

# NEW OBSERVATIONS

135

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# The Pine Ridge Reservation Prisoner of War Camp #344

PUBLISHER & EDITOR: Mia Feroletto  
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# The Pine Ridge Reservation Prisoner of War Camp #344

**PUBLISHER & EDITOR: Mia Feroletto**  
**GUEST EDITOR: Robert N. Felix**



Leonard Peltier | Down But Not Out



Leonard Peltier | I Was Young Once and Had Many Horses

Mia Feroletto

# When Color Won't Matter

*"I hate white people. I'm open about it. I hate white people. I hate what you represent to the last 200 years of our people. I don't think you can understand that...In the Lakota nature we are not supposed to hate anybody. We are dealing with (it) in our own ways, but when you leave the reservation, it makes it doubly hard...There's gotta be a time when we can come together and say 'I want to be your friend. Can you be my friend?'"*

**Alex White Plume; Hero of the Industrial Hemp Movement and Former President and Vice President of the Lakota Sioux Tribe**

Late May/Early June, 2020

The entire world has been impacted by Covid 19 and is experiencing a lock down in one form or another. People have been sequestered in place around the globe and many lives have been lost. And if that was not enough for the world to deal with, America is erupting in waves of violence and protest as we stand up and say "NO MORE" death and abuse to minorities and People of Color (POC).

The people of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota have defied the Governor of the state and set up road blocks to keep people from coming onto the reservation as a safety measure to keep visitors from infecting residents with the virus. With the highest mortality rate in the nation, Pine Ridge cannot risk a hit of this magnitude. Even people with homes on Pine Ridge are not allowed in unless they can prove they have an essential role to play in the community.

A portrait of Alex White Plume graces the cover of New Observations Magazine Issue #131 "Industrial Hemp: Superhero/Savior of Humanity. Alex is one of the heroes of the industrial hemp movement. Eric Steenstra, President of Vote Hemp and former President of the Hemp

Industries Association has this to say about Alex: "Alex White Plume has been a leader and a powerful voice in the fight for Native sovereignty and the right to grow hemp. Alex prevailed despite several decades of efforts by the DEA to deny him the right to grow hemp and empower his tiospaye (family) and tribe. Alex has inspired many people throughout the world with his fight and commitment to Native rights."

Back in February/early March at the start of the Covid virus where I live in Vermont, I became aware of the fact that Alex White Plume to date had not been paid for his hemp crop going back two years. Alex had partnered with Evo Hemp and their founders Jourdan Samel and Ari Sherman to grow hemp to manufacture CBD oil under the combined label of White Plume Hemp and Evo Hemp. Alex was enthusiastic about the venture and saw it as a way out of poverty for his family and his community.

In the documentary-style film "American Hemp", available on Amazon.com, viewers can watch the founders of Evo Hemp discuss with Blue Circle Development consultant Brandon Pitcher how they can connect with other players in the industrial hemp industry

like Alex White Plume, "and (that) utilizing his name and reputation to build a brand...would be very smart."

Alex White Plume has not been paid for his crop or given product made from White Plume Hemp for personal use by family and friends. Alex is owed close to six figures. In a community where the average person lives on \$5,000 a year, this is criminal. It is beyond comprehension that two young guys trying to make it in the world of hemp would take advantage of one of the key people responsible for the legalization of industrial hemp in America. It is a familiar story that repeats and repeats for Native Americans and it is time it stops. It sure looks as though the folks at Evo Hemp never had any intention of paying Alex White Plume for his crop.

Racism in any form is unacceptable and needs to be rooted out and eradicated down to its very essence. Racism has defined the fate of Indigenous People all around the globe as corporate greed replaces our sense of humanity and minimizes our basic rights given to us by our Creator at birth.

Another Lakota friend, John Red Cloud, has been incarcerated for the past ten years. Granted parole approximately 18 months ago, John made the misstep of making arrangements to go outside of the allowed geographic area open to him in the halfway house where he resided and arranged a visit with his children without the permission of the Department of Corrections. As a result, weeks before he was to be released, he was returned to prison, where he is today. This week, I was told by someone I trust that before this happened, John had informed his counselor that he would like to attend a sacred sweat lodge ceremony. He was told that would not be allowed. John went over the head of his councilor and permission was granted but it seems John may have been labeled an agitator because he has been treated differently ever since. John Red Cloud is a talented artist and writer. He is the first member of the Red Cloud family to graduate from college. He is educated, informed and ready to be of service to his family and the Pine Ridge community. It is time for John to be allowed to return home and fulfill his promise as an individual.

The stories of abuse and misuse of Native Americans are endless. Since I am connected to both the Red Cloud and White Plume families, I give them as examples here. Racism and a sense of entitlement are at the core of this treatment. Beginning with the taking of their land through eminent domain and the continual breaking of all treaties to grab additional land and natural resources, the United States Government has not honored a single agreement made to Native people.

I am profoundly grateful to the contributors to Issue #135 of New Observations, Pine Ridge. The reservation is a place like no other, consisting of extraordinary beauty and spirit. To a one, the people I have met on Pine Ridge are full of insight and move in ways that are lost in many areas of America. The Lakota are at one with their surroundings. They are brothers and sisters to all that walks, flies or crawls upon this earth and their stories compel us to be better people. If we will only listen.

My personal thoughts and feelings range somewhere between Chase Iron Eyes and John Fusco. John's film *Thunderheart* has had a profound impact on me from the first time I watched it in 1992 at the time of its release. Spirit has brought me to Wasta where I live in the exact unit used by Val Kilmer and Sam Shepard as their office and lodgings in the film.

For those who have not seen the movie, it is based on factual events that occurred primarily on the Pine Ridge Reservation in the 1970s. Deborah White Plume, wife of Alex who served as an advisor on the film, provided the inspiration for the Water Protector/school teacher character Maggie Eagle Bear. Her young son Lance was shot in the arm by Dick Wilson's GOONS back in the day when violence was a daily event on Pine Ridge.

This issue of New Observations is meant to explore the American Indian Movement, the imprisonment of Leonard Peltier and that fact that in any other country, Leonard and John Red Cloud would be released. Around the world, Leonard Peltier is seen as a prisoner of war. He has had the support of countless people including Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, to name a few. The official name of the Pine Ridge Reservation is Prisoner of War Camp #344.

In prison, Leonard Peltier has developed his talent as an artist. We showcase his paintings here to share with you their raw power and their poetry. Leonard captures the essence of the Sioux culture along with the personal sacrifice that has become an essential part of reservation life. His work moves me in surprising ways, just as I know others have been moved. The historic art influences on his compositions and subject matter are clear to see. I look forward to the day when a catalogue raisonne is produced of his paintings by a respected art historian exploring his contribution to American art.

Leonard has been imprisoned for 44 years. Ballistic evidence that proves Leonard Peltier's gun was not used in the death of two FBI agents on Pine Ridge on June 26, 1975 was not allowed to be presented during his appeals trial. In any other country, he would have been released by now. His freedom would represent a monumental landmark for Indigenous People and minorities around the world, yet his incarceration is used as a means of holding Leonard, his supporters and People of Color down, just as we have witnessed the knee or the foot on the neck of a man of color flat on the ground. As the character Jimmy Looks Twice, played by activist and poet John Trudell, states in *Thunderheart*, "Sometimes they have to kill us. They have to kill us, because they can't break our spirit. We choose the right to be who we are. We know the difference between the reality of freedom and the illusion of freedom. There's a way to live with the earth and a way not to live with the earth. We choose the way of earth. It's about power, Ray."

Back in 2012, the sculptor Joanna Malinowski made the decision to include one of Leonard's paintings in her installation at the Whitney Biennial. Recognizing that Leonard belongs in the Whitney Museum, a museum dedicated to exhibiting the work of American artists, Joanna took the unusual step of showcasing his painting and issuing a challenge to the elite society that frequents art world institutions. As she writes in her article, the Whitney Museum supported her in this action. Her act was prescient, as more and more cultural institutions take a stand against systemic racism and abuse.

The Standing Rock protests against the DARPL pipeline ushered in a new spiritual power and sense of collaboration between people. Retired veterans of the American military stood side by side with members of hundreds of tribes from around the world to say no to the polluting and desecration of sacred land in North Dakota. Chase Iron Eyes had eight felony indictments against him for his actions as one of the leaders of Standing Rock. His contribution to this issue is a battle cry for freedom and sovereignty for his people and for ALL people on this planet. As he clearly stated in 2017, what is happening at Standing Rock is and will happen to all of us around the globe if we do not work together to stop the corporate takeover of our country. We are in the time of the 7th generation, a time predicted by Chief Red Cloud when peoples of all color come together to work for the good of the planet.

From our three-month quarantine, all we need to do is look out the window to see the difference in our sky, air and environment. The animals are coming back. The plants and trees are stunning in their vibrancy. Dolphins are swimming in the canals of Venice for the first time in years.

Tokata Iron Eyes and Greta Thunberg are environmentalist representatives of their generation who are standing up and calling out our politicians and corporate leaders for their callous misuse and destruction of our environment. Tokata invited Greta to Pine Ridge back in October of last year to speak to the Lakota community on issues of which they were profoundly aware long before Greta became a public figure. We owe it to our children to join them in this effort. We are running out of time.

The participation of Leonard Peltier, made possible by the pillar of Lakota matriarchy Paulette Dauteuil, forms the heart and soul of this issue. Through Leonard's paintings, we can all see aspects of Native life and culture, joy and

despair. His work provides a glimpse of the prevailing spirit of Indigenous People around the planet who will not be broken, regardless of where they find themselves. Leonard takes his place beside Vaclav Havel, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi and others who has inspired us to strive to become our best selves.

I would like to thank our guest editor Robert Felix for his time and expertise in helping to assemble this issue of New Observations, and our contributors, John Fusco, Cindy Catches, Annie Wenger-Nabigon, Chase Iron Eyes, Alex White Plume, Richard Fox, Charmaine White Face, Mitch Epstein, John Willis, Keri Pickett, Robert Looks Twice, Insight Photography, Dana Thompson, Cultural Survival, Edward Valandra, Mark Charles, Mary Collins, and Joanna Malinowska for their extraordinary contributions.

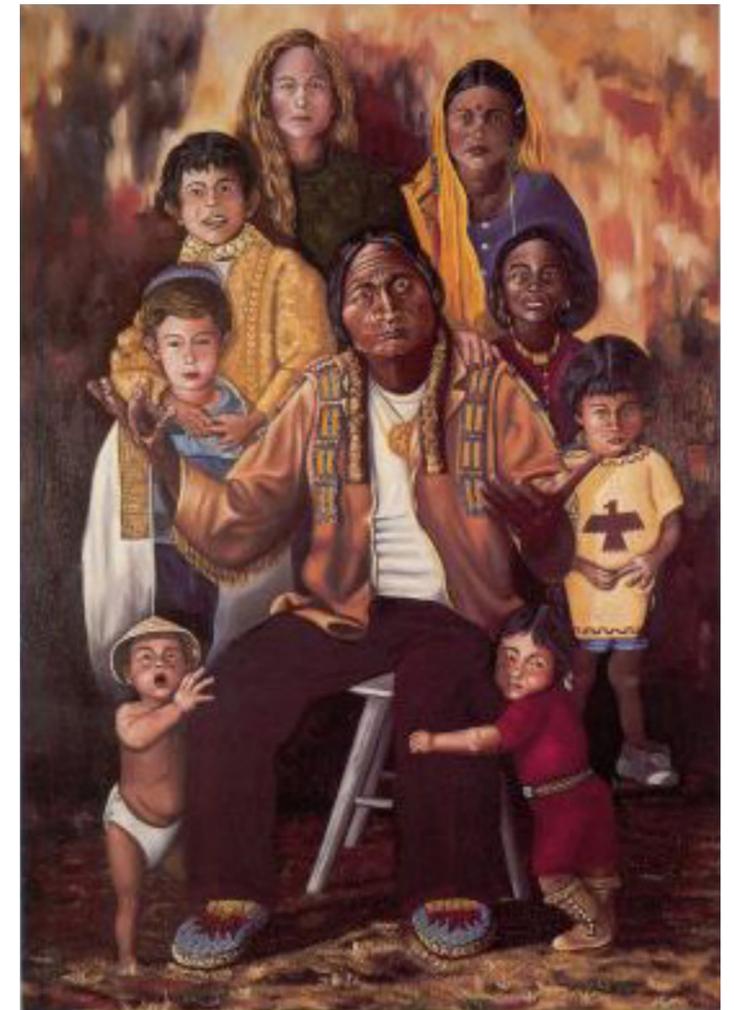
And to Lucio Pozzi, Diane Karp, Erika Knerr, Karen Gunderson, Annie Wenger-Nabigon, Leah Poller, Mafe Izaguirre, Diana Roberts and Naomi Rosenblatt, thank you for your support and many talents.

I call on the next generation of visionaries and moral leaders to come and take their place. It is their time to show us the way to the Land of Promise.

## Mitakuye Oyasin . . .

To All My Relations

Mia



Leonard Peltier | Sitting Bull & Children



# The Pine Ridge Reservation

## Prisoner of War Camp #344

**PUBLISHER & EDITOR: Mia Feroletto**

**GUEST EDITOR: Robert N. Felix**

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Photo by Mitch Epstein | Badlands: Red Shirt Table, Pine Ridge, Indian Reservation, South Dakota.

“Back behind Red Deer Table there are these strange beings from another world that eat stones and dirt and who will kill anyone who crosses into this place. This is what the spirits say.”

From the movie “Thunderheart”

Chase Iron Eyes

# Pine Ridge Reservation: Prisoner of War Camp #344

Pine Ridge Indian Reservation Prisoner of War Camp #344 Oglala Lakota Nation

**D**uring the Covid pandemic within the global community, every Native American Nation is under threat. The Lakota Nation is under attack from fanatic racist settlers. Kristi Noem, South Dakota’s governor, has attempted to instigate conflict during this pandemic: she has issued a threat to the Lakota People, under penalty of legal action, by demanding they remove their health checkpoints that serve as their only way to survive another foreign disease. The Lakota will not remove the checkpoints as long as their lives depend on it. Kristi Noem reached out to US President Trump for assistance to bring the tribes to kneel before this artificial authority and toxic violence bent on destroying Mother Earth.

On the Pine Ridge Reservation, there are 10 health-check points which are used to screen travelers who are guests in our homeland. They are only allowed to pass through if they have an essential purpose or are simply passing through. We attach a monitor to their vehicles to ensure they do not veer off course.

At the time of this writing, the Pine Ridge Reservation has 19 confirmed cases of Covid. This may not seem like a lot, but after 130 years of foreign imposed and debased poverty, we are in an extremely vulnerable position to ward off the rapid spread once it gains critical mass.

The world is paying close attention to this because the very right of English-speaking colonial forces to maintain settlor terrorism/genocide against its invented and real enemies (other ethno-cidal nation states) is at stake. The Indigenous Nations are the true civilized peoples, propagating new ways of re-knowing the purpose of humanity and capable of leading the world to freedom.

The Covid pandemic has leveled our collective understanding related to the exploitation of labor and intelligence and at the same time condemning our children to a certain ecological hell. The Indigenous Nations remain the only hope for all of us.

The Indigenous Nations do not believe Western civilization contributed anything good to our planet except the internet, if it can take any credit for that. We are finished telling our oppressors how they should live with basic human values. We are tired of our oppressors political imprisonment of our leaders who try to protect our environmental rights.

Leonard Peltier has been imprisoned far too long by a process known to require remediation. As a matter of moving forward in the spirit of cooperation, we have called for President Trump to grant Leonard Peltier an immediate clemency in the interest of his health and consideration of the limited time he may have left to remain with us all.

The people of the Pine Ridge Reservation have bled rivers on account of America’s lies and violence, the principle method used to maintain our subjugation. The people of Pine Ridge must have their full authority to make and be governed by their own laws. In addition, they must acquire the return of more land from thieving settlers. We are willing to live as neighbors. We have always pledged our peace and we still do; we fight and die for the American flag in far greater proportion than any white-euro-supremacist faux patriot.

The people of the Oglala Lakota Nation continue to experience ongoing threats to their way of life from the colonially imposed federal-trust relationship. This relationship is intrinsically

oppressive. The Euro-Amero settlers maintain an illegal occupation and attempted annexation of our allodial rights.

Our current and future generations are facing harsher realities every day. There is no excuse for this suffering, and we plead with the world to help us heal, help the world heal, by returning land to the Indigenous Nations. We are a living prophecy every day that there are opportunities to unite for our salvation.

Our right to live, to health and to clean water are inviolable. Currently, we cannot provide clean water to the entire reservation since several wells have tested beyond the maximum contaminant levels of uranium. Additionally, the same neo-nazis Kristi Noem and Donald Trump, are doing the bidding of big extractive industries to force the Keystone XL pipeline within striking distance of our children. These extractive forces are planning to build man-camps full of criminals and rapists right next to where our children live.

We ask for your support and attention in our hour of need.

Chase

—  
**Action is Prayer.**



Photo by John Willis | The Mass Gravesite at Wounded Knee from the Massacre of 1890

“Um, back that way is a place called Wounded Knee. They came and shot our people down because they were Ghost Dancing. They believed this dance will stop the white man from coming and bring back the buffalo. They shot 300 of us. One of those killed was a holy man called Wakiyan Cante — Thunderheart. He was killed while running for the stronghold. It is his blood — the same blood that was spilled in the grass and snow at Wounded Knee, runs through your heart like a buffalo. Thunderheart has come, sent here to a troubled place to help his people. That’s what I’m told. Run! Run for the Stronghold Thunderheart, run. The soldiers are coming.”

Grandpa Sam Reaches character from the movie “Thunderheart.”

**Lightshine Canine Rescue has found permanent homes for over 10,000 rescue dogs from the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations. For additional information on their work please visit their website:**

**<https://lightshinerezdogs.org/>**

# O grave, where is thy victory?

Robert N. Felix

**H**ave you ever decided to go to a place, an event, and not know why? Yet, intuitively, you trust that there is a good reason, a strong connection, unknown to you at the time. I have had this experience: In mid-June 2019, I learned of a conference, scheduled from July 18 to July 22, 2019, at the Pine Ridge Reservation in Kyle, South Dakota. The conference was titled “Contact and Consciousness” and attendance was limited to about 25 guests, all scheduled to meet at the Lakota All Nations Gathering Center, part of the home of Dallas Chief Eagle and his wife Becky. The conference was organized by Mia Feroletto. At the time, I did not know her or anything about her.

At the same time the Pine Ridge conference was scheduled, my wife Lyn and I had plans to travel to Pittsburgh to attend classes taught by teachers coming to America from Damanhur, Italy. These teachers were part of the Damanhur Mystery School. We have been participating in the school since our first trip to Damanhur in September 2018.

As I read the itinerary for the Pine Ridge event, I knew I wanted to go there. The event listed numerous speakers who would recount their contact experiences with extraterrestrial beings and hybrids. More compelling, the event was

to include Lakota Elders speaking about their Native traditions, rituals, and their creation story, as well as offering the opportunity to experience a Hoop Dance, participate in a Sweat Lodge, attend a sacred Sun Dance (a rare event for non-Natives), trek to the mystical Badlands, gather for a pilgrimage to the Wounded Knee Memorial—the site of powerful energy and great sorrow— and lastly, have the privilege to share a traditional feast with members of the Lakota Nation. All of this was attracting me, and yet I know there was something more and indeed, there was.

After seeking on my own to discover my connection to the Lakota, I sought assistance from a higher spiritual realm. One week before I traveled to Pine Ridge, I had an Akashic reading to access my past lives, my personal history and my journey. Amazing as this might sound to some, the meaningful events of all our existences are spiritually encoded and impressed as if recorded in a tome. When requested, Akashic record-keepers were readily able to explain my connection to the Lakota and Pine Ridge. It was stunning, overwhelming and uplifting. I learned that in a past life, I was at Wounded Knee during the horrific massacre of December 29, 1890. I was Chief Spotted Elk, a Miniconjou Lakota Sioux. It is on that day, there, that I died.

