

5-15-2008

An Ethnographic Inquiry into Prudent Behavior and Culturally Correct Attitudes of Ethnodoxologists Living among the Lakota Oyate

Joseph T. Dorer
Bethel University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/ethno_master

Recommended Citation

Dorer, Joseph T., "An Ethnographic Inquiry into Prudent Behavior and Culturally Correct Attitudes of Ethnodoxologists Living among the Lakota Oyate" (2008). *Masters Theses*. 4.
https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/ethno_master/4

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Music and Worship at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.

**AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY INTO PRUDENT BEHAVIOR AND CULTURALLY
CORRECT ATTITUDES OF ETHNODOXOLOGISTS LIVING AMONG THE *LAKOTA*
*OYATE***

A MASTER'S THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF THE CENTER FOR GRADUATE AND CONTINUING STUDIES
BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY

JOSEPH T. DORER

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS IN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

MAY 15, 2008

Copyright 2008 by Joseph Dorer

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY INTO PRUDENT BEHAVIOR AND CULTURALLY
CORRECT ATTITUDES OF ETHNODOXOLOGISTS LIVING AMONG THE *LAKOTA*
OYATE

Joseph Thaddeus Dorer

May 2008

Approved: _____, Thesis Advisor

ACCEPTED

Program Director

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Will Peters, thank you for all of your knowledge, guidance, and insight.

To my mentors, Dr. John Benham, Paul Warnock, and Dr. Jeff Meyer, thank you for challenging me to achieve more than I ever thought possible.

To my family in Arkansas and my reservation family,
thank you for always being there for me in every possible way.

To Leon Matthews, Phillip Piper Sr., LaMoyne Schneider, and my brother,
Christopher Dorer, thank you for all of your invaluable assistance.

A special thanks to Marsha Bon Fleur for her countless hours of tediously and selflessly
transcribing and editing the interviews.

ABSTRACT

For centuries, the indigenous people of North America have been plagued by white encroachment. People of European descent have come among Native Americans in almost every form imaginable. They have been treasure seekers, soldiers, bearers of horrific diseases, liars, rapists, murderers, missionaries, anthropologists, government workers, doctors, and teachers. In the summer of 2004, in spite of my own reluctance, I became part of this historically menacing group. Still, I am somewhat different than the others I've already mentioned—I came as an ethnodoxologist.

Other ethnomusicologists have come among the Lakota people to study music and culture including Frances Densmore, R.D. Theisz, William W. Paige, and William K. Powers. Nonetheless, I may be one of the first non-Native ethnomusicologists whose research focuses primarily on Lakota music and culture in the context of Christian life and worship. It is this focus that sets ethnodoxology apart from secular ethnomusicology. (The efforts of Richard Twiss and Dr. Gerald Yellowhawk—who are both Lakota—could also be considered ethnodoxological.)

Since I am one of the first of my kind, this work is an attempt to lay groundwork for other ethnodoxologists that may follow my lead. Using the data from eleven in-depth interviews that I've conducted with Will Peters—Lakota father, musician, traditionalist, teacher, and believer in Jesus Christ—I attempt to answer the following question: How should ethnodoxologists act when they come to live among Native Americans and what attitudes should they most appropriately harbor inside?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 Introduction.....	1
CHAPTER 2 Literature Review.....	11
CHAPTER 3 Research Design.....	39
CHAPTER 4 Analysis of the Data.....	56
CHAPTER 5 Conclusions and Recommendations.....	67
RESOURCES.....	72
APPENDIX Eleven Recorded Interviews with Will Peters.....	77
Interview I.....	79
Interview II.....	95
Interview III.....	121
Interview IV.....	134
Interview V.....	138
Interview VI.....	145
Interview VII.....	162
Interview VIII.....	178
Interview IX.....	187
Interview X.....	207
Interview XI.....	229

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Ethnodoxologists are multifaceted people. By definition, they are Christian men and women who take an active role in the “theological and practical study of how and why people of diverse cultures praise and glorify the true and living God as revealed in the Bible” (Hall n.d.). Often, these men and women can also be considered ethnomusicologists. This means that their focus is probably musical or musicological. Moreover, several ethnodoxologists have received extensive training in anthropology and/or linguistics. Other ethnodoxologists may choose to focus on additional aspects of worship—both corporate and personal. Finally, by nature, most practicing ethnodoxologists are cultural outsiders who have willingly placed themselves in a cross-cultural setting. It is this “outsider” facet of being an ethnodoxologist that can be the most prominent while working in the field.

In my experience, while living, working, and studying among the Oglala Lakota on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, very few people have recognized me as an ethnomusicologist or ethnodoxologist. I consider this lack of recognition to be something positive, since I would rather be viewed as nothing more than just another human being. Unfortunately, however, I quite often have been seen as something other than “just another human being.” I have had numerous experiences where it was fairly obvious that I was not being treated simply as a man, but rather, as a *white* man. At other times, the fact that I am a Christian has seemed to be at the forefront of my interactions with people. In certain situations, I have also been recognized as an anthropological

researcher. Some of my most positive interactions, however, have been in the role of a musician.

