

PILGRIM'S...



PROGRESS

# NC RL Catholic Rural Life



December, 1980

ADDRESS FORM 3579 to:  
National Catholic Rural Life Conference 0008-8331  
4625 N.W. Beaver Drive, Des Moines, Iowa 50322



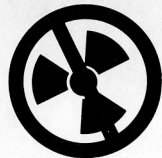
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**Catholic Rural Life**  
Volume XXX, No. 10  
**Published by the National Catholic Rural Life Conference**  
4625 NW Beaver Drive, Des Moines, Iowa 50322  
Phone 515-270-2634  
**Editor: Bart Pollock**

Subscription: \$15 regular, \$50 organization, \$10 low income, \$.75 single copy. Bulk rates available. Published monthly, except July. Second-class postage rate paid at Des Moines, Iowa 50322. Postmaster, send address change to 4625 NW Beaver Dr., Des Moines, Ia. 53222.

**A Common Bond**

*The old Lakota was wise. He knew that man's heart away from nature becomes hard; he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect for humans too. So he kept his youth close to its softening influence.*

—Chief Luther Standing Bear

There are signs in rural America of an emerging alliance. Many American Indians and non-Indian rural people are supporting one another in the struggle to preserve the land and their respective ways of life.

The Black Hills Alliance, for example, is a coalition of Indians, farmers, ranchers and other concerned people working together to protect the Black Hills region of South Dakota from becoming a "national energy sacrifice area." The obvious reason for these groups allying is that they face a common threat, but in their love for the land there is a common bond.

Despite differences in their histories and lifestyles, there is a fundamental point of unity between Indian and non-Indian rural people in their experiences of a land-based way of life. One who lives close to the earth understands the importance of living in harmony with the cycles of nature and experiences the interdependence of all life. These are not only practical lessons; they are also spiritual lessons.

To live in harmony with creation, grateful for the Creator's gifts that sustain and inspire us is

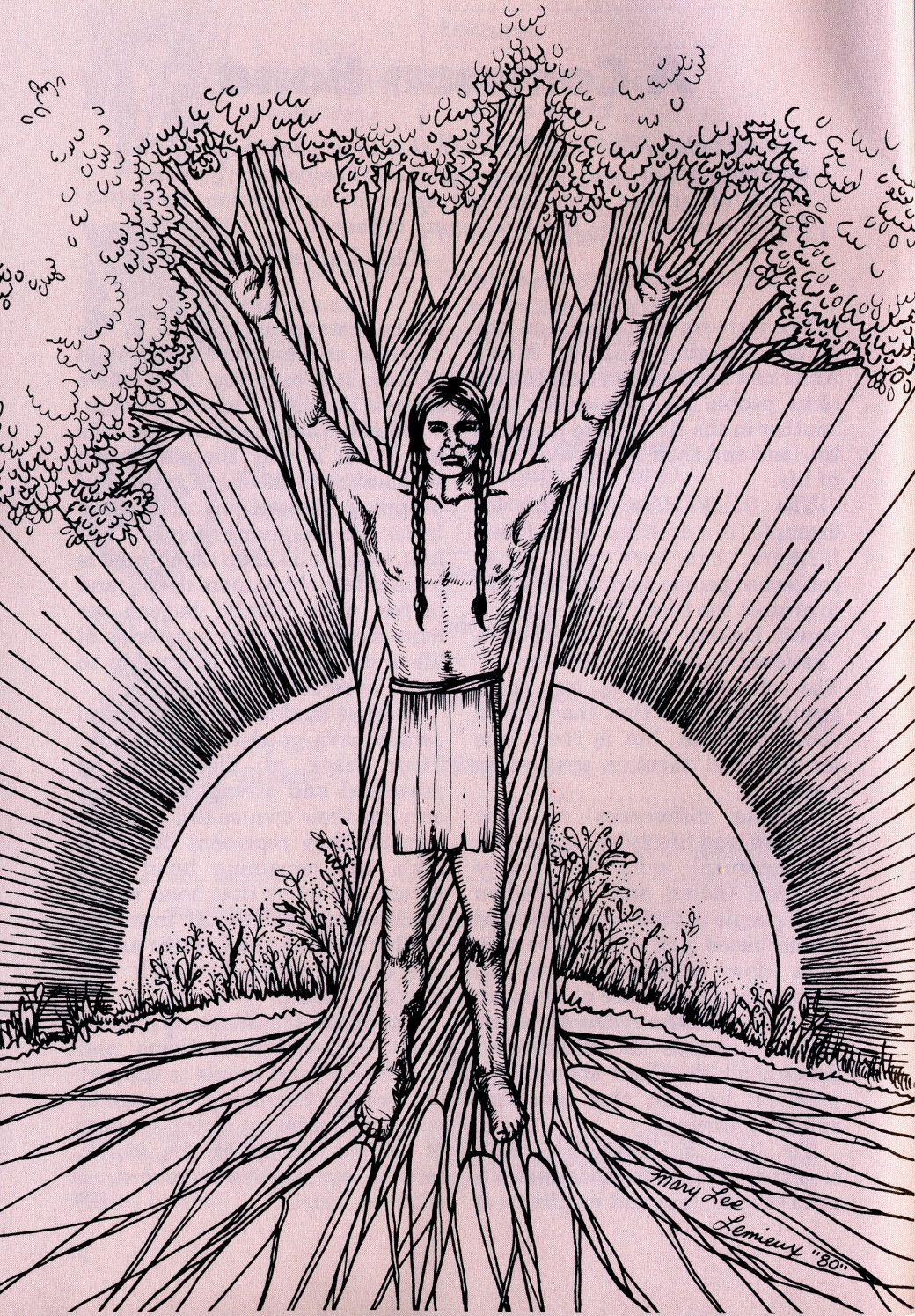
to understand one's place in the universe as a creature and a child of God. It is humility. And where there is humility there is wisdom.

Chief Luther Standing Bear tells us: "That is why the old Indian still sits upon the earth instead of propping himself up and away from its life-giving forces. For him, to sit or lie upon the ground is to be able to think more deeply and to feel more keenly; he can see more clearly into the mysteries of life and come closer in kinship to other lives about him ..."