I felt exceedingly grateful, and at peace, for this meaningful news. I learned that I would be attending a service at the Wounded Knee Memorial, standing at the gravesite of Chief Spotted Elk (called “Big Foot” by the US Cavalry) and honoring my soul brother self and all of those I once personally knew. More importantly, I knew that my trip would be the beginning of a journey, and that I would have to decide at some point down the road whether I was going to cross a threshold that would change the course of my life and others forever.

I was cautioned by the Akashic record-keepers to make no reference or claims of my learnings to any of the Lakota people I would meet on this trip. After all, in my present life, this was to be my first trip to Pine Ridge. In that life, I am a white man who has not yet connected to the Lakota, yet I know a sacred knowledge that now echoes to me in the light that had been buried in darkness.

From 1976 to 2018, I practiced civil rights law seeking justice against employers on behalf of employees who felt discriminated against or cheated out of their wages, or against unions on behalf of their members who had been denied rights under their union contract or pursuant to federal law. I helped many people. I have

yet to improve the lives of the Lakota, or other Indigenous nations. Proceeding with caution was necessary.

On July 21, 2019, prior to travelling to the Wounded Knee Memorial, our group gathered at the All Nations Gathering Center. Speaking to us that morning was Vonda High Hawk, quite possibly the great-granddaughter of Chief Spotted Elk, i.e., my great-granddaughter. I was emotional but contained myself. Vonda is a powerful woman. An eloquent warrior. She is passionate about her ancestry, her traditions and culture, and knows the hardships they endured and still endure.

Referencing the morning of December 29, 1890, Vonda passionately reflected on the loss of life at Wounded Knee, including the loss of Chief Spotted Elk. On that day, at least 150-350 Lakota tribal members, including women and children, were brutally massacred by the United States Military. In the days leading up to the slaying, Chief Spotted Elk, a man of peace, had negotiated a surrender. The Lakota Nation was betrayed and was needlessly and brutally slain. Two weeks earlier, on December 15, 1890, Sitting Bull, a Hunkpapa Lakota leader was murdered. Sitting Bull is the half-brother of Spotted Elk, my half-brother.

The bodies and body parts of the slain were literally dumped into one mass grave. Vonda clearly expressed her dismay for that and the fact that the United States Government, in nearly 130 years since the massacre, has yet to apologize for its genocidal actions, nor has it rescinded the medals awarded to its soldiers for so-called bravery, which are really 'medals of dishonor'. Displaying deep wisdom and strong resiliency, Vonda also expressed deep compassion even for the actions of the soldiers. She recognized that on that fateful day, the soldiers were following orders in a chain of command, and they also suffered, and their departed souls were still suffering for their actions.

After Vonda spoke, I stood to thank her for her courage and express my gratitude for her compassion for both the victims and perpetrators, which moved me greatly. I expressed my hope that she would join us later at the Wounded Knee Memorial. Others also expressed the same hope. She responded that she had an important task to do and would probably be unable to attend. I felt she was moved by the reception we gave her and remained hopeful that we would see her at the memorial.

Not long after, among the dust, weeds, grasses, occasional flowers and stray dogs, two dozen kindred travelers, including myself, arrived at the Wounded Knee Memorial to honor the fallen Lakota. A memorial tombstone tells the story of the fallen. At the gravesite, Vonda High Hawk was present. We were grateful for her presence. Vonda expressed great hope for the future, speaking of the interconnection of all life, and her respect for all forms of life.

Sometime after I returned from my trip, I reflected on some of the similar traits Chief Spotted Elk and I share. We each have a strong desire to resolve conflicts and a passion to be honest and true to our convictions. I wrote a poem in honor of Chief Spotted Elk and my experience at the gravesite.

*To Chief Spotted Elk  
When I look at your grave  
I see pockets of bright energy  
Glowing warmly and beckoning me closer*

*And when I touch the earth around you  
I feel my soul awaken  
And I feel eternally connected to you*

*I can feel your compassionate energy  
And I do not now grieve  
Instead I embrace you with all my love*

*I feel like I was just born  
I know you are reborn  
Life is rich and new again*

**Robert N. Felix is a retired civil rights attorney.**



Photo by John Willis | Standing Rock Camp

**M**y trip to Wounded Knee had a profound effect on me. I made a resolution. It will be my specific goal to honor and assist Indigenous nations of the world. I have an even more particular goal to assist the Lakota Nation. I intend that all my actions and goals be aligned first with deep gratitude, love and compassion for the gift of life I enjoy on Earth. I resolve to act always with self-love, self-respect, self-compassion, self-gratitude and self-knowledge. I resolve to act the same towards all others, and I will honor all my ancestors and living family members. My intentions are now a sacred contract.

Soon after I set forth my intentions, Mia Feroletto, the organizer of the conference in Pine Ridge and the publisher for New Observations Magazine, contacted me and asked if I would like to be a guest editor for an issue dedicated to the Lakota Nation, to be published in Spring, 2020, The request felt so organic, so right and under the circumstances so predestined. I accepted the offer, gladly embracing the assignment and committed to doing my best to accomplish the tasks required. Dear Reader, you are now viewing the fruits of my efforts and the efforts of many others. Life can be very sweet. It's sweet right now.



Insight Photography | Lakota Youth

Cindy Catches

# Oceti Wakan's Sacred Fireplace Dream for the Lakota

Looking at Pine Ridge's History and Our Hope for Tomorrow

**T**hirty years ago, I met and fell in love with Peter Catches, known by his Lakota name of Zintkala Oyate (Bird People). He was a 38th generation Lakota medicine man. After marrying, we moved to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. I knew and greatly respected his father, Pete Catches Sr., who was to have a significant impact on my life. He was known and loved in Indian Country for being one of the four medicine men who brought the Sun Dance, (their most sacred rite) out into the open public in the early 1960s. Practicing Native American religion was against the law and violations carried a ten-year prison sentence. It wasn't until 1978 that the ruling was reversed. The sacred ceremonies never stopped for the Lakota, but they were forced to go underground; even one of their own people could turn them in. They were brainwashed by the church, instituted by the US government to bring residential schools to reservations. The mandate was to "kill the Indian, but leave the man." At that time, the church didn't recognize other spiritual paths.

The two or three generations of residential schooling widely devastated the Lakota. The trauma the children experienced being taken from home and not being able to see their parents except for the two months in the summer was devastating. They were punished for speaking Lakota, but it was the only language they knew. They were "shamed" for everything Lakota, and were told it was "lesser than..." This, plus the United States government's war with the Lakota ending with the Wounded Knee Massacre translated into inter-generational trauma. Peter's grandfather, who helped raise him for his first 16 years, was a survivor of the Wounded Knee Massacre. He was nine years old when his

brother pushed him into a dry creek bed and told him to run towards Pine Ridge for safety. He was the only surviving member of his family. That is still a deep wound here on Pine Ridge.

This brings us to today. Pine Ridge has the highest mortality rate in the country and the lowest life expectancy in the Western Hemisphere, second only to Haiti. A University of Wisconsin population study done in 2015 showed that the Lakota counties on four Lakota reservations had the highest rate of mortality in five of the top six places in the entire United States. All seven Lakota counties placed in the top 25 with the highest mortality rate.

The role trauma played on health wasn't known until about 15 years ago. This discovery is as critical as that of learning the role germs played on health in the late 1800s. The Kaiser University Hospital identified nine Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) that could impact a child's life. These include an addict or someone with mental illness in the home; emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; not meeting the child's needs for things like food and clothing; having a parent either divorced or imprisoned; and suicide by someone in the household. In a survey of 25,000 people, if four or more of these are present, 70% would become addicts and the other 30% would have major health issues, with a 20-year diminished life expectancy. Alas, this is the norm in many of our communities.

My husband and his father felt that the first step in healing their people was to return to the Lakota people their Lakota heritage, the way in which they were raised. They both spent their lives bringing sacred ceremonies and language back to their people. Language is crucial since

it shapes how you see your world. The Lakota language is a very spiritual language, in many ways similar to Arabic. It is very connected to an understanding of the relationship with Mother Earth, as well as the natural powers known to be greater than themselves and their use for the good of the people.

Three of the seven sacred rites given to the Lakota for health and happiness are in use all over the world, bringing healing and spiritual benefits to those who practice them. They are the following: the inipi, hanbleceya, and the wiwanyang wacipe. The inipi, what most people know as the sweat lodge, is a purification of the physical, emotional, and spiritual body—a renewal. The hanbleceya—the pipe fast or better known as a vision quest—goes beyond: It is a prayer done for four consecutive years. It can be practiced for one, two, three, or at the most, four days. There is much more to this prayer than this article can convey. It is a fast from food and water, while one is alone in the wilderness, aided by a spiritual person like my husband. It is a tool for finding one's self, facing one's fears, healing, and more.

The wiwanyang wacipi (Sun Dance) is again a consecutive four-year commitment, after which you can enter the Sun Dance for only one year at any time—the same as with the pipe fast. The whole Sun Dance is considered one prayer: every effort, the making of the arbor, the cooks, the firekeeper, from beginning to end, is treated as one prayer. It is a prayer for the people, but even more. My husband says that the arbor represents the universe, since we are all connected. That is the foundation of being Lakota—mitakuye oyasin—we are all related, all are my relations. My father-in-law says it's a prayer

in itself. It acknowledges that we are connected and related to all of living creation. What affects me affects the whole. It is a four day fast from water and food, where the dancers suffer in prayer for something personal in their own lives or for others. But the complete prayer encompasses the whole. My husband ran our Spotted Eagles Sun Dance for 44 years before he passed away in 2018, the month before the 45th year. I believe it is the longest-running Sun Dance in Lakota country. We pray this Sun Dance continues in the future, for I have witnessed so many miracles and lives changed from it.

The foundation of the Lakota people is very spiritual. People visit from all over the world because of this. They value their understanding and connection to the powers they know to be greater than themselves. Even with all the trauma and healing that needs to happen here, their love is deep.

My husband's vision of helping our children was the last thing he left for his people before he died. We had a suicide crisis for several years; more than 500 children a year try to take their lives — too many succeed. He prayed and prayed and even brought back an old song that he would sing as he walked and thought about what he could do. He would ask every person that visited if they had any answers to how we could turn this around. Last in line and knowing he only had a few years to live, he couldn't bear thinking he might not leave them the medicine that would reverse the situation.

His prayers were answered. He was invited to be on a panel at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). I remember when he was introduced, he said, "I'm here because our children are killing themselves, and I'm looking for answers." This was not why he was invited to be on the panel. What he did was plant a seed. The Surgeon General was the moderator of the panel. Peter was invited the next year, and by the middle of the session, it became all about our children. The Surgeon General said, "Peter, I've been thinking about what I could say to you all year. We have been in the health business for over sixty years. I realized I could tell you the best money spent that we have found is in prevention. The earlier, the better.

Returning home, I told Peter that I'd seen many miracles at that Sun Dance, which is, in fact, a medicine wheel, an ancient healing tool. Humans have their physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental aspects (the development of

the mind). To be truly healthy, we must develop all four areas in ourselves. If we start in the West, what body would that represent? He thought about it and replied 'the physical'. Which virtue of the four sacred virtues of the Lakota? He said that would be 'generosity'. I thought that made sense, since the color used in the West is either green or blue. Mother Earth is green and blue; she is our best example of generosity. The next was red, the North, and I asked again. He said that would be the 'emotional body', and the virtue would be courage. I had just learned the root word of courage was *cour*, which means sharing what's in one's heart. I knew this was key in healing the emotional body, either of one's self or of another. That led to the spiritual body, which was the East. The old man, Peter's father, used to get so angry when he would see 'wisdom' is the East on some Lakota charts of the Four Great Virtues. He would say, "We have the focus of these virtues for the development of our children. There is no way a child can strive or learn wisdom. That takes one's whole life of striving for." He went on to say, "Of course, wisdom comes from the East." But in the old Lakota world, fidelity was in the East. The child was taught that their first fidelity was to their Creator, most important relationship in a person's life. All other relationships come after that. The second fidelity taught to children is between a husband and wife. Without fidelity, that relationship can't survive. The Lakota was taught to marry for life. The strength of the family is what makes a strong nation. He said, "Taking fidelity out of the four great virtues have hurt the Lakota so much." So, we put it back in!

That left white and gray for the South; I thought, the brain is white and gray. This is the mental body, and that left the virtue of fortitude. I know that it takes a lot of fortitude to develop the brain. So, we had our vehicle for writing a prevention curriculum for our children. My husband said we needed to start their education while our children still have their innocence and hope that they can do it differently than their parents. We decided to start it for second graders. It takes seven years to change every cell in the body. We developed a seven year curriculum from second to eighth grade to give them all the education we could to teach them how to make healthy choices for their lives. We hoped to turn this generation around so they could learn the life skills most people learn if they live in a healthy and thriving home. Then they can live it and give it to the next generation. We wanted our children to learn how to have a healthy and prosperous life.

Every child deserves this. This is what one learns in a healthy family life.

For this to happen, something else was necessary: They needed to learn trauma healing tools and skills to heal their past and many of their daily living situations. We start each lesson with one of these. There are so many ways trauma healing experts have discovered to help convert negative energy into the energy of love and unity inside of ourselves. This curriculum is also designed to break the cycle of addiction, to choose life over death, self-esteem, healthy diets, and so much more. We have filled it with the love of their culture and language and the reasons for saving it.

About halfway through developing this curriculum, we realized that it needed a Teacher's Manual for each workbook, since 80% of our teachers are not Lakota in spite of teaching more than 95% Lakota children. For these lost children, we started developing this, as well as collecting our ancestors' stories. They don't understand who they are and how their Lakota culture offers timeless values to the world. Through telling the ancestor's stories, we provide the basis of values and virtues of their culture. In the Teacher's Manuals, we match each lesson with an ancestor story, together with other support materials. We developed a Parent's Handbook, so the parent could support their children's learning. We are in the process of collecting the last 100 of the total 400 ancestors' stories, as well as finishing the Teacher's Manuals for Book 6 and Book 7. We plan to be finished by the next school year of 2020.

My husband's prayers were strong, the gift of 38 generations of sacrifice for the people. With heartfelt feelings, we hope to get this in the schools five days a week in their cultural/health classes. We pray the future of Lakota society will continue to be a gift to all of mankind for generations to come. Every culture saved betters the whole of humanity; each contributes a gift to the whole. I believe his prayers have given us a culturally or multiculturally based foundation for healing children everywhere. Healing the past is vitally important for a healthy tomorrow.

You can visit our website: [ocetiwan.org](http://ocetiwan.org) if you would like more information. Thank you for your interest in the Lakota people.



Insight Photography | Lakota Youth



Photo by John Willis | Eugene and his adopted daughter, Victoria

## *The helping kind*

**Mary L. Collins**

*the helping kind  
for peter catches*

*how did I know his medicine ways?*

*a broken old man,  
head low to his chest,  
hands on his knees.*

*He seemed lost.  
The television was on. Loud.  
His recliner pulled up real close,  
so he could hear it.*

*He was watching rodeo on a western channel.*

*I remember sitting at his feet  
and saying, "thank you".*

*As a guest in his home,  
I was mindful of the intrusion.*

*For someone like him,  
to have someone like me  
inside his home, well,  
that was a big deal.*

*It was a generosity I am just now understanding.*

*He held nothing back.  
Not his drunkenness,  
not his frailty,  
not his medicine ways.*

*But I could not read through  
the spectacle of the man  
who, at his advanced age,  
had just danced four days straight,  
who had healed the sick,  
and taken the poison out of their lives.*

*I could not reconcile the needs*

*of the many who came to be doctored  
taking it all in, purging the hurts and injury  
heaped upon his loved ones, generations  
upon generations, himself alone,  
carrying the burden of it.*

*Drinking helped him forget.*

*He was, after all, an ordinary, humble man,  
a wichasha unsiiciyapi,  
it's hard to carry so much for so long  
without collapsing under the weight of it all.*

*So when I went to say my goodbyes,  
I sat quietly at his feet, and said,  
"Thank you for letting me come here."*

*He raised his head slightly, and said,  
"I love you." I said, "I love you too."*

*I touched his hand.  
He let me hold it for a minute,  
and then he slipped back into his weariness.*

*Or was it somewhere else he escaped to?*

*Black Elk said this was not the real world.  
I remember.*

*There was nothing more to say.  
I let go the old man's hand, stood, and left.*

*Medicine ways are more mysterious  
than I can ever describe or understand.*

*The rodeo played on the TV set,  
The old man lay asleep in his recliner,  
tipped back, feet up, eyes closed.*

*Here was a holy man.  
And I was healed.*



# *Nokomis Giizis\**

*She climbs upward, steady, slowly,  
Glowing round, full, sturdy,  
Marking her familiar path through gleaming branches  
Of the apple tree standing in my garden.  
She has a patience of ancient ancestry,  
Of one who has tirelessly traveled the same path since time immemorial,  
Since the grandmothers of our grandmothers danced in her light.  
She holds my heart's tides and pulls me to her,  
Eyes soft in the present night.  
She sees the fallen fruit  
And does not pause.  
Blossoms will dress the branches when she returns.*

**Annie Wenger-Nabigon**

\*Nokomis is the Ojibway word (Anishnaabemowin) for "Grandmother." Nokomis Giizis is the name of the moon. The moon is thought of as the grandmother of us all, since she gave birth to Mother Earth in Anishnaabe cosmology.

The Anishnaabe and the Sioux peoples have a long-standing relationship, sometimes as enemies, sometimes as friends and allies, but always as part of the family of Indigenous peoples of Mother Earth. Although I was not born to the Indigenous peoples of this continent, I am part of an Anishnaabe family of Northern Ontario, and was first taught about Indigenous peoples by First Nations Elders from La-

kota territories and other locations in what is now known as the United States of America. As a dual citizen of Canada and the USA I am constantly learning the multidirectional ways of relationships, working to grow as an ally of Indigenous peoples around the world. As a settler descendant I believe it is my responsibility to "live in right relationship" as a treaty person, and to walk carefully on Mother Earth. Nokomis Giizis gently guides and teaches me, continually bringing me into balance.

Written on May 14, 2020





Photos by John Willis | Sanka Wakan NA Wakanyeja Awicaglipi

# Sovereign Health in a Sovereign Land

**Charmaine White Face**

In the 1960s, uranium mining flourished; since that time, radioactive pollution from more than 2,000 abandoned mines has been allowed to poison the land, the water, and the air in our Treaty Territory and beyond. Presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council meeting on Sept. 17, 2015, the Special Rapporteur on Toxic Waste was asked to come do an investigation. We had learned that there were 15,000 abandoned uranium mines in the 15 western states, so more people than just our Nation were being affected. He told us his study was rejected by the United States Government.

The consequence of the radioactive pollution is that our people, the Oceti Sakowin nation, has the highest number of diseases caused by radioactive pollution in all of North America. And now, the US, through their own Indian Health Service, is destroying what little health care was available to us, another violation of the 1868 Treaty. Our human right to just survive is being obliterated.

The Native American Indian Community of Rapid City, SD, and the Black Hills Area is an

inter-tribal community made up of approximately 28,000 members from more than 300 Indigenous nations located in North America and Alaska. We use the Sioux San Indian Health Service Hospital located in Rapid City for our health care needs. This city is illegally located in the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty Territory.

The provision for health care was a part of the 1868 Treaty with the Sioux Nation, although many other Native American nations also had similar treaty provisions. Therefore, the provision for health care is a responsibility to be provided by the US through the Indian Health Service (IHS). It is not a free entitlement but a Treaty duty because our great-great grandparents knew that our traditional medicines and medical people were not going to be allowed to continue.

The Sioux San IHS Hospital became a general hospital from the efforts of the local Rapid City Native American Indian Community in the late 1950s and early 1960s, just a little over 50 years ago. Prior to that time, our Native American Indian community did not have health care since the IHS hospitals on the reservations would not provide health care to those not living on the reservations.