There is no problem with the fact that people on the reservation see me as a non-Native, an outsider, and a white man. Indeed, I belong to these three broad groups of people. Likewise, I am a Christian, an anthropological researcher, and a musician. It is not always something negative when people recognize these various aspects of who I am. What can create issues, however, are the prejudices that Native Americans may have toward these specific groups, reactions by members of these groups to the aforementioned Native American biases, and finally, the perpetuation of the very same negative behavior and attitudes that created these prejudices in the first place.

It is no secret that whites, Christians, and anthropologists are among the least respected and least trusted people by Native Americans in general—and especially among those living on reservations. This lack of trust and respect is underscored by centuries of racism and genocidal policies on the part of all three groups toward the indigenous peoples of the Western hemisphere. The motivation for much of these racist and genocidal attitudes and policies has been and often still is economic and political in nature. However, throughout history, many anthropologists and Christian missionaries who genuinely meant to help Native Americans have nonetheless harbored attitudes and took part in actions that were destructive to the very people whom they intended to serve. What is disheartening is that even after centuries of mistakes, well-meaning whites, Christians, and anthropologists refuse to learn historical lessons and continue to inflict the same age-old wounds upon the Native American community. This is all

compounded by the fact that, especially in immediate areas around reservations, whites are sometimes overtly and deliberately hateful toward Native Americans.

As I have alluded to before, being a white ethnodoxologist means that I am an assumed member of all three of the previously mentioned, unpopular groups. Almost immediately upon living and studying in Pine Ridge, I began to recognize what I perceived to be racial, religious, and even occupational prejudices against me. While people in cross-cultural situations often may feel prejudice that isn't really there, I believe that at least some of my perceptions were substantiated by certain negative things people said and did. Though I cannot deny the fact that many people on the reservation have been extremely patient with me and have shown me a great deal of kindness, I often have—much to my discredit—chosen instead to focus on the actions and attitudes of those who seemed to dislike me, or at times, even belittle me.

Fairly early on in my experience, I began to shy away from things that caused me to feel like an outsider. I cringed whenever anyone would introduce me as an ethnomusicologist or a missionary—I preferred to be known simply as a “student.” I was embarrassed to carry around my video camera and recording equipment at pow-wows. I became reluctant to conduct interviews because I didn't always feel trusted, and little else could make me feel so white. Additionally, I began to distance myself from other whites, and more specifically, white Christians. Sometimes in conversations, I have even proudly pointed out those parts of my ancestry that are non-European.

In doing all of these things, it is not as if I was ashamed of who I am or even that I wanted to be someone that I am not. While I cannot deny the fact that I sometimes find

myself wishing that I could be a Native American, this has never been a major motivational factor for any of my behavior. Instead, I see this desire as being a feeling that is natural and probably typical among most outsiders who live and work on a reservation. What I've really searched for is common interests and shared experiences. During my time living among Lakota people, what I usually wanted most was just to be accepted for who I am.

Of all the various roles that I have assumed while living on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, being a musician seems to be the mode that is most widely accepted without prejudice. People on the reservation enjoy a diverse variety of music and many have a very sophisticated appreciation and understanding of it. In music, I seem to have found a common ground. As a musician, I sometimes actually feel trusted and respected. Nonetheless, even as a musician, I have run into some walls—especially in certain situations regarding traditional Lakota music.

For me, it has been a daily battle to know exactly how to be. I am constantly assessing my behavior—whether I am being too “white” or whether I am trying to be too “Indian.” Either one can be considered offensive by certain people on the reservation. I especially despise the racism that I encounter—regardless of whether it comes from Natives who don't trust whites or whites that don't trust Natives. As a white person living and socializing among Native Americans, I am adversely affected by both kinds of racists.

Walking away from the situation seems like the easiest thing to do in light of all these issues. Off the reservation—in the “white world”—I would not constantly be treated

as an outsider. On the reservation, I am member of a minority group, and for the first time in my life, I have to face some of the same struggles that darker-skinned people face where I come from. If I left, most of these struggles would disappear. It is probable that there are several people who wouldn't have to think twice about escorting me—and all other non-Natives—right off of the reservation. However, besides possibly putting me in a more comfortable situation, I truly do not know what my leaving would really accomplish.

Regardless of any hardships that I might face, I love living on the reservation. In many ways, it is home to me now. There are several people here who are like family to me, and on most days, it is rather difficult for me to be lonely. Reservation life has become a huge part of who I am. Because of this, leaving might actually put me in a *less* comfortable situation.

Comfort, however, should certainly not be the reason why a person enters a career in ethnodoxology or even ethnomusicology. Quite often, at the very heart of these two interconnected fields is a commitment to cross-cultural studies—which also usually means a commitment to stepping outside of one's comfort zone. My initial interest in missions-focused ethnomusicology came with a realization of all the damage that white missionaries have done throughout the world by forcing European and Euro-American culture and standards upon those whom they evangelize as if these are inseparable from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. With this realization came a desire to confront some of the issues created by those who came before me. Indeed, I sought a

career as an ethnodoxologist in order to take on issues like racism, not to run away from them.

