skill that made me accidentally bump into the elder's knowledge. And then, when I bumped into it, I liked it. And that's why I am a real Longhouse guy now. And never changed, I guess.

It reminds me of John Bigtree, you remember. He was a Seneca guy. He was married to a woman from the reservation over here. He was a tall guy. He was a really, really beautiful looking guy. And he used to be a movie star. They used to come after him to play in the movies. He was in that *Drums Along the Mohawk*, movie. That old Indian handsome guy walking around. That was him. I got to know him. I didn't know him real personally, but I knew of him and I knew him too, I heard him talk one time. He and his wife were both really kind of traditional in their thinking, even though he was a movie star. He was a movie star but when he finished something he would come right back home to the reservation and his little shack. No running water, no inside toilet. And that's the way they wanted to live. That was their choice. And if some guy—Indian or white doesn't matter—started to use these ten-thousand-dollar English words on him, he would make pretend that he understood everything you said. And if he didn't understand what you said—maybe Professor talking to him, or Lawyer or somebody—he'd be saying “uh-ha.” And then he would say, “hallelujah.” So, every time he says “hallelujah” that means he doesn't really know what you are saying.

He was one of—I think four or five, or three, I don't know how many—that become the composite image for the Indian head nickel. They took part of his image and part of other people's image. And they put it together and that's what's on their five cent nickel. You know the money they would carry around, the five cents? That's his picture. So, John Bigtree was the most important person in the world. Everybody carried him around all the time. But he was a real modest at the same time.

What Jim Dumont talked about was really helpful. That spirit has liberated lots of people. This I can tell right here, because I was watching everybody. And I

If there is trouble, then, what are you going to learn from that trouble? Is it going to make you cry? Then, what are you going to learn from that? Because when you cry, that's what makes the corn grow, make the strawberries more sweet. So, the worst thing that can happen to us in life can come right from there, and can teach us.

I want to confirm the story of spirit that Jim was sharing with us. That we were so fortunate for the spirit to come where we are. To tell us. Because in the Longhouse, where I always been hanging out, I had uncles and grandfathers and grandmothers in there. And cousins in there. And my friends are in there in that

ator's greatest dance. That one is the strongest we have, because that turtle rattle we use is a symbol of the Earth, the Mother Earth herself. You shake that, the world is moving, shaking. Our grandmother and grandfather and all our sacred leaders told us to ask for forgiveness of anybody you may have hurt before you go in that dance to honor the Creator. Because if you have hurt somebody's feelings, you have, indeed, hurt the Creator. And so before you honor him, wipe your body clean. That means, ask for forgiveness. So when you go there you go there pure. You are a conductor of your body to that spirit Jim was talking about and all the spirits you pray with can go through your body to touch the earth and hook you to the earth. Hook you to the sky. And hook you to all of the life.

So, who doesn't want to be in ceremony? That means you don't want to enjoy life. That means you don't want to smile. That means you don't want to rejoice about your grandfather, and grandmother, and great-grandmother. That means you don't want to touch their hand. That means you don't want to embrace them. It's lonely if you don't do that. You get so lonely that your heart breaks. You get so lonely that you shoot up your arm with cocaine or any other stuff that's no good. That's plastic roses.

It's so simple. So they said, if you do this, you ask for forgiveness all the time before you touch the sacred things. Then when you dance the feather dance it appears as though your feet aren't touching the ground, but you are dancing on air. Even when they talk about the spirits coming, they never are touching the ground. They like floating. They are always around, the spirits. Everywhere. Day and night. They are always around. And they are always looking, too. They are trying to be with us, because we are theirs. We belong to them. When we allow that to happen, we allow harmony

The cradle board is the beginning of their world in a sacred way, to observe with honor through their eyes instead of touching. That's why you bind them up like that. So they learn how to watch and admire the beauty of the world, not wreck it like little kids would do.

could tell it touched the heart, that spirit touched the heart. And Jim was like the conduit for that to come here. So, you see, we all can do this at various times. If we learn how to do that in our daily life, just learn how to enjoy life, even if it's tragic. Even if it's the most sad thing that comes your way, just take a deep breath and say, "my Creator." Just say that. My Creator. That means Creator spirit is going to help you right away.

Don't frown and pump your muscles up and make pretend you are Superman's first cousin. That's what's going to give you ulcers and heart trouble and everything else that comes with it. Just be a plain old John Bigtree. And just relax.

Longhouse. And one of my uncles used to say what I have heard you guys say today here. I heard some of my relatives say the same thing in the Longhouse, at one time or another. So, what you guys did for me is you affirmed everything that I believe in my sacred house. That's how I understand this. You affirmed it, reaffirmed. Certified it. Documented it. Strengthened it, in my mind. So, if somebody is going to try to colonize me or rearrange my thinking they got a long ways to go, because you guys really sewed it up this time. I wouldn't change for nobody now.

At our Longhouse, they say when the big Feather Dance comes, that's the Cre-

to take place upon our life. And our uncle said in our Longhouse when the food comes to you that's been prepared for the feast, never pull your plate aside and say, "Oh, I don't like that kind of food," because if you do this, you are pulling yourself away from your uncle that's passed or your grandmother that's passed, or your mother or whoever has passed. You are denying them.

Maybe our taste buds don't like that particular thing, but out of respect I will eat it, because grandma liked it. Because my uncle liked it. And even though it's not pleasing to my mouth, that couple of seconds I will put it in and I will eat it, because my uncle liked it. And when I eat it, he eats it because he liked it. That's my duty. That's why we say in our feast that it will pass on. When they come to us and give us food we are told in our Longhouses never to say thank you. It's for the dead. Don't dispute it, because they have been here about 10, 20, 50,000 years. So, it must be that they're right.

The reason they said, "Don't say thank you" at the time of the feast for dead people is because when you say thank you, that means that's a courtesy that I can say yes or no. I can say, "No, thank you," or "Yes, thank you." It creates that kind of choice. But, see, what our uncle said and our grandparents said, is at the time of the feast of the dead, that isn't a choice. They are already there. They already made us born. So we don't have choice in that matter. It is the fact of what we are. We don't have that choice, or the luxury to say that. It's our obligation. It's our commitment. I don't know if that makes sense, but it does to me.

It's like the cradle board. When I took my kids to the Longhouse when they were little babies and I stuck them in cradle boards, me and my wife, we stuck them in and tucked them in. And carried them in that cradle board for six, seven months of their life. Even I tried to make

PHOTO: © MARIYV 'ANGEL' WYNN/NATIVESTOCK.COM



Nez Perce woman with baby in cradle board.

a bigger one when they were all broke. Because, for me, that cradle board is medicine. The cradle board is the beginning of their world in a sacred way, to observe with honor through their eyes instead of touching. That's why you bind them up like that. So they learn how to watch and admire the beauty of the world, not wreck it like little kids would do.

Indian kids, you see them sometimes, they go some place and they never touch nothing. You don't even know they are around, because they were raised in that

cradle board. That's the way I was raised. That's the way I did to my kids. And they thank me for it. One time one of my daughters was crying and crying. Why? Because we took her out of the cradle board, and she won't go to sleep until we put her back in that cradle board. My little girl who can't even talk, cried her head off; she loves her cradle board. Oh, that's reassuring. That's affirmation.

Tom Porter (Mohawk) is the spokesman and spiritual leader of the Mohawk community of Kanatsiohareke in Fonda, New York.

MEDICINES WORK WITH FRIENDSHIP AND RECIPROCITY

JANICE LONGBOAT

Thank you for inviting me to this beautiful, beautiful weekend. My name is Kehekti:io. It's a name that was given to me in the Longhouse by one of our medicine people, Elizabeth Silversmith, who Katsi talked about.

I carry that name with a great deal of honor. It means a good garden, or a beautiful field. And I am a gardener. So, I carry that name.

I would like to honor some of my teachers, because they are the people that have been there for me. And that's the reason that I can stand here and share what I have to share. People such as Thomas Banyaca. Such as Tom Porter, who is here. And an Ojibway man named Little Elk who died at age 92.

These are some of the people that have inspired me to walk the road that I have walked. I am the fourth youngest child of ten, of eight girls and two boys. I was born to a Mohawk mother and a Cayuga father in the fourth month of 1938.

The beginnings of my life were the joy of being with my siblings in a three-room log cabin on one of the busiest corners of the Six Nations Reserve, in Ontario. With a wood stove, a well where we drew our water, outdoor toilet. It was the happy days.

It was next to the one-room school that I attended from grades one to eight. High school was off the reserve, because there isn't one on Six Nations. Thirty-three acres of farmland, bush and a creek that ran through our land, where I was born and raised. And that's where I began to gather my knowledge.