Indians and non-Indian rural people have good reason to ally. Their ways of life must be preserved and strengthened, not only for their own sakes, but also because they represent our society's last remaining bond with nature. To break that bond would be to cut ourselves off from the truth and from the Creator as He reveals Himself through the natural world.

The articles in this issue present many reasons for Indians and non-Indian rural people to support one another beginning, on page 5, with an invocation to the Creator of all the things of the world, offered by Sakokwenonkwas, a Mohawk chief.

BP



# “To all the things of the world . . .”

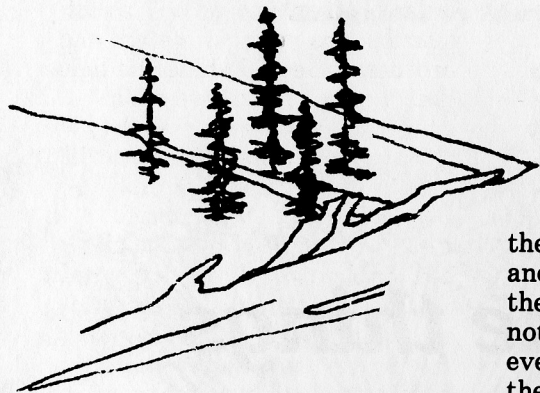
by Sakokwenonkwas

To the people who will be reading this message telling about us, we should be grateful to them for their interest and their efforts in our cause. At this time, we would like to give our greetings and thanksgivings to all the people wherever they are who have made efforts to help us. At this time we give them our thanks and our greetings from our smallest children to our oldest grandfather who happens to be about 92.

At this time now, we shall direct our minds to our Mother Earth, because the Creator made

our Mother Earth and we are upon her body. Still today, you and I and everybody have come this far in the history of the whole world. Since the beginning of that history, this Mother Earth has supported us. This Mother Earth has given everything that we need to live. And so at this time I would like to say to all the people everywhere that our minds should be thinking about that and that as they read this message we should, with oneness of mind, give our greetings and thanksgiving to our Mother Earth who has always followed the Creator's instructions. So we give greetings to our Mother Earth.

(Excerpted from an interview in Akwesasne Notes. Reprinted by permission.)



To the bodies of water, the rivers, the big lakes, the streams — to all bodies of water, to our wells and springs (the Creator made those as well). The Creator gave life to those waters, and also directs the water to work hand-in-hand with all the other life that the Creator put on this earth. So as we drink the water each day, the coolness of that water and the quenching of our thirst brings to our minds the commonality we share, and so I would like to ask that our people, and all our supporters, as you drink this water today, let our minds come together as one and we shall offer our greetings to all the water of the world which has brought us this far, so be it our minds.

There is another that the Creator put on this earth — the grass, and all the medicines, the herbs and different vegetation. And the Creator's master plan was that we would be interdependent on each other — on these herbs and grasses that feed the animals and the wild game — and to those medicinal things that heal the sicknesses. Though mankind has forgotten

the secrets and the knowledge and the proper way to deal with these things, the medicines have not forgotten. They still wait every day and every night for the human beings and the animal world to ask them for their help that peace may come and sickness may go. So, as forgetful human beings that we are, let us think that way, and give our greetings at this time to the medicines and vegetation of the world.

There is another the Creator put on this Earth — the bird life. The bird life flies over our heads, and early in the morning they will sing their songs to remind us of this life. Their song will shake up our mind so that our minds will not become lonely. They will be our companions. The birdlife still does this, although they are few, like we American Indians are few now. The bird life still struggles to bring happiness to the minds of mankind. And to the eagle, which was placed upon the Tree of Peace, to guard our people, to all of them — they are few now, just like the American Indian — we ask that all our people will think about this the next time they hear the birds, and we will now put our minds together as one mind and give our greetings to all the bird life as is our duty so that life will go on.

At this time we direct our attention to the four winds.

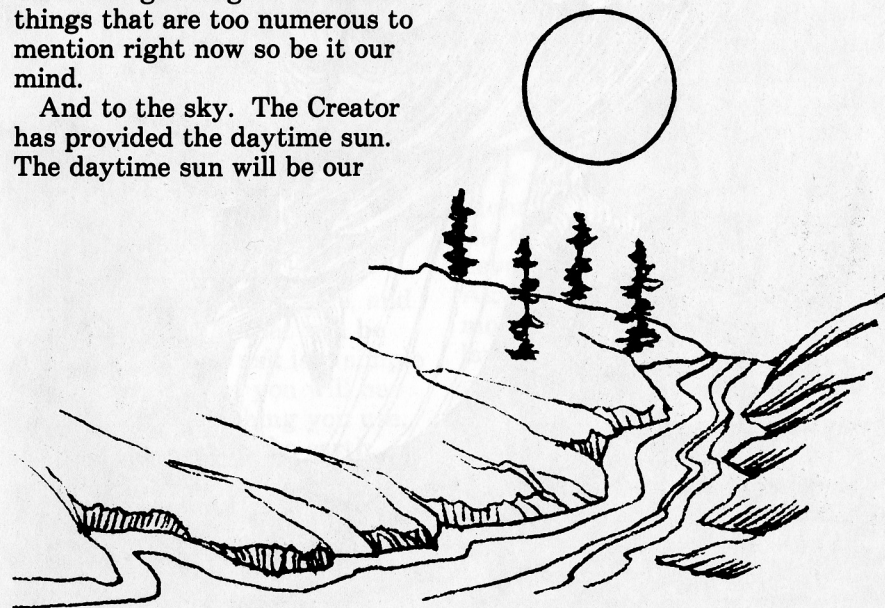
They will blow at night and in the day. They will make the air to move, and in that way, they will support life. Those winds have been made by the Creator for all life to share. To those winds which have never failed, to those winds who are also now hampered by mankind, to those winds who are not as healthy, just as we the people have become very ill, still they strive to live and they still try to perform their duties. And so, I ask at this time that all the people that read this direct their attention to the spirit and the power of the winds who never detoured from the Creator's instruction to do their duty for the benefit of all life. So now we give greetings to the winds, so be it our minds.

To all the things of the world — and there are many — all that life has a purpose. To all that life we shall gather our mind as one and give our acknowledgement and greeting to all those things that are too numerous to mention right now so be it our mind.