In 1986, the US Indian Health Service created a non-profit corporation in the state of South Dakota for which it secured federal 501(c)3 non-profit tax status. The corporation was called the Aberdeen Area Tribal Chairmen's Health Board, and seventeen tribal chairmen from the region were placed on the Board of Directors. The purpose of the corporation was to provide a liaison between the seventeen tribes and the IHS. The name of the corporation was eventually changed to the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board (GPTCHB). However, off the reservations, these Tribal Chairmen had no special sovereign powers other than ordinary people. They were to take the information and news back to their tribal governments and people.

The Sioux San Hospital was unique in that it was not located on a reservation but on Federal Indian land in a city, and the patients were also people who had access to health insurance because of being able to find work. Therefore, the Sioux San Hospital was able to generate additional income besides government funding for the hospital and its patients. The US has



Photos by John Willis | Vern Sitting Bear and his Niece's Pet Wolf

historically funded IHS hospitals at only 40% of need, which is even lower than that of US Federal prisons.

Currently, the IHS made a Public Law 93-638 Self-Determination contract with their own non-profit corporation for the management of the Sioux San Hospital. The contract went into effect on July 21, 2019, with a non-profit corporation that has no health management capability. Further, their health facility is not certified by any health certification system and cannot bill for any insurance. In addition, as a private non-profit corporation, they need to have their health delivery personnel licensed in the state of South Dakota. Many of their doctors and other health personnel are not licensed, and many were removed from employment with the IHS for a number of other reasons. In addition, some of the personnel are convicted felons, in violation of IHS rules.

Consequently, health care delivery has been greatly diminished for the 23,000 active patients treated at Sioux San Hospital. Since July 21, 2019, there have been 3 deaths, 2 people maimed, a mentally ill woman incarcerated from cessation of her medication, a man having a stroke when his medication also stopped, and prescriptions for medication for a young man with a terminal illness activated when medications were not given to the right pharmacy. Furthermore, the IHS has turned over the medical records of more than 1500 patients to the non-profit corporation despite documents signed by patients requesting that their medical records not be shared. These are all incidences that the author is aware of. There are many more but due to the right to privacy, we cannot list more.

As our only remedy, more than 150 of us have filed a lawsuit in the Federal court in June, 2019, asking for a permanent injunction on the contract due to no free, prior, and informed consent of the Community's members and patients as required under PL 93-638. The court case was recently decided on Feb. 18, 2020, when the Federal judge ruled in favor of the illegal contract stating that the non-profit corporation had "Tribal sovereignty."

A non-profit corporation, as a Federal 501(c)3 entity under American law, cannot be a Tribe or part of a tribe. Therefore, the corporation cannot have "tribal sovereign immunity". This was

brought up in our case numerous times. We will be appealing the decision, but the American court system can take years to deliberate. In the meantime, our health care, which was never ideal, is declining even more rapidly. (If you wish to see the case online go to Gilbert v. Weahkee.)

There are a number of ways others can help. A Federal bill needs to be passed to clean up all the abandoned uranium mines that are hurting millions of Americans besides our Nation. Another source for information about this is [www.cleanupthemines.org](http://www.cleanupthemines.org).

The American government needs to become lawful and uphold and enforce all of the provisions of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. The Senate Indian Affairs Committee needs to open an in-depth investigation into the Department of Health and Human Services and the Indian Health Service as hundreds of millions of dollars are at stake. And if anyone wants to help us locally, we need attorneys to help us with our appeal and a number of Civil Rights and Privacy Rights cases caused by this illegal government contract.

The main problem is that there is a lid on information that comes out of the Northern Great Plains. These states have the least number of people of all the 50 states and are among the poorest in the country. These states also contain the largest number of Native American Indian Nations. If more Americans really knew what was happening, these situations would never be allowed to continue.

# Looking back and looking twice

Robert N. Felix with Robert Looks Twice



Leonard Peltier | Grand Son

**R**obert Looks Twice is a young and vibrant Native American warrior, an Oglala Lakota and member of the Sioux Nation. He grew up on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, which is economically mired in deep poverty, and where alcoholism, suicide and violence are all too common. The chances of living a long and prosperous life for the many is greatly challenged. Is Robert's destiny different? There are signs that this might be the case.

When Robert was 14 years old, reporter Diane Sawyer went to the Pine Ridge Reservation with a film crew and interviewed him and several other young Native teenagers.

In her video, Sawyer showed Robert's living conditions: He was living in a small trailer home with no heat, a leaky ceiling and a buckling kitchen floor. At times, the trailer felt very cold with the only heat coming from a propane stove. Robert lived with his grandmother Blossom, an uncle and 8 cousins, 5 of whom shared one room. This did not look like the beginning of something big. Yet stereotyping would not stop Robert.

Sawyer reported that Robert, though living in poverty and saddened by the fact that his mother was suffering from alcoholism, had a steady, keen mind and an optimistic outlook; his hope was steeped in and buoyed by the traditions of his Native culture.

Sawyer pointed to the fact that Robert was the quarterback of his middle school football team, the president of the student council, and an academically recognized student. He was already excelling at Lakota Native rituals such as the

sacred Sun Dance (Wiwanke Wachipi), which he executed with precision to the beats of the tribal drums, adorned with an eagle feather indicating the honor of young warrior bestowed upon him by tribal elders.

The most memorable and intriguing part of the interview was Robert's future vision: his goal in life was to become the first Native American to be elected President of the United States. Robert admitted that the road to that goal would not be easy. In fact, it would be "muddy" as he put it; nevertheless, it was a path he was quite willing and ready to take.

Others, such as the hereditary chiefs of Canada, have been keeping their eyes on Robert. These chiefs inherited their positions based on ancient tribal laws. Their goals and duties are to act in ways that maintain the traditions of their culture. Could it be that they sensed something special about this young man, something that brings great promise to our first nations? I wanted to find out.

In February 2020, I caught up with Robert, who recently turned 22. We communicated by phone and online, and he agreed eagerly to answer my written questions. Here's how Robert responded:

**Q.** Have you been learning more about your tribal culture and history? How is that going?

**A.** Yes, I have been. I'm . . . good friends with our tribal president [Julian Bear Runner], and he's showing me what I need to expect if I ever run for tribal president. I try to go to all the council meetings to know how our tribe is doing and I've been doing a lot of reading and research as well.

**Q.** You mentioned to me when we previously spoke that you would be moving to California to model and act. Tell us more about that?

**A.** Deep down I always wanted to be in front of the big screen and it seems like my calling, plus I enjoy it a lot. But, I'm starting from the bottom, so I'm taking some acting classes and doing a lot of different auditions to get my image out there more. Plus, I got great support in California.

**Q.** Tell us about your current family life situation. How is your Grandmother doing? How important has she been in your life?

**A.** My family always supported me in all my goals, but my Grandma is the one that pushes me to do better and she knows what I'm capable of doing. My Grandma is well. As for my life, it's just getting started.

**Q.** Who are the people you admire most from the past and present?

**A.** I admire my Grandma, mainly and my uncle – while growing up, they pushed me to succeed. But my mentor/main supporter is a guy I met a couple years back and his name is David Fernandez Jr. He's the one helping me chase my acting dream and showed me some things that I didn't think were possible for a small town Rez [reservation] kid; he always believed in me.

**Q.** Do you still wish to run for the presidency? If so, tell us why and how you plan to accomplish that goal? How would you like to be remembered?

**A.** Yes, I do, and I plan on accomplishing that goal by going to school in California to learn what I need . . . to get to that goal. By my hard work and drive. I want to show people that

whatever we put our minds to, we can succeed in life. I want to leave a legacy behind for future generations and show them there are many ways to make it off the reservation.

**Q.** Anything else you want to tell the world that you think is important at this time?

**A.** My acting mainly — it's not easy, what I'm trying to do, and I need a lot of support and motivation, because it's seem like a lot of people don't believe in me. But acting is really important to me because I have the talent, I just need the opportunity.

On February 15, 2020, Robert moved to California. It is still too early to tell how that move will turn out, but he is a very determined to make his life meaningful and his drive to help his people is still there. His immediate challenge is staying focused since he arrived in California just as the coronavirus was infecting the many. Both Robert and the virus are forces to be reckoned with. My prayers are with Robert.

# INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD VALANDRA

Robert N. Felix

**RF:** Today is December 13, 2019. I am Robert Felix, the guest editor for *New Observations Magazine*, and my guest today is Dr. Edward C. Valandra, who earned a PhD from SUNY Buffalo in American Studies and Native Studies concentration, received an Undergraduate degree in chemistry at Mankato State University and a Master's in Political Science from the University of Colorado at Boulder. He has taught at the Metropolitan University in St. Paul, Minnesota, at the University of California at Davis, and at the University of South Dakota at Vermillion.

Dr. Valandra is a writer, researcher, editor, mentor and educator. He was born and reared on the Rosebud Reservation. He has served in the tribal government, and he is the founder of the Community for Advancement of Native Studies, known as CANS. He served as the president of the American Indian Studies Association, and he is associated with the Living Justice Press, which advocates for outreach and diversity for restorative justice. He has written an outstanding article that was published in the book "Standing with Standing Rock".

Dr. Valandra, welcome!

**EV:** Well thank you, Rob. Glad to be here.

**RF:** Let us start with restorative justice. When did you get involved with that?

**EV:** . . . I do not know exactly when I became involved with restorative justice as much as I was born into restorative justice. I think that most Indigenous people are born into the framework of restorative justice. It's just how we deal with relationships within our communities, within our extended families. Because of Lakota thought and philosophy, we value kinship and relationships. And contemporary restorative justice looks at Native traditions and tries to emulate those Native ways. We just did not call restorative justice back then.

**RF:** Are you working to heal relationships that have been harmed?

**EV:** Well, . . . there is a lot of controversy even within the Native community about restorative justice. There is the definitional understanding that you undo the harm as the result of wrongdoing. . . so, how you undo the harm becomes critical, and for restorative justice, it is hearing other people's stories, and moving away from terminology like 'victim' and 'offender'. That came out of the criminal justice system when it tried to implement restorative justice as an alternative way of doing justice. And so, some of that language seeped into restorative justice. Now they are getting away from that kind of language.

There is this process that must be followed. And I don't want to make it sound so transactional but there's this understanding that for the healing to happen, both parties have got to come together with an understanding that they need to undo the harm, and so a person harmed has a lot of say over the direction of how to undo the harm and they usually come together in the format of a circle, and there's some understandings reached before you even get to that part. And it's not one to one — you have your supporters there on both sides, and they try not to use it as a shaming or a judgmental mechanism, rather it's to hear each other's stories to get a more contextual understanding of the people involved in trying to undo the harm.

**RF:** So, in the Native tradition of healing, are there mediators, or elders? Who is directing it?

**EV:** Well, I think this is where it gets interesting. In my community, you usually had third parties, but they were not necessarily as in terms of the west — objective or neutral people. These third parties could be elders or respected persons in the community who were often approached to weigh in on issues between spouses, or issues or conflicts between family members. So, you went and sought those people out, who are not necessarily fair and impartial or neutral, but someone who knew the

person that did the harm and the person that has been harmed. And then, of course, community values and norms came into play in that regard.

**RF:** So, are there any outsiders that have professional training who get involved in the Native circle, or is it just the community itself?

**EV:** Well, you know, you really did touch on some really interesting discussions that have been emerging over the last five to ten years about that, because as restorative justice has become more mainstream, there's this movement to credential people in restorative justice, to facilitate the dynamics of restorative justice. And when restorative justice was becoming more and more mainstream, the pushback by grass roots people that have been involved, the actual practitioners. . . they pushed back, saying, where does the experience come in? You know, you can get people that are credentialed to be practitioners of restorative justice, but what about those people who have just been doing that for a good part of their life? You know, credentialing versus one's station in the community, one's experience in the community, one knowing who the community is, versus an outsider who can come in saying they've been credentialed, you know, by some program to be. . . knowledgeable in restorative justice. That is a contested area right now.

Let us talk about Living Justice Press, a small press, non-profit, where the people associated with them wanted to do books on restorative justice. In 2011, because Living Justice was trying to do more outreach, I became more active, with them and mainly as a Senior Editor in Native Studies because initially most of the books published by Living Justice Press had a lot to do with white authors. And Living Press was very concerned about it, and that has been one of the criticisms of restorative justice and restorative practices that there have been a lot of whites that have been involved with it and they're the ones that have been producing the literature. They are the ones that are doing the workshops. They are the ones that are asked to do the workshops, and so Living Justice Press realized that they needed to do more outreach. So, I got more involved in trying to help, and got Living Justice Press to do more outreach among communities of color, and they have done that since. And so, it is trying to bring in more diverse voices around the issue of restorative justice, more women, particularly more people of color, basically.

**RF:** Has the restorative justice process been successful?

**EV:** Because the process is downright messy, because of the dynamics involved, the issues involved, the expansion of the circle and people that you bring in to help heal, to help resolve, there may be a desired outcome, but whether one achieves it or not is another story. And it really depends on the person that has been harmed and the person that did the harm. Neither one is mandated to be in circle and can pull out at any time. So, it takes a personal commitment by individuals and their supporters to see the process through. What it takes to undo the harm is the goal, and how the harm is undone is that negotiated space. And the person that has been harmed may articulate what it takes for them to feel whole, and the person that did the harm may not be able to achieve everything in that.

So, it is really an interesting dynamic of back and forth. As they each bring their personal stories into the circle, the symbol of restorative justice. So, the person harmed can speak directly about just what kind of psychological, emotional and spiritual damage has been done to them.

And the other person may tell a different kind of story about who they are as people. And so, as they hear each other's stories there is this rich context that each provides, to find some basis for a relationship for the healing to start happening. And so, it becomes very relational. Personal stories give a lot of context, and they become powerful. you must build a relationship, so restorative justice becomes more transformative than it is transactional. And the talking piece seems to be the big thing. Whoever holds the talking piece cannot be interrupted. . . or should not be interrupted. And they take as long as they need to tell their story.

**RF:** Being an Indigenous educator in Native studies in a culture so steeped with Western values. . . what kind of challenges and issues does that raise in formulating curriculum, and mentoring educators on how to present curriculum for Native American students?

**EV:** Oh my gosh (laughs). It must be your training as a lawyer that you ask such questions. There are many, many challenges, and I just finished an article entitled, "Undoing the First Harm," and the subtitle is, "Settlers in Restorative Justice." And I take an extremely hard look at restorative justice's evolution, and the claims it makes to undo harms as the result of wrongdoing. And the literature is very hopeful that restorative justice may lead to healing as one of the outcomes and building of relationships. And so one of the challenges I throw down to restorative justice, especially when they have settlers in restorative justice, like how can you say, or as one of my colleagues has said, how can you tell a child that stealing is wrong when the whole continent has been stolen? How can you reconcile theft on one hand, and yet still live on the theft of stolen land and still benefit from it?

So, my challenge with restorative justice was. . . how are you going to undo the first harm. . . the theft of land and the genocide that comes with that? And that is a very fundamental question, and it challenges the core of restorative justice because restorative justice. . . has a lot to do with undoing the harm as a result of wrongdoing. And if this harm is still out there. . . there is this unresolved harm that still lingers out in the ether, and yet when Native people come into the circle, is that really a safe space for us? Can we feel safe in that, especially if there's descendants of settlers in there who still have maybe have some tropes or stereotypes, ideas about Indigenous peoples? [In] the article. . . I am challenging the norms and values of restorative justice. In other words, if you claim to be awakened, how does that manifest for Indigenous peoples? And that is the intersection where a difficult conversation must start, or as we say, a difficult story must be told, and everyone is a participant in that.

**RF:** The goal of Western culture, among some people, . . . in the 1800s, . . . was the total extinction of the Indian nation. So, how is a Native child who is taught that history learn to live in a world where the influence of the western culture is everywhere?

**EV:** This is why there's this movement in some parts of the world, and in some parts of the United States, where there are some schools that are trying to do a restorative school. . . a restorative model built on relationships, and again, part of that restorative justice framework involves storytelling, and then providing that space for stories to be told in a way that people can better understand where a person or a nation is coming from, or a group of people are coming from. So that is the hope that I see [for] restorative justice, especially where they try to do restorative

schools, in which they allow for that kind of expression to come through and have people talk about it.

And you are right, there has been a horrific history that has been largely sanitized and cleansed, so people do not really have to deal with the horrific nature of the founding of the United States. And I think people are almost afraid to talk about that because, you know, the celebratory nature of US history, is one of progress, and one of pioneering, and, you know, taming the wilderness. And so, I think when you have other voices saying, well, the reality is quite different as we experienced it. And those stories need to be heard.

That is really a tall order, but I think those stories have got to be heard no matter how difficult they are to have. And it, you know, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa reveals, it is a very difficult process, and maybe that's why restorative justice is so hard to implement... because there are other voices that can give a different perspective, of let's say the settling of the US, and I so often find that a really difficult challenge myself. You know, I want to be in that dialogue. I want people to know that we are human beings, that we have feelings. When I go to Wounded Knee, I still feel the rage, and it is been over a hundred years. And yet when I stand there, when I have a thoughtful prayer, thoughtful moments... the anger is just as real today as it was the day of the massacre. And so how do we get people to hear that in the mainstream... that might be unsettling to them, like... time does not heal (laughs).

**RF:** Discuss the United Nations Declaration of Rights of the Indigenous Peoples. What do the professors of Native studies teach about that declaration?

**EV:** I think mainstream Native studies would argue that it shows an evolvment and recognition that Native peoples have arrived on the international scene. But note, we published a book by Charmaine White Face, who took part in the drafting of the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UN DRIP as they call it, and Living Justice Press published one of her books, and she gave the insight, because she was in the belly of the beast when all that was being proposed, and the substantive changes from the original declaration to when it finally got adopted, ... but that kind of scholarship is rare. Because she wrote her story about how UN DRIP was much stronger when the Indigenous peoples first got hold of it and wrote what they felt were rights, that is being recognized as sovereign, and then having the ability to directly use the UN mechanisms to address the issues of disparities that exist, But, by the time it got through the UN, it made the states as the responsible parties to address Indigenous issues or harms.

I do not think that part of the history is talked about in Native studies, other than it is accepted as a good thing, and it shows the progress of the international community with respect to Indigenous peoples. But what they did not tell was the original UN DRIP was much more robust and gave Indigenous peoples a much greater voice in accessing the international community through UN mechanisms.

**RF:** Is there any discussion about Leonard Peltier?

**EV:** I am told that if you travel to other countries and you mention the name Leonard Peltier, most people may recognize that name... that he

is a political prisoner of the United States. And yet when you mention Peltier in the United States, almost no people know that name, except for those perhaps like yourself, and others, who have taken the time to really do some inquiry. Leonard Peltier is not a household name as much as it is in the international community. And even more so, most Americans find it almost astonishing that the United States would even have political prisoners. You know, other countries do that, but not the US. And yet when you bring up Leonard Peltier as an example of someone who has been persecuted for his role in the American Indian Movement, that is almost not heard of. And so, I guess I struggle with that. His case is representative of the kind of oppression that is happening throughout Native country. He is just the most celebrated case that we know of.

**RF:** I want to turn conversation to the article you wrote called "Water is Life," "Mni Wičoni" for the book, *Standing with Standing Rock*, tell me the origins for writing the piece?

**EV:** So, the origins come from having had an exceptionally good mentor in Vine Deloria, Jr., who wrote about the natural world, and then, the Haudenosaunee Seneca Nation scholar, John Mohawk. He was another mentor of mine, and they often talked about the natural world in ways that I recognized and understood, just growing up in my homelands, that it does possess personality. And that is why we have relationships with it. I was a student of John Mohawk and Vine Deloria, Jr., and, they really pushed me to think beyond environmentalism, beyond the ecology movement, that we should be stewards, to have clean water and clean air. It's even deeper than that. It goes to the core of who we are in this world.

I understand that the natural world possesses personality, and of course, all the things in that natural world, the Buffalo Nation, as we say, or the Water Nation, all have this notion of autonomy, and they have a right to coexist, independent of human beings. Mni Wičoni means on one level that water is life. I wanted to say, Mni Wičoni at a deeper level, means water is more than life. And so, I went into the Lakota traditions, my traditions, to say, what does that mean, when I say that water is more than life? And so, you get into the origin stories. You get into how we use language, how you begin to understand a different kind of reality that exists out there... a deeper reality.