We had many visitors that came to our

home. I thought they were all my grandmas and grandpas. I thought, boy, am I lucky I got lots of grandmas and grandpas. They came to visit. And it seemed like they came once every lunar cycle. They would make a round of the reserve, which is seven miles by seven miles.

When I was growing up, the people used their voice a lot. The greatest gift that we are given, they say, is our voice. Way down the road they would yell so we knew they were coming. We didn't have telephones, so they couldn't phone. But they would yell way down the road. And my mother would say, put the tea kettle on.

She was always saying to us, always be prepared. But I didn't know what that really meant. Always be prepared, she said. And it seemed like she would always have something ready for them, to give them some food. And so I learned very young how to take care of people that I thought were all my relatives, my blood relatives.

And in exchange for that, I heard their stories. They brought gifts such as seeds, bread, cloth, thread and buttons. My mother was a sewer. And in our kitchen there was a big round table and we always sat around that table. So, all of the action in our home took place around that round table.

And we all had a place at that table. So if there was a vacant spot, my mother always knew who was missing in that spot. And we were always encouraged to talk. So I grew up in a real talking family. We were always encouraged to share. Anything we wanted to talk about, we could say.

So, communication has always been very important to me. In the family that I was

raised in, boredom was never a factor. If there was any slight indication of boredom my mom would say, okay, I am running short of wood. Go cut some wood. And we had to go cut some wood. I remember one time we were short of wood, four of us, including myself, we went down to the bush. We cut four cords of wood before it got dark that night.

And so I know all about cutting wood. And what kind to cut for what kind of weather. Or we need to hoe the garden, or we need to milk the cows, or we need to bring in the water. We need to clean the lamps.

Even though I had all of these people around me, I required a lot of quiet time. And in this quiet time that I needed, I walked, I watched and observed things that were going on around me. And I marveled at that because I never truly understood. I never understood how that all happened.

I watched my Mom make medicine. I watched my Mom make two quilts a week the whole time I was growing up. I watched her can a thousand jars of fruit a year. I observed all this. And I was a part of it.

My mother was a night person. And my father was a day person. And I became, or I guess I was born, a morning person, because I get up really early in the morning. So, I spent a lot of time with my dad. And he taught me the outside stuff, and my mother taught me the inside stuff that went on.

When I was about seven years old I woke up one morning and I heard my grandmother calling me. It wasn't on the telephone or on the Internet. It was in my mind. I guess today they call it mental

telepathy or the spirit. I got up and I told my Mom what I heard. And she said then you must go to where your grandmother is.

And so she packed a little basket of fruit and away I walked down the road. It was a mile and a quarter to where my grandma lived. And when I arrived I just walked in, because when I was growing up no one locked the doors. It was unheard of for anybody to lock their door. When people went away they just put the broom across the door or a stick.

When I walked in, my grandmom was burning tobacco in the stove. She had the lid off the stove and she was burning tobacco. And she was saying in Mohawk that prayer that you heard from Tom Porter the first day you came.

And I stood and I listened until she was finished. And she looked up and she said, "You got my message." She had the biggest smile. "You got my message." And I said yes.

She said, "Today is the day. You are seven years old now." She said "Today is the day you must go to the water." And I didn't know what she was talking about. But I went to the water, because when I was growing up, we listened. We never questioned.

I went to the water. She said, "I want you to sit beside the water and when you come back tell me what you experienced." And so I did. But when I came back and she asked me, "What did you see?" I said I didn't see anything. She said, "Then you must go back to the water." So, again, I went back to the water.

I came back and she said to me again, "What did you see?" I said, I didn't see anything. And at this point I was getting frustrated. And I wanted her to tell me what I was to see. But she wouldn't.

Third time, I went back to the water. Didn't see anything. The fourth time I went back to the water. I looked into the water and I saw me. Water is a reflection of who we really are. The spirit of who we really are as a human being.

And I saw me. And it was at that point in my life when I realized I was really here and

human. And I began to smell everything in the bush. I began to look around and see the medicines in the trees and everything around me. I began to feel the wind in my face and in my hair and on my arms.

And I got really scared. I thought, what's happening to me? What's going on? And I came back to the house, and my grandma again said, "What did you see?" And I told her what happened. And she got the biggest smile on her face. And she said, "That's what I wanted to hear. Now you can help me with the medicines."

My grandma worked with medicines. She also delivered many babies in our community. And she really, really cared for people, like Tom talks about his grandmother.

She said, "Now you can help me." She said, "You can not work with the medicines unless you are able to see." She said, "They are going to come to you and you have got to be able to see them." I didn't really know what she meant, really meant, when she talked to me.

She said "You have got to listen, because they are going to talk to you." And I thought at the time, what is she saying? Medicines can't talk. Plants can't talk. What is she talking about, my grandma?

She said "They are going to come to you in a dream. And you have got to be able to understand what that's all about. Pay attention," she said. But she said one more thing that has carried me through my life to this very day and this very moment. She said "What you experienced are gifts that the Creator has given you, the spirit has given you."

"But," she said, "you have one more. This one is very, very important." She said, "pay attention." She said "This gift that you were given is the one that's going to carry you through the darkest of nights and you will never get lost. This one will take you down the roughest roads in your life. And you will never get hurt."

"Pay attention," she said. "Always be aware of what is going on around you." And I am seven years old and hearing this, but not

really understanding what she is talking about.

She said "Listen for your instructions." In these three days I have heard many people talk about the original instructions, the natural instructions. She said, "You must become a friend to the medicines, because medicines work with friendship and reciprocity. Never take unless you give."

She said, "Always carry tobacco because it's that spirit of the tobacco that tells the medicine it's time now to do it's work. It's time now to help."

When I was growing up I never ever heard of the word "health" like we talk about today. The old people talk of well-being. I guess that means the whole person.

So, I would like to share a few stories on how I knew spirit. When I was 12 years old my mother became very, very ill. It was the first time ever that I knew of my mother being sick. And the doctor came to our home. I remember it was on a Sunday afternoon about three o'clock. And he said to my father, and all of us, "I can't help your mother. There is nothing more I can do for her."

I remember thinking my mother was going to die. She was going to die. My mother. And after the doctor left my father sent my brother down the road to bring a man, Mr. General, who burned our tobacco for us. We got busy and we cooked and we put through a healing ceremony before dark for my mother.

And when Mr. General was leaving, he said to us, "Tomorrow morning your mother will be sitting up in bed." He said, "The second day she will ask to get dressed. And the third day she will be doing her regular duties." Wow, how can that be? How can just what we did possibly make that happen?

The next morning my mother was sitting up in bed. And the next day she asked to get dressed. And the third day she was doing her work, her duties in the kitchen. And I remember going out into the bush and thanking the Creator for sparing my mother's life. And I said to the Creator, "If

this is the power of our medicine, please, that's what I want to do. That's the kind of work I want to do."

I was twelve then. But I had already experienced many things with my grandma. I had watched her when people came for medicine. And I began to help her with her work. Then I got married, moved away, traveled a bit. But always, always going back to the medicines.

At the age of forty, I asked myself, "What is it I am to do? Whatever it is, Creator, help me to find and understand it." And I met this man, Little Elk, and we never spoke. It was like he could read my mind. And pretty soon he said to me, "Jan, if you are going to walk this road, this good red road, may I make a suggestion?"

He said, "If you are going to walk this road you must become like a hollow flute." I didn't know what he was talking about. He said, "You must become like a hollow flute and let the wind blow through. And you can make music." And I didn't say anything, but I thanked him for his message. And I was on my way.

Then I met another person. Her name was Ann Jock, a respected elder from Akwesasne. And she said some things to me that have stayed with me. And every time I went to visit and spend time with Ann the first thing she would say is, "Lets walk into the mountains to pick medicine," particularly golden thread.

Well, this one particular time we went, I had been talking about turtles a lot. And on the way back there was a turtle walking across the road. And she said, "There is your turtle. You have been talking about him. There it is. Stop, stop the car."

I stopped the car and we got out. But there was no turtle. There was no turtle. We looked on both sides of the road. There was no turtle.

I put down some tobacco and I thanked the turtle for that experience. We got back in the car and we went around the curve, just the amount of time that we had taken to stop, and there was a terrible accident

around the curve. If we hadn't stopped for the turtle, that would have been us.

I began to become aware of what spirituality is all about. I began to ask the Creator to help me to find the people in my life that truly could help me to understand. As they said, when one door closes, the other one always opens. But you must be intuitive enough to go through those doors. I made a commitment then to go through those doors, to be intuitive enough to enter. That's been my journey for a long time now, mostly to listen to the spirit, because the old people say when we need guides, when we need helpers, our helpers will come. But they will not always be in human form. Be intuitive enough to listen.