Need for This Study

In the case of the Oglala Lakota, much of the distrust among them concerning certain groups is—to an extent—justified. Still, regardless of how justified it may be, this lack of trust can be destructive and especially unfair to those well-meaning outsiders who are genuinely seeking meaningful relationships with Lakota people. Moreover, a continued suspicion among the aboriginal people of North America that most whites and Christians seek to destroy their culture and way of life will most likely lead to the perpetuation of its status as “one of the most resistant groups to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world today” (Smith 1998, first page of “Preface”).

As an ethnodoxologist living and working on an Indian reservation, it is my responsibility to be an agent of change in a situation where change is clearly needed. This study is an attempt to enter into what I believe should be an ongoing, cross-cultural conversation. It is not as if I have some delusion that this work alone will make a huge impact on the previously mentioned negative dynamics. Instead, my intention is for this inquiry to be part of a collective, intergenerational effort to foster mutual trust and respect between Native Americans and non-Natives.

It is my desire that my relationships with people on the reservation will be strengthened through this research. If this is all that I accomplish, I would consider my work to be a success. Beyond this, there is a definite need for open, honest, and current dialogue between Native Americans and non-Natives concerning religious, social, and

interpersonal issues. Becoming a part of this dialogue is one of the main thrusts of this paper. Finally, this inquiry is meant to provide insight for well-meaning ethnodoxologists, ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, Christians, musicians, and non-Natives who are living or who plan to live around or among Lakota people or Native Americans in general. Information contained herein may even be useful for those involved in intercultural endeavors beyond Native America.

Statement of the Research Question

Historically, outsiders have attempted to change the behavior and attitudes of Native Americans. Quite often, their objective was to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream Euro-American culture. In contrast, this study addresses needed changes in non-Native behavior and attitudes. While a secondary goal of this inquiry may be to positively change the hearts of Native Americans concerning outsiders, its primary focus is non-Natives. This is more than appropriate because historically, it is the racism, ethnocentrism, and ignorance of non-Natives that is at the root of many of the problems presented in this paper.

Some Christians may contend that an examination of non-Native behavior—or any behavior—is not really necessary, because if one is Christ-like in his worldview, then everything else should fall into place. I will not argue against the validity of such a statement. However, I would contend that seeking wisdom and understanding concerning people of different cultures and ethnicities *is* having a Christ-like worldview. Moreover, I would point out the various historical atrocities of Christian missionaries in

their handling of Native Americans. Many of these missionaries may have been attempting to lead Christ-like lives, yet they still made crucial mistakes.

Ian Frazier, who is a white man that has spent a great deal of time among the Oglala Lakota, states in *On The Rez* that he looks to Crazy Horse's life for an example of what to do in certain situations—even in his private life away from the reservation (Frazier 2000, 15-17). While Crazy Horse led an admirable life and is the iconic hero of the Oglala, he was still just a man, and unlike Christ, he did not lead a flawless life. Moreover, even if one acquires a great deal of knowledge about his life, it is difficult to know what Crazy Horse would do when confronted with twenty-first-century situations.

Instead of major historical figures like Christ or Crazy Horse, some outsiders look to experienced non-Natives like Ian Frazier and even people like me for guidance. While non-Natives who have spent a significant amount of time among Native Americans may serve as adequate intermediaries, they can never truly understand how it is to actually be a Native American. Although it may require one to step outside of his comfort zone, the most practical and reliable way to acquire information about how an outsider should conduct himself in certain situations while living in an indigenous society usually is to simply ask an indigenous member of that society about it.

During my time living on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, I have had several indigenous consultants who have answered many of the questions that I've had concerning the Lakota way of life. Though I am thankful for the insight that these men and women provided, my understanding of Lakota culture has been, nonetheless, rather piecemeal and admittedly inadequate. This inquiry can be viewed as an organized effort

to gain a deeper, more thorough understanding. At the heart of this study is a series of interviews with Will Peters—Oglala Lakota father, teacher, politician, musician, traditionalist, and follower of Jesus Christ. The main thrust of these interviews is to answer the following question: How should ethnodoxologists behave and what attitudes should they portray when living, working, and studying among the Lakota people? More specifically, the interviews focus on the behavior and attitudes of Christians, anthropologists, musicians, and non-Natives (especially whites).

Limitations and Assumptions

The most glaring limitation of this inquiry is the fact that it is based on interviews with only one person. This also, in my opinion, is one of its strengths. While interviewing a single individual may only yield information based upon a single viewpoint, it would be very difficult to go into such depth and be as thorough with multiple interviewees. The approach of this study is that of a student questioning his teacher about various concerns that he may have. Though this student realizes that other viewpoints exist, he trusts that his teacher has an adequate knowledge of the subject at hand. Moreover, this approach accomplishes one of the original goals that I had when the idea for this inquiry was first conceived: To honor the Oglala Lakota people by focusing on the life and insights of one of their contemporary leaders and musicians.

Though I have attempted to be as in-depth as possible in the interviews, they are based largely on the experiences of only two people—interviewer and interviewee—in our small corner of a vast reservation. Therefore, this study should not be considered to be exhaustive or comprehensive. Rather, it should be read as a general source of

information about common issues that cross-cultural workers may face while living among the Lakota people.