**RF:** Please compare the paradigm of Indigenous peoples with Western paradigm.

**EV:** One of the examples that I often use to distinguish an Indigenous paradigm from the West, is when we talk about water. Out in the west, it is often in quantifiable terms like acre/foot — an acre of water, a foot high, and so there is the quantification of water rights. And I often say, well, that's only part of the story. When are we going to talk about the rights of the water? And at that point, you know, the hydrologists, water lawyers, and the politicians of the west, they stop and go, like... what are you talking about, the rights of the water? That is vastly different than water rights itself. So, when you begin to talk about the rights of the water as people, they are entitled to free flow, entitled to be highways for the salmon and other fish, entitled to be uninterrupted in their hydrology cycle. And they have a right to be unobstructed in the relationships with people that sustains life. So, it's a whole different paradigm when you be-

gin to talk and contrast Western paradigms with Indigenous paradigms, which recognizes that water has as much right to exist in its form as any other living thing, including humans, that expresses an Indigenous world view and the emotions that go into that. We are talking about how water is our relative.

**RF:** Well, in your article, you also noted that just as the natural world was not being accorded its rights, the Indigenous people had not been accorded their rights either. Can you comment on that?

**EV:** I think in some ways, what I was trying to say is that there is such an interconnectedness going on between humans and the natural world. And one inference is that the rights of one do not really supersede the rights of the other, or that there's equity of rights as a result of this relationship or this interconnectedness, and we must recognize that. Much of our body is water itself. And if we have harmful relations to the water, then what does the water inside of ourselves have to say about that relationship? Could it be that because we treat water so badly, or so uncaringly, that it manifests in ourselves as human beings? And that is why we treat each other so badly. That's why we treat each other so harmfully... that if we had a more equitable or a more relational understanding with water, maybe we would be kinder to other human beings because the water within our body is in relation, has that relationship of goodwill.

So I make that argument, that because the Water Nation is in us, and because of the memory it does keep, we ingest the harm that we do to water, and then we act it out, or we manifest or we project it. I mean, it is an argument that I made.

**RF:** Well, your article demonstrates that Indigenous peoples view the world from a higher level of consciousness. There is a connective part to everything. And when people can step back and see the importance of the gifts of the natural world in relationship to the people on this earth, we are all better off.

**EV:** I really like how you phrase 'gifts' of the natural world. I think the natural world has that ability to gift us, like with water and trees, and different species for our own sustenance. And I would say that... those are gifts to be appreciated, that they contribute, but the Western paradigm seems to say, well, those are not so much gifts as they are just resources to be used in the service of Western development. So, let's dam the water, and then produce hydroelectricity. Or let us build a pipeline that may damage drinking water for possibly millions of people downstream. And I think there is no appreciation of these gifts that the natural world brings to us. I think we just take them for granted.

**RF:** The Western world view is they own things — that water is property, and you can make profit out of water, instead of protecting it. What runs through your article is the responsibility to make sure the natural world remains as pure and as beautiful as it is, and that in some non-Western cultures, parts of the natural world has been accorded legally recognized rights, such as the Ganges river have been accorded rights so it cannot be polluted. And in 2007 or 2008, Ecuador, in revising its constitution, prohibits actions that would destroy the environment and the ecosystem!

**EV:** Right.

**RF:** And so, your article was pointing out that there is an existential risk if you do not take care of Mother Earth.

**EV:** The natural world is trying to respond to the changes and the relationships with humans, and it has. Only when we are facing the reality of what we have done in our relationship to the natural world, that we are beginning to understand that we needed to be more in relation with the natural world. There's just so many factors that the Western paradigm just seems to ignore, and just focus on one or two, perhaps economic outcomes, or values that are about... progress. notion of progress is that it is a good thing, and it is linear, and it is upward, not realizing that all this progress has led to toxicity of the planet. I mean, it is almost as if we must stop and just really think about our behavior, and how are we to engage the natural world. I think we have just done things so narrowly in our viewpoints, that now we are beginning to understand the consequences of what we did and that there is a different way to be in this world.

**RF:** Well, Dr. Valandra, it is been a pleasure talking to you today. You point out that actions have consequences and repercussions. They have it when we engage the natural world, and we have it when we try to eliminate peoples of the world. And when the people survive, they have to deal with those repercussions in working out their way of life.

You have the last word, Dr.

**EV:** (laughs) Well, Rob, I have certainly enjoyed the conversation, and I wish there would be more of this kind of dialogue, just between peoples, and having this exchange. I would end on the note that you raised toward the very end, and that's... there are consequences, and we have a responsibility. We must own that. We have to embrace it — it's more than just rights, it has to do with — as participants in the natural world, what responsibilities do we have to trees, to animals, to water, to all these things that comprise the world. What are our responsibilities? And I think that is the question that is just lingering to be answered still.

**RF:** Thank you again.



Leonard Peltier | Tatanka



Insight Photography | Lakota Youth



Insight Photography | Lakota Youth



Insight Photography | Lakota Youth



Leonard Peltier | Ayasha

# It Takes a Community to Heal and Indigenous Youth are Fundamental

**Nati Garcia**

In many Indigenous cultures there is no land ownership because the land is a living entity to which we belong. This common thread in fostering sustainability and wellness within Indigenous communities is a unique perception in retaining a holistic relationship with the natural world and all species residing on Earth. Indigenous knowledge and traditional practices are rooted in the internal and external landscape of intellectual reasoning that is intergenerationally transmitted orally. It is a collective organism in stewarding the land, mind, spirit, body, and health of communities devolving from interactive engagement: a fluid and transcendent way of living that is constantly generating and regenerating sustenance, a universal oneness and synergy that builds relationships with community, and a holistic view of wellbeing.

The disappearance of Indigenous cultures, knowledge, traditions, and languages is due to many factors and influences of western ideologies and modern development. Indigenous people are struggling from the impact of pre-contact and colonization. Due to the relationship between the land and Indigenous Peoples, they are impacted firsthand and experience disparity and systematic impoverishment. When removed or dispossessed from the land, there is a loss of oneness. Indigenous people depend on the land as a vital resource, but most importantly, the land provides a relationship of self with belonging and being. Dispossession creates dependency and fighting back leads to oppression that then leads to compliance and normalization. It is here that we must question the human rights of Indigenous Peoples and understand the historical analysis of the dehumanization relationship amongst them. In turn, we must celebrate the knowledge and cultural intelligence that Indigenous people genetically embody. Protecting the collective rights to land, territory, and resources includes defending the rights of Indigenous people

to strengthen their culture and language diversity which contribute to the wellness and health of their communities.

Cultural Survival advocates for the support of Indigenous led movements for self-determination and self-governance. Because knowledge is power, one core effort is through education and accessibility. Through our programs and partnerships with Indigenous communities, we offer grant making programs such as Keepers of the Earth Fund, run by Indigenous people for Indigenous people. We fund only Indigenous led initiatives and solutions at the grassroots level that are collectively sustainable for the community. Projects funded have been for traditional forest management, agriculture, medicine practice, economic sovereignty, food security, land rights, environmental and biodiversity protection, Indigenous languages and knowledge retention. Priority is placed on Indigenous women and youth leadership, offering a healing space to amplify Indigenous voices and restore from the trauma and violence inflicted on their internal and external landscapes.

Our Community Media Grants Project provides opportunities for Indigenous community radio stations to strengthen language and knowledge systems through radio broadcasting. It offers multiple streams for transmitting information and amplifying the voices of Indigenous people as they exercise their rights.

Radio in particular is a great source of information access where there are limited resources to water, electricity and mobility. Radio has facilitated the organization and mobilization of Indigenous rights movements and the revitalization of culture. While technology has rapidly developed, there remains a penury in Indigenous living conditions. Radio has been a vital tool in maintaining the wisdom and voices of the people, es-

pecially among youth who are slowly migrating into more concentrated urban areas far from their homes. This has created an intergenerational gap manifested in language and cultural detachment.

With the increasing development of technology, new facets of accessing information and communication have dramatically increased on a global scale, rapidly impacting Indigenous communities and influencing traditional practices. The affordability of certain technology such as cell-phones has initiated a phenomenon in rural Indigenous communities leading to new forms for communicating. Previously, Indigenous people have sustained their communication based on face-to-face interaction and on oral and gestural repertoire. For this reason, it is important to support other means of utilizing these new technologies while strengthening traditional oral practices, and strengthening knowledge, culture, and language diversity.

Indigenous youth in particular are adapting better to technological advancements and have become active participants on social media platforms. However, the norms of social media often do not represent Indigenous worldviews, culture, knowledge or languages as much as one would hope. This acutely impacts the mindset of a new generation of youth; it has altered their cultural practices, distinct from that of their elders, revoking an intergenerational struggle. “As a young Indigenous woman, I have a duty to continue recovering and strengthening my culture, my customs, my language, my traditional clothing, and reinforce along with other brothers and sisters,” says Ñusta Sánchez, a Kichwa Fellow from Radio Publica Cotacachi, Ecuador.

Indigenous youth are also one of the most vulnerable populations experiencing extreme living conditions, high rates of suicide, poverty, mental health issues and school withdrawal within the Western educational systems. They continue to experience the impacts of the cultural and systemic genocide of colonization.

Nonetheless, Indigenous youth are extremely resilient and hold precious wisdom passed down from their ancestors, a genetic power within many Indigenous communities. While resilient, this youth has become very adaptable to the transitions of development, especially with modern technology where they now must balance ancestral practices with modern societal norms. Having to navigate two worlds is challenging; without proper education and guidance, Indigenous youth can spiral from relatedness to disorientation. “I am a journalist student because of the socio-political problem in Nicaragua. Since I was 13 years of age, I have worked in radio. It was an incredible experience and the first time I spoke, my voice trembled. In journalism, one always learns. The challenge I had was that I did not speak my language fluently. My experience with the project is that it helped me become more fluent in my language. To this day, I can perfectly speak Miskito,” says Jeyson Adonis Miranda, a Miskitu Fellow from Radio Yapti Tasba, Nicaragua.

The lack of Indigenous education in institutional, political, and social media systems separates Indigenous youth from their own cultures and self-determination. Indigenous youth holds the wisdom and knowledge of their ancestors. To foster growth, it takes a resurgence of the implementation of Indigenous culture within these systems of indifference. Multilingual and culturally relevant education should be provided at all educational levels. Institutional systems of health, in healing the

generational trauma, identify the issues that most affect Indigenous communities, and assist in the prosperity of needed solutions.

Youth leadership and the development of their communities is an integral part of ensuring the wellbeing of the community. It is transformative to listen and respond effectively to the dynamic stories. Indigenous knowledge systems and the human rights of Indigenous people require an unprecedented level of coordination and collective innovation within the intergenerational global community. It is also important to honor the experience and expertise of Indigenous youth as key decision makers in the development of the world. Their rapid adaptability to digital media technologies, multidisciplinary abilities and communicative development allow them to transform new modes of cultural production.

“Our greatest learning has been the sharing of the words and the opportunity to learn from our elders and finally the possibility of creating and building something together. Understanding our role as Indigenous communicators has allowed us to come to terms with a stronger commitment to our territory, culture, values and elders.” Jose Daniel Arias (Kankuamo) from Radio Stereo Tayrona, Colombia

One way in which Cultural Survival facilitates the influence of modern technology is through our Indigenous Youth Community Media Fellowship Project, guided by the principles of collaboration with the expertise of the youth in learning, allowing youth to become the agents of expertise builds on their sense of self as knowledgeable while shaping new creative outlets for cultural intelligence and immunity and fostering the knowledge of their Peoples.

While culture expands us, history may contract us. It also teaches of one's origins and allows understanding the historical trauma to confront in order to heal. Changing history is not possible, but shifting the emotional response to it paves the way for youth to actively engage in their culture and participate in the dialogue for generating a new future for their communities. By supporting the teachings of their elders, it builds a strong sense of identity and understanding. Community media plays a huge role in building a strong sense of identity and knowing, relating to their culture, land, language, and traditions. Using songs, stories, dances and imagination, the teachings present love, responsibility, rites of passage, spirituality and cosmology of their existence.

Storytelling has been guiding this process for many generations. Stories draw out the voices of our ancestors and stimulate imagination in sharing the richness of an Indigenous culture. Indigenous people are great storytellers; it is what connects to the land and essence. Cultural Survival Indigenous Youth Community Media Fellowship Project promotes this process where youth can co-create new stories through community radio and audiovisual productions, engaging with elders, knowledge keepers, and Indigenous leaders from their community. The fellowship provides support to represent the voices of their communities and bring awareness of local issues to global conversations through their proposed projects, all the while strengthening their cultural identities, language and leadership. “This project helped us to understand elders and get them to express their needs and feelings that sometimes out of fear they cannot do it and it helped us to become aware of many things that as Indigenous youth we are losing and adopting new cultures without realizing that our culture is unique and we must rescue it and be proud of

where we come from,” stated Jessica Sarango Rumipulla, Kichwa Fellow from Radio Kimsakocha, Ecuador.

“During the development of the project the most special thing was to be in the field, as part of the investigation process, and listening to the oral stories of the elders. Sitting for hours to hear their story and hopeful hearts who continue to cling and not forget our customs. Thanks to the fellowship in giving the opportunity in being able to work with our elders, with youth and children. I have developed skills in editing and learned many things that I could apply,” commented Ronal Epieyu, a Wayuu Fellow from Radio, Colombia.

The Fellowship is now in its third cycle and has awarded grants to 22 youths to date from Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, and Nepal. It trains youth in building their capacities in radio broadcasting, journalism, program management, audiovisual production, and radio production by creating their own narrative of their culture for local, national and international platforms.

Community media has been an outlet in channeling this growing need of the youth to engage and maintain their culture. They are given the opportunity to manage their own project enhancing leadership and education using new mechanisms of community media to contribute to cultural expansion. “The loss of our Native foods and plants makes us forget bit by bit our identity, so it is important to fight against this. I realized that I was never alone, that there are extraordinary organizations that permit encounters to see one another. I see a brighter future, where I hope to enforce my role within the radio and develop leadership in my community,” stated Zyania Roxanne Aguilar, a Zapoteca Fellow from Radio Calenda, Mexico.

Youth also get the opportunity to be leaders in research by documenting their cultural practices and knowledge systems using their own narrative versus the conventional research methods from academic anthropologists and linguistics. This multimedia narrative can be transformative for a community. Youth are able to produce material for younger generations in a creative, contemporary way where interpretation and response invites community participation. They reflect on what is happening in their communities and share this with the global community. “We want to make known these struggles, highlighting our rights as Indigenous Peoples, describing our unity with our roots and identities, spreading the resistances and proposals of the communities and Ixil authorities. Telling of the events that affect or favor the Ixil People at a national level, and always making visible the fundamental and indispensable role of young people and women,” commented José Samuel López Pérez, an Ixil Fellow from Radio Q’Ajsab Yol Tenam, Guatemala.

It takes a community to heal. Indigenous youth are fundamental in this process. When they have access to the tools and appropriate technologies to record what matters to them, transformation occurs. Participating in new cultural forms of community media that reflect what is going on for them and creating cultural production through their lens restores a sense of pride in their Indigenous cultures and languages. Youth are reflecting on these communication technologies and becoming more active in taking over the traditional learning practice and returning back to their roots.



Photo by Keri Pickett | The Lakota Victory Day Pony Races have races for children, women and men and even for those that don't have a horse.



Photo by Keri Pickett | Annual Lakota Pony Races.

# Pony Up! The Lakota War Party Races at Kiza Park

Mia Feroletto

In 1978 through 1979, a young Alex White Plume returned home from military service in Berlin. Arriving at the Pine Ridge Reservation, Alex was forced to confront the raw poverty that he had temporarily escaped by enlisting in the army. His homecoming included bonding with a little horse whose ears had been lost from frost bite in the bitter South Dakota winter. The name of the horse was Ornery as Hell (Ohansica) and he was a mean son of a gun at that. With his brother Percy, Alex began to race around the reservation on horseback at lightning speed. Even the tribal police could not stop them.

The year 1980 celebrated the marriage of Alex and Deborah. The White Plume family made their home in Manderson, South Dakota, less than ten miles from the Wounded Knee Memorial. The couple soon decided they needed an activity for the children in their combined families. So

pony races and games were started with their own kids, but soon grew into a community affair to celebrate the Native American victory over the US Cavalry and General George Armstrong Custer on June 25th, 1876. Lakota call this the battle of Greasy Grass but the majority of Americans refer to it as the Battle of Little Big Horn.

The pony races became a symbol of the resurgence of Sioux culture that was returning to Native life back in the 1970s. Categories were grouped by age and type of race. The culmination of the races had the riders chasing an impersonator of General Custer to capture his flag. In the stunning photos by Keri Pickett, we are given a glimpse of the excitement, enthusiasm and fun experienced by the participants as they compete for prizes surrounded by rolling hills draped in sunshine.



Photo by Keri Pickett | Horses have miles of territory to roam on the White Plume family land on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.



Photo by Keri Pickett | Cetan Akicita (Percy White Plume 111) and Wanbli Wahancanka (Theo Two Eagles) walking their horses.

On the Pine Ridge Reservation, residents go through a monthly cycle of having cash at the beginning of the month to almost none by the end of the month. The White Plumes instituted a series of cash prizes for all of the riders who begin racing at the age of six and stop in their late teens. The races provide a celebration and community meal where families can honor their heritage, their relationship with their horses and a day of pride. Alex and Deb raise \$5,000 each year for prize money. No one goes home empty handed. At the end of the day, everyone receives a gift.

Rosebud and Tyson White Plume are running the races now with Alex and Deb's grandchildren charging off around the hills of Manderson. While they once showcased their horsemanship skills with their friends and relatives, they now serve as organizers. The tradition continues. Bragging is not allowed in Lakota culture except for June 25th, when

riders and their families members are allowed to boast of their bravery and skill on horseback.

All are welcome at Kiza Park as long as there is no religious proselytizing. Bitter feelings remain from the time of the enforced enrollment in residential schools. So when you visit Kiza Park, leave your religion at home. Just by being there you will experience a sense of gratitude.



Photo by Mitch Epstein | War Pony Races, Pine Ridge, Indian Reservation, South Dakota



Photo by Keri Pickett | Malcolm McKinnon rides in the role of General Custer during the Capture the Flag race representing the defeat of Custer at the Little Big Horn.

John Fusco

# Truth and Thunder

The Making of the movie *Thunderheart*



Photo by John Fusco

Early in my Hollywood screenwriting career, only one movie in, my agents advised me against leaving town and moving to a log cabin in the mountains. I told them I only wanted to write about what spoke to me in a true manner, rather than hire out to big studios and write their blockbuster ideas.

My agents said my movie and inexperienced philosophy would amount to 'career suicide.' I made the move anyway and wrote an original screenplay called 'Young Guns.' With that success, my agents told me to stay in the cabin and keep writing what I wanted to.

What I wanted to write, more than any muse or meaning could inspire, was a modern-day drama set on a reservation that gave voice to something that I knew, in my gut, was true:

The war against Native Americans did not end in 1890 at Wounded Knee. The Indians wars and government subjugation system continued, in more clandestine ways, through the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, and continues today (Standing Rock a case in point).

While I had been in New Mexico on the set of 'Young Guns' I had mentioned this passion to a full-blooded Hopi lady who became a friend. That is when the journey of 'Thunderheart' began.

I had told her that while researching events on Pine Ridge that had occurred in the 1970s, I often listened to the powerful musical narrative of Oglala-Lakota singer-songwriter Buddy Red Bow.

Less than a few weeks later she called me to tell me that Buddy was visiting her in Taos. Invited to meet him, I drove from Santa Fe for the meeting that would begin a deep friendship, an artistic collaboration, and the path to the true story and hidden facts that I needed to write and produce 'Thunderheart.'

When Buddy learned of my ambition and determination to get this story through the maze of Hollywood and to the world, he told me that it was 'heavy duty stuff' and told me that I would need to go see a certain person on the Rez to seek his blessing. This person was the elder Chief Frank Fools Crow, the highest-ranking ceremonial chief in the Oglala-Lakota Nation and a renowned medicine man. In fact, he was considered to be the last of the true Lakota holy men.