If I was to write a letter to the Seventh Generation, these are some of the things that I would say. I would say, always be prepared. Always be prepared. Like the old people, they were always prepared. You didn't think there was anything in their cupboard, but they could make a big meal for anybody that came.

To communicate, use your voice for song, for helping people, making people happy. By saying just a few words we can do that. Look after your well-being mentally, spiritually, emotionally and physically. I would say: be aware of what's going on around you; listen.

One time, Thomas Banyaca called me and said, "Jan, it's time to relearn the language of the universe." I wasn't too sure what he was telling me. He said, "We need to not learn it, it's always in here. But we need to relearn the language of the universe, so that we can fully understand what the spirit tells us. That everything has a language. Everything has a power. To look for your helpers."

He meant the ones that help us to find our gifts. He meant: don't be afraid to experience, to intuit. I just want to say that 20 years ago before I came back home (I was away for a number of years), it was because spirit told me to do that. I didn't know what I was going to do, never had a job and had three children to raise alone. So, I came back home. And the next day I had three

jobs, and began to work seriously with the medicines. And one of my family came to me shortly after that and she said "Jan, I want you to have the land that grandma lived on. I want you to have it. And that's where I live today. I live where my grandma lived when I was growing up." I know every inch of that land from when I worked with her when I was a young person. There are three bodies of water on this land, this sacred land. I do not say I own the land. I am just a keeper of that land for the short time that we are here. We are just keepers of the land.

I have to say that I am totally looked after by the spirit. I am totally looked after. And I thank the Creator every day for that. On November 2nd I got into an accident. Totaled my car. But I got up and walked out without a scratch. And when I got out of the car, it was like somebody was standing on my right side. It was a female voice. This voice said to me, "This is not in your journey." And I looked and I thought someone was standing there. There was nobody there. "This is not in your journey." And again, I always carry tobacco. I put down some tobacco and I thanked the Creator for that. For, first of all, sparing my life, and that I was given some direction in my life.

I don't know what that really means yet. I guess I have some work to do yet. When we open our mind and our heart, the two must work together. Tom Porter wondered early about the title of our section, this workshop. It is psycho-spirituality. This is what that means, the mind and spirit, apart or working together, to realize or become aware of what is going on around us. All these things that have happened to me, the many spiritual things, I had never put a name to it until now. But that's what it's all about. That's what it means, psycho-spirituality.

I wanted tell the young people what was said to me: learn to fly like the eagle. Spread your wings and go. As Tom said, roll up your sleeves, now, go on.

Janice Longboat (Mohawk) is coordinator and a traditional herbalist for the Earth Healing Herb Gardens and Retreat Center in Six Nations, Ontario.

I Saw That When People Worked Together Great Things Could Happen

PEMINA YELLOWBIRD

Da ska shash. Mah bidz zagidts. Nawah. In the languages of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, I have just greeted you in a respectful way and said, 'Today is a good day.' My name, my true name, the one that my relatives in the Spirit World know me by, is Atna Tawisa, which means Mother Comes, and it has to do with the way a Holy Being came to the Arikara People, to teach us how to live in a good way. It was my maternal grandmother's (Ina B. Hall) name before me, and it was transferred to me by another grandma, Ella Waters, who was 94 years old at the time. And this is what Grandma Ella said to me about it:

She said, "Generations and generations ago, eons and eons ago, our people lived in a humble way, a pitiful way, they lived under the earth, not fully formed as human beings yet. As our People began to form, they had no teachings, and so they quarreled with one another, they failed to do things right, and things went badly for them as they started out being human. Those with no parents went hungry, and the old people were not taken care of properly. But one day, the Creator pitied them and he sent a Holy Being to teach them how to live in a good way. One day," she said, "a perfect ear of corn appeared among them, and in a mysterious or holy way, that perfect ear of corn changed into a

woman, like you and me. And that's what your name is talking about, that mysterious way our Mother Corn came to our People. Mother Comes."

I am a child of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation. That is what people call us. We call ourselves the Nueta, the People of the First Man (Mandan), the Hidatsa, the River or the Willow Crow, and the Sanish, the Friendly People (Arikara). We have lived for many millennia along both banks of the Missouri River, whom we regard as a living being and who is very beloved by us. We are known by the kind of traditional home we built, too, called earthlodges, that we once lived in. The building of these homes was begun in ceremony, conducted by women, who also built and owned them. Our Nations had, and still have, a very highly developed agriculture, and we still have different kinds of corn, as well as squash, beans, sunflowers, pumpkins and tobacco, along with the many other plants and medicines we gather in our homelands. We still plant large gardens, and like the grandma who spoke earlier, I am a gardener, too. We formerly had a large trade network on the Missouri River, and traded our garden produce with tribes from as far away as the Pacific Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and up into Canada and the Great Lakes area. We gained a lot of teachings about the ones we adopted and the ones

that adopted us through this trade.

By introducing myself and my People to you today I am doing what my relatives taught me to do, and that is to greet you all as relatives. And I ask all the elders to excuse me, for standing up in front of you and talking like this, and I ask you to correct me later if I make any mistakes. I am also supposed to tell you that when we travel, they come with us, our ancestors, our relatives. They are all standing here. Everything I am telling you comes from them, and I am just a messenger. I feel like a little kid standing here, a little kid who has been really blessed and got to hear wonderful things from a lot of older people, very, very blessed. And you see how we teach through our stories, those stories are powerful. Those words are holy. I was also taught to do another thing, when I travel, and that is this: I want to acknowledge the chiefs, the medicine people, the elders, the citizens and the children of the Nations whose homelands I am in. I acknowledge you and I say thank you for letting me come to your homelands.

I want to give a great thanksgiving for this good man who prayed for us (Tom Porter). Haven't these last few days just been TOO MUCH? I don't know about you, but my heart is ready to burst. I have had trouble falling asleep every night, because of the medicines and the

power and the energy that has been coming out of everybody, and because everybody has shared all of these good teachings.

I feel like a little kid standing here. If I could take a pencil and make a dot on this wall, that would represent what I know, what I have gained as knowledge. But these walls, this floor, this ceiling, that would represent what the elders know, what there IS to know, and that's why I feel like a little kid standing here. I want to thank you all in a humble way for sharing, because I have turned myself into a sponge and just absorbed everything you said, because that's how I was taught. The way this grandma was speaking, we're supposed to listen, and that's how we learn.

When I was little, I too was blessed with a wonderful grandma. I was really lucky because she taught me how to listen, and because of that I learned many things, and have had a blessed life.

I really loved my grandma, and I felt for you when you were talking about losing your mother or your grandma, because I was the same way when she went home. When I was small, I was in trouble all the time because I wouldn't listen, but I would do anything for her, even behave, if it meant I could be near her. She loved flowers, and her garden, and she transferred that love of the earth and of all growing things to me. She was also a product of the boarding school era, yes, we had that in our family too. One day, they got the love beaten out of them. And they came home and if they weren't violent and angry and hurting themselves or others, they were quiet. Very quiet. And that's how my grandma was. She seldom spoke, she was very quiet. But I grew up around her, keeping my ears and eyes wide open, watching everything, learning, learning, learning, because she seldom spoke, even to get after one of us grandkids. She was a good teacher in

that traditional way, where you model the things you want the kids to learn. And I figure the best way that I can honor her and her memory is just to try to live by her teachings, to be as much like her as I can, and to pass those good ways on, which is why I'm very grateful to come here and be a part of sending a voice into the future, for those generations who are yet unborn. I have four wonderful sons, and even as I was trying to teach them, they were teaching me too, about unconditional love.

came to be my turn to set an example. I had to work hard to feed them. I had to be honest so that my sons could be honest. I had to be responsible for everything I said and did, so that my boys could learn to be that way, too. And my grandma, in all my life I never heard her swear or say a bad word about anybody. I wish I could say that I am like that, too, but I can't. I made mistakes, and I let my boys see my mistakes, too, so they could see me apologize for them and to make amends, because they will

I am also supposed to tell you that when you travel, they come with us, our relatives, our ancestors. They are all standing here. Everything I am telling you comes from them. I am just a messenger. I feel like a little kid standing here.

My grandma taught me to be hard-working. She did this by example. She worked hard all her life, was never idle. She taught me to be honest. She taught me to respect myself. She taught me about being humble, because I could watch her live her humble life. She used to say, "We are all a part of the whole." And then I watched her be a community builder in the days before that phrase was even around. She didn't say, "Why doesn't the Council do this, why don't they do that? Why don't they fix this? Why don't they give this to me?" If she saw that something needed to be done, she got up and did it herself. And I also saw, through her efforts, that when people work together, great things can happen. These are the things that I learned from her.