This work is most relevant for white, Christian ethnodoxologists and ethnomusicologists working among Lakota people—especially those working among the Oglala. It is also meant for missionaries, anthropologists, musicians, and other cross-cultural workers who live among or around Lakota people. Certain information contained within this study may also be applicable to those working in other parts of Native America. This is especially true for those living among other Plains and/or reservation-based tribes.

While I use the information contained within the interviews to examine the behavior and attitudes of ethnodoxologists and ethnomusicologists, the value of the data may extend well beyond the focus of this study. Indeed, there is a great deal of information within the interviews that could be applied to other research, so much so, that I consider them to be the real treasure of this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

I have stated previously that I intend for this inquiry to be a part of an ongoing, cross-cultural conversation meant to foster mutual trust and respect between Native Americans and non-Natives. In order to gain a more adequate understanding of where this study fits into the larger dialogue, it becomes necessary to consider other related research and pieces of literature.

To an extent, most literature written about the Lakota or by a Lakota is relevant to this research. Beyond this, books and other publications about Native Americans in general and about broader cross-cultural issues are also pertinent. To present and review all of the possible material here would be an impossible undertaking, and any attempt to do so would be counterproductive. Instead, I focus on what I consider to be some of the most relevant pieces of literature as well as those that have had the greatest impact upon me. Moreover, while some of the literature that I present is quite obscure, several of the better known works included here are held in high esteem by the Lakota reading public in general.

I have divided the literature into four topical categories: (1) White-Native American relations, (2) Christianity in Native America and Lakota spirituality, (3) Anthropology in Native America, and (4) Lakota music and musicology. Some of the literature that I present here fits rather nicely into a single category, while others seem to extend across two or more of the categories. In these more ambiguous cases, I have divided the text based upon subject matter or presented the entire text under the category that best describes it.

White-Native American Relations

When inquiring about prudent behavior and culturally correct attitudes for whites that are living among the Lakota, it may be useful to consult sources that address white behavior and attitudes in general—especially in cross-cultural situations. *Being White: Finding Our Place in a Multiethnic World* is one such source (Harris and Schaupp 2004). The authors use personal experiences, supplemental research, and biblical scripture in laying a foundation for their recommendations to whites concerning race, racism, and interracial interaction. Since biblical scripture is quite prevalent throughout the text, *Being White* was clearly written specifically for white Christians. Still, most of the authors' conclusions could be useful even for non-Christians, and the book certainly is applicable to this study.

Being White challenges the reader to move from a "2-D" perspective of the world where ethnic, cultural, and racial realities are glossed over and evaded to a "3-D" perspective where these realities are embraced (24). This book approaches conflict as a healthy part of cross-cultural relationships and something that should not necessarily be avoided (48-56). Additionally, the authors set a standard of having a biblical foundation fairly early in the text as they use the Book of Acts as a "lesson book" and examine certain ethnically charged events contained therein—especially the division that arises in Acts 6 between the Hebrews and the Hellenists within the early church community (26-29). Within the pages of *Being White*, there are many lessons to be considered, including the concepts of moving beyond “colorblindness” into a full appreciation of other ethnicities (84-96) and whites finding their "white identity in Christ" (142-53).

In order to gain a deeper, more “3-D” perspective of white-Native American relations, it is necessary to examine the history that exists between these two groups. There are many historical sources in existence that address the history between whites and Native Americans. One of the most widely accepted—and most beloved—of these is Dee Brown’s *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (D. Brown 1991). Brown uses authentic and often obscure accounts of various historical occurrences to bring life to the nineteenth-century struggle between Native Americans and the U.S. government for the American West. According to Brown, in *Bury My Heart*, he has “tried to fashion a narrative of the conquest of the American West as the victims experienced it, using their own words whenever possible. Americans who have always looked westward when reading about this period should read this book facing eastward” (xviii).

Vine Deloria Jr. places *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and his own book, *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1988), on his very short list of books that “stand out in the literature about the American Indian because the rest of the field is so easily classified and deals primarily with a fantasy image of Indians, the kind of Indians that many groups of Americans would like to believe exist” (Deloria 2003, 24). A few pages later, however, Deloria implies that *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* was also among several books “on the ‘real’ Indians of yesteryear” that Americans in the 1970s turned to in order to “avoid accusations made by modern Indians” in books like *Custer Died for Your Sins* (2003, 28). Though his book may have had a mixed effect on the reading public, Brown’s own intentions were that the readers of *Bury My Heart* would have a deeper

understanding of the modern Indian by having a knowledge of his history. He concludes his introduction of the book with the following words: “And if the readers of this book should ever chance to see the poverty, the hopelessness, and the squalor of a modern Indian reservation, they may find it possible to truly understand the reasons why” (D. Brown 1991, xix).