Ninety-seven years old at the time ('Grandpa' as I would come to call him, was born in 1890, the year of the Wounded Knee Massacre), Chief Fools Crow sat with me, my wife, and Buddy at his small home in Porcupine on Pine Ridge Rez. He sized me up for a long time of silence as Buddy explained, in the Lakota language, who I was and that I wanted to write about the painful events of the 1970s.

Chief Fools Crow asked me questions through Buddy and I answered. Then, at a certain point, the elder brought the canunpa — the sacred pipe — and we smoked, passing it between us.

'There are no lies with the Pipe,' Buddy told me.

At the end of a day I will never forget, Fools Crow did a marriage blessing for my wife and I, and then instructed Buddy to help me research what I needed to tell the story as a film. However, said the Chief, I would need to study and learn the Lakota language so that I could get information directly from him.

On that same day, Buddy took me to meet Dennis Banks who was on the Rez meeting with Hawaiian senator Inouye. Over the days and weeks and months — and then over 5 years — of objectively researching the story of Jumping Bull Compound, the hows and whys and the buried facts, I learned the language at a semi-proficient level and became deeply immersed in traditional ceremony. Grandpa Fools Crow was the patriarch of the 'tiospaye' that I would be adopted into. Because I had been around the Rez, on and off, for years, doing readings of my early script drafts and having the Native people vet and advise, I was given the name 'Wakinyan Ca'ante' — Thunderheart.

Although I would write a fictionalized account of the 1970s events (using the form of a thriller to get through the Hollywood gantlet), most realized that it was thinly-veiled expose' of government abuses on the reservation, abuses leading to the Jumping Bull Compound incident and the conviction of Leonard Peltier for the unfortunate murders of two South Dakota field agents in the FBI.

The more than one hundred unsolved murders on the Rez and the connection to secrets around the mapped mineral reserves and more than 6,000 test holes drilled (and more than 5 million pounds of uranium identified), led me to my thesis:

The clandestine uranium rush was the new gold rush of an energy-scarce economy. The FBI was the new Seventh Cavalry, and Leonard Peltier and other American Indian Movement leaders were the new Crazy Horse who had led his ancestors against the first invasion of the Black Hills in the 1870s.

Grandpa, who had been the medicine man of AIM, approved of the story that I wrote (and which featured an elder based very much on him). My allies on the Rez strongly supported and even held ceremony when they knew I was taking important studio meetings regarding the project.

My screenplay hit a stonewall.

Hollywood, in 1989, was terrified of a movie so closely based on events that pointed a finger at the government. 'Can you change it to casinos and cocaine, or can the Indian cop come to LA and kick ass?' they asked me. No way. I had put years into this, a man had been wrongly convicted, murders were still unsolved, and the nation's soul was on the line. They didn't buy it. And they wouldn't make it.

On a feeling I still don't understand today, I sent the script to Robert DeNiro. I knew that he had expressed interest in my work as a young writer and I knew that he was about to open Tribeca, his own production company.

DeNiro not only responded to the material, he asked me to take him to Pine Ridge. He would fly to Rapid City on a private jet and then head to the Rez with me for several days. I took him to meet Grandpa Fools Crow (who traded him a rock for an expensive necklace just like in the movie); he did a sweat lodge ceremony with medicine man Pete Catches; and he met the survivors of the 1970s war on the Rez.

DeNiro became so invested that he traded a future acting commitment to the studio if they would greenlight my movie. After hiring Michael Apter who was about to begin making a documentary, 'Incident at Oglala' about the true events, we were on our way.

The making of 'Thunderheart' was unlike any movie experience I ever had or ever will have again. We shot exclusively on the Pine Ridge Reservation using as many Native non-actors as possible. And as Apter did interviews for his documentary, I dug deeper into the feature script and the movie deepened into an unusual one-feeding-into-the-other process. Former members of the GOON squad (Guardians of the Oglala

Nation) were playing themselves in reenacted gunfights and ambushes, pursuing John Trudell, himself the last national leader of AIM at the time.

'Thunderheart' became — or always was — more than a movie. It became a cathartic experience filmed at actual locations. Every day was a ceremony of sorts, a deep and meaningful immersion into a story that needed to be told. Unfortunately, Grandpa Fools Crow passed away before we went into production, but each morning we set out a star quilt on a director's chair with his name on it.

The movie would receive wide critical acclaim and call attention to the unresolved injustice. Not enough attention however; the movie was not widely seen. We screened it in Washington to help pass legislation to protect sacred Native American sites. I was told it was powerful and mattered.

Between that and the cathartic 'healing' process in the making of the movie, I was asked if I had achieved my goal.

'No,' I said. 'Only when Leonard Peltier is released from prison after having served 40 years — 40 years for charges built on fabricated evidence — after a reign of FBI abuses in traditional Native communities,' will I truly feel that the movie mattered.

The injustices and genocide of Wounded Knee cannot be altered. But there is still time to right one of the greatest American wrongs in history.



Photo by John Willis | Potato Creek



Robert N. Felix

# The Man Who Planted Trees



Photo of Richard Fox fire dancing

In Indigenous cultures, tribal members hold the enlightened view that the natural world of trees, mountains, rivers, and the like, are alive and animated with spirit, feelings and consciousness. This is not a novel or idle perspective. Rather, it is wisdom handed down, ancestrally derived, and as intuitive, rational and abundantly obvious as people's needs to breathe clean air and drink clean water. Trees and water are life, and we, as humans, have a sacred responsibility to protect and respect all life forms, for they are more than natural resources existing solely for the taking and destroying.

I write today about a man I greatly admire. He is not from an Indigenous culture, but from the wilds of New Jersey. Yet, you would not know that from the trajectory of his life, the passion of his mission, and the people that he has blessed by living, breathing and working on Mother Earth. His name is Richard Fox and he has a long-standing affinity with Native cultures. Fox's spirit is animated with a view of the natural world similar to that of the Indigenous peoples he has helped. He is an animist. He sees life with feelings and consciousness throughout. And he has touched many lives. He is the man who planted trees.

Fox attended Bloomfield College where he received his BA in 1971. Growing up in the 60s led him to want to make a difference in the world. Starting out as a civil rights advocate, Fox became more — he became a natural rights and environmental dynamo. And Fox made it happen.

In 1972, while on the way to California with the intention of seeking a masters' degree, he found something else, something that represented a powerful allure to him. Fox became enchanted with the huge open spaces and forests of the American southwest and, at the age of 23, he started a forestry cooperative, which was to become the largest one at the time.

For the next 18 years, Fox travelled to, lived in, and worked in 17 states, some in the Southeastern part of the United States (during the months of December to March) and some in the Southwestern part (during the months of April to July). Fox lived mostly outdoors in the forests he served, sleeping under the stars by night, and doing forestry work by day. During this time, Fox, personally planted over 700,000 trees and his crew, in total, planted 27 million trees. They also analyzed 4 million acres of forest inventory, which, at times, required an assessment as to whether the current forestry practices under review were sustainable for the long run.

In Washington DC, from 1990 to 1998, Fox switched gears to garner experience working with non-profits. He worked on a land trust protecting the Potomac River, and quickly realized that in order to succeed, he needed additional experience in fundraising, and he got it.

In 1998, greatly concerned about the dire problems associated with deforestation in Latin America and Central America, Fox became one of the co-founders of the non-profit "Trees, Water & People" (TWP). For the next 18 years, he worked, planned and executed his dream and it made a difference. Fox served as TWP's National Director from 1998 through 2011 before becoming the Executive Director from 2012 until 2016.

At TWP, Fox's initial emphasis was fostering reforestation, and TWP was successful in planting 3-4 million trees in Central America. Fox and his team quickly realized that the locals were cutting down too many trees for cooking, which contributed to the unintended, albeit natural, consequences of pervasive deforestation. Once the local community understood the problem, they learned how to manage their local resources. TWP suggested a simple solution: the local people needed to use energy efficient cookstoves to help preserve the natural resources, so TWP began designing and distributing these appliances. It worked.

Beginning in 2002, Fox and the leadership at TWP began focusing their environmental development efforts on assisting Native American communities in the United States, starting with the Lakota Nation on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, one of the poorest communities in the entire Western Hemisphere. The people there were the descendants of oppressed peoples who were victims of genocide. Fox sought to develop viable renewable energy solutions that would be accepted within the matriarchal system existing within their culture. The renewal solutions had to gain the acceptance of the grandmothers and the aunts and had to succeed on Tribal Lands where the earth was arid and the climate was harsh. This posed a considerable challenge for a non-Native like Fox, since he had to first garner the trust of the Lakota who has a long and bitter history with distrusting the white man.

The Lakota were put on land they loved. But, as Fox saw it, it was a harsh love since no one else wanted to live there. It can be very hot and sunny in the summer. "When you come to Indian Country, you will see how many third world countries, hundreds of them, are right here in Indian Country. Where the roads go around it and the grids go around it. Rivers go around it. They put all these reservations on the worst possible land and hoped they'd die. But they didn't."

Over the years, that sun is now being used and harvested for renewable energy. The old ways of the Lakota as reflected in their stories are often expressed as the life-giving essence of the sun. They speak of the Sundance and the creeks and the water and the thunder beings and everything in the natural world. And when they play their powwow drums, that's the heartbeat of Mother Earth. Their songs replicate the heartbeat of the mother carrying a child. The sweat lodge replicates the mother's womb and the heat in the lodge signifies life and replenishment. The

people remain very much connected to the land which, in total surface, is the size of Connecticut. Yet this area has only two stoplights, no movie theatres and one large main food store to buy groceries and smaller stores scattered in each town. It takes four hours to drive from one end of the reservation to the other. The people are poor, living mostly in trailer homes costing about \$3,000.

And then there are the winters: often bitter cold and windy – sometimes dangerously windy. It is a harsh place to live where elders sometimes freeze to death in their homes in the winter. That’s just unacceptable. So to assist the tribal community on the Pine Ridge Reservation and improve living conditions, Fox’s team, in 2002, began installing air solar furnaces, at a cost of \$2000 per furnace, which was far more affordable than solar electric, and reduced the cost of the prohibitively high winter heating bills on the reservation by 30%. This was a great start. Then several forces united. Let’s call the first two the ancestral power of Lakota history teamed with prophecy, and the final force: the way synchronicity works.

What’s the history and prophecy? The short version is that Chief Red Cloud, considered by many as the last of the great war chiefs of the Lakota Sioux, and the only chief who ever won a war against the US, was wise enough to realize that the Sioux Nation could never win an all-out war with the US. He wanted to save his people from certain annihilation, so to advance peace he signed the so-called Laramie Treaty of 1868. But not long after, the US did not honor the treaty, and once again, the renewed cry of “kill the Indian,” was echoed and many more Lakota were killed, while the rest were ultimately placed on desolate reservations to die slowly and fade into oblivion. Having witnessed these horrendous events, Chief Red Cloud looked into the future and prophesied that it would take seven generations for the Lakota to get over the cultural clash with the white people at which time he envisioned that the goodness of the pale-faced people and the goodness of the Lakota will create something new and better in the world. It is a message of hope, resiliency and strength.

As for the synchronicity, Fox had arrived on the reservation at precisely the right moment. Enter Henry Red Cloud. He grew up on the Pine Ridge reservation and had just recently returned home to help his people. Red Cloud is a fifth-generation grandson of Chief Red Cloud. Henry had met Fox years before. But when Henry saw Fox on the reservation helping his people, he instantly knew that destiny was presenting an interesting opportunity. Fox, at that time, was not yet aware that both he and Red Cloud were on a parallel path, since Henry also knew about renewable energy options, and, in particular, about solar air furnaces and had, himself, made and installed them as well. It was clear that Red Cloud was a natural leader and the people on the reservation looked up to him. To Fox, teaming up with Red Cloud became the essential factor, the missing link for development of successful energy renewal on the Pine Ridge Reservation; Red Cloud had a fierce desire to help his people by improving the quality of their lives, and told Fox, in essence: we can write a new chapter, create a new future and help families in need.

Working together, Fox and Red Cloud found a way to help the Lakota and other tribes embrace renewal energy, mixing something new with the old cultural traditions of honoring the natural world, and in so doing,

fulfill the Chief’s prophecy by turning it into a beautiful new reality, improving the life of the Native American by giving them real skills to perform green jobs and forever change their lives.

Here’s what unfolded: By 2003, TWP was providing hands-on training, including solar energy and educational program workshops on the reservation; soon after Red Cloud was running the program. In 2006, Red Cloud established Lakota Solar Enterprises (LSE). His sons (the sixth generation) and their sons (the seventh generation – Henry’s grandchildren) came to work for LSE, one of the earliest, and perhaps the first, 100% Native American-owned and operated renewable energy company in the US. More partnerships and cooperation would follow.

In 2008, TWP and Red Cloud created Red Cloud Renewable Energy Center (RCREC). Thus, what began as a startup training program in 2002-2003, had blossomed by 2008 into a multi-purpose training and education center focused on providing hands-on renewable training skills for the Native tribes. Over the next 15 years, they installed around 1100 furnaces, including those that were built, sold and installed for other tribes. Ultimately, they worked with about 40 tribes, many of which wanted to learn how to do it themselves.

Fox, even with limited resources, has now assisted in providing over 140 workshops. And as the trainees came, they wanted to learn more and more and so they added training on solar pumping and organic farming, not just for traditional Lakota foods but all kinds of nutritious foods. The solar pumping delivers the water into the farm. They’ve also provided solar radiant floor heating as well as water pumping for hot water heating. They developed mobile power stations for radio stations and produced solar lights, delivering them, for example, for the benefit of the water protectors at the camps at Standing Rock, North Dakota. They also worked to reforest burned areas throughout Pine Ridge with a Native Ponderosa Pine, a very large species of variable habitant, bringing new life and new beauty to the Native land. In fact, Fox and Red Cloud planted 115,000 trees on the Pine Ridge Reservation and at Bear Butte, South Dakota, the sacred vision quest area.

In 2013, Henry opened the Sacred Earth Lodge as a place to reside and learn green skills, or, in the alternative, as a place to visit for those wishing to learn about reservation life. In 2016, he founded his own non-profit organization, Red Cloud Renewable (RCE), dedicated to continuing his efforts in playing a pivotal role in stimulating interest for renewable energy options, economic development, and energy independence in the Native communities of South Dakota and spreading worldwide. Fox considers Red Cloud to be a tremendous leader, as well as an orator, and they have travelled together doing dozens of energy events in the United States and in Europe. In October 2017 after retiring from TWP, Fox became the Director of Communications for RCE.

In 2018, Fox moved into solar electric and in partnership or collaboration, with Red Cloud Renewable, InOurHands, Lakota Solar, Thunder Valley CDC, Sunset Power Solutions, Remote Energy, Johnny Weiss Solar, providing the expertise to complete a 20 kW ground-mount solar array for the KILI Radio Station, “The Voice of the Lakota Nation” — an independent radio station funded entirely by donations. KILI is broadcast now all over the world. They installed two small systems on their roof and a 20 kW system on the ground. They also assisted in having a wind tur-

bine installed for the radio station and turned KILI radio into the most renewal Indigenous radio station in the world. Quite an accomplishment.

Most recently, Fox and Red Cloud partnered with Solar Energy International (SEI), a company Red Cloud has worked with over the last 20 years. SEI is one of the foremost solar educators in the world. In one of these projects, they selected 9 tribal members to receive advanced professional training to gain national certification. After completing their training in October 2019, the candidates travelled to Colorado to the SEI labs to finish the necessary training. The applicants for this program all received full scholarships. While under no obligation to work on or for the reservations after certification, the application practice revealed that these individuals intended to use their skills to work on and for tribal lands. In fact, while their final training for these certifications were in Colorado, they initially specifically came to Fox and Red Cloud’s workshops at Pine Ridge because there they are all Native Americans, and had they trained elsewhere, they would have been the only Native Americans there. They told Fox that the training they wanted had to relate to their culture, otherwise their solar energy projects would fail. The grandmothers must be on board!

Fox and Red Cloud’s networks have given them the means to take on huge projects across the great plains, since those they have trained in many of these places are working on various installation projects, while the training workshops continue to provide needed skills to them and other green warriors. They’re also about to be involved in another project called “Solar Lookout Park” that calls for the installation of 400,000 solar panels at Pine Ridge. That’s a square mile of solar.

For reservation housing projects, there is a need for 5,000 homes. They have been erecting buildings, office and residential, using locally sourced material to create compressed earth blocks, using compressed damp soil to form blocks. They built a 3-bedroom house and then gifted it to Leonard Peltier’s son, the late Paul Shields-Peltier, who, in the waning days of the Obama administration, travelled to Washington DC in the hopes of securing a pardon for his father, who at the time had been imprisoned for nearly four decades. His valiant and loving efforts, as it turned out, proved unsuccessful and he died in the process of trying.

Fox and Red Cloud work hard to obtain local participation even before suggesting a project: 85 to 90% of the people on any project are Native. If Red Cloud needs certain special expertise, he finds the people and brings them in, whether they are Native or not. All in all, Fox’s efforts have been very well-received and appreciated. Fox believes that Henry is key, fulfilling the role of trusted local leader, a prerequisite for getting buy-in from the Natives. Tribal people are very resistant to outsiders with big ideas, because many have not fulfilled their promises and the reservation is littered with failed projects.

It also really helps that Fox has vast experience in fund raising. His experience in the forestry cooperative TWP and in Washington has paved the way to his success on Pine Ridge. Wearing many hats, Fox has raised funds for over 200 projects. And even with this experience, the task of navigating the exacting red-tape to qualify for federal funding is very hard. Fox worked hard to persevere, as money can translate into projects, and, as Fox says: “projects can translate into life “

While Fox and Red Cloud have been able to accomplish so much, they recognize it is still not enough. “There are not”, asserts Fox “enough of us doing enough for Indians.” He invites people to come to the Sacred Earth Lodge and spend time in the heartland of Indian Country on the Pine Ridge Reservation. “See for yourself what it’s all about. On Pine Ridge, there are a lot of good people doing a lot of good stuff,” and as Fox adds: “there’s a lot of caring and sharing and an unparalleled spiritual history, and it’s a positive experience to go to the reservation. And every time I go there, I am left with a strange thought: that I am getting more than I am giving.”



# INTERVIEW WITH LEONARD PELTIER

Mia Feroletto and Robert N. Felix

**1. Do you believe you received a fair trial? If not, what was unfair about it?**

**Answer:** I strongly believe my trial was unfair, and the incidents of FBI and U.S. Attorney office misconduct are well documented. Witness intimidation, fabricated evidence, and the withholding of exculpatory evidence were all used to ensure I did not get a fair trial. I was also prevented from introducing evidence surrounding the now well-known Reign of Terror, and at least one of the jurors was known to be biased against Natives.

**2. Did the prosecutor fail to provide your attorneys with any important evidence that would have been favorable to your defense? If so, what was it?**

**Answer:** The prosecutors, with the assistance of the FBI, hid ballistics testing that showed the weapon prosecutors tried to link to me was not the weapon used to kill the agents. Producing this type of exculpatory evidence is part of the most basic constitutional protection given to defendants. And but for government responses to Freedom of Information Act request years later, we never would have even known the test existed.

**3. What is the legacy you want to be remembered for?**

**Answer:** Through the struggle and perseverance for my people since an early age I developed my life-view: I want to be remembered for my leadership for the struggle for Native Nations and all poor people, and to ensure human rights for future generations, and of course Native Sovereignty to protect Mother Earth.

**4. What message to you want to convey to the world?**

**Answer:** To protect Mother Earth, empower Indigenous people, and World Peace are at the heart of my messages.

**5. How has your creativity helped to deal with your incarceration?**

**Answer:** My Art gives me moments of freedom and it allows my creative section of the mind to sharpen my craft of painting and writing.

**6. Your art conveys a deep thoughtful nature and love of Native people and nature. Where does this internal beauty come from for you?**

**Answer:** It stems from the personal experience of living with my people, and their creative ability expressing our history through Art.