And it's a good thing I did, because my boys required them of me when it

need to learn how to do that, too, to become true men. I let my boys see how much I love my garden, my flowers and vegetables. I explained to them the same way all of us have been telling today: those who are yet to come, you are in the seeds. We are going to water you. We are going to feed you, with these good words today.

That Oneida leader who came and talked to us, oh he made me cry when he said to those who are yet to come, how their tribe had no land. And what they did to raise the money to replace their land base. And he said to them, "We did this for you."

All those elders that are standing here, they did that for us. The least that we can do for those who are coming, for the children we ourselves give birth to, is to be a good example to them. When I made mistakes, which I did frequently,

I asked my boys to forgive me. And they did and now they tell me I did a good job as a mother. And that really touches me because they are all grown now, and they learned to be true men. God blessed me with six grandchildren, and I love being a grandma. I get to be like my grandma now, except I'm not as quiet as her. I am always talking to my grandchildren, singing to them, talking to them. But I really love, love, LOVE doing it. I can see how they are going to love the ones who are coming, those yet unborn. I hope they have a chance to see this and to hear this, and to pass it on. In the event that they do have that chance, I want to say to them, to LISTEN. Open your mind. Open your heart. Open your ears. Open your eyes. You are going to learn something good and useful for your Life.

Watching my grandma, I learned that we have to give back. We have to give something back to our People, in exchange for the very air that we breathe, for the food that we are given, the liquids, for the privilege of calling ourselves children of our Nations. In exchange for this Life, we give back to Life.

I also learned this lesson of giving back when I was named. In our naming ceremony, the one who conducts it presses that name into you so that the ancestors in the Spirit World can recognize you. They pray for you, and call on all the ancestors who carried that name before you to help you, to walk with you and protect and guide you. And then they ask you, "Now. What are you going to do for the People? What are you going to do?" Meaning: all these good prayers have been said for you, and now things will go good for you, but what are you going to do to give back something to the People? At which time I said what probably everybody else says, that I would do whatever is asked of me.

And it was not long before I found out what that was to be. And this is how I'll answer the questions of what I do for the People and what that work is. I was working for our second female Tribal Chairwoman, Alyce Spotted Bear, some of you here know her well because she was a graduate student here. Well, I was Alyce's administrative assistant, and my job was to help her do her job, and that meant I got to talk to a lot of interesting people about a lot of interesting issues. One day, I answered a phone call for her and learned that the North Dakota State Historical Society

Those shellacked skulls were retrieved and were in storage in the Society when I learned about them. At that same time, I learned that the State had been hoarding the contents of Native burials for as long as one hundred years in order to study them, and I began to tell the other Tribes about it, and we knew we had to stand up and do something. In 1985 our tribal governments made appointments to the North Dakota Intertribal Reinterment Committee to address the issue. We developed our position about the treatment of our ancestors and their burials, and we did

That's one thing that I learned. I have to now stop here and acknowledge the chiefs, the medicine people, the elders, the citizens, the children of the nations whose homelands I am in. I acknowledge you and I say, thank you to you for letting me come to your homelands.

had recently held a Board meeting, at which someone said something racist about Native peoples, and the caller requested that I get copies of the tapes of their meeting and respond to whatever was said. Well, once I got those tapes and listened to them, I learned that in a discussion about the looting of an Indian burial, where the stolen skulls had been shellacked, a wealthy white man on the Board said, "Oh, who cares about a bunch of old Indian bones anyway?" And now I have to apologize to all of you for speaking of these things in this public way, because we're not supposed to talk about this in public, at least we never used to, but we have to now in order to fix what's wrong. So forgive me if what I say is upsetting to you.

that with one heart, one mind, and one voice. We worked not only for the repatriation and reburial of the 2,200 or so of our ancestors in the possession of the State, but we worked for the passage of a state law that protected existing burials for the sake of the deceased, and not for the sake of science. In 1989, we got our state law, and in early 1990, we reburied our beloved ancestors, on tribal lands, and without having to further their violation through scientific study. During this same time we helped work for the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and to date, we have reburied about 5,000 of our ancestors. And there are still thousands more to go, but we won't rest until they are all back in the ground.

I know what you meant. When they leave it's hard. But I figure the best way I could honor her is just to try to live by her teachings. And so, I was really grateful when I was asked to come here. It's not just my family, it's all these standing back here the ones who taught her. And the chance to send a voice into the future.

In doing this work, I learned a lot about our original teachings and instructions, including the care and protection of our dead. Some of what I know came, once again, from my Grandma, who used to take me with her to the cemetery when she would care for the graves and feed our relatives. She's the one who told me that when you go where they are, you don't make noise, you don't play around, you don't walk on them. You just go there to pray and to remember them with food and tobacco. I also saw that we Native peoples are here today because of these very same ancestors who languished in museums and universities, and that one day, my beloved Grandma would be joining them, and I didn't want anybody doing that to her or anybody else. Our teachings also told me that when you bother them, when you disturb them, they can't stay in the Spirit World, because they are no longer at rest. They can't really stay here in this world, either, because they no longer have a body. And so they wander between the two worlds, pitiful and crying and lost. An elder told this story to one of our Committee members:

He said, "I have seen where they are, these Pitiful Ones. In the Spirit World, there is a place, a place that has a road going through it. And that road is made of a very fine dust, and on this road, thousands of feet are passing all the time, people going home to the Spirit World. And on either side of this road,

as far as you can see, these Pitiful Ones sit, skeletons, some missing parts of their bodies, with their heads down to hide their tears. And on each and every one there sits a layer of this dust, kicked up by the others who are going home. That's where they are at," he said, "when they are not whirling above the places where their bodies are kept, or when they are not whirling above their descendants, trying to get help for themselves." And their unrest, our elders told us, affects us too. If they are not at ease, we have dis-ease, too. If they are not at rest, we have un-rest, too. And so with each reburial of each ancestor, our turmoil and problems subside, and so by helping them we are helping ourselves, too. And that's why this work is so important, to bring things back into balance and maybe by the time the generations to come are here, this problem will no longer be a problem for them.

I just have a few more things to tell, for those who are coming, and then I'm going to close with the teachings that our Mother Corn brought to the Arikara people.

At a meeting one time, a grandmother from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota stood up to talk. She said, "Yes, those young people call me grass-roots. When I heard that, I said, 'grass roots, I don't know what that means.' Grass roots. So, I went home and I thought about it," she said. "And I got to thinking how the roots of the grass

make the grasses grow tall and healthy, they gather food and water for the part that lives above ground, and it's this part that feeds the buffalo and other animals, including humans, and the buffalo and other animals feed the People. The seeds of the grasses and plants feed the birds, and they give a home to many things that live and move and breathe. I see now," she said, "how the roots of the grass feed all things in their turn, and how I do, too." She said she got up the next morning and went to a Council meeting and told those people that she was grass roots, because she feeds all things in their turn.

That's what everybody is doing here at this conference. And you that are coming, you that are not yet born, you think about that. Think deeply about everything that was said here by these good people, read many things into it. Think deeply and some day you will come to understand what they were talking about.

You that are still coming, I want to tell you a little something about humility. This is a life experience. Even though I was blessed with a lot of humble teachers, that's one of life's lessons I learn over and over again. If you are not humble, life will teach that to you. I want you to pay special attention to this: because people were humble, and worked together, a great thing has happened, and that's the results of this conference you are reading about today. In these results you will find a map for

your life, for all Life. Think deeply about all these things and be humble about it.

You must take good care of yourselves—physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. That’s your job. When you do that, you will have so much peace, so much strength and serenity, and so much love. These will come to you in an abundance, and then you can give them away to all you meet.

You must learn compassion. I’m going to tell you a story to teach you about the kind of compassion I’m talking about, the kind that can cause miracles to happen. There is a man, he’s my uncle. I love him, I respect him, he is like a father to me. And he has been so good to me, and here is what he taught me about compassion.

When he and his wife were young, she had a sickly heart. She had a stroke. She was paralyzed on one side, and still a young woman. Their children were all still small, and at that time my uncle was a school teacher. And she couldn’t get out of bed—she was helpless, couldn’t talk, couldn’t even feed or bathe herself. When she came home from the hospital, my uncle had to do everything for her, as well as work at his full time job and care for the children and the house. This he did gladly, because he loved her and he loved his family. One day, he went in to check on her and she was laying there, crying. Not making a sound, just crying, and the tears were sliding down into her ears and on the pillow. My uncle said he held her hand and comforted her until she went to sleep, and all that time he was thinking about why she was crying. She couldn’t really tell him why, but all he had to do was to try to see things through her eyes, and this is what he saw: he saw a young woman, paralyzed, cut down in the prime of her life. She didn’t know if she’d ever get well, hold her children again, have any kind of a life besides

being bedridden. And he saw how the future looked to her, and he felt for her. He felt so much compassion for her that he wanted to cry her tears for her, so he got her mother to watch the children and he went out to the country, to the old house where he grew up, so he could just let go and have a good cry. He said he pulled in there, and as if he was blind, he walked into the countryside, crying and crying and praying for her. He didn’t think about himself or his future, or all of the tremendous demands that were being placed on him at that time. He thought about his companion, and how hard things were for her, and he cried and prayed for her.

good, something for the People or for someone else, you have to have that true compassion, you have to feel what they’re feeling, otherwise what you’re saying is just words.” And he was right. He was absolutely right.