In many ways, Deloria’s *Custer Died* stands as a companion volume of sorts to Brown’s *Bury My Heart*. As indicated in his comments above, Deloria himself appears to believe that there is a deeper relationship between the two books. (If I had to choose only two pieces of literature to recommend to outsiders before they visit a Lakota reservation, these would be the two.) It is not really their similarities that cause the two books to complement each other so well; it is the ways in which they are different. Whereas Brown relies heavily on carefully documented sources to bring nineteenth-century events to life, Deloria relies partially on documented historical fact and partially on his own opinions. This is not to say that *Bury My Heart* is in any way superior to *Custer Died*. Brown is a twentieth-century white man writing about events that he did not live through. In contrast, Deloria is a twentieth-century Lakota man writing about events that he *has* experienced. It is precisely this experience that gives validity to Deloria’s more opinionated style. One should certainly keep this in mind as he or she reads through Deloria’s ideas about the state of Native America, the U.S. government, Christians, anthropologists, and other more contemporary issues faced by Native Americans. The only real drawback is that *Custer Died* was originally published in 1969. Nevertheless, many of the realities that confronted Native America at that time are—to a

degree—still in place. (The chapters in *Custer Died for Your Sins* about Christian missionaries and anthropologists are discussed more thoroughly later in this review.)

Even with the rather well rounded picture of the history of white-Native American relations that one gains by considering both *Bury My Heart* and *Custer Died*, there is still plenty of room for further research, particularly regarding information about this topic after 1969. *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to Present, 1492-2000* (Nabokov 1999) is an adequate supplement to any extent of research that one might conduct on this subject. *Native American Testimony* touches upon a full spectrum of issues faced by indigenous North Americans throughout the entire history of their interactions with Europeans and those of European descent.

In *Native American Testimony*, Peter Nabokov compiles an entire anthology of direct quotations, firsthand accounts, and authentic documents by Native Americans. These were collected from various North American tribes and, for the very most part, are concerning their relations with whites and institutions established by whites. The book is split into two major parts: Part I—First “Encounter to Dispossession” and Part II—“Reservation to Resurgence.” In all, the book consists of twenty chapters, each dealing with a significant portion of white-Native history. Nabokov begins each chapter with a more formal research-based prose describing the historical context in which the testimonies occur. Each chapter consists of several related testimonies, and each testimony is preceded by a brief description written by the author. The author’s own writing presents a more general history that can be read separately or in concert with

the testimonies, while the testimonies themselves present a more detailed, experience-based account of history as seen through the eyes of individuals.

Within the pages of *Native American Testimony*, the author has gone to great lengths to present many diverse viewpoints. He presents testimonies from a large number of tribes from geographic locations spanning most of the North American continent. There are testimonies of relatively unknown people and testimonies from internationally renowned people like Crazy Horse (178-79) and Chief Joseph (180-81). Some of the voices contained within this book are more tolerant of whites, Christianity, and anthropology than others. Indeed, there is at least one testimony from a seemingly Christian viewpoint (64-67) and testimonies of Native anthropologists (313-20). There is even an excerpt from the journal of Mary Jemison, a full-blooded white woman who was captured by a Shawnee raiding party in 1758. She was adopted by the Iroquois at age fifteen, died an Iroquois grandmother at age ninety on the Buffalo Creek Reservation, and is treated fully as an Iroquois by the author (73-78).

Nabokov includes Jemison's testimony as an example of a "captivity narrative," which was an early American literary genre that gave "first hand accounts by whites [that] had been abducted by Indians" (73). Many of these types of narratives "reinforced the popular image of the Indian as a bloodthirsty savage," while a few of them, like Jemison's testimony, "tell of the captive's integration into Indian culture" (73-74).

These captivity narratives are not the only accounts by whites concerning their interactions with Native Americans. Throughout history, whites have been quite inclined to write down, record, and reminisce about their experiences with Native Americans.

This phenomenon has produced such classics as Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca's *La Relación* (1542), an account of his sixteenth-century foray into the unknown interior of North America. It has also produced lesser-known accounts such as *Aus dem Tagebuch des Missionars Schmidt in Nordamerika* (Schmidt 1859), which is the journal of a Lutheran missionary named Johannes Jakob Schmidt who worked among various Northern plains tribes in the mid-nineteenth-century. In more recent times, reservation-centered accounts by whites have been fairly typical. For this study, it is more pertinent to focus on these more recent narratives. Possibly as adequately as Nabokov's *Native American Testimony*, these reservation-centered narratives also supplement *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and *Custer Died for Your Sins* with detailed information about white-Native American relations since 1969. Below, I've limited my focus to two examples from the aforementioned category of texts—*On the Rez* (Frazier 2000) and *Keeping Heart on Pine Ridge: family ties, warrior culture, commodity foods, rez dogs, and the Sacred* (Glover 2004), though other accounts of this nature may be of equal value to research in the area of white-Native American relations.

When reading through *On The Rez*, I had no doubt that I was reading the account of an outsider—someone who is not from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Frazier masterfully discusses his experiences with the Oglala Lakota people, both on and off of the reservation, while interweaving events and ideas from his personal life, Oglala Lakota history, and Native American history in general. His friend—and Oglala Sioux tribal member—Le War Lance is a fairly consistent companion throughout the narrative. The book itself is novel-like and, for the most part, should be read through as

a single entity. Some examples of significant topics that are discussed in the book are the author's interview with Charlotte Black Elk (117-21), Father Eugene Buechel's *Lakota-English Dictionary* (Buechel 1970, discussion in Frazier pp.153-56), and the life of SuAnne Big Crow (200-214).