Leonard Peltier | Home of the Brave

# Gallery of paintings by Leonard Peltier



Leonard Peltier | Broken Jaw



Leonard Peltier | Man with Robe



Leonard Peltier | Grandma Jumping Bull



Leonard Peltier | Snow Maiden



Leonard Peltier | Mic Mac Maddona



Leonard Peltier | Shoulda Won That Dance



Leonard Peltier | Child in Ceremonial Clothes





Leonard Peltier | Untitled



Leonard Peltier | Homeland Security



Leonard Peltier | Red Crow



Leonard Peltier | Daydreamer  
PRISONER OF WAR CAMP #344 0071





Leonard Peltier | Dine Elder.



Leonard Peltier | Ghost Dance Leader



Leonard Peltier | Geronimo - Remain Strong



Leonard Peltier | I was once a young warrior too



Leonard Peltier | Dance with the spirit of the Horses



Leonard Peltier | Willie



Leonard Peltier | One of the 38



Leonard Peltier | Thunder Buffalo Hooves



Leonard Peltier | Geronimo



Leonard Peltier | BlueStill



Leonard Peltier | Ind Still Life

Leonard Peltier  
© 2010  
PRISONER OF WAR CAMP #344





Leonard Peltier | Horse Nation

# Writing about Leonard Peltier in the Time of Plague.

Joanna Malinowska

I'm writing from my pandemic hideout in Ithaca, not sure if I'm safe, worried for the safety of friends and loved ones spread across this vast continent. Seeing the deer nonchalantly crossing the symbolic boundaries of our backyard to graze on fresh, spring grass, I think how even less symbolic and effective our fence is against the invisible and omnipresent danger of the virus. I can't help thinking of the terror experienced by the first custodians of this continent when the plagues and diseases of the so-called Old World arrived here.

I can't remember when exactly I had heard his name for the first time, but it was a long time ago, in Poland, while it still belonged to the Soviet Bloc, on the verge of collapse. At that time, the news we were able to get from the outside of the empire on shaky legs was very limited, censored, and/or manipulated. But for some reason, the stories of the protests on the Pine Ridge Reservation were arriving to our part of a separated globe, not censored and to a degree, welcomed by our government as signs of the corruption and inner decay inside the territory of "our" enemy, the United States. The American Indian Movement was quite popular among the students in my high school, hungry for a larger world, the world outside of local propaganda.

Fast-forward to the future and the next century: I live in New York. Against the wisdom and survival odds prescribed to the emigres from Central Europe, I chose to become an artist. Not a very promising and certain

perspective. But unexpectedly, what seemed to be my version of the American dream knocked at my door: I was invited to participate in the 2012 Whitney Biennial. A shock. Before I began to wrap my brain about the potential work I would make for the occasion, the first challenge of producing something for a certain number of pages in the biennial catalog arrived, something that would go beyond the images of previous artwork, something more profound, was expected. My mind was blank and paralyzed. I decided to go on a road trip from New York to the shores of Lake Ontario, to visit friends. The history of crossing these lands is as vast as the lands themselves; it is hard not to be enchanted. On my trip, I stumbled on the territories and lands marked as independent, tribal lands. These signs and announcements seem puzzling; it seemed to me that the whole business of dividing land and creating borders was complete nonsense. That was when the idea of declaring my allocation of pages in the biennial catalog as an independent territory began. The Whitney Museum of American Art seems a curious entity, its exhibitions tend to represent a very limited idea of what is truly American — barely any artist Indigenously American is considered, many artists (mostly males) that were born in Europe dominate its exhibitions. My thoughts go to Leonard Peltier and the idea of donating my catalog pages to him. What if he could use them as an independent platform to speak up, the thoughts unsaid then forgotten?

I sent a message to Leonard Peltier and contacted his Defense Offense Committee. A week or so passed by before I got an answer. Dorothy Niham, the LPDOC Chairwoman responded, expressing her concern about whether it would be possible to include Leonard's work in the Biennial since he had not himself been invited. In my response, I clarified that I had meant only for the catalogue pages for the moment and that my hopes were to bring attention to his incarceration rather than his artwork. But wait, the inclusion of his artwork was a great idea. I talked to the curators and felt both surprised and encouraged by the green light to bring Leonard's painting to the impermeable Whitney Museum of so-called American Art. Besides my exchanges with the Defense Offense Committee, I wrote to Leonard directly. I had no idea that at the time he was subjected to solitary confinement and struggling to survive the heatwave. Another few days passed before I received a message from Leonard via Dorothy Ninham, accepting the invitation and nominating Ms. Ninham to be in charge of the matter.

The following weeks or months, Dorothy Ninham, her daughter Gina Buenrostro and I worked together on compiling materials for the catalogue. Leonard was clearly more interested in being recognized as a painter rather than as the warrior of an American Indian Movement. We settled on one of his prison letters and several of his paintings. The fruit of our editorial e-exchanges was published in the Whitney Biennial 2012 catalogue.

Besides the work on the catalogue, I worked with Elisabeth Sussman and Jay Sanders, the curators of the Biennial, on including one of his actual paintings for the exhibition. To continue the theme of the independent territory, we decided that Leonard's painting would be hung on a special "neutral" wall that was to be built for the occasion. It turned out that I was not the only who decided to share the honor of being chosen for the

Whitney Biennial with other, non-invited artists. Robert Gober and Nick Mauss come up with similar resolutions. My personal reasoning was the certain unease of being a Polish-born artist, who at the point had spent as many years in America as in Poland but continued to struggle with defining her own national identity— another reason why the borders and land divisions seem so absurd.

My initial interest in Leonard Peltier was focused on his court case and being a political prisoner, but the process of editing pages for the catalogue, building a neutral wall inside the Whitney, and eagerly awaiting for his painting "The Horse Nation" to arrive, expanded my perspective and caused me to question the absence of contemporary Indigenous American artists from the dominant art discourse, and from the walls of the museum that specializes in American Art.

As a part of my contribution to the Biennial, I was asked to conduct a public education event. It took place on April 13, 2012. Several hundred people attended, filling most of the bunker-like downstairs reception area and outdoor courtyard. I decided to use the opportunity as a stage for strategic intervention on behalf of the Leonard Peltier Defence Offense Committee. I wanted to bring together questions of cultural collisions, of the nearly invisible institutional presence of Native American artists, including Mr. Peltier. I experimented with the collision of marching bands based on the original idea by the American composer Charles Ives, and a howling piece inviting everyone present to produce a coyote or wolf-like sound for the duration of 10 minutes. The walls of the museum seemed to vibrate. Later, it was interpreted by the New York magazine critic Jerry Saltz as a call to free Leonard Peltier. And, via a Skype connection, Dorothy Ninham spoke to everyone present about Mr. Peltier's case, providing a real-time report from an ongoing cross-country freedom walk from California to Washington, DC, involving activists on his behalf.

Initially, I did not know what I was doing, or I should say: there was no specific 'plan' — this all evolved as I went forward — the car trip, talking with Dorothy Ninham, my activist friends and artistic collaborators, and people at the museum. I had lots of hopes, including the hope that the museum would buy Leonard's painting, thereby giving his campaign some much-needed money. So far that has not happened.

Months later, I make a tobacco pouch with glass beads forming the words: FREE LEONARD PELTIER on its front side. I put a pack of American Spirits Light inside it and mailed it along with a letter to President Obama, asking him to enjoy the tobacco and seriously consider offering his pardon to Leonard. That did not happen either.

Fast-forward, again, to now. If Barack Obama seemed a real hope, despite his judiciary cautiousness, my hopes for benevolence from the current administration are next to none. And the pandemic. I can't imagine what it is like inside a prison, without a window that offers a view of deer grazing on fresh, spring grass.

# Healing Ourselves and our World by Leveraging Indigenous Wisdom

## The Path to Healing Ancestral Trauma

Dana Thompson

In October of 2014, while I was working on three separate freelance projects in Minneapolis, a colleague invited me to an outdoor dinner event which was being prepared by a local chef. Even though it was 38 degrees, I agreed to go. The meal was hosted under trees next to an old stone pizza oven on a small permaculture farm in the middle of the woods. It was an all-day event where people were invited to walk hiking paths around and about the farm, explore abandoned barns, spend time in the woods and pet the animals. Guests ate dinner surrounded by the green, gold and red foliage, sitting on folding chairs as the chair legs sank into the cold ground. Everyone was wearing winter coats, but I do not remember a single person complaining about being cold.

The chef that night was the enrolled Oglala Lakota Sean Sherman, and he had launched his company, The Sioux Chef, four weeks earlier. He prepared a beautiful dinner of bison meatball soup with fresh herbs and a gorgeous, locally foraged salad which was sprinkled with flower petals. As he spoke, I was instantly struck by the gravity of this food and his message. Later on, he told me how he got there. He had spent the last fifteen years learning various food cultures as part of his culinary development—Italian, French, Japanese, Spanish... and then one day, as he was burned out from typical chef overwork, he decided to take a six-month break. During this time, on the Nayarit coast of Mexico, he began to observe the local Indigenous tribes. Unlike in the United States, these tribes were still living on their ancestral homeland since this part of the world had not been crushed by colonialism in the same way as it had been in the US. Indigenous people still had their traditional clothing, craft works, humor, music, language, and their foods.

Suddenly, it struck Sean that he had no idea what his own ancestors had eaten before white contact. He realized then that he needed to do some important research.

When I heard his story, I knew immediately why this was so critically important. I knew very little about my own Dakota ancestors, much less what they had to nourish themselves and each other. My Native blood line comes through my mother, and through oral traditions, she shared with my siblings and me the little that she knew about her ancestral foods. I learned about pemmican, how to garden, why wild plants are delicious, healthy and have many uses, and other things like how and when to find wild onions (ramps).

I asked Sean if he had a team in place to execute this important vision, and if so, I would be happy to simply be his biggest cheerleader. If not, I thought I could help. My background was in the music industry, but when I had my daughter, I needed to obtain health insurance coverage, so I went into marketing and merchandising. My skills were in strategy, event production, branding, retail development, and copywriting. He brought me on immediately, and within a few months, he asked me to come in as his partner.

Over the course of this last six years, Sean and I have worked to fulfill the two missions of our organization: creating culturally appropriate food access for Indigenous peoples and developing Indigenous education. These two values have been systematically eliminated by the US government as a form of genocide, forced assimilation, and cultural removal. We began by creating a catering business to employ Native chefs interested in learning more about a decolonized kitchen, with the intent of them bringing this knowledge back to their own communities to define their own food systems.

To jumpstart the journey for the people we work with, we begin by removing three key colonial ingredients: wheat flour, dairy products and refined sugar. We also eliminated beef, pork and chicken. Immediately, this way

Leonard Peltier | Playing A Lovers Song

PRISONER OF WAR CAMP #344 87



of eating lowered the glycemic index significantly, while moving food systems away from the largely factory-farmed proteins.

During countless dinners we executed in tribal communities, one thing stuck with me. No matter where we were, when we served the ancestral foods of each region, especially to elders, we saw a striking phenomenon: the outpouring of ancestral memory. Sean writes menus that are specific to each area of the country. Revitalizing Native foodways takes deep research, and we partner with local providers — farmers, foragers, hunters, fisherman and other producers — for local foods.

Our team creates a meal for a community usually using a community room or a school with a commercial kitchen. Each time we serve, we can see elders light up with the first bite of food. They begin talking to us and their neighbors about what their own families had served them, and they can somehow remember what their own grandparents ate. This brings on an intense flow of emotion, joy, tears, laughter, grief... it's cathartic, and I see what we believe is a step towards healing generations of trauma.

My focus has shifted after witnessing this incredible phenomenon. I am committed to learning more about why and how this happens. When I started researching this and talking to peers in our work, I began to learn more about epigenetics. This term is used to describe anything other than DNA sequencing that influences how we develop as an organism. It means that our ancestors' experiences, both positive and negative, in the form of epigenetic tags, can be passed down to future generations. Those emotions and traumatic experiences are then held in the body awaiting an opportunity for healing.

In the fall of 2019, after a year of research, I gave my first presentation about "inherited trauma" to a full room at a conference in Minnesota where we live. Once I was finished, a research scientist approached me and said, "I want you to know that medical communities are going to push back on your theories, but I have evidence to back you up." He explained to me that when genes are forming, they choose one of three options: they will be either a reader, a writer, or an eraser. One way that researchers have been able to access the eraser gene is through maternal nutrition.

What I have learned is that we are born with genetic coding that forms us, using the experiences that are hardwired in our parents and grandparents. Everyone has some type of trauma, some more than others. Indigenous communities across the US lost their land, their languages, and the ability to govern themselves. Boarding schools tried to extinguish their spirituality. Access to nature was diminished by being forced onto reservations, and Indigenous food systems were systematically removed. I think about the damage it would do to entirely strip one's culture away. That is what happened to my grandfather and his family, and so many others. The damage is very deep. Even now, many people brought up on reservations have little access to their own histories, and their own ancestral foods.

In 2017, Sean and I began developing our own nonprofit entity called NATIFS (North American Tradition Indigenous Food Systems). To accomplish our work, we realized that opening a restaurant wasn't going to make a sufficient impact. Restaurants usually have only about 3% profit margin, so it didn't make sense for us to put our energies there. We wanted to be able to bring everyone in from tribal regions that was interested in learning about their ancestral foods. This goal would require transportation resources, as well as onsite support such as housing, as well as building out a training facility. In January of 2018, after about two years of arguing with the IRS,

we were granted 501(c)3 status for our organization. We immediately launched a capital campaign to support North America's first Indigenous Food Lab training restaurant which will sit under the umbrella of NATIFS. Our opening date was tentatively planned for June 2020.

At the time of this writing, our for-profit entity called The Sioux Chef employed 23 people. Our plan was for our employees to transition leadership roles within the non-profit organization, the Indigenous Food Lab. Then came COVID-19. I am now writing this in the heart of a shutdown world, with all food businesses having been shuttered in the State of Minnesota as of last week.

After losing every upcoming event we had on the calendar, and consequently the company's entire revenue source, we were forced to lay off all our employees in hopes that they would get some state support. We have no idea when food operations will be permitted to function again.

Our plan is to transition employees into the nonprofit organization as soon as the Indigenous Food Lab is ready to open. All of the chefs on staff would build culinary skills and have access to the resources necessary to develop their own recipes. They will learn how to locally source foods, permaculture design, and Native agriculture. Depending on the region or local, we might teach how to develop local foraging operations and food preservation methods such as sun drying and seed saving. Every brick and mortar operation will learn how to achieve ServSafe certification, how to write a business plan, and how to institute 'front of the house' protocols to be able to function as a food operation. We want Indigenous leaders to have enough expertise to take back to their own communities and successfully open whatever type of business they desire. Depending on their vision, this could be a one-person catering operation, an agricultural business, or a full-scale restaurant. Our goal is to eliminate any barriers to success.

Like every human, any individual may come to us carrying the trauma of their relatives, both living and past. My passion has evolved into dedication for developing a program to help acknowledge individual trauma and choose to commence the healing path, giving participants the best shot at success. Any person that strives to heal their own trauma is healing their own family's trauma. That healing reverberates within the people around them, both living and not yet living. The work is individual, but it expands into the collective community.

As I began developing my approach, it struck me very clearly: We can't use a colonial healing method to undo 300 years of colonial oppression. We need to leverage Indigenous wisdom to identify a therapeutic modality that is relevant to our First Peoples.

Today, Sean and I are "social distancing" ourselves in our home as we face the virus that has already changed all of our worlds drastically. Our kids' schools closed this week indefinitely. Our friends and colleagues are reaching out, feeling isolated, scared and steeped in the anxiety of the unknown. But we, as humans, can't close down nature. Our natural world is all around us, and it's got every bit of medicine we need to thrive.

The COVID-19 crisis lays bare the dark side of late-stage capitalism. We are witnessing the real downside of our reliance on big companies to transport food back and forth across the globe. And the reality is, as humans, we do better when we relate to our neighbors. Historically, we are healthier when we know where our food comes from. We have a stronger investment in our own bodies when we have an awareness of our immediate environment. Knowing the origins of our food builds so

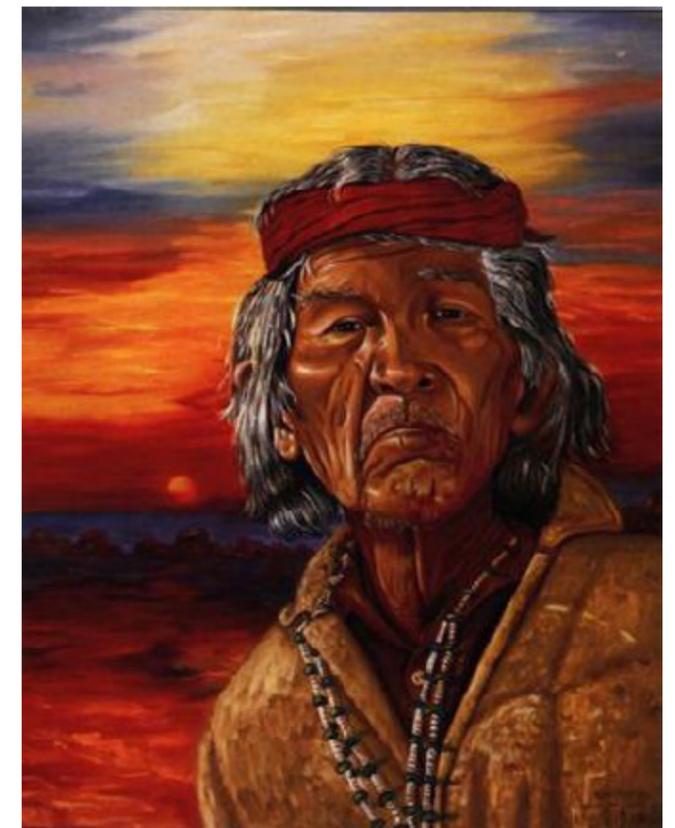
many things — the local economy, our trust in one another, our bodies and minds, our collective health, and so much more.

Over the last few years, I have been learning more about how humans respond to threat. Threat response is as relevant now as it's ever been. Over the last twenty thousand years, our brains have developed an awareness to threat, with an immediate, sometimes unaware, reaction. It's innate. We trigger into the flight, fight, freeze, and most recently, the appease response. One function our bodies have to process this quickly is the vagal response system. The vagus nerve begins in our brains and extends into the body like the root system of a tree. These networks are very similar to how trees communicate with each other for miles around using an underground network. When we see or feel something that is threatening to us, we immediately feel that throughout our organs and into the very fascia that runs throughout our bodies.

The vagus nerve is the longest, most complex of the cranial nerves; it extends from our brains, through our throats, winds down through our spine, and roots itself right in the gut. This nerve is part of the parasympathetic nervous system, which scientists sometimes call the 'rest and digest' system. When you are in a state of rest, or not triggered into a state of threat, this network of nerves releases calming hormones like oxytocin and serotonin. These are the same hormones that are released when you hug someone you care for, or when a mother nurses her baby, or you dig your hands into healthy soil, connecting with the microbiome of the earth. This is the same microbiota that is found in all multicellular organisms throughout our planet.

In fact, we are all connected. For the last two hundred years, we Americans have been told that we are on this land to conquer it, as though we are foreign objects here for a visit. But when we access Indigenous wisdom, it becomes clear that we are not "ON" this earth, we are "OF" this earth. By some miracle, this planet created us. And our overly developed brains have gone haywire, overwriting these deep biological connections.

This new virus is revealing many truths about humanity, and one is that we are all connected. We are one human species, and our actions impact each other in a deep and meaningful way. Let's humble ourselves to the fact that we can be loving to each other, value life, and not just human life. All the ways we can calm that vagal response are also ways that show each other respect and care: Feeding each other, singing and communicating, and by engaging with the plants, clean air, water, soils, trees and animals around us. And eventually we will be able to hug each other again. All of these are antidotes that Indigenous peoples recognized innately as medicine for all of humanity, then and now.



Leonard Peltier | Blue Warrior

Leonard Peltier | Navajo

# Interview with Mark Charles

**RF:** Today is August 30, 2019. My name is Robert Neal Felix. It is my distinct privilege today to have a conversation with Mark Charles, who is running for president of the United States. Welcome, Mark.