There was a time when the United States Government made it illegal for us to practice our ceremonies, but our ancestors fought to hang on to them. There was a time when the U.S. Government tried to take our cultures, our teachings, our lifeways away from us, but our beloved ancestors kept them so they could pass them on to us, and so that we could pass them on to you. Make sure you learn all you can about

She taught me about being humble, because I could watch her live her humble life. She used to say, we are all a part of the whole. And then I watched her be a community builder in the days before that phrase was even around. She didn’t say, “Why doesn’t the council do this, why don’t they do that? Why don’t they fix this. Why don’t they give this to me?”

When his tears ended, he said he looked around and found that he was standing in a bed of sage, one of our most powerful medicines. So he offered some tobacco, and he picked some of that sage, and he went home and he wiped her off with it, and prayed for her, with his compassionate heart and mind, because it was all he could think of to do for her. And four days later she got up and walked, and has since led a full and active life.

When my uncle told me that story, he said, “So if you want to do something

your Peoples’ original instruction and teachings, and make sure you pass them on to the generations who are to come after you. When you act on these original teachings and instructions, good things happen. When we acted on our teachings about the treatment of our dead, they were put back in the earth, and no longer needed to whirl around us, making us pitiful too. Working together to restore peace to our dead was one of the ways that Native peoples are also restoring Life to our original teachings and instructions, so you see

everyone and everything benefits when you follow these good ways of our ancestors. Hopefully by the time you arrive here on earth, our original teachings and instructions will have been restored to their rightful place in the center of the lives of the People. But just in case there is still work to do on that, I leave you with the teachings of our beloved Mother Corn, told from our Origin Story by Four Rings, a Sanish Medicine Lodge leader and chief, so that you'll know how to have a good life.

MOTHER CORN'S TEACHINGS

*Mother Corn bade them:
 ever to be industrious;
 to provide for those
 who should be dependent upon them,
 and not to indulge themselves in ease,
 to be not envious nor covetous,
 to live peaceably with their neighbors,*

*to avoid contention or quarreling,
 to be generous and forbearing,
 to practice hospitality to strangers,
 to be kind to the poor,
 to be considerate toward the youth,
 to give good counsel to the erring and
 restore them to the right way.*

*She also enjoined them
 to be truthful and just in their dealings,
 and faithful to trust.*

*She exhorted them
 ever to be brave to endure suffering and
 courageous to defend their people
 against an enemy.*

And remember these things: Have love. Seek justice. Walk humbly with your God. Be good to one another. Keep your eyes and ears open, and you will certainly learn something good, but you cannot learn a thing if your mouth is open and going all the time. Be pre-

pared at all times, try to look down the road and anticipate what's going to come next, so you can prepare. Even if what you've prepared for never happens, at least you'll have learned something. And look up. Have joy. That's why you're here on this Earth, you know, to learn and to have joy and to enjoy all the beauty that is here. And now I'm going to close with a traditional statement we always use when things of grave importance have been discussed:

We duit dunst stuidt

*That's the way things always were
 That's the way they are now
 That's the way they will always be*

Pemina Yellowbird (Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara) represents her Nation on the issues of repatriation, reburial, preservation, and protection of her people's sacred sites.

Eastern Wisdom of the Giveaway Conference

June 2003

The Wisdom of the Giveaway Conference Series brings together representatives from tribes, tribal foundations, mainstream foundations, and various levels of government. The goal is to advance tribal sovereignty and Native control of tribal assets through the strategic distribution of charitable resources.



The conference will take place in the Northeast

For more information contact Joseph Linkevic at linkevic@firstnations.org or call (540) 371-5615, ext 50.

Visit our website at www.firstnations.org.

*Strengthening Native American Philanthropy
 An Initiative of First Nations Development Institute*

Choosing the Path With Honor

MICHAEL ARREDONDO

I get my Native blood from my mother's side of the family. Her father was Shawnee and her mother was Chippewa. My father is Hispanic. My great, great grandfather, David Dushane, was chief of the Eastern Shawnee in the 1940s, who died in 1976 of a ruptured appendix. The Shawnee were involuntarily placed in Oklahoma. But of course we were promised the land would always be ours, and it would never be owned by whites.

As we all know, in 1907 Oklahoma, land of the Red people, home of the Red people, became the 46th state. The Shawnee were fragmented into three tribes, the loyal, the absentee and the eastern extreme.

We have about 1,000 tribal members, and if my math is correct there it's only two to three percent that are fluent in our language. There is no way to learn our language unless you go home. There is no other way to learn the language. You have to go home and attend language class on Wednesday nights. Being a student here at Cornell it is just impossible for me to be in Oklahoma on Wednesday nights. I understand the elders reasoning for doing that. However, it is a difficult thing to accept.

The Shawnee never received a reservation. Instead we received individual tracts of land for ownership.

I have two older sisters, and my father took a look at the poverty, high

unemployment, poor health and the welfare system and said, "I cannot raise my family here. I need to go where I can do the best for them." So he moved us to Albuquerque, New Mexico. You know, they say if you don't like Mexicans and you don't like Indians, don't go to Albuquerque.

So we fit right in there and that's where we grew up. My mom's parents were also there. My grandfather sat me down as he would from time to time and told me about all the bad things I would hear about being Native.

As my life unfolded, I saw that it was indeed true. I did hear those things. In paralleling Sitting Bull's words, in his time, he told me that I had been born into a white man's world and that I would be walking on a white man's road.

He said, "You should acquire the white man's medicine and his skills and his planning and you bring them back to us. We will be waiting on you."

I have been trying my whole life to get to college. It has been quite a long road. I learned about college while watching TV. I caught about the last five minutes of a TV program and I went and found my mom after it was over and I asked her what an Ivory Leaf League school was.

She was chuckling for about as long as you are, and she told me that it was a school that you could go to if you had a lot of money. I asked her if we had enough.

She looked at me and she said, "It might be a while." So this college thing sounded pretty good, and if I was going to go, I was definitely going to go to the best, because that was what the TV program said.

So I went out and I got all the jobs that a little kid can get at that age. I raked leaves and picked up old cans and that sort of thing. They were all too happy to pay me to do odd jobs to contribute to my Ivory Leaf school fund. After some time, I put all this money together and I took it to my mom and I asked her if I had enough yet to go to the best school.

She didn't bother to count it. She only looked at me and she said, "You know, it might be a while." So this continued for some time, but I noticed that a very indirect and subtle message began to appear. Over time as I got older, it came to be a very direct message. She said that certain programs, institutions and educational opportunities weren't for me. Weren't for Indians. Weren't for people of color. Maybe perhaps you should make other plans.

So I quit talking about it so much and by the time I got to high school, I quit talking about it altogether. In four years of high school, I did not have one teacher, one administrator, one coach, one advisor, one counselor, ask me if I wanted to go to college. Not one.

So after high school I joined the U.S. Navy to get the GI bill so I could go to

college, because I knew my parents couldn't help me. Shortly thereafter I was deployed to the Gulf War. Being medical personnel in the Gulf on the USS Iwo Jima put me in a pretty bad position. We had what was termed the worst accident in the history of the Gulf War. I had never seen and I hope I never see again bodies that were burned that bad, beyond recognition. Using their dental records to identify their remains, preparing them to be shipped back home, I could only stop and think, this is not what I had in mind. I just wanted to get money to go to school.

So I wrote a letter to the richest man in the world, explaining my plight to accomplish my third goal. The richest man in the world wrote me back and said, I understand your situation. I understand what you have been up against. I understand that not very many people have given you a chance. I'll take a chance on you.

But you know what they say, join the service, see the world, get money for your education. When I got back from the Gulf, I applied and was accepted to the cardiovascular school of medicine in Bethesda, Maryland. To give you a very brief idea of what a cardiovascular technologist does, we function in place of a physician assistant to the cardiologist. We scrub in with the physician at the table in OR. We are a cross between a physician's assistant and first assistant in the operating room.