And to the sky. The Creator has provided the daytime sun. The daytime sun will be our

older brother, and he will watch over us, the younger sisters and brothers. He will shine the light that we may see as we walk upon this Mother Earth; that we will see each other, that we will see the commonness of one another. With his heat, the earth will not freeze, with his heat and power things will grow. So to our older brother the sun who shines today, the most reliable there could be, we the people shall take this moment to offer our greeting to our old brother sun who has followed the Creator's instruction from the day of the beginning, until this time. And hopefully tomorrow we shall see him again. For that reason, we find words of gratitude and encouragement to our old brother sun at this time.

To our grandmother moon, who the Creator placed in the





sky and who is the leader of all female life in her monthly cycle. The Creator placed in her hands the duties to see that the families of the human beings will continue on. When our babies are born, and we first hear them cry, that means grandmother moon is still strong and still shares her power with us. The tides of the ocean rise and fall, the gardens of the earth produce food — it is the doings of grandmother moon. And so we are enabled to live today. At this time let our minds be as one mind and extend greetings and thanksgivings to our grandmother moon, the head woman of the earth.

Also to the unseen forces of the earth. The Creator has put forth these beings and gave them power that they may watch over us and carry messages to all the powers and to the Creator to report the way things are going. To those spiritual beings, we extend greetings and thanksgiving at this time.

Now to our Creator, the maker of all the world. In the beginning of time when the world was new and the Creator made us, He told our grandfathers — the first grandfathers that was — I have made everything you need there on the Earth. These things will bring you peace, and will bring you life that will be continuous. All I ask is a simple instruction — that you will be grateful for everything you use. As you walk about the earth, every life you see, you will acknowledge it with gratitude. You will always be grateful.

So it is that the Indian people of the Americas continue our

ceremonies, for those ceremonies express the gratitude and the acknowledgement of interdependence to all the things of nature — to all the things that are necessary for us to live from day to day. At this time let us think about these things, and let us face our Creator — the mystery of the whole universe, and give our thanks and our greetings at this time.

What I see at stake here is the same thing that I see when they talk about the buffalo or the golden eagle or any other species of bird or animal that is on the verge of extinction. That is the same thing that I see here with our people. We are at the verge of extinction. The way of life that our grandfathers said that we should adhere to or be in harmony with is at stake. Our language, our beliefs, and all that which makes us a people is at stake.

Among the Mohawk people here at Akwesasne, there are roughly about 6,000 in population. Out of that 6,000, of our children under the age of five, you might find maybe two dozen that can speak fluent Mohawk. Once the older generation is gone and passed away, the Mohawk language is gone from the face of the earth forever, never again to return. And Akwesasne probably has the most fluent speakers of our language of any Mohawk communities left. Specialists say that language is 50% or more of culture. The ceremonies, the different songs — it all requires our language. Once it's gone, everything else ceases.

With the land, and with the freedom of choice to work for the

interests of the people, there's a certain pride that comes with that. If we lose the control to determine our own affairs, then we lose all that too, and we become nothing. So this is a fight not only of laws and principles, but it is a fight to survive, that we may have the spirit that make the body mean something.

It's hard to express what I'm trying to say. We are fighting and struggling for a way of life that is almost extinct. The opening prayer, if people think about it, that is what we are fighting for — that there will be a common bond, a common direction so that the world and all its powers can be shared and respected, that all could share in peace, in unity, that all could share in the continuance of mankind. It is a fight to try to bring to the attention of the world that the world is in trouble.

In a sense, the struggle is almost comparable to a man trying to lift up the world with his two hands — that's the odds. In order to explain that, a whole history of the world is needed. A whole understanding of the different processes and also the different ethnic groups or races would have to research their paths as well and find that common chord, that universal understanding, that will cause the people of the world to really consider what is the enemy and what things are needed to secure that there will be a world here for the next generation, and the one after that.

One of the things that comes to mind is that before she passed away, my grandmother

one time really kind of scolded my grandfather. They were both up in years. She comes from a traditional background and greatly affected my life as far as understanding of traditional values goes.

One time, a project was coming into the reservation — a waterline — and my grandfather was very sick at the time. He said that he didn't like these projects but he said that he couldn't argue any more because he said he was going to die pretty soon and it was useless to get involved. And my grandmother got on his case and she said, "What are you talking about? You have 11 children and you have pretty near a hundred grandchildren and you're going to give up and you're not going to argue for them?"

And that's basically the attitude of the Traditional people. They will fight and strive for what's going to be for their grandchildren and the next grandchildren. There's a strong feeling of family among Traditional groups. We say that our great-great grandparents are buried here, and there is a feeling there that we are a people, that we have to do everything in our power to make sure that this land is going to be there for our children for generations to come. Whatever happens, we have to watch to see that it doesn't destroy the coming generations.

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*(Sakokwenonkwas is a young Mohawk chief. The prayer at the beginning of this article is a version of the Haudenosaunee, the speech with which Traditional people of the Six Nations open and close each social or sacred gathering.)*

# 1868 - 1980

## The forgotten treaty rights of the Lakota Nation

by Nick Meinhardt

Traditional Indian people greatly respect the earth on which they have lived and which they have protected for thousands of years. They strive to be in harmony with the land and with all living things which grow and live on the earth.

Non-Indian ranchers and farmers also know the earth's cycles. They work the earth from planting through harvest and respect the balances and limitations of the soil from which they gain their livelihoods.

In the Northern Plains of western South Dakota, both groups share a deep love and respect for the Black Hills region. Lakota (western Sioux) people see the Hills as their sacred place, their historic burial ground, their church. Non-Indian ranchers and farmers see them as a thing of beauty and as original homestead

land which their families have worked for generations.

Now, however, the Black Hills are in danger. Energy development corporations are attempting to override the wishes and the legal rights of the local people by moving ahead with plans to strip-mine the Hills for coal and uranium.

Ranchers, farmers and Indian people, meanwhile, are finding in this common threat a reason to come together as friends and allies. Facing such government-supported coercion by corporate interests, the ranchers and farmers of the area are learning what the Indians have known for over a century — that the struggle to preserve their values and their way of life is first of all a struggle to preserve their land.