Vic Glover's *Keeping Heart on Pine Ridge* contrasts well with *On The Rez*.

Throughout this narrative, the author maintains the tone of an insider. Whereas Frazier occasionally discusses his life outside of his reservation experience, Glover's approach is one of complete cultural immersion. It was impossible for me to know by what he wrote whether or not he was a Native American—I had to ask around. He never identifies himself as a non-Native. He often discusses the Lakota people in the third person, but also, rather frequently uses the first person plural form when discussing events on the reservation. Moreover, he freely uses local colloquialisms. While Frazier maintains a rather light tone throughout much of *On The Rez*, Glover's tone in *Keeping Heart on Pine Ridge* is even lighter, in keeping with typical reservation culture. Still, there are some similar situations and discussions shared by the two books. For instance, Glover's description of the variety of people whom one might find under the brush arbor at his Sun Dance (Glover pp.104-5) is quite similar to Frazier's description of the people whom one might find at Big Bat's convenience store on a typical summer day (Frazier pp. 51-52).

Although a degree of continuity exists throughout the entirety of *Keeping Heart on Pine Ridge*, each chapter has its own title and can be read individually without losing a lot of meaning. Topics discussed within the book include "Jesus on the Rez" (Glover

pp. 21-22), the treatment of death on the reservation (45-47), and "Rez Dogs" (57-59). Additionally, because Glover actively takes part in ceremonies, valuable information about traditional Lakota religion and peyotism is peppered throughout the text.

Christianity in Native America and Lakota Spirituality

Christian missions to Native Americans throughout the past five hundred years have, for the most part, been a disaster. Throughout much of this time, the battle cry of missionaries was to "kill the Indian, but save the man." In an attempt to bring the joy of Christ to Native American tribes, they instead brought cultural tyranny, racism, and greed. Still, it can be said that because of their efforts, no matter how flawed, the gospel of Jesus Christ did reach the indigenous tribes of North America. Nonetheless, because of this negative history, many Native Americans have, in contemporary times, completely given up on the church—though not necessarily on Jesus—and turned instead to the traditional religion of their respective tribes.

For Christians in general and especially for those working among Native Americans, the chapter in *Custer Died for Your Sins* entitled "Missionaries and the Religious Vacuum" (Deloria 1988, 101-24) may seem like the ranting of a lost and angry man. While Deloria does discount the Christian message as one of "impotence and irrelevance" (112), his call for a national Indian Christian Church run by Native American clergy (122-23) implies that his discontent lies more with white missionaries than Christianity itself. Certainly, a more constructive way to approach this chapter is to read it as a short history of the failures of Christian missions to Native America as well as a rather candid criticism of those missionary endeavors by one whom those missions

were meant to reach. Throughout the chapter, Deloria discusses the historic greed of Christian missionaries concerning land and control. Moreover, the evils of Christian denominationalism and the denominational competition for membership as it has manifested itself in Native America are among the central issues of his criticism. While some of the things that Deloria writes are rather speculative, for the most part, this chapter is a rather sobering revelation of many of the mistakes and failures of Christian missions to Native Americans.

At the time when Deloria was writing *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Native American clergymen were not as numerous as they are today and certainly did not have the national prominence that some currently have. According to Deloria, "[the] major denominations [at the time when the book was being written were] adamant in their determination to exclude Indian people from the ministry" (116). Since that time, however, several Native American clergymen have become recognizable figures within the national evangelical Christian community. Some are noted authors and have written groundbreaking works regarding Christianity in Native America. Below, I examine two such pieces of literature: *Whiteman's Gospel: A Native American Examines the Christian Church and its Ministry Among Native Americans* by Craig Stephen Smith (1997); and *One Church, Many Tribes: Following Jesus the Way God Made You* by Richard Twiss (2000).

Probably more than any other book in this literature review, *Whiteman's Gospel* is written specifically for Native American readers. Throughout the first chapter, Smith is clearly speaking to Native Americans as he attempts to discredit the idea that the

message of Jesus Christ is the "Whiteman's Gospel" by establishing Jesus as a member of a tribal group and a minority group—the Israelites (11-12).¹ Interestingly, in the chapter from *Custer Died for Your Sins* that addresses Christian missions, Deloria similarly distinguishes the religious worldview of the Jews—and in particular, the Hebrews of the Old Testament—as something that Native people can identify with (1988, pp. 103, 120). Echoing some additional ideas of Deloria, Smith suggests the formation of a national Native Christian denomination run by Native American Christian leaders in conjunction with existing churches and mission organizations (Smith, pp. 81-86). Deloria's influence upon Smith's writing is well documented, as *Custer Died for Your Sins* is quoted extensively in *Whiteman's Gospel* (34, 66, 72, 115-16), and these quotations are generally used in the text as supporting material for Smith's arguments and ideas. Still, whereas Deloria for the most part discounts Christianity as a dead religion, Smith is unwavering in his presentation of Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

In the final chapter of *Whiteman's Gospel*, Smith challenges the Native reader to make one of three choices: "Serve the gods of our ancestors, serve the gods in the land where you are now living, [secular America,] or serve the Lord" (131-53, quoting Joshua 24:15, *NIV*). In making this challenge, Smith is not asking the Native reader to give up his culture. Rather, he calls for those Natives who choose to serve the Lord to "allow the Spirit of God to work in [their lives] in such a way that [they] will evaluate [their] cultural