Along with the doctor, we know all the procedures that clear out the

blockages of the heart. We know how to program and implant internal fibrillators that will restore an abnormal heartbeat. We know how to map the electricity inside the heart, find the abnormal pathways and fry them out with radio frequency ablation to restore normal hearts.

I really love what I do, what I have been doing for ten years already. When I got out of the Navy five years ago, I was 26. I had to stop and think, do I still want to be doing this in ten years? Do I still want to be assisting physicians in ten years? In ten years, I could be a doctor.

So I had three goals ahead of me. I needed to get out of debt. I am a skydiver. I have been skydiving for six years now and I stopped counting jumps at 200, which is a whole other story. But I had to master a significant amount of debt. I needed to get in school, because as we all know, being outside of the school system and getting to the point where you are sitting down in the classroom and taking classes can be quite a hurdle.

I also wanted to find a way to finance my education and my cost of living. I looked around for about six months. I

found a job in Seattle. I moved up there. In a year, I pounded down about 17 grand worth of debt and I got into school.

I reduced my hours to part-time at work, which in my field is about 30 hours a week. And while taking chemistry and calculus, organic biology, all those sorts of classes, I found that it was becoming just too much, the stress of my work and my classes.

So I wrote a letter to the richest man in the world, explaining my plight to accomplish my third goal. The richest man in the world wrote me back and said, I understand your situation. I understand what you have been up against. I understand that not very many people have given you a chance. I'll take a chance on you.

It's really been quite a thing to think that somebody that I don't even know decided to back me like that. For every semester that I successfully complete, along my pathway, I get funding from the Bill and Linda Gates Foundation, and it covers my tuition, my books and my fees, cost of living, groceries and electricity bill, food plan. It's really quite a deal. It is one of the most empowering things that has ever happened to me.

So this last spring, a letter came in the mail from an Ivory Leaf school.

I opened that letter up and it told me, that the dream that I had inside for 25 years, the dream of a six-year-old child, had finally come through.

This past summer, I sold most of what I owned and loaded the rest in a U-Haul and took six days to drive out here to Cornell, to finish my pre-med requirements. I am here at Cornell.

The Native students here, we face our own issues. We wonder if we got accepted for our blood. I talked to other Native people, not here at Cornell, that feel perhaps we have sold out, come to a predominantly white institu-

tion, that what we need is to start our own schools, tribal colleges.

When you look at all the physicians in the United States, divide them up by race, and point to all of them that are Indian, it's one tenth of one-one hundredth. When you look at all of the applicants in the Cornell pre-med pool every year, out of everybody that applies to medical school from Cornell University every year, on the average 81 percent get in. Those are huge numbers when you compare that to other institutions.

I came here to increase my chances, to take the road that gives me the best chance to accomplish my dream.

I came here to increase my chances, to take the road that gives me the best chance to accomplish my dream.

Unfortunately the reality is, that if I blow my grades, I blow my ride. It's that simple. So I apologize for missing most of the conference.

I imagine with my heritage I could just as well work for Hispanic people. But I wasn't nurtured that way. I know that in the end, when I stand before the Creator and I look him in the eye, I know that I have chosen the more narrow path, more difficult path, but one with great honor.

That will be my message to those that are yet to come, not to be self-serving. To pick that most difficult path, to come back and serve your own, to be proud of who you are, be proud of being an Indian and where you come from. To be humble before the creator, to listen to the children and encourage the children, for they will be sitting where you sit and I will sit. They'll be the only ones.

So before I close, I would like to tell you a very brief story about a little neighbor kid named Eric, a young black kid that lived next door to me. He comes from a single family home and his mom works, so he is home unsupervised more than he probably should be.

I would go outside on my study breaks in Seattle and I would sit in the coolness. He would ride his bike by and I would ask him what he wanted to be when he grew up. He didn't know if he really wanted to go to college. We would have these conversations, and over time he finally would start saying what he wanted to be. When you are as young as he is, it changes every week so he was a fireman, professional football player, accountant.

I always responded, alright, that sounds good Eric. I bet you would make a great football player, make a great accountant. I think he kind of caught on as time went on. He would be encouraged to do whatever he wanted.

Finally the week that I left Seattle, he rode up to me on his bike and he said, I think I figured out what I really want to do. He said, I want to do taxes on the moon.

Right on, Eric. Right on. Believe in the children. Travel safe on your way home. Thank you for your time.

Michael Arredondo (Shawnee) is dedicated to providing assistance to his community and serves as a role model for fellow students.

SPIRITUALITY GUIDES YOU BACK TO WHO YOU ARE

TERESA LYNCH

I am Navajo. And very proud of it. I went to school in Arizona, grew up in Arizona, but moved around as a little girl. I was born into this world with two Navajo parents. And the Creator gave me those parents with a flight bag, I would say. In this flight bag, the Creator put tools for me like my parents. He gave me another set of parents or guardians—an aunt and uncle—who also raised me.

And all those people that raised me.

I have different sets of parents. And as I grew up I looked around and I was different. And that made me angry, because I had different families while growing up. Each family had an alcoholic within that family. So I am called a survivor child of alcoholism. Even, with that, I was strengthened by those people. And with that strength I was able to help my people today.

I moved around the world with my parents. Supposedly, my father told me before he passed away, I knew my language, the Navajo language, but lost it when I was going to a public school. They kicked me out and told me I couldn't go to school there, because I didn't know English language properly. My father fought back and I went to public school and I lost my language. But I am going to learn it still. So I won't say, I wish I learned my language, because there is still plenty of time to learn it. Only when I go on to the next world, then I can say I didn't learn my language.

I did learn other things from my par-

ents, the different sets of parents that I had. I learned how to pray. And I learned integrity. And I learned how to be strong. I took the things that I needed. And that is the way, to take what you need and leave things behind so that others can have.

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And so I took from my parents what they gave me and then left the problems that they had. And I took the strength, the examples. My father was in World War II. He taught me to serve my country. So I served my country in the Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard. I spent six years there. It taught

me discipline. It taught me to have a love for our country that I didn't have before.

It taught me that I really do have a lot of freedom. The other thing that I learned, like I said, was prayer. I was baptized Catholic. And it was something that I didn't want to be, but out of respect for my parents I was baptized. As I got older, in maturity and spirituality, I made that decision for myself, what I wanted to practice.

As my journey continued I lost my way, and found myself in a world where I felt I didn't belong. I got, as pilots would say, disoriented. And what brought me back to who I really am is my spirituality. That's what saved me.

It also guided me to the career that I am in now, which is aviation. I presently go to school at Airline Training Academy in Orlando, Florida. And I am the first female Navajo pilot. And I hope to be a commercial airline pilot and make that my living, because that's what makes me happy.

And we are here on earth to be happy. And when I was disoriented, I was looking for happiness in all these different ways that you have all spoken of. And found it very empty. I got the materialistic things that I thought were going to make me happy. And at that young age I thought that those were going to make me happy, but found my life very empty until one day I found myself crying on my knees asking for help from the Creator to guide me, because I was lost.

And I was very humbled in this prayer.

And I said, you know, this is the life that you have given me. And this is what I want to do with it. If you can create man or woman and everyone you have created has their fingerprint that is unique. Everyone is different. You have given me a specific gift. And I want to know what it is.

And I asked for help. And I said, Creator, I just need to know from you.

So time went on and doors began to open. And doors shut. And doors opened. And I went to a flight surgeon. This is a doctor who looks at pilots and tells them if they are safe to fly or not by their health. And so, I went to this flight surgeon and he said, "I am sorry, dear, you won't be able to fly because your eyes are not as good as they need to be to be a pilot."

I thought, this must be a test from the Creator. And I have gone as far as I can. And so, I cried all the way home from the hospital. But then I questioned it again, I thought, should I believe this doctor or should I believe the Creator? And I thought this can't be true. And so I went and I talked to another pilot. And he told me "I have something I want you to read. Meet me at this store." And so I went to the pilot shop and I went to the store. And then I said, this is what the doctor said. And he showed me this article. And he said that the Federal Aviation Administration, the FAA, has written this article and he wanted me to read it.

I read it and the article said that they are changing the medical requirements, which will allow me to fly a month later. So, that was another miracle. That's just one tiny, tiny one.

But, it was how it started. I have to believe that we are born here to be happy, to share with one another, and that we all have a plan. I had that desire to fly, to learn how to fly. But it was along the journey that I found that desire. I was going to ASU where I got my bachelors in interdisciplinary studies and fam-



A young Navajo girl feeds a lamb.

ily studies and business. When I sat in front of the nursing building, because that's where I was going to study as a nurse, I thought, this is a great way to help my Native people. My mother was a nurse, and my foster mother is a nurse. So, I sat in front of the nursing building, and along that way there came a Southwest Airlines 737 plane that flew by, because they were right on the flight path. I had just spoken to my counselor in nursing and I was failing terribly in chemistry—not because I didn't under-

stand it, I just was not interested.