**MC:** Thank you. It's good to be with you today.

**RF:** Please, tell us who you are and your background.

**MC:** In the Navaho culture, when we introduce ourselves we give our four clans, and as we're matrilineal our lineage derives from our mother's mother, who, in my case, is of American Dutch heritage, and so I am from The Wooden Shoe People. My second clan, my mother's father is from The Waters that Flow Together; my third and fourth clans, my father's mother and my father's father are both from The Bitter Water Clan. It's one of the original clans of the Navaho people.

I grew up in the southwest, in a border town to the Navaho reservation. The town was called Gallup, New Mexico. I was actually born on a mission compound known as Rehoboth. It was a mission of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. It was founded in the early 1900s as a boarding school, and it operated both a school, a church, and a hospital for many years. Eventually the hospital became the county hospital for the whole area, and the school transitioned in the 1980s and 1990s from a boarding school to a day school, and then the church became kind of its own entity, still on Rehoboth but separate from the whole mission, and I grew up there. And it was a very fascinating place to grow up. I tell people I grew up in a Dutch ghetto just off the Navaho reservation. My father's parents lived there on the mission compound with us. My grandfather was a translator for some of the early Dutch missionaries. He had a hand not only in translating some of the hymns for the Dutch hymnal, but also the Bible. They translated that into Navaho. My mother came to this mission compound, she grew up in Denver, and was a missionary nurse, actually on her way to Africa, and she came by

for a two-year stint on the Navaho reservation with Rehoboth, and met my father, whom she married and so she never made it to Africa, but stayed in the southwest her entire life.

I went to school at UCLA for college, and eventually after getting married, moved back to the southwest where we lived in Gallup again. I began preaching in the churches around the reservation, and eventually was called to pastor a church called the Christian Indian Center in Denver, Colorado. It was there that our congregation was exploring the idea of contextualizing worship. What does it mean to be Native and be Christian? Because the boarding schools forcibly assimilated our people to western society and culture, the message was that our people had to become Christian, but to become Christian, you first had to become American. And so, our language was taken away and not taught, culture was taken away including our traditions, identity was removed, and many people including my parents, and my grandparents bought into that lie. So, they became Christian, but because they became Christian, that meant my father didn't know the language to teach it to me. And so we began exploring as a church what it meant to be Native and be Christian. That journey led me into relationships with Indigenous Christians from all over the world, and eventually it led me to moving back to the Navaho Nation with my family in the early 2000s. For three years we lived in a very remote section of our reservation. We were off the nearest pavement on a dirt road. We lived in a one room hogan, we had no running water, no electricity. We lived with a family that wove rugs and herded sheep for a living, and when we moved there, we were ready to kind of experience life off the grid, but what caught us by surprise was how marginalized and disenfranchised the whole community was. And that was really what kind of took us by surprise, and was the biggest adjustment, too. And so it was while I was living there that I not only began to study more of the history, but as I was processing through my

own insecurities and shame I was feeling for being Navaho and living on the reservation, and especially how I felt we were looked down upon by the rest of the nation, I began writing some of my thoughts, my ideas out, and that turned into my blog which is called The Wireless Hogan, which led to some political and social justice reflections, and soon it led into the study of the Doctrine of Discovery, and that was really the catalyst for the broad dialogue that I'm trying to engage today, of connecting our nation to this history.

**RF:** Is the Doctrine of Discovery a key to understanding the history of the United States?

**MC:** Yes. The Doctrine of Discovery begins with a church doctrine, an edict, a papal bull, known as Dum Diversa, issued on June 18, 1452, by Pope Nicholas V. This edict and others that followed between 1452 and 1493, known as The Doctrine of Discovery, essentially directs the nations of Europe, to search out and find lands that are not yet ruled by white European Christian rulers, and to treat the Natives as subhuman, and to take ownership of these occupied lands, as if, they there for the taking to by invading, conquering and vanquishing Saracens and pagans in various parts of the world, including the Americas, and placing them in perpetual servitude. This is literally the doctrine that let European nations invade Africa, colonize and enslave the people because they considered them to be subhuman. This is the same doctrine that let Columbus arrive in this 'new world' already inhabited by millions and claim to have discovered it. You cannot discover lands already inhabited. That's known as stealing, conquering, colonizing. The fact that we have monuments, history books, leaders who refer to Columbus as 'the discoverer of America' reveals the implicit racial bias, which is that Native peoples, and people of color are not fully human. The Doctrine of Discovery is really a white supremacist Christian doctrine that really centers the white Christian male at the center, and then creates a category of 'other' out of everybody else. Now the challenge with this doctrine is how it's become embedded into the foundations of this nation. Look at the Declaration of Independence — although the document contains the very inclusive statement, "all men are created equal", the document, itself, was a letter written by the colonists, protesting the proclamation of 1763 by King George that took away the right of discovery of the empty Indian lands west of Appalachia, accusing the king of "raising the conditions of new Appropriations of land," and that the King has "incited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring upon the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages". This letter was signed on July 4, 1776. Most people are not aware of the fact that the Declaration of Independence, 30 lines below the statement "all men are created equal," refers to Natives as "merciless Indian Savages".

**RF:** I would think almost nobody would know that.

**MC:** The challenge is that our Declaration is the basis of our nation's value and purpose, just as our Constitution is the basis of our laws. Yet, these foundational documents are making it very clear the reason they used this very broad, inclusive term, 'all men' is because the founders knew it had a very narrow application. And while Dr. King in the civil rights movement refers to the Declaration as one of the blank checks of the United States, this promissory note of equality, it is neither a blank check nor a promissory note. In reality, it's a white supremacist document, and the Supreme Court, in the 1800s, affirmed that the Declaration of Independence did not apply to black people. That's not why it was written. And so when we use this statement of belief, or this statement of values as some great document that now guides our society, well this helps us understand why we struggle with racism and sexism and white supremacy, because it's literally in our statement of purpose. The same thing with the Constitution.

**RF:** Yet, Abraham Lincoln, in his Gettysburg Address, talks about the nation as dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

**MC:** If you read the Gettysburg Address, it has the same failings that both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution have, which use inclusive sounding terms. But when you read the Constitution, Article 1, Section 2, it never mentions women, specifically excludes Natives, and counts Africans as three-fifths of a person. So "people" is left defined as white land-owning men. And that's who could vote. And so, it is when the Gettysburg Address talks about "all men," and "of the people, by the people, and for the people". Well, Abraham Lincoln is literally one of the most white supremacist, ethnic cleansing, genocidal presidents our nation has ever seen. You know, he actually states, in the Lincoln-Douglass Debates, that "I have no intention of freeing the slaves in the states where slavery already exists. I have no intention of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor allowing them to vote, nor to intermarry. There is a physical difference between the white and black races which forever forbids the two from living in terms of social and political equality, and as long as they must remain together, there must remain a position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man," said Abraham Lincoln, "believe the superior position belongs to the white race. There's a quote hanging at the Lincoln Memorial that says: "If I could save the union without freeing a single slave, I would do it." Abraham Lincoln, after signing the Pacific Railway Act of 1862, authorized, the hanging of the Dakota 38, and then the removal of the tribes from Minnesota; after the Sand Creek Massacre, and the removal of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe from Colorado and after signing the bill creating Bosque Redondo, his general, Carlton, did a scorched earth campaign on the lands of the

Navaho People, rounded up 10,000 Navaho and Mescalero Apache to be taken down to Bosque Redondo, and a quarter of our people died while enslaved in this death camp. Abraham Lincoln has ethnically cleansed the states of Minnesota, Wyoming and Colorado, and the Territory of New Mexico, as he's making way for the transcontinental railway. And so, again, he is a blatant white supremacist, who has one of the deepest legacies of genocide within our entire nation. He would rival probably Andrew Jackson, as far as for his genocidal policies and rhetoric. And yet we hold him up as our nation's greatest president, and even as one of our heroes.

**RF:** You put things in full perspective when you understand the history, a history that is not taught.

**MC:** This is one of the things I talk about frequently. I say, American exceptionalism is the coping mechanism for a nation that's in deep denial of its genocidal history, as well as its current racist reality. This is why our infrastructure may be crumbling, our schools may be failing, our health care may be a mess, our income inequality may be the highest of almost any country in the world, our environment may be collapsing, and yet we cling to this narrative that we are exceptional.

This notion of American exceptionalism is the coping mechanism, because if America is not exceptional, and if we're not the best at everything we do, not the greatest nation on earth, then we're merely another colonial genocidal nation. And that thought's unfathomable to most people. And so we cling to this mythology of exceptionalism, which is actually rooted in the lie of white supremacy. And this is where you'll have so many leaders use this narrative of exceptionalism. So, in 2016, Donald Trump won the election by promising to make America great again. Hillary Clinton, not to be outdone, told her supporters, America is great already and "America is great because America is good." So, they both agreed our past was great, a history that included the enslavement of the African people and the ethnic cleansing of the Native peoples, our internment camps and exclusionary immigration laws. They disagreed if we were great in 2016. Donald said no and Hillary said yes. See, most Americans thought in 2016 we were having the discussion about racism vs antiracism, or equality vs inequality. That's not the discussion we had. The debate we had was did we want Donald Trump and the republicans to make us explicitly white supremacist, racist and sexist again, or did we want Hillary and the democrats to keep our racism and sexism implicit?

**RF:** What do you think of the current political dialogue?

**MC:** Well here's the challenge — our nation has a very simplistic two-party system — it takes very complex issues and boils them down to a single binary. And so now neither side is interested in solving the problems. And when you look at it, they both have the same basic set of values.

So, in 1823 we had a Supreme Court case: Johnson vs McIntosh. Two white men litigating over a single piece of land. One acquired the land from a Native tribe, the other acquired the same land from the government. The issue is who owned it. The case gets to the Supreme Court, which must decide the principle upon which land titles were based. They reference the Doctrine of Discovery, and rule that the doctrine gives title to the government and that title is consummated by possession, and conclude that even though Natives were there first, they are savages, whose subsistence came chiefly from the forest, and they only

had the right of occupancy to the land, like a fish would occupy water, or a bird would occupy air, but to leave them in possession of the land was to leave the country a wilderness. The Europeans have the right of discovery to the land, the fee title to the land, and therefore they are the official titleholders. That precedent gets referenced by the Supreme Court in 1954, 1985 and most recently in 2005.

Now in that 2005 case, the Oneida Indian Nation had been illegally removed from their lands in New York, and title was held by the State of New York. The Oneida Indian Nation 250 years later purchased the land at full price 250 years later on the open market and intended to reestablish their traditional sovereignty over these lands. Well the State of New York and the City of Sherrill, where the lands were located, that they purchased, wanted their tax revenue, so they sued the Oneida Indian Nation in Federal District Court. The Oneida Indian Nation prevailed, and so the City of Sherrill appealed to the Federal Court of Appeals, and the decision was upheld. They appealed a second time to the Supreme Court, which reversed the decision and referenced by name the Doctrine of Discovery and the 1823 precedent, albeit without using the words "savages." The court referenced the fact that the have now greatly increased in value, as they've been converted from wilderness to become part of cities like Sherrill and the Oneida Indian Nation cannot "rekindle the sovereignty that long ago grew cold." This legal opinion was written and delivered by Ruth Bader Ginsburg. She is the progressive liberal voice of dissent on a very conservative Supreme Court. She has fought hard for the rights of women in this country and done a great job with that, I might add. However, point out, because after that by referencing the dehumanizing Doctrine of Discovery and saying Natives cannot have sovereignty over their land, she is further perpetuating that white supremacy is a bipartisan value that neither progressives nor conservatives are interested in confronting and fixing.

**RF:** So, it's an election cycle, and many of the people you are addressing are ignorant of the foundational values of this nation.

**MC:** With many of the problems we have, people think we need new laws. So, let's talk about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This is a massive problem. We literally have thousands of Indigenous women and girls who have been reported missing or murdered and there has been no follow-up. There's no police report, nothing happens. They go missing, they get murdered, they get reported, and nothing happens. There's no record, there's no trail, and this has been happening for years and years and years. Therefore, we need to address it. The law is what's corrupt and broken, because we need a new basis for our laws. Otherwise our problems will not be fixed. We know, we understand how deep this problem is. We've lived it, we're experiencing it I know these things not because I've read them, or studied a brief from my staff on them, but because I'm a part of this community. And I've experienced this. I know this from my own experience and I'm bringing the conversation down to a deeper level, which was my entire goal, that's one of the things I'm trying to do with my campaign.

**RF:** Well, I think it's succeeding

**MC:** There's a debate going on about paying reparations. We need to have that debate, and we need to pay reparations. However, throwing money at the past injustices does not address the problem relationally. The United States wanted to pay the Lakota millions of dollars in settlement for stealing the Black Hills. The Lakota Sioux said, it's not for sale.

See, that's terrifying to the United States of America, because it means that its capitalistic system is impotent here. It would love to be able to put a price tag on its injustice and write a check. Okay, we're done now. That's over. But when you have a Doctrine of Discovery that puts a value and a relationship of exploitation and profit between the colonial male and the environment, and when you have that sort of relationship defined in your foundations, in contrast, you have Indigenous peoples who understand the sacredness of the land, whose creation stories take place here, who understand not just ethically why we should live a certain way, but spiritually, and relationally why we need to live a certain way in these lands, that has to be addressed. Our relationship gives us a tie to this land that the United States of America will probably never feel.

**RF:** Where do we go? I mean, the discourse in America right now, is at the lowest point until tomorrow. Then it'll be even lower. It has really gone to a point of seemingly no return. What's going to happen to this country? How do you see it?

**MC:** Well, this is where I'm adamant. The United States of America needs a national dialogue on race, gender and class. We need a national conversation about these issues — on par with the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions that happen South Africa, in Rwanda, and in Canada. Now I wouldn't call ours Truth and Reconciliation, because that implies there was a previous harmony. But I call it Truth and Conciliation. Conciliation is merely the mediation of a dispute. If reconciliation perpetuates the myth we used to be great and now we're not, conciliation gives a more honest starting point. This thing began as a mess. We're just trying to make it better. There's a Native elder from Canada, from the Dene Native people in Canada, his name is Georges Erasmus. He says, "where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community." Which means, this 'before' common memory must be created. You can't maintain a façade of exceptionalism, when your entire world is crumbling, we're going into more debt than you could possibly repay. We're putting on this image of 'we believe in equality here,' when it's very clear to the world that we don't believe in equality here.

So keeping up this façade of exceptionalism is exhausting. And people say, well how is your message received? Because you talk about things very bluntly. Well, I work very hard to talk bluntly, but also not to point fingers and accuse people. I just try to lay out the facts. This is what our history is. This is what we've done. And here's some proposals of how we can move it forward. And there's a part of that, that I think is deeply refreshing to our nation. You know, where we can actually acknowledge, yeah, we're not great. You know, when you define greatness, as many Americans do, as learning how to treat other people as human — that's not greatness. And we can't even do that.

**RF:** I think your point of exhaustion is very well taken, because I'm sure when you talk to your audiences, there's enormous pain felt — that genocide, theft, took place here, — you can't sit easy with that. And so, you talk about this trauma. Tell us your perspective on that.

**MC:** So, when dealing with this history, especially with our marginalized communities, with Native Americans, African Americans, I always start with the understanding of PTSD, which is post-traumatic stress. PTSD is an individual diagnosis for someone who has experienced a single horrifying event — someone who gets assaulted, someone who gets robbed, someone who is in a car accident, someone who is in a battle

or in a war — they may get PTSD from that experience. It affects you mentally, physically, emotionally, relationally — it's an all-encompassing condition, but it's an individual diagnosis for someone who's experienced usually a single horrifying event. Now there's another form of trauma called Complex PTSD.

Complex PTSD comes not from a single horrifying event, but from a pattern of them. So if you get PTSD from being in a battle in a war, you get Complex PTSD from living in a war zone. If you get PTSD from living, from being abused, or being assaulted by somebody, you get Complex PTSD if you live in an abusive relationship, where assault happens daily or weekly. It's been observed by psychologists that Complex PTSD is passed down from one generation to the next. It's been observed that children and grandchildren of people who have experienced Complex PTSD have symptoms of trauma in their own lives.

Now there's another trauma called Historical Trauma. This is not an individual diagnosis, but it's how psychologists understand the dissatisfaction in a broad community. So you have a community that has experienced boarding schools, or internment camps, or slavery, or Jim Crow laws, or mass incarceration, or Indian removal, or The Holocaust, this community now will experience what's known as Historical Trauma because there will be a deep dissatisfaction within that entire community. So, I refer to Historical Trauma as a multi-generational, communal manifestation of a Complex PTSD.

Now researching this trauma can help us work better with these communities. So if I understand the Historical Trauma, as well as the PTSD and Complex PTSD of the boarding school survivors and the other people who have lived in these environments on the reservation — if I understand that before I go in, I can prepare my presentation, prepare my dialogue for that so I don't trigger someone. But the most likely group that's going to derail the dialogue on race, is not people of color, but white people. These were the people who would be so triggered by what I would say, they would have to confront me as a liar, because again, I'm laying out this history, and either I'm a liar or they're genocidal. And it's easier to call me a liar than to embrace the character of their country. And so, I began to recognize this and see this as a pattern, I was observing trauma in white people, but it didn't make any sense to me. Then I found a book called, *Perpetration Induced Traumatic Stress – PITS*, by Rachel McNair. She defines PITS as being like PTSD in every way, shape and form, except instead of inflicting the victim of a horrifying event, PITS would inflict the perpetrator — the person who caused the horrifying event. She calls it 'the psychology of killing.' If you have a person who has a license to kill, whether a drone pilot, a soldier, someone who is allowed to kill by the state, what happens psychologically to them when they do this? She looked at a very comprehensive study on Vietnam veterans, she looked at the school by Socrates, who said that the doer of injustice is more miserable than the sufferer. She came up with this diagnosis that she called PITS – Perpetration Induced Traumatic Stress. Once I saw that, the pieces fell into place, because I hypothesized, if PTSD has a complex, multi-generational, communal manifestation that we call an historical trauma, that inflicts the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of people who experienced these events, it makes sense that PITS would also have a complex, multi-generational, communal manifestation as The Trauma of White America. And so, I began interacting with white people as another group of traumatized people. It helps me understand why they're so psychologically triggered when we talk about it. The first

symptom of trauma is shock and denial. So we have a buried apology by the US Congress to Native peoples. This isn't racism, this is trauma. We have the states of Texas and Oklahoma passing laws that you can only teach 'patriotic history.' This isn't racism or sexism, this is trauma. They're so ashamed by what they did to become who they are, they can't even teach it anymore.

**RF:** So, we have a traumatized nation.

**MC:** Yeah. Absolutely. We have a nation that's running from its history, and doesn't know how to deal with it. It wants to, but it doesn't want to create this common memory. Most Americans, if you ask them, would acknowledge the history with Native peoples is bad. But they don't know the details. And most often they don't want to know the details. because the details will literally make them sick. And that's why I go so in depth, it's healing to have these things spoken out loud.

To be able to say, my ancestors did this. The people who founded my town did this. The people who founded my city did this. The people who founded my state did this. You know, I think there's something deeply healing in having that truth spoken. And this is what heals generationally. You know, we talk about the Iroquois, and the seventh generation, where you don't just look behind, but you look to the future. Seven generations, both in the past and in front of you, behind and in front of you. And if we want to create a better world, not just for our children, but for our future grandchildren, then we have to create this common memory. We have to learn how to tell these stories. We have to tell these stories so that we can bring this healing in at a very deep level. So that instead of passing on trauma to our children and grandchildren, we can actually pass on health. We can pass on a good community, we can pass on healthier relationships, instead of the broken ones that we're passing on right now. So, it does not shock me for a moment that the United States of America is struggling with trauma. We have a nation founded on genocide and slavery. And we've never held anyone to account for that. This nation was founded on white nationalism. And we've never dealt with that.

