

## Further Thoughts on the Protection of Ceremonies

by Arvol Looking Horse

Since the statement of protecting our ceremonies, there have been many issues that have come out. Many people reporting on one another, many people arguing for the participation of non-Natives, many non-Natives telling me that I am a dictator of these ways. I see this as good and bad because I now see since these reports, there is a much bigger problem than I ever knew in concern of the violations. Even more reports of deaths, charging, molestation and mixing of other beliefs, this must stop!

These violations are affecting our children's health; many of our children ending their life with suicide. They do not feel that ceremonial energy that was meant for them. The people in these hoc'okas need to become stronger and connected with our children's needs to survive.

This Bundle is our way the Creator gave us to help us survive with spirituality. It is all about transferring spiritual energy for health for your loved ones and thinking of seven generations to come. These prayers also go out to the world, for all, Mitakuye Oyasin.

I don't like the division, but again when was the last time we really united. I would rather see our people, even if there are only a few, unite strong and understand what this is all about, to stand with me for these ways to be protected, so this Bundle can stay for our future generations.

These sacred protocols were always there. The teachers are the Grandfathers. There was nothing new in my statement. The only thing that changed was allowing other Native people whose nations come from this same ma-co-c'e (land) to participate in Sundances and vision quests. Their ancestors understood the values and traditions of ceremony in the connection to this Turtle Island.

I have known in our history that we shared our ways with other nations with respect. Our people would intermarry with other Native nations; they would become a Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota Oyate. It was the same when our woman married another nation's man, because we have the same teachings and bloodline to this ma-co-c'e.

I have heard Native and non-Native people fully understand my statement,

yet many are misinterpreting the statement because they don't want to see the truth and how it affects them. Many have wanted me to re-explain what all this means with the decision. The decision was based on many years of the elders coming to me with dreams and concerns of what is going on. I waited to make another statement, to allow time to bring things out and open the eyes of the people to look at what is happening with our sacred ways. Just how serious these things have become has now been revealed.

I will explain the things that people have been questioning. First, I understand that there have been people at the meeting that are talking about not agreeing with my decision. I announced my decision in Lakota; that has a much larger meaning. During the meeting, that was taped, Sam Moves Camp stated that I make a decision after all the issues were discussed. Yet I am getting word from non-Natives that they have talked to some men at the meeting and they were told that they did not agree. Yet no one said anything after I spoke.

These men are only a few. I guess they have learned how this affects them after the statement went out, so they backed away. Some of the people getting back to me are reporting the misuse of their friendship with these men and other men that call themselves intercessors. They have questioned how they could agree with this decision even when they do these violations themselves.

I still stand by these Lakota men and have to work with them. I don't feed that negative energy. We are the Buffalo Nation and I will not report them. It is up to these people to correct these things themselves. The Buffalo teaching is to stand around one that has fallen and help them stand; these ways belong to them, even if they have become lost. The other need is to establish our strong societies again to deal with these matters. Those society men who are compassionate and walk in a respectful manner, yet strong in their energy with spiritual guidance to correct these violations in an honorable way.

I stated the only government protection of our ways is the eagle feather law, because we are dealing with non-Native participation that does not

honor our spiritual laws that are in place. This only law is when only enrolled members can own this sacred item for ceremonial use. The feather represents knowledge and you have to earn this for any part of our ceremonies. I realize that during the 1900s many of our people were taken away from their families. I have participated in providing a healing ceremony for adoptees. Many are even full bloods and cannot find their families. We can still find a way to provide our people in recognition of their right to their identity.

Those that know their lineage can still prove their bloodline. Our intermarrying with other nations is not that old that it cannot be found. In the meantime, we need to continue to focus on the protection that is available now. That first teaching of bloodline came when the first Keeper was told by Pte Skan Win that the Bundle must stay in the bloodline and passed down through a vision or dream from the Keeper. So it is the same teaching of our Native bloodline with the ceremonies.

My position is the Keeper of the Bundle that consists of the Seven Sacred Rites. I am being responsible to remind the Oyate that these ways are being violated. Even to a degree that in 1979, when we were bringing out the Sacred C'anupa, we received a warning in ceremony from the Grandfathers that if these abuses continued, they would leave. We decided to put away the Bundle for seven years from 1980-87 and get the word out that we were warned. We could be just another nation, with no identity, no cultural language, no cultural way of life and we could probably lose our reservations and sacred sites.

Pte Ska Win told us her spirit would stand upon Mother Earth in the future. These signs have been coming every year since 1994, with the births of the white buffalo calves. This is a blessing, to see the reminder that the bundle she brought is still here for us, but yet it is also a warning. If you remember, she came the first time when we were having a hard time of starvation. The buffalo disappeared because we forgot the buffalo teachings of honoring the Creator in the way we walk. We have forgotten these important teachings once again.

I stated that I cannot dictate to the

spiritual leaders who they allow to attend and support ceremonies, who they feel they need to doctor or where they travel. This was to only remind that the white brothers and sisters, they could still attend and pray with us at a ceremony if the spiritual leader allows this. Again it is the hoc'oka, the center, where our Oyate stand, that needs to be protected.

This is also a reminder even with our own people, they need to prepare their life to stand in that altar and learn these protocols of a drug- and alcohol-free life. They must have a calling that is interpreted in ceremony to at least begin to learn the language and not give in to English. The language is very important in communicating with the Grandfathers.

When I attended the UN Indigenous Day with representatives from indigenous nations from around the world, they discussed the criteria to maintain our voice in the protection of our sacred sites and cultural identities. All agreed it was to maintain the language. Don't give up your ways because you don't know how to speak yet. You can learn as you go along and this sacred language will come back for your Tiospaye.

We are the only indigenous nation in the world that has opened our sacred ceremonials, of the altar, out to the public. Now we are seeing the abuses and violations. Anyone can read a book or get close to our ceremonial people, then go out and practice our ways without proper protocols.

Racism is when a race is not given a right because of the color of their skin in American society. These sacred instructions were given to our people's society, as many other nations were given their own. If that were the case, then all the other indigenous nations that protect their sacred ways would be racist.

Our nation's protection of these sacred ways is prayers of strength for all Mitakuye Oyasin. Indigenous peoples understand these boundaries of protection. Iktomi is always there to trick us. It is our responsibility to protect the life of our Lakota, Dakota, Nakota future generations. This gift belongs to them from the Creator.

I would like to remind you of a time when we can all gather at the sacred sites, with "all nations, all faiths, one

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