The counselor said, well, your interest in aviation will not take you very far. I went down to the bottom of the nursing building and I was really hurt. I sat down and I saw the Southwest Airlines 737 fly by.

I just pondered and reached within, and asked myself, what can I do? I am not handicapped. I can breathe. I can see. There are so many things I can do. But what can I really do with my life? I thought, well, what is it that I really want

to do? If there were no limitations, if there was nothing to hold me back, what would it be that I would want to do?

When I was a child, I used to want to be an oceanographer. Study the ocean. And I used to want to be a doctor, and I used to want to do a lot of things. But as I grew up that static clung to me too much, and I believed those things that people were telling me. I was socialized in a way that did affect me in a negative way. My fifth grade teacher told me, "You are not going to the sixth grade." It was people, even some family, that told me that I wouldn't go to college or make it through high school.

And I was very humbled in this prayer. And I said, you know, this is the life that you have given me. And this is what I want to do with it. If you can create man or woman and everyone you have created has their fingerprint that is unique. Everyone is different. You have given me a specific gift. And I want to know what it is.

And when that plane flew by in front of the nursing building, after I had that talk with my counselor, the sound of that engine was the sound of freedom to me. I looked up and said, if I could do anything it would be to fly that airplane. To learn how to fly that airplane. I felt, well, what is stopping me? Fear? Money? What people would say? Then, how could I help my people by becoming an airline pilot? I wanted to go back to the reservation and help the people. That was when I prayed about it. And the doors began to open. And open. And like I said, some have been shut, but it only

drives me to where I really needed to be.

As I go back to my land, I speak to my people, and I even had the opportunity last month to speak to a school in Orlando that is a non-native school. I was able to tell them our story. I hope to help the Navajo people through my story, and the non-Native American kids, the next generation that are non-native. Maybe they will be able to learn that spirituality is a very important, because it guides you back to who you really are.

Aviation is only a part of who I am, part of what I want to do. And in that flight bag are those parents and those families that helped me to fly along with the compass and the map and all those other thing that pilots need to get on this journey. I leave with the future generation that faith precedes the miracle. And that when you lose your life to the Creator, to God, you truly find it.

I ask the future generation, are you using your potential? That is one thing that I love about flying—I feel like I am using all of my potential. I am using my sight, my hearing, my mind and my spirit. When I do my pre-flight checklist and I go around the airplane, I am really listening to my spirit.

When I am flying, I listen to the airplane and the engine. There is so much going on. When they say time flies, it really does, because when I took my first flight lesson it lasted an hour. It felt like ten minutes. Some day, hopefully, I'll be patient.

So, to the future—are you using your potential? And if you are not, look within yourself, because there are the answers. And if you are not, it's unacceptable.

Teresa Lynch (Navajo) received a bachelors degree from Arizona State University and is enrolled at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Thank You For Letting That Fire Burn

TOM PORTER

Again, with special permission from our Creator, I will pray in English so everybody can understand. Because if we understand, it opens us and makes everything clear.

On the day when we began, we asked the Creator to stay with us, be with us, be next to us, in front of us, all around us. And then our brother, he brought out the candle and he suggested that there be a fire and it's been burning on the water. In that fire is the same thing that is a soul and a spirit of life.

We live in its warmth and there is a brightness that is us, that is the flame, to keep the flame going and keep the brightness going.

I have been watching this mother and her two children since the day we started, how admirable that is, that two little kids were listening. Even though they were quietly drawing things, they are still listening. In 20 years or 30 years, how they were listening, that might affect them.

It is that ripple. All the elements that are needed to make a whole are right in here with us.

That demonstrates the power of the youth. They are just as strong as they ever were and they are still reconnecting and reclaiming each other. So everything is wonderful actually, and when we asked the Creator to be with us, by golly, he was.

So at this time, I want to also acknowledge the organizers. Of course whenever you organize something, there's lots of

work and you don't sleep right for days because you are worrying about whether you are taking care of all.

So, thank you organizers and the people who funded it, thank you so much. Where we slept, you would think we were the King of England and the Queen of England, where you put us—nice room, fancy room, fancy bed. We didn't get cold. We didn't get wet. Everybody was happy.

It was like family—Dakotas, Navajo, Hopi, Mandan, Mohawks, all kind of Indians. Yes, it was great. So what are we going to do? With one mind and many layers of thank you, to our Creator, for these wonderful past days, we say thank you with love, and our minds agreed.

We remember our days that we shared together. Jump in the van and go eat and have a good dessert and jump in a van and come back. Jump in a van and go to a social dance and have a good time, like last night. Yes, those are the things we did together.

We laughed and joked together and we cried together too, and we also found hope together. We find clarity too. We hear the functions of each participant, each different, but we find out that it's actually the same, for the betterment of our people. And that is the miracle of all the miracles. Because this is it. Together, we can move the mountains. Together miracles can happen.

As we leave each other in a way it is a little lonesome. We won't be able to laugh

with each other or shake each other's hand or hug each other or eat together, because we will be going back to our families and where we come from on the Mother Earth. But the memories live. Remember that time? We'll be walking with canes, or maybe be in wheelchairs, 20 years from today and say, remember that time at Cornell? We were all together over there. So that's what we will remember.

So we say thank you to one another in our minds for the great honor of rubbing shoulders with you, of eating with you, of talking with you, of listening with you and all the things we did together.

Then to our mother, our ever-loving consistent mother, the one who is forever there, no matter what happens, no matter what we do, she never throws us away. She is always there embracing us, no matter what we do.

That's an example of what mothers should be and we have that mother, all of us. It's the same mother. So with oneness of mind, we throw our thank yous and greetings and love to our main mother, our foundation, for her love and compassion and her steadfastness of giving us life. We say thank you our mother, the earth. And our minds agree.

To the waters that run in the rivers and the streams and all of the water everywhere, for the noise on the roof, the lapping and the cries of the water, the toughness of the Niagara Falls voice of water, and the small drops of rain that

make you want to sleep and be comfortable and rest. To the waters that refresh our body when we wash and shower, to the water we drink when we are dry and quenches our thirst. That's the sacredness of the great water that the Creator gave to us and is still giving. So, on behalf of our families, our people, we send our thank you and greetings and our love to the spirit and the power of the nourishing waters of the world. We say thank you for quenching our thirst again today.

To the life that's in those waters, beings who do their duty and their job to clean the water and to nourish anybody that needs nourishment. To the life of the waters, the fish and so on, we say thank you with love. And our minds agreed.

To the berries of the strawberry, and all the other berries that come all the way until the snow comes, for bringing sweetness and medicine to our body and good taste to our food and health to us, we the nations of this Mother Earth say thank you today. And our minds agreed.

To the gardens that grew this summer, the corn and the beans and the squashes and the potatoes and the watermelons and the cantaloupes, everything that grew—now it doesn't matter if the snow gets so deep. We have food to nourish us and feed us and our kids until the snow goes away, so we can live. All summer we worked hard so that everybody can live. And so to the gardens and all the plants that grow this summer, with love, we say thank you to you. And our minds agreed.

To the trees, the big trees, the little trees, the maple tree, the leader of them all, here in the Northeast, the sweetener of the syrup that makes our food taste good. The tree that we get the boards from to make a little humble house, when the cold winter comes, so we won't freeze. If it gets real cold, we will gather the limbs that have fallen, and we will make a fire, and as that fire is flaming, it brings warmth to our grandmothers and grandfathers and children and our people. We kindle that fire

and we place our tobacco upon it, and the smoke carries our prayers to the Creator in the universe, so that we are connected to everything that's sacred.

So to the tree, who gives us the fruits of all kinds, for our children to grow and to be nourished, to the white pine tree that's a symbol of peace and freedom, and to the trees that make the air we breathe—that's why we are here and we are breathing. So when we add up all the wonderful gifts the trees give us, it is quite substantial, and we cannot live without them. So we, of one mind, we send our thanks and our love and greetings to every tree that grows everywhere in every forest on Mother Earth. And our mind again, has agreed.

Now to our grandmother the Moon, leader of the female life. She gives them the power so that their bodies can be the receiver, the comfortable bed where a new baby will begin its birth and the nations again will be born.

To the four winds that blow, the ones that bring the white blanket of snow, which is about to happen shortly, so that Mother Earth can rest, and then to the other two winds of the south and west, that remove the blanket of snow when she has rested enough, so birth can occur again. Those Four Sacred Winds, they are the ones that bring the changing of the seasons, so that there will be balance where we live. It is refreshing on the hot day when that cold breeze touches our face. They are still working just as strong as they were in the beginning. So to the Four Winds we say thank you with love, and our minds agreed.