In many ways, the historic

struggle of Indian nations to preserve their land and resources prefigures and parallels the struggle of small farmers and ranchers today. Both groups have seen their lands coerced away or stolen by government, corporate and financial interests. The Lakota Nation, after signing an international treaty in which they reserved for themselves land in a five state region, today are situated on six small reservation tracts of land over which they have little control. Likewise, farmers and ranchers have seen their lands shrink into fewer units controlled more and more by outside interests.

At times, the two groups have been at odds with one another, but increasingly rural Americans and Indian people are realizing that they need one another as allies. For this to happen, however, rural Americans need to

understand the history of the Indian peoples' struggle for their land as well as the United States government's legal obligations to them which predate the current struggles.

The dispute over the Black Hills and surrounding territory goes back to the war between the United States and the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho Nations. After losing several military skirmishes in the 1860s, the United States decided it could no longer financially afford to continue the war.

In the resulting Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the Lakota Nation reserved for itself the "absolute and undisturbed use and occupation" of western South Dakota (from the east bank of the Missouri River to the state's western border) as the Great Sioux Reservation and portions of North Dakota, Montana,

### 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty Commission



Wyoming and Nebraska (called "Unceded Territories") for spiritual, hunting, fishing and other purposes.

In order to understand the present day struggle of the Lakota people, we must first understand the significance of the 1868 Treaty. Legally, it is an international agreement between two equal entities — not equal in size or population or military might, but equal in legal status. The Lakota Nation, like any other nation, has a permanent population, self-government, boundaries and the ability to enter into relations with other nations.

According to the U.S. Constitution, treaties are considered to be the law of the land, on a par with the Constitution itself. Moreover, as international instruments, treaties are considered to be part of the body of international law. They cannot be unilaterally abrogated or cancelled, but rather must be mutually amended or terminated.

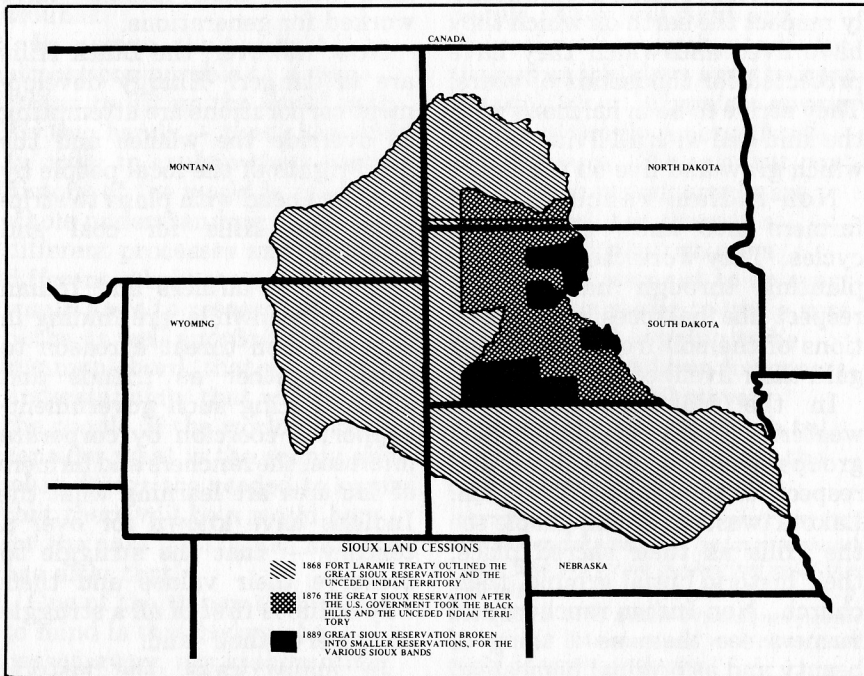
But the United States has said, in essence, that treaties with Indian nations are inferior to and unlike treaties with nations such

as France or Panama, and that it can, therefore, change or cancel them through Congressional fiat. And that is exactly what the Congress did to steal land from the Lakota Nation.

In 1877, for example, after negotiators were unable to gain enough signatures to buy the Black Hills (Article XII of the 1868 Treaty specified that three-quarters of the adult Lakota males had to agree before any land cessions could be made.), Congress simply passed legislation to steal them and the Unceded Territories as well. To justify this theft, the U.S. government is now trying to convince the Lakota people to accept a \$105 million cash settlement.

South Dakota was illegally created on Lakota land in 1889. During that same year, Congress unilaterally reduced the Great Sioux Reservation to six separate smaller reservations. And in the early 1900s, laws were passed which opened up whole counties of these reservations for homesteading by white farmers and ranchers.

Although these farmers and



ranchers certainly aggravated the problems with Indian people at times, for the most part they too were victims. They homesteaded and bought land which the U.S. government did not own or have jurisdiction over in the first place. In a sense, they were used to populate the Northern Plains so that the land could be taken away from the Lakota people. And once that was accomplished, the banks and financial interests began to maneuver people off the land during hard times by foreclosing on mortgages, raising shipping rates, and exercising other forms of economic pressure — a trend we see continuing even today.

The beneficiaries of these land grabbing efforts have been, and continue to be, the U.S. government and the large corporate interest which it supports. Early on, it was the railroad companies that benefited. They actually sent representatives to Europe to encourage people to settle the Northern Plains.

The military also gained from our government's land-stealing policy. In 1942, the Department of the Army took 194,106 acres of land from the Pine Ridge Reservation for use as a gunnery range. Then in 1954, the Air Force invaded Lakota land to establish Ellsworth Air Force base.

More recently, the spoils have gone to the energy corporations. A 1971 study entitled the "North Central Power Survey" outlined plans for thirteen 10,000 megawatt coal-fired power plants to be constructed on Lakota treaty land. Test drilling for uranium in the Black Hills began in 1951

near the town of Edgemont, S.D. Soon after, a uranium mining and milling plant was established. Then in 1975, after a large uranium deposit was discovered in the northwestern corner of the Pine Ridge Reservation, secret negotiations were conducted for the transfer of that portion of the reservation to the U.S. government.