**RF:** Maybe part of the conciliation, is people coming together to recognize what took place. It's actually easier to accept the truth, than to deny it forever. Because denying it forever, you can absolutely have no feeling. A common memory could come together if people start recognizing what they did. They want the truth. because it's hard to hold onto a lie that you know is a lie. Your message can make a huge difference, and probably has already made a difference. When I heard you, I said to myself, this man is authentic. He has a certain unique perspective because he's a Native American, and he's willing to call things out. He's not going to be popular when he says it, but it's something you really need to know.

**MC:** It's good to talk to you.

**RF:** It's good to talk to you.



Leonard Peltier | Barry 2 Tonka



Leonard Peltier | Woolly Rider

## CONTRIBUTORS BIO

**Cindy Catches** married her husband, Peter, and moved to Pine Ridge in 1991. Prior to that, she had her own environmental design & landscaping business in Jupiter, Florida for 20 years. She went from one of the wealthiest communities to the poorest community in the US. They built their own home but lived without water and electricity for the first ten years. Her husband and his father were both medicine men of the Lakota Sioux people, a 37th & a 38th generation. In Lakota, a true medicine man must be in the DNA. Peter believed he was the last of his kind. Her father-in-law was known and loved in Indian country for bringing the most sacred of the Lakota sacred ceremonies, the Sundance back out into the open in the early 60s even though it was against the law till 1978. Her husband put on and conducted the Spotted Eagle Sundance, for 44 consecutive years, the longest-running Sundance in Lakota country. These two medicine men felt the way to heal their people, who have the lowest life expectancy in the Western Hemisphere — 2nd only to Haiti— was to bring them back to themselves

as they were created, to be Lakota. To do this they started a non-profit, Oceti Wakan (Sacred Fireplace), in 1989. Not only did the two bring the Buffalo Sundance to Sitting Bull's people at Standing Rock, but the Spotted Eagle Sundance to Cheyenne River, Rosebud, Lower Sioux, and to Pine Ridge Reservations. Cindy helped her father-in-law publish his book, "Sacred Fireplace - The Life & Teachings of a 37th Generation Medicine Man." She helped her husband write and publish seven books and CDs on Lakota language and culture. Cindy wrote and published two books on prevention, "Learning Prevention Using Lakota Values" primary and secondary. She and her husband created a Wellness Program which included seven years of curriculum, 2nd to 8th grades, using a medicine wheel approach with life skills for the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental bodies. This includes over 300 ancestors' stories to give the children the values and cultural identity which they feel is so important to good health. This program is starting in Oglala Lakota County Schools this coming fall. This also

includes a Parenting Handbook so the parent is able to support what the children are learning, trauma healing tools, addiction prevention, and the education to make help a child learn to make healthy choices to live their best life. Cindy believes, because of her husband's prayers being so powerful, they were able to create a program that would really help children all over the world. Cindy is almost finished writing a book of her and her husband's spiritual journey called, "I Married a Medicine Man." [www.ocetiwakan.org](http://www.ocetiwakan.org)

**Mark R. Charles** is a Native American activist, public speaker, consultant, and author on Native American issues, as well as a journalist, blogger, pastor, and computer programmer. He is an independent candidate for President of the United States in the 2020 election.

**Mary L. Collins** writes from her home in Elmore, Vermont. Her second home is on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation where she is an adopted relative in many families. She is the founder of Lakota Tiny House Nation, a tiny

house building project that provides instruction, materials, and support to encourage, promote, and sustain home ownership on the Reservation. Her writing has appeared in Green Mountains Review, the San Diego Writer's Anthology, and as a member of the PoArtry Collective.

**Mitch Epstein** (born 1952, Holyoke, Massachusetts) is a fine-art photographer who helped pioneer fine-art color photography in the 1970s. His photographs are in numerous major museum collections, including New York's Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Whitney Museum of American Art; The J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Tate Modern in London.

**Robert N. Felix** is a former NYC Civil Rights lawyer for 42 years. He specialized in federal litigation involving civil rights, wages and hours, employment discrimination and labor law. Felix vindicated the rights of individual employees to remedy constitutional violations of law (e.g. the right to Free Speech, Equal Protection and Due Process) on issues of wrongful terminations or harassment via unlawful discrimination, based on gender, disability, religion, age, race and national origin or whistleblowing activities or unlawful retaliation.

**Mia Feroletto** is a well-known art advisor, activist and artist who divides her time between Vermont and South Dakota. She was the creator of A SHELTER FROM THE STORM: ARTISTS FOR THE HOMELESS OF NEW YORK and ART-WALK NY, an annual event for Coalition for the Homeless that has been copied all around the country since beginning in 1995. Feroletto has organized many benefit auctions and events at major auction houses such as Sotheby's and Christie's and has served on the board of directors of such organizations as Dance Theater Workshop and Sculpture Center. She is the publisher of New Observations Magazine, the producer/creator of HEMP NY CITY, a partner in the founding of the Thunderheart Center for the Arts in Wasta, South Dakota and the creator and producer of the Consciousness and Contact conferences that have received worldwide recognition. Feroletto is a committed animal rights and animal welfare activist. She is determined to maximize visibility for the arts and our cultural world and is currently developing the Adopt An Artist Program to send artists to destinations around the globe in order to develop their art. She can be reached at mia.feroletto@gmail.com.

**Richard Fox** I was fortunate to live, work and camp in the great forests of the United States for most of the year for most of 18 years - truly living where the wild things are. In many ways, I was one of the wild things that lived there. During that time, I had the privilege to be able to plant more than 700,000 tree seedlings and participate in hundreds of forest related projects. Through our forestry co-op, we were able to fund the Healing Light Foundation, our organic farm, other organizations and projects and bring in some of the greatest metaphysicians, teachers and healers of the day. It became the experiential core of my life-long journey into Druidry.

Today, my energy is focused on working with my many Native American friends with a base on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, where I have a small home. I primarily work with my Lakota friend, Henry Red Cloud, the 5th generation direct descendant of Mahpiya Luta, (Chief Red Cloud), the last war chief of the Lakota Sioux. Henry is the Executive Director of the non-profit, Red Cloud Renewable (www.redcloudrenewable.org) which focuses on training Native Americans in renewable energy and sustainable building approaches and implementing projects that help Native communities move towards energy independence. In this way, he teaches a new way to honor the old way.

**John Fusco** is an award-winning writer-producer with 15 major film and TV credits to his name. Most recently, he wrote the Netflix Original hit 'The Highwaymen' starring Kevin Costner and Woody Harrelson.

**Nati Garcia** (Maya Mam) is Cultural Survival Indigenous Youth Community Media Fellowship Coordinator. Garcia was born in a refugee camp in Campeche, Mexico when her family fled Guatemala in the 1980s when the military genocide operation targeted Indigenous communities. Her family received refugee status in Canada, and she grew up on traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples: skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), selfwítulh (Tseilil-Waututh), and x'məθk\*əyəm (Musqueam) Nations. Her experience as a marginalized Indigenous youth inspired her to advocate for Indigenous sovereignty and self-autonomy. During her seven years of experience as a facilitator, youth counselor, and community builder, she has helped individuals develop a sense of self-worth and integrity. Garcia is enlivened by opportunities to explore authentic exchange, leadership, world-bridging, social justice, and youth empowerment. Garcia has worked with a variety of intergenerational, intercultural, and youth-focused organizations in Canada and hopes to continue on this path in collaborating, teaching, learning, and performing on an international level. Reach Nati at ngarcia@cs.org

**The In-Sight Photography Project** and its Exposures Cross-Cultural Youth Arts Program empower youth, through photography, to find their own creative voices and to communicate their unique personal visions. Classes in photographic arts are provided regardless of ability to pay. Curriculum is guided by understanding and respect for individuals, communities, and cultures.

**Chase Iron Eyes, Esq.** Chase's distinguished career fighting for the civil rights of Native Americans includes serving as lead local counsel in the Dakotas for the Lakota People's Law Project, co-founding the Native news website LastRealIndians.com, and work in the Native Lives Matter movement. In 2016, he was the Democratic congressional nominee for North Dakota. From the beginning of the movement, Chase was involved on the front lines of the fight against the Dakota Access pipeline, hosting tribal leadership, providing legal services, and joining the water protectors in their prayerful and peaceful protest. Born on Standing Rock Nation, today Chase lives at Pine Ridge,

where he serves as public relations director for Oglala Sioux Tribe President Julian Bear Runner. Chase holds bachelor's degrees in political science and American Indian studies from the University of North Dakota, and a Juris Doctor of Law degree with an emphasis in Federal Indian Law from the University of Denver's Sturm College of Law. He is the father of three Lakota children.

**Robert Looks Twice** As a 13-year old, Robert Looks Twice aspired to be president of the United States. ABC "20/20" "Hidden America: Children of the Plains" was a six part documentary series hosted by Diane Sawyer that featured Robert and his life. Now in his 20s, we return to Robert to see where his thoughts are currently and learn of his plans for the future.

**Joanna Malinowska** was born in Gdynia in 1972. A specialist in visual arts, she graduated from the sculpture departments of both Rutgers and Yale universities. She lives and works in New York City. In her art, she moves around various forms of expression - sculpture, video, performance art - she tackles subjects related to anthropology, cultural conflict, and music.

**Leonard Peltier** is an American Indigenous rights activist and an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa, and also of Lakota and Dakota descent. After being extradited from Canada through a false witness statement, he was convicted of murdering two FBI agents in a June 26, 1975, shooting on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. As detailed by "In the Spirit of Crazy Horse," his trials and conviction are considered highly controversial and not credible.

**Keri Pickett** is an award-winning artist. Producer, Director and Cinematographer for the documentary feature First Daughter and the Black Snake (94 minutes), a documentary feature film following environmental activist Winona LaDuke and her family and communities efforts to keep big oil out of her tribe's sacred wild rice territory. The film has been nominated for many documentary feature film awards and it won Best MN Made Documentary Feature at the Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival and Best Feature Film from the Portland EcoFilm Fest. It is distributed by Virgil Films & Entertainment and is available on DVD as well as streaming on Amazon and iTunes. Most well known as a photographer, her career started in 1983 when legendary NYC Village Voice Director of Photography Fred McDarrah gave Pickett an internship at the newspaper where she worked until the late 80's when she left NYC, returning to MN due to a diagnosis of Burkitt's lymphoma cancer. During her two-years of chemotherapy she turned to photographing children coping with life-threatening illness, receiving a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and a Bush Foundation Fellowship for this work. Pickett's photographs are in International and National Museums. She has been awarded fellowships from the Bush Foundation, McKnight, Jerome and Target Foundations as well as the National Endowment for the Arts. Her pictures have appeared in Life, Time and People magazines as well as Stern and Geo. Pickett is a 2017 McKnight Foundation Fellow in Media Arts.

**Dana Thompson** Co-owner/COO, The Sioux Chef; Executive Director, NATIFS (North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems) As co-owner of the company The Sioux Chef, Dana Thompson, lineal descendant of the Wahpeton-Sisseton and Mdewakanton Dakota tribes and lifetime Minnesota Native, has been working within the food sovereignty movement for the past six years. Within that time, she has traveled extensively throughout tribal communities engaging in critical ways to improve food access. Last year Dana jointly founded the non-profit NATIFS (North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems) for which she is acting Executive Director. Through this entity, she will focus her expertise on addressing and treating ancestral trauma through decolonized perspectives of honoring and leveraging Indigenous wisdom.

**Edward C. Valandra, Ph.D.**, is Sicangu Titunwan, born and raised on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation. He received his B.A. in chemistry from Mankato State University, his M.A. in political science (public policy) from the University of Colorado-Boulder, and his Ph.D. in American Studies (Native Studies concentration) from SUNY-Buffalo. Dr. Valandra is the founder and Research Fellow for the Community for the Advancement of Native Studies (CANS), a Native-government-chartered, research-based, reservation-rooted organization. CANS supports the advancement of Native Studies as both an intellectual and applied discipline. It serves Native Peoples by conducting research that promotes the liberation of Native Country, which involves revitalizing nationhood. Dr. Valandra's work for CANS ranges from consulting Native colleges and Native governments to forming networks and providing guidance on Native-based community projects to building undergraduate and graduate curricula in Native Studies. Since 2003, Dr. Valandra has served as an advisor to Living Justice Press on Native understandings of justice and on how to apply restorative justice to repairing long-standing, historical, and current harms between peoples.

**Annie Wenger-Nabigon** was born in north-central Arkansas, USA in the traditional territory of the Osage peoples. Her parents were Mennonite medical missionaries there until 1959, and engaged in unorganized civil rights activities which deeply influenced her early years. From age 7-18 she lived in a Mennonite community in Lancaster County, PA, the traditional territory of the Susquehannock peoples. Annie emigrated to Canada in 2006 to complete her Ph.D. at Laurentian University. She and Professor Herbert C. Nabigon, MSW (1942-2016) were married in a traditional Anishnaabeg ceremony in 2006 and later moved to his home reserve, Bigtigong Nishaabeg (Pic River 1st Nation), where she lived until 2017. Currently living in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, she works as assistant professor of Social Work at Algoma University. She is close to family on both sides of the border. Annie has various publications, has conducted many presentations and workshops, and has worked in both Canada and the US. Her primary area of specialty is with people living with mental illnesses, addictions, and the effects of

severe trauma. Her first book, Enough Light, is forthcoming from Latitude 46 Publishers (2021), and is a sequel to The Hollow Tree (2006) by Herb Nabigon.

**Alex White Plume** was born on the Pine Ridge Reservation. He grew up strongly connected to traditional Lakota culture. He joined the US Army and was stationed in Berlin, Germany, where he left the US Army in 1978. White Plume's interest in sociopolitical issues developed later in life after his return to Pine Ridge. White Plume has pursued a life of farming but had difficulty succeeding with crops on the limited agricultural lands of the reservation, where physical conditions are harsh and challenging. He and his extended family, or tiospaye, tried alfalfa, barley and corn; they also raised horses and bison, which are being raised by ranchers in growing herds on the Great Plains. All yielded little more than subsistence under the harsh conditions. After considerable research, in 1998 the Oglala Sioux Tribe passed an ordinance to allow the cultivation of low- THC-hemp on the reservation. The market for the crop was high around the world, and it is a sustainable product with a short growing season. During World War II, the US government encouraged hemp's cultivation for its qualities of "hardiness, utility and low cost." In April 2000 White Plume and his family planted industrial hemp on their farm on the Pine Ridge Reservation. At that time, he was reportedly the only farmer to openly plant, cultivate, and produce cannabis-related crops within the borders of the United States since it was prohibited by federal anti-drug laws in 1968. While hemp products can be sold in the United States, its cultivation is prohibited, a law implemented by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Although related to cannabis, hemp does not have psychoactive properties and is in demand worldwide for a variety of uses, including processing as a cloth and as food. In addition, White Plume believed that the tribe's sovereignty on its land would enable him to grow the crop. Federal DEA agents made a surprise raid on his field that August and destroyed his crops. In August 2002, he was served with eight civil charges by the US District Attorney related to the hemp cultivation, and a court order prohibiting continued growing of the crop. Although he has appealed, the 8th US Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the DEA, while acknowledging that its registration process could be a burden and that hemp might be a good crop for the Pine Ridge Reservation. Finally this season, in 2017, Alex White Plume has planted his first hemp crop in more than 15 years. He intends to build a hempcrete home for himself and his family after the harvest.

**Charmaine White Face or Zumila Wobaga** (73) is Oglala Titunwan Oceti Sakowin (Oglala Lakota from the Great Sioux Nation). Ms. White Face is the Spokesperson for the Sioux Nation Treaty Council established in 1894. She founded and coordinates Defenders of the Black Hills, a non-profit environmental organization which received the International Nuclear Free Future Award for Resistance in 2007 in

Salzburg, Austria. A writer, organizer, scientist, and great-grandmother, she may be contacted at cwhiteface@gmail.com

**John Willis** is currently the full-time photography professor at Marlboro College, and the co-founder of The In-Sight Photography Project, and its Exposures Cross Cultural Youth Program. "Photography provides me with a visual tool for exploration and communication. The ways we communicate with each other and the world around us have always been major points of interest and contention throughout my life (in addition to photography I have studied psychology and education). Because I choose to represent my observations about the world in images rather than in written essays, I have used photography in a variety of ways. Not only do I make my own images, but I help others make their own as well. I have spent much of my life teaching photography in diverse settings. I have taught all age groups, from first-graders to nursing-home residents."



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Photo by Sheila Steele

## LEONARD PELTIER

Write to Leonard at:

Leonard Peltier #89637-132  
USP Coleman I  
P.O. Box 1033  
Coleman, FL 33521

### WHO IS LEONARD PELTIER?

An innocent man, Leonard Peltier is a Native American activist who was unfairly and illegally tried and convicted for his participation in a firefight on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1975.

This event took place amid the high tensions and extreme violence known as the "Reign of Terror" and left one Native American and two FBI agents dead. After a trial the following year, in which two other firefight participants were acquitted on the grounds of self-defense, the FBI went to extraordinary lengths to get Leonard Peltier — someone had to pay.

### THE CASE

Leonard Peltier was illegally extradited from Canada to face a trial filled with Constitutional violations. Since his sentencing, documents proving FBI misconduct that included the fabrication and suppression of evidence, have been revealed. During subsequent oral arguments, the US Prosecutor admitted "...we can't prove who shot those agents." Leonard Peltier remains in prison.

### CONSTITUTIONAL VIOLATIONS

***"The FBI used Mr. Peltier as a scapegoat and they continue to do so today."***

— Don Edwards, Former FBI Agent/US Congressman

- Illegally extradited from Canada
- Thousands of documents withheld during trial
- Egregious trial conditions
- Coerced testimonies
- Fabricated affidavits

### CURRENT STATUS

To the international community, Leonard Peltier's imprisonment is a stain on the United States' human rights record. Many human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, consider him a political prisoner and demand his immediate release.

Now in prison for over 44 years, Leonard continues to struggle with ailing health. As a father, grandfather, and great grandfather, he would like to be able to spend the remainder of his life with his family and his people.

Leonard is also an author, artist and a humanitarian who has been nominated several times for the Nobel Peace Prize.

**Leonard Peltier desperately needs your support in this critical time in his fight for freedom. All legal remedies have been exhausted and his only hope rests with the President, who can grant Executive Clemency.**

Call the White House  
(202)456-1111

Write the White House  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**PLEASE ASK THE PRESIDENT TO GRANT EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY TO LEONARD PELTIER**

**INTERNATIONAL LEONARD PELTIER DEFENSE COMMITTEE**

### CONTACT

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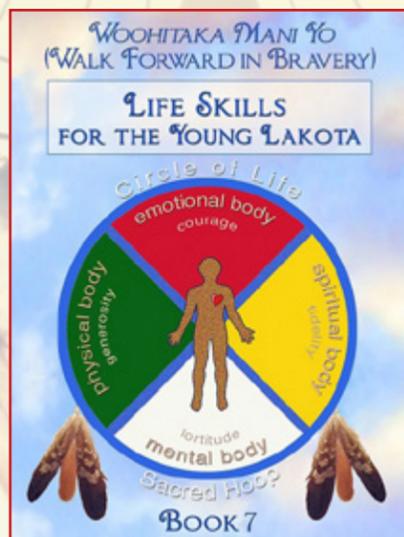
### OCETI WAKAN

## Making a better future for our Lakota children!

Oceti Wakan's new Wellness Program is designed for children from 2nd – 8th grades. This program was created to educate and heal their trauma; develop healthy life skills for their physical, emotional, spiritual and mental bodies; to teach them virtues development; and to create a strong positive Lakota identity. This Wellness Program gives our children the tools needed to live healthy lives, avoid the pitfalls of addiction plaguing our communities, and helps to restore the Lakota Culture.

Oglala Lakota County Schools will be using our Wellness Programs in their daily classrooms; however, they cannot afford to purchase workbooks for each child. Can you help? Having individual workbooks is very important as they include lessons, activities and resources they can refer to in the future when faced with difficult choices and challenges. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit. Please visit our website to donate.

Wopili! (Thanking you in a deep spiritual Lakota way.)



Visit our website for other books, CDs, posters and more on Lakota culture and language.

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