Then as you and I have been privileged every day to walk upon Mother Earth, remember that one of the main things the Creator wants us to do, is to be happy and

know laughter and joy. Remember, he made the birds for that purpose? This morning, early this morning when the dawn was coming, those birds got up and they sang many beautiful songs to welcome the sun and the new day. So the birds made a nice day of happiness. The eagle who is the leader of all the birds—they are the protectors of our Mother Earth, and they still fly, real high in the sky, like she wants to do.

I would love it if that little Navajo girl drives that plane I am going to ride in, high in the sky.

So to the birds, thank you for your song today, and follow the Creators way. And our minds agreed.

To our grandfather the Thunders, whenever we hear them, we hear the noise in the sky and our old leaders take their sacred pipes out and they fill them up with tobacco and they stand in the doorway and they send that smoke way up—Whew! And they say, "Grandpa thunder, take that smoke as a gift, as that smoke carries my love and my thankfulness, that you are leading the waters to where I live."

So this past summer, as the summers before, our grandfathers have been good to us, always in the nick of time, always renewing the water that we drink in our rivers, in our ponds. That's our grandpa thunders. They love us because we're their grand-children.

So the grandpa thunders, thank you. With love we say thank you, and our minds agreed.

Then our Creator made the suns, the daytime sun and the nighttime sun. Our older brother who watches over the younger brothers and sisters—that's you and I—so that we may see and respect each other and care for each other, so we won't hurt each other and we won't collide together as we walk the earth. That's why the light shines from our old brother. So the corn will grow and the trees will grow and we won't freeze to death. That's our brother, what he does every day. So today, you did a wonderful job, just like you did yesterday. He is consistent. He is there forever for us.

So to our Old Brother Sun, we say thank you with love, and our minds agreed.

Now to our grandmother the Moon, leader of the female life. She gives them the power so that their bodies can be the receiver, the comfortable bed where a new baby will begin its birth and the nations again will be born. Our grandmother the Moon is loving and she is stubborn and she never relinquishes the job the Creator gave to her, and that's why we are born and that's why we hear our young people talking about their life and what they want to do.

So Grandmother Moon, we say thank you because we are your grand-children. And our minds agreed.

Then, the stars. It has always been said that the stars are the ones that tell us what's coming tomorrow. If the big storms of winter will be here these coming months, or tonight, that star can tell us if that's going to be, if there will be a lots of snow this winter, so that you and I can get ready, so we won't get hurt, our kids and our family. If the next summer coming is going to be lots of water, those stars will tell us tonight so that we will get ready for that. Lots of water next summer, so you don't put your house too close to the river. Or, it's not going to rain enough, get closer to the river. The stars tell us how to live a safe, good life on this Mother Earth.

But the elders did say some day, our

people will lose their knowledge of how to talk to the stars. If they do, then it will be sad. But even in that sadness, our children will not become blind, all of them. So that even if they forgot all the knowledge of what the stars mean, one thing is really for sure—all they have to do is look in the nighttime at the great beauty of the stars that fill the night sky, and it will be awesome and it will be magnificent beauty.

So to the stars, and the beauty we say thank you, especially for bringing the morning dew on every grass in the hot summers. So to them we say thank you, with love and our minds agreed.

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hot summers.*

Then our Creator made the four sacred beings. When those spirits are here, you really can't see them most of the time, but you can feel them. How do you feel them? Because they are the ones that make you shiver, and the goose bumps come upon your body. They are the ones that bring that chilling feeling through your body for a moment, or a warmth, a warm feeling to your body.

They are the ones that give you that rush when you hear something that is spectacular or profound about universal truth. And they love it. Then they can feel. But for the most part, they say they are the unseen forces of the universe.

They are the ones that protect us where we walk on this Mother Earth. They are

the helpers of the Creator. So when we do foolish things, they kind of push us back to where we are supposed to walk, and they enter our lives through dreams and true messages like you heard in these last days.

They are the ones that were born as humans in the past all over the world, that brought messages of peace and ways to have no more wars. So we have been so lucky, all us nations, because we have our laws and the things that they gave us to survive.

That's why it is 2001 and we can still say, Mandan, Mohawk, Ojibway, Hopi, in these last two and a half days. It has been a miracle and a half, to see our Sioux brothers, Dakotas, or Mandan or Cherokee, Hopi, Navajo, Zuni and all the rest. It is indeed an honor for us and each other, to have shared each other's company.

So as many nations, let us—I like the way grandma said it, [Speaks in Indian Language]. That means many layers of thank yous and dreams and love, that they touch the ceiling of this room and want to go out the doors and the seams of this room, it is so many layers of greetings and thankfulness and love. Then we pick it up and we throw it to those Four Sacred Beings, and we throw it to our Creator, the maker of all. Its the only thing he wants, is for you and I to say thank you for the pleasure and the miracle that we walk this earth. Every day, that is all he wants—us to say thank you and to mean it. And then they will help us.

So to our Creator who gave us this most perfect world full of beauty and full of everything we need, we say thank you. And our minds agreed.

Also, our Creator and our maker and our helpers the Four Sacred Beings—thank you for letting that fire burn. Thank you for giving the power to our delegates, young and old and middle-aged, all who spoke and all who heard that we have the power to listen, the power to absorb, the power to understand messages in the correct way. So that when we go home, those

messages will travel and it will affect changes that will bring peace and health and hope to all our families.

Our Creator, we ask for a special gift and we also ask your Four Sacred Helpers, that as this assembly concludes today, untie the rope that has held us together. We untie it so everyone can be free to disassemble from this assembly and look for the road that goes back to our villages, to our communities, to our families that remain there and couldn't come with us.

We hope that our delegates don't stumble over anything that will cause them injury, but that they all will go home safely with no accident. We ask also our Creator and our sacred helpers, that when we get home, let us find our wives or our partners and our children and grandchildren there, happy and in good health as when we left them.

So it is Creator, that we ask this favor of you, and our minds agreed.

So to our delegations, I am going to say this—when you get back home to Dakota country, to Arizona, to Oklahoma, to California, to wherever your village is, the first chance you get, please carry to the ears of your people the hellos and thankfulness to your leaders from our leaders.

When you get back home, carry the voice of hello and thankfulness and wishes of goodness, from our women to your women. When you get back home, also, on behalf of our men that have no offices or spiritual duties as officials but just regular Iroquois men, take with you the hellos and the thankfulness and their thoughts of well-being, to your young men of every nation when you go home. Take their hand to shake it.

Also, I will even go further, even tell the little kids that our little kids run and play around, too, and they don't need to read no book on how to play, because the Creator gives it when they were born. We

know that in Hopi and Lakota, Cheyenne country, wherever you come from, that your kids do the same thing.

So carry the handshake of our Iroquois kids and their thankfulness and their hello and their love back to your kids.

I guess with so much love, for sure, that we will continue the sacred things and the teachings. We will even go on further, to even talk on behalf of the unborns, the kids that's coming. We don't intend to quit our ceremonies. We intend to stop nothing and we know that you are the same.

So take the hand of our unborn back to your nation, to your unborn, and say hello with love from nation to nation. We send those greetings.

Until we meet again, thank you.

Tom Porter (Mohawk) is the spokesman and spiritual leader of the Mohawk community of Kanatsiohareke in Fonda, New York.

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More information on the programs highlighted at left can be found on the First Nations website, www.firstnations.org.



FORUM PARTICIPANTS

extend heartfelt appreciation to all who participated in the *American Indian Millennium: Renewing Our Way of Life for Future Generations* Forum at Cornell

University, November 29-December 2, 2001. With the participation of those listed here, and others, the experiences of Native people will be provided to the future generations.

(LISTED ALPHABETICALLY)

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Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee), first woman Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Stillwell, Oklahoma

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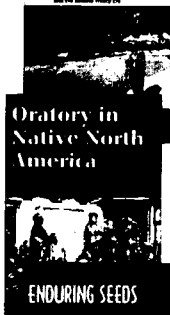
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Retha Walden Gambaro

Sculptor



Retha Walden Gambaro began to observe the "spirituality of art forms" when she was a child in Lenna, Oklahoma. Her art career did not formally begin, however, until 1969 at the age of 52.

Her dedication to art is depicted in the obvious concern for detailed artistic perfection in her work. She strives to achieve a special interaction of understanding between "sculptor, sculpture and viewer."

Gambaro is inspired by her American Indian heritage and endeavors to reflect and preserve it through her work. She enjoys expressing the blending of cultures, past and present. Each piece holds the spirit of the subject and passes the spirit and knowledge to the viewer.

Her works may be seen by appointment at her studio.

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