Currently some 25 corporations holding claim to approximately one million acres in leases are known to be operating in the Black Hills area, all in violation of the 1868 Treaty. In none of the instances I have mentioned was the approval of three-quarters of the adult Lakota males obtained.

It is only without the interference of outside corporate interests that the people of the Lakota Nation and other Indian nations, as well as the people of the United States, with rural Americans taking the lead, will someday develop a land policy which respects the land itself and the rights of the people who live on it, including the treaty rights of the Lakota and other Indian nations.

It is time that rural Americans and Indian people realize that they need each other as allies in their common struggle to preserve the land. It is time also that the landloving people of this country insist that our government respect the Lakota and other Indian nations as sovereign nations and honor the treaty obligations which it has so long forgotten.

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*(Nick Meinhardt is the director of the Pine Ridge Education/Action Project for the North Central Region of the American Friends Service Committee in Minneapolis, Minn.)*

# Challenges and opportunities for Indian agriculture

by David A. Larsen

Farming the land is nothing new to the American Indian. It is now accepted that Indian agriculture in North America had its beginnings during the Late Archaic or Early Woodland period — around 3,000 years ago. The process involved the gradual diffusion of squash, corn and beans from what is now Mexico and Central America.

With the flood of European immigrants to the New World came a new value system regarding land — a system that ran counter to Indian values. Land title had previously been nonexistent. The Indian's legal system had been the tribal council which had been, as it is today, the final arbitrator in any Indian legal disputes. Going over the heads of these tribal councils, the white culture began to take land in the name of church, state and private individuals.

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*(Reprinted from "Perspectives on the Structure of American Agriculture, Vol. I" by permission of the Rural Land Alliance of Rural America.)*

The ownership and control of land is the most important issue facing American Indians. Indians hold title to vast tracts of agricultural land, but for a number of reasons most of this land is not being farmed by Indians. And the rate of return on the land that is being farmed by Native Americans is nearly half what it is for non-Indian farmers.

The statistics tell the story: according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), nearly 2.5 million acres of Indian land is classified as agricultural. Of this, 29 percent is irrigated. Last year the gross value of the products grown on both irrigated and non-irrigated Indian land approached \$400 million.

Although this appears at first to be a sizeable figure, the BIA further reports that 73 percent of it went to non-Indian operators — that is, farmers, usually with large holdings, who leased the land from its Indian owners. These non-Indian farmers cultivate about 63 percent of all In-



dian agricultural lands, leaving 29 percent for Indian operators (the remaining 8 percent is idle). Moreover, these leasing arrangements have not always been to the advantage of the tribe leasing the land. Indians have frequently complained that the leases, which are usually handled by the BIA, are for only a fraction of what the land is actually worth.

The main reason why more Indians are not farming their own land — the reasons why so much of it is leased — is a lack of access to government farm loan programs that help farmers get started and offer technical assistance once their operations are underway, according to Indian advocates. Government agencies such as the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) and the Soil Conservation Service, they say, are failing to reach out adequately to Indian farmers.

Those few Indians who are farming are harvesting lower crop yields than their non-Indian counterparts, again, it is charged, due to a lack of government assistance. For non-irrigated land, the gross return per acre for Indians was \$68, compared to \$119 for non-Indians. Irrigated land brought a \$340 gross return per acre for the Indian farmer, compared to \$546 for the non-Indian operator.

To address the problem of Indian land ownership and lower productivity, a conference was held in February, 1979, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The gathering was called the First Annual Native American Indian and Alaska Native Agricultural Conference and it was sponsored by BIA, ACTION, FmHA and the National Tribal Chairmen's Association.

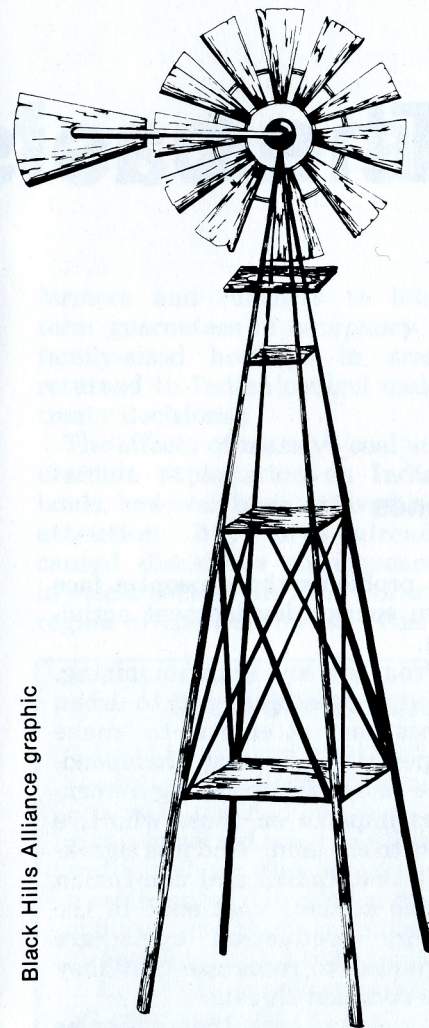
Most of the meeting participants were Indian farmers who were selected to reflect regional diversity and a variety of farming methods. Among the main areas of concern to Indian agriculturalists that were investigated by conference participants were forestry, ranching and livestock, tribal farming and individual farming.

Those at the forestry sessions said their problems stemmed from difficulties in management and organization, poor funding and a need to improve education and training for forestry personnel. In addition, it was noted that BIA has received insufficient funding, resulting in poor services to the tribes, which means poor tribal development of timber resources and of banking sources and private investors.

Ranchers and livestock operators viewed access to funding and loan programs, improved market awareness and improved land use planning as pre-eminent. One recommendation was that an Indian be appointed to fill a cabinet level position in the U.S. Department of Agriculture that would be responsive to Indian trust needs. In essence, this would mean that programs and funds would be specifically geared to Indian agricultural operations.

Tribal farmers expressed similar concerns regarding FmHA, BIA and Small Business Administration (SBA) loans. They also cited the need for improved training and the lack of coordination between government agencies on Indian affairs.

Individual farmers, meanwhile, added problems with land acquisition and land consolidation to the list.