¹ See the discussions in Prompts 4, 9, and 10 of Interview VI. (See Appendix.)

ways in light of the Scripture" (126). In doing so, Smith adequately describes and endorses critical contextualization among Native Americans.²

Like Smith in *Whiteman's Gospel*, Richard Twiss also discusses the issue of contextualization of the gospel among Native Americans in *One Church, Many Tribes*. However, while *Whiteman's Gospel* is an appeal for Christianity to non-Christian Native Americans, *One Church, Many Tribes* is an appeal to Christian Euro-Americans for the validity of using certain items and ideas from Native American culture in Christian worship. Throughout the book, Twiss periodically introduces "some basic historical and worldview differences between Euro-American and North American Native peoples, [hoping to] give [Euro-Americans] some valid cultural insights to better appreciate and understand the thinking of modern Native people" (2000, p. 23). He uses this historical and cultural information as a foundation upon which he presents his ideas about contextualization of the gospel among Native Americans. Contextualization in the form of various positive aspects of Native American culture being redeemed in the name of Christ is the main focus of the book.

Twiss supplements his discussions about contextualization and his redemptive view of Native American culture with additional information and arguments about the importance of Native Americans in world missions. He points out the "unparalleled mission[s] opportunity" that Native Americans have in world evangelism (19-20) and

² According to Paul Hiebert (1998), critical contextualization is a process by which customs and beliefs are "first studied with regard to the meanings and places they have within their cultural setting and then evaluated in light of biblical norms" (186).

argues that "[because of their] culture and unique history, made known around the world through books and movies, more than any other people group [Native Christians] can travel anywhere and be received as ambassadors for the Kingdom" (212).

In particular, Twiss exhibits a strong belief in the powerful ways in which God can use Native American music and dance to spread His gospel. In fact, he devotes an entire chapter to a discussion of the subject. His argument is not so much limited to Native American music as it is for the use of indigenous music in general to be used in Christian worship worldwide. The chapter in *One Church, Many Tribes* is not Twiss's first appeal for the redemption of indigenous music and dance. In 1998, he published a booklet entitled *Dancing Our Prayers*, which is a more concise explanation of his position on contextualization. In that same year, Twiss also wrote "Set Free to be Native and Dance in Worship," an article in *EM News*, which strongly endorses the idea of redeeming indigenous art forms based on an experience that he had in Alaska (1998b). Moreover, Twiss is actually one of many voices in the Christian community who endorse the development of indigenous hymnodies. Even in Native America, the development of Native American hymns has had some success, most notably, the Kiowa hymns that are associated with the book *The Jesus Road* (Lassiter, Ellis, and Kotay 2002).

In his introduction to *One Church, Many Tribes*, Twiss acknowledges that his "views and beliefs do not reflect those of all Native leaders" (23). Many leaders have supported the idea that Native American culture can be redeemed in Christ, but others have not. In particular, the leaders of the Native American District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance formed a six-member task force to "respond to then growing

movement of 'redeeming the culture' evident in [the] Native American evangelical church" at that time. In its position paper, the task force states that while some in the Native evangelical community are promoting the idea that objects "formerly used in animistic worship can be 'redeemed' for use in Christian worship, . . . there is no [scriptural] record of any object used in spirit worship ever being redeemed" (Christian and Missionary Alliance 2000, pp. 2, 5). In a possible response to those who oppose his ideas, Twiss published a revised version of *Dancing Our Prayers* in 2002.

Individuals have written other pieces on both sides of this issue. These include Paul Louis Metzger's article "The Gospel of Genocide and the Good News of Jesus Christ: From Victim to Victor in First Nations Ministry" (Metzger 2003); and Brent Liberda's position paper "The Culturally Correct Gospel and Idolatry of Identity" (Liberda 2004). Interestingly, both of these authors support critical contextualization to some degree in their respective works, while clearly standing on opposite sides of the argument. In "The Gospel of Genocide and the Good News of Jesus Christ," Metzger presents compelling arguments against a "whitewashed" gospel and for the redemption and transformation of Native American culture through Christ. Quite conversely, Brent Liberda in "The Culturally Correct Gospel and Idolatry of Identity" contends that the propagation of a "culturally correct" gospel among Native Americans "leads believers into idolatry rather than disciplining them toward holiness," and is actually "theological liberalism dressed up in Indian garb."

While the evangelical and Protestant communities are still in the process of cutting their teeth on problems related to Native American culture in Christian worship,

the Catholic Church has already reached a level of relative maturity regarding these issues. Once regarded as one of the least-open denominations among Christians to Native American religion, the Catholic Church now embraces traditional Native American spirituality. According to a relatively recent report released by the Catholic Council of Bishops, several "Native symbols" were reportedly being used to varying degrees in Christian worship by many of the Roman Catholic churches in predominantly Native American parishes across the United States. The various "symbols" that are mentioned in the report include smudging, the medicine wheel, Native American naming ceremonies at baptism, Native American drums, and Native American melodies adapted for the liturgy, to only name a few (Catholic Council of Bishops 2002). Additionally, the use in Catholic schools of educational resources like *Lakota Life*, which is a book for preteen and adolescent students designed to "provide an exchange of Lakota and Christian ideas," has been encouraged by the upper echelon of Catholic leadership in the United States. According to its author, "[the] overall purpose of [*Lakota Life*] is . . . to show that the Gospel of Jesus can be introduced to a culture without destroying [that culture]" (Zeilinger 2003, inside of back cover).