Black Hills Alliance graphic

Indian farmers face many challenges and many opportunities in the years ahead. Energy, once considered abundant and cheap, is playing an ever more important role in agriculture, and will mean higher prices for fertilizers, pesticides, farm equipment and fuel. Increased energy costs could make or break the small farmer. These higher costs could

result in increased on-reservation processing and manufacturing of goods. Centralized, on-reservation production — from the time that the seed is planted until it is made into a loaf of bread — might mean increased return for a tribe.

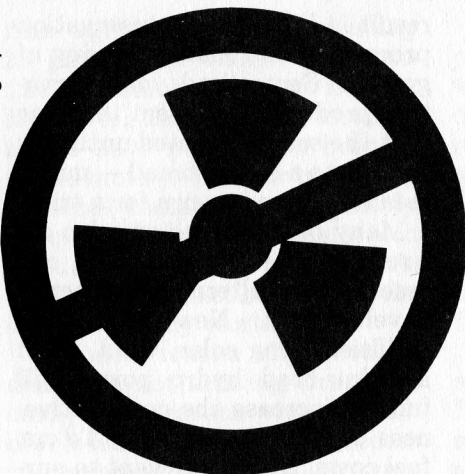
Many of the tribes are also expressing interest in on-reservation alternative energy development. New processing facilities using solar, wind, wood and low-head hydro power will further increase the competitiveness of tribal operations. To cut fuel costs, tribes will want to pursue other alternatives such as alcohol fuel distillation (as several are now doing). Foods now grown on reservations that could be used for distillation include cattail rhizomes, sugar beets, corn, wheat and potatoes.

The issues facing the Indian agriculturist in the 1980s are complex, but energy issues, the farming of more land and the better use of present Indian landholdings are key. Therefore, the improved planning, management and organization of existing operations should be a priority for the tribal farm or the individual farmer.

More centralized farming will help eliminate the middle-man, return more funds to the reservation and help with the tribal balance of payments. This in turn will raise the standard of living of reservation inhabitants by making available the capital necessary to provide long-needed services.

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*(David A. Larsen is a research associate specializing in energy issues for United Indian Planners Association, a Washington, D.C.-based group that offers training to native Americans on planning issues. Mr. Larsen is an Oneida Indian.)*



# The basis for an alliance

by Lillas Jones

*"We are the people of the land. We believe that the land is not to be owned, but to be shared. We believe that we are the guardians of the land. The future of our children, and of all generations to come, will depend on our efforts today to prevent corporate seizure and abuse of the land."*

So saying, representatives of 23 Indian nations and 36 other nations of the world issued a "Declaration of Dependence on the Land" last July at the 1980 Black Hills International Survival Gathering in South Dakota.

Calling for 21 changes in the current situation, the representatives — mostly Indians and family farmers — proposed a broad program to end government and corporate actions that threaten their lives and livelihoods. The "Declaration" was the culmination of the "Forum on Indian Genocide and the Planned Extinction of the Family Farm," which was called mainly in response to

the problems those peoples face from energy development activities.

From coal and uranium mining, to large powerlines and to urban relocation, attempts to make "Operation Energy Independence" a reality are having tremendous impacts on those who live close to the land. And it is significant that Indian and non-Indian people at the "front end" of the energy production cycle are beginning to recognize that they face common threats.

For many years, Indian peoples have tried to bring an understanding of their treaty and land rights to the general public and the government. Land claims under treaties — such as those in Maine and the Black Hills — have been played in the media to the tune of Indians excluding whites from "their" property. (The "Declaration" specifically addresses this concern, calling for recognition of the right of family

farmers and ranchers to long-term guarantees of occupancy of family-sized holdings in areas returned to Indian control under treaty decisions.)

The effects of massive coal and uranium exploitation on Indian lands, however, have received less attention, but have already caused disastrous consequences in places such as the Four Corners region of the Southwest. There,

uranium mines and mills, coal mines, and huge coal-burning plants have caused water contamination, the loss of productivity of large areas of land, health problems, social dislocation, and air pollution. In response, Indian people, after failing to get solutions from tribal, state, and federal governments, have occupied several sites. These ac-

*Continued on next page*

## Declaration of Dependence on the Land

Land is a sacred trust and a precious resource. Together with the water that flows under and through it and the air that flows around it, the land has been created by God, the Great Spirit, and given in sacred trust to all living creatures. The land is one, its water, soil, air, elements within and living creatures are a whole, not meant to be divided and abused. Mother Earth nourishes her children, and they are to treat her with respect. They are to live in harmony with her and with each other. . . .

1. We call for the restoration of the sacred relationship among all creatures and the earth. We declare our dependence on the land, and urge all peoples to recognize their own dependence on the land for their lives and livelihoods.

2. We call for an end to the abuse and appropriation of the land. We invite all concerned peoples to struggle with us to achieve that goal.

3. We call for an end to all genocidal programs which uproot, displace and relocate Native Peoples and other rural peoples.

4. We call for all nations to acknowledge that international law holds that all treaties are binding upon the nations that contract them, and cannot be changed without the consent of all the parties involved.

*Continued on next page*

tions and the issues behind them have received little publicity, and public awareness remains minimal.

Family farms and ranches have also been threatened for a long time. Corporate interests that buy up family operations have been helped by government programs in the form of subsidies, price fixing, and plans to increase agricultural "efficiency." Family agriculture and its dependent small towns have long been the backbone of the "American way of life," and rural observers have rightfully been alarmed by the loss of about 300,000 family farms in the last decade.

The threats posed by pollution and land usurpation for energy

activities, particularly in the West, have proved to be the last straw to many farmers who have, like Indian peoples, exhausted government remedies and turned to confrontation. The marches on Washington, the toppling of powerline towers in Minnesota, and protests against the use of the power of eminent domain are some of the ways rural rage has been expressed.

So despite divergent and often antagonistic histories, many people of the land now see reasons to stand together. In our predominantly urban society, rural concerns often receive little attention — even though we all depend on the land for our survival.

The "Declaration of Depend-

ence on the Land" outlines a variety of needed changes. Among the assertions in the "Declaration" are the need for restoration of the recognition that rural people are the stewards of the land and that all people must treat the earth with respect and love. More specifically, participants called for residency requirements for farms, an end to genocidal practices against Indian peoples, people's control over the power of eminent domain, local control of water, recognition of treaties as binding international laws, termination of nuclear energy and weapons, the end of manipulation by non-elected bodies such as the Trilateral Commission, and stopping government's

role as an arm of big corporations.

Clearly, the implementation of these and the other proposed programs means massive change. Still, representatives who formed the "Declaration" felt that a first step had been taken. The "Declaration" expressed that hope in the way it ended: "The Great Spirit will guide our thoughts and strengthen us as we work to be faithful to our sacred trust and restore harmony among all peoples, all living creatures, and Mother Earth. The struggle will be long and difficult. So let us begin."

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*(Lilias Jones is a researcher for the Black Hills Alliance in Rapid City, South Dakota.)*

5. We call for land justice for Native Peoples: recognition of their sovereignty and traditional forms of government, with the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty as the starting point for the just resolution of differences and the model for honoring all other treaties.

6. We call for the return of federal and state lands in treaty areas to the jurisdiction of Native Peoples as the initial step in treaty resolutions; these areas to be maintained in a manner harmonious with the natural environment.

7. We call for the recognition of the right of family farmers and ranchers to exercise stewardship over family-sized holdings in treaty areas restored to Indian control, as long as they respect and care for these lands, through long term, renewable guarantees.

8. We call for the promotion of family farms and ranches, especially through owner-operator and residency requirements, and parity programs tied to conservation practices that lead to the eventual elimination of agricultural dependence on chemical pollutants of the land.

9. We call for the revision of inheritance, estate and property taxes to benefit family farmers and ranchers.

10. We call for an end to the urban development that misuses rural land, and areas of natural beauty.

11. We call for the right of the people to determine how eminent domain is to be used.

12. We call for control of rural water resources by the consen-

sus of all land-based people, and protection of water quality and quantity for rural and urban needs.

13. We call for support of the labor organizing efforts of farmworkers.

14. We call for the termination of all phases of nuclear energy development, and the promotion of safe and clean energy alternatives.

15. We call for an end to nuclear weapons development and the dismantling of nuclear weapons systems.

16. We call for an end to government's role as a political arm of big corporations, and establishment of a people's government.

17. We call for the expropriation of transnational corporations' agricultural holdings, and their redistribution to indigenous and agricultural people.

18. We call for an end to the manipulation of the world economy by such non-elected bodies as the Trilateral Commission and the Committee on Economic Development.

19. We call for the establishment of a solidarity network with other people engaged in the international struggle for justice on the land.

20. We call for the promotion of sisterhood and brotherhood among peoples of all races and social classes.

21. Finally, we call for the recognition of our responsibility to be stewards of the land, to treat with respect and love our Mother Earth, who is a source of our physical nourishment and our spiritual strength. . . .

# A People with Many Blessings to Share

by Gilbert F. Hemauer, Capuchin

*We look for a world in which we will not be alienated because we wish to retain our identity and the best of our culture; a world that will recognize and utilize our talents and abilities — not just the label “Indian” but a genuine appreciation of our heritage and its history. And finally, we seek encouragement to keep all which Maheo (God) gave us as a People.*

— James Spear, Northern Cheyenne

People today are challenged to grow out of a purely ethnocentric existence toward a genuine sharing within the unity of all humankind. As we move into the decade of the 80s, all people of good will are challenged to become more aware and respectful of each other, to live as a human family in a just and well-ordered society.

Christians, in particular, need to learn to appreciate the manner in which the Creator has been and is present in other religions and cultures. In this country, we have failed to appreciate and learn from the original people of

this land — the Native Americans.

When the early European settlers came to this land, they encountered a people with their own distinct language, culture and value system. Unfortunately, what was not understood was not to be appreciated; what was different was considered wrong, backward or uninformed.

For centuries, native peoples had been learning the lessons of living in this land we now call Canada, the United States, Central America and South America. Yet the ways of this new land and



environment were not learned by the early "pioneers" — a fact that is much in evidence in the present climate of pollution, rape of natural resources and other violations of Mother Earth.

As Catholics in this country, we share in this responsibility. While pockets of respect and understanding are part of the history of the Catholic missions, most frequently Native American people have been victims of a Christianity without hope in a kingdom of God wherein all people of every culture are called to share their dignity, culture, values and the other gifts given them by our Creator.

Instead of mutual respect, paternalism and maternalism frequently characterized our past mission approaches — being and doing for, instead of being and doing with the people. In the place of mutual, respectful dialogue wherein the sacredness and dignity of each person were respected, monologue and cultural domination too often became the usual behavior.

This is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Good News of salvation in which all people are co-workers in the kingdom of God.

No one culture exhausts the height, depth and breadth of God's self-revelation. Rather, each culture brings new insights and a different perspective to our understanding of God's dealing with His people.

Cultural differences should be celebrated, not eliminated. In order to discover the riches and limits of one's own culture, one needs to learn from the cultural realities of others. Unless we see ourselves in relationship to



others, we cannot really see the truth about ourselves. Only when each culture appreciates this on a practical level will economic, political and social liberty and justice for all become a shared vision leading to concrete goals and directions for global justice and peace.

While many cultures can benefit from the Western European gifts, the Western European cultures likewise are limited and can learn and benefit from the cultural riches of other peoples.

Native American people have much to share in the areas of spirituality and practical living. They are a people richly blessed by one Creator with a deep sense of the sacred and a profound reverence for all life.

For Native American people, the Creator is the center of the Circle of Life. Everyone and everything is in harmony and interrelated and finds the truth about life in the circle. Each reality is respected and seen in relationship with all life. Creation is not a static condition, but one that is always present and ongoing. Many of the sacred ceremonies of the Native Americans ritualize this belief in celebrations of the renewal of all life.