For the most part, *Lakota Life* presents Christian and Lakota ideas about spirituality in a parallel manner; there is very little mixing of the two within the book. The idea of Christianity and traditional Lakota religion being parallel belief systems is even more substantially presented in *The Pipe and Christ: A Christian-Sioux Dialogue* by William Stolzman (2002). This book is based on information and ideas that were gathered by the author and others in multiple meetings between medicine men and

pastors of varying Christian denominations as they discussed the relationship between the Lakota religion and Christianity. On the surface, the book is merely a presentation of the information from those meetings, which took place on the Rosebud Indian Reservation between 1973 and 1979. Still, on a deeper level, this book can also be read as the personal journey of discovery by the author from relative ignorance into a better understanding of both Christianity and Lakota spirituality. Because Stolzman is a Catholic priest, many of the parallels and comparisons that he makes with the Lakota religion are more specifically Catholic than ecumenically Christian. In the end, he concludes:

[A] person can practice the Lakota religion in a totally orthodox way and also practice the Christian religion in a totally orthodox way—each at its appropriate time—both with a faith and interrelationship that encompasses the real situation of the individual, bringing blessing from God, *Tunkasila* and Father, for *mitakuye oyasin* and the People of God through the Pipe and Christ (218).

Stolzman writes *The Pipe and Christ* for both Native Americans and non-Natives, both Christians and those practicing the traditional Lakota religion. On the other hand, Stolzman's manual *How To Take Part in Lakota Ceremonies* (1995), which is meant to complement *The Pipe and Christ*, is written specifically for those who lack knowledge about the Lakota religion, especially non-Natives and Christians. As its title suggests, this book is a guide for people who are unfamiliar with certain Lakota rituals, designed to assist them in correctly participating in those rituals. The book "emphasizes the practical and action side" of six different ceremonies—"the Pipe ceremony," "the Sweatbath ceremony," "the Vision Quest ceremony," "the *Yuwipi* and *Lowanpi* ceremonies," and

"the Sundance ceremony"—in order to help outsiders and beginners participate in these Lakota rituals with confidence (back cover, table of contents).

It is important for any outsider who is planning to live among Lakota people for any length of time to actively seek information about the traditional Lakota religion. Central to an understanding of Lakota spirituality is knowledge concerning the Sacred Pipe and the seven sacred rites. There are numerous resources available, like the aforementioned books by Stolzman, to ascertain such knowledge. However, one of the most legitimate sources would be *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Sacred Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Black Elk 1989). This is a book that was recorded, compiled, and edited by Joseph Epes Brown. In the book, Nicholas Black Elk's recorded accounts, which were originally in Lakota, were translated into English by his son, Benjamin Black Elk.³

Nicholas Black Elk began his life in "the freedom of the plains and hunted bison." He fought against U.S. soldiers at the Little Big Horn, was at the massacre at Wounded Knee Creek, and was friends with many renowned warriors and leaders. As a youth, he received instruction from great holy men concerning the mythology and spiritual ways of his people. As he got older, he himself received visions and became a great, respected spiritual leader (J. Brown 1989, xiv-xv).

Black Elk was a Christian—a noted Catholic missionary among his people—and a traditional Lakota spiritualist (Bordewich 1996, 225-27). In his foreword to *The Sacred*

³ It should be noted here that Joseph Epes Brown originally became familiar with Black Elk by reading *Black Elk Speaks* by John Neihardt (1932).

Pipe, he acknowledges that “God sent to men His son, who would restore order and peace upon the earth” and that “Jesus the Christ was crucified, but shall come again at the Last Judgment, the end of this world or cycle.” He affirms that he “understand[s] [these things] and know[s] that [they are] true.” Furthermore, Black Elk states:

The white man should know that for the red people too, it was the will of *Wakan Tanka*, the Great Spirit, that an animal turns itself into a two-legged person in order to bring the most holy pipe to His people; and we too were taught that this White Buffalo Cow Woman who brought our sacred pipe will appear again at the end of this ‘world,’ a coming which we Indians know is not far off. . . . Then they will realize that we Indians know the One true God, and that we pray to Him continually (Black Elk xix-xx).

Black Elk intended this book to explain “the major rites of the Oglala Sioux, in hope that in this manner his own people, as well as the white men, would gain a better understanding of the truths of their Indian traditions” (J. Brown 1989, xv). The book itself consists of eight chapters. The first chapter is entirely devoted to the story of the sacred pipe and how it came to be acquired by the Lakota people. Each of the remaining seven chapters is reserved for one of the seven sacred Lakota rites: the Keeping of the Soul, the Sweat Lodge ceremony, the Vision Quest, the Sundance, the Making of Relatives ceremony, Preparing a Girl for