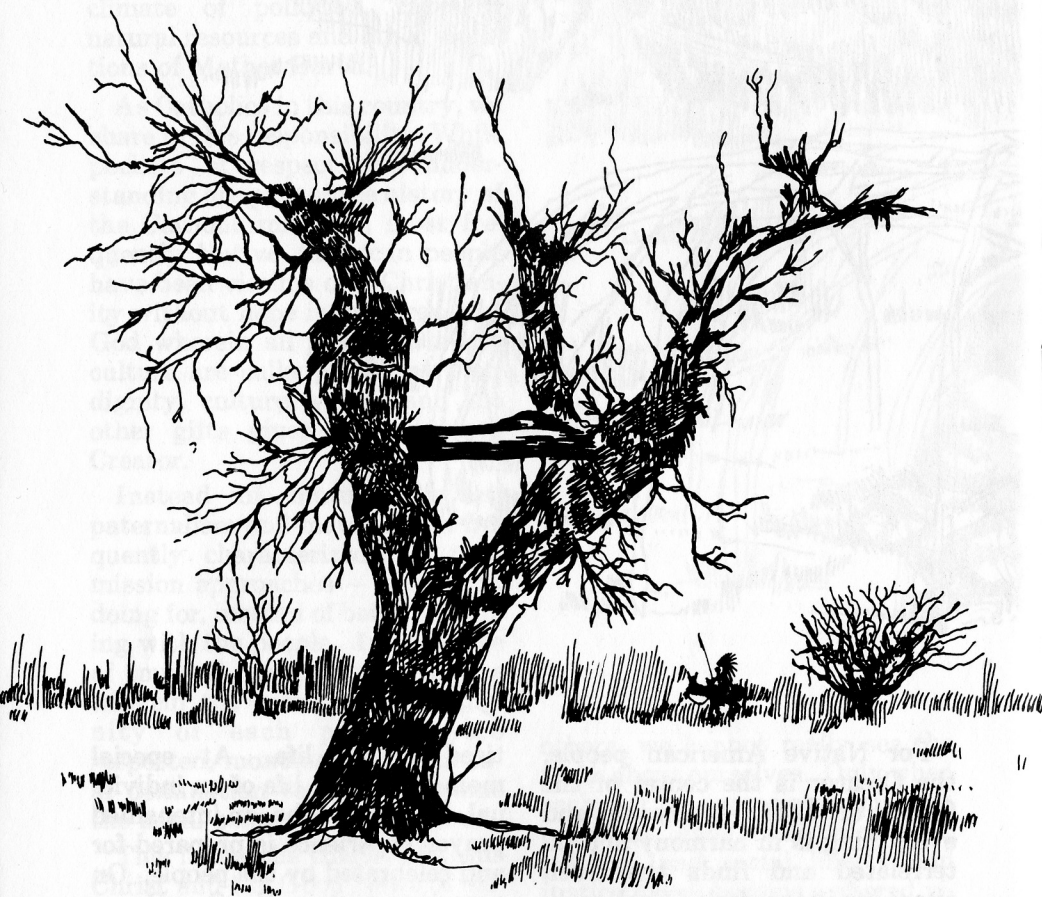
Prayer, for Native Americans, is a lived experience. It is not something to be found in books, but comes rather from the heart at any given moment. Consequently, prayer is a way of living.

Native American prayer focuses on the real world and is concrete

tized in all life. At special moments in the life of an individual, family or tribe, an intensified prayer experience is prepared for and celebrated by the people. On occasions such as the Sun Dance of the Plains Tribes and the Vision Quest, it is not uncommon for many people to fast from all food and water for several days.

Prayer and action are integrated. Prayer is a sacred action celebrated in a human and relaxed manner without the dualism of the Western European tradition which is so foreign to the traditional Native American way of living.

I recall vividly a learning experience in prayer I had shortly after I began living with the Northern Cheyenne people. One



old Indian chief stopped by one afternoon and shared with me a number of concerns within his family. He asked me to pray. My instinctive reaction was to promise a remembrance of these "intentions" (notice the emphasis on the head vs. heart mentality) at the liturgy to be celebrated the following day.

The old chief appeared to be disappointed in my lack of understanding and quietly remained

and waited. Upon inquiry, I learned that he wanted me to pray with him now, not tomorrow or during some other set-aside prayer period. He taught me the beauty of spontaneous prayer much better than any treatise recommending spontaneous prayer would ever do.

Another way in which we can learn from Native American culture relates to the problems we have created for ourselves and all

other people living on the earth as a result of our Western European emphasis on the possession of material things. This cultural value has led to stockpiling, hoarding, acquiring everything possible and an obsession with getting ahead even if it means taking more than what is necessary. This kind of thinking also leads to competition, envy, jealousy, violence and building up armies to protect things.

This mentality is contrary to the traditional Native American way of living which is characterized by taking and using only what you need for yourself and your family. Concrete examples of this attitude are evidenced again and again in daily sharing and giving away of what is not needed.

At the time of death, many people in our culture tend to look forward to the inheritance from the deceased person. In contrast, in many of the Native American tribes, the personal belongings of the deceased are buried with time for their journeying back to the Creator. In addition, the relatives of the deceased give away (that is, make themselves poor) in order to honor and express their deep love and respect for the deceased person. Frequently, such gifts are given to non-family members or even total strangers.

Often the worst injustice, be it within a family or among the family of nations, is to expect everyone and everything to be the same. Hopefully, people today are becoming mature enough to realize that what is different is not necessarily bad or wrong, but often is a contribution to the entire human society.

One need only look to the in-

finite variety of God's creation to realize that He calls people to celebrate unity as opposed to uniformity. For it is when people of different cultures come together recognizing their true center as the Father and Creator of us all that real dialogue and sharing become possible. In this unity, there can be no winners and losers, haves and have-nots. There can only be sisters and brothers, fellow travelers in the journey and mystery of life.

Given the history of our relationship with the various Native American peoples, and conscious of this country's strong stand on human rights, it is truly incredible that decade after decade we continue to live with past and present injustices in our relationships with Native Americans who have yet to experience in a real and practical way the reality of human rights in this country.

Is this not the time for grace and healing? Is this not the time to remedy the injustices and heal the wounds afflicting our human family here in the United States? Is it not a crime that, by our silence, we have perpetuated cultural genocide and the inhuman conditions in which many Native American people still suffer in the 1980s?

Christians in the United States, wake up! Let us recognize, understand and admit our sin. Let us correct past injustices and walk side-by-side in solidarity with our Native American brothers and sisters.

There are many, many teachings and gifts to be shared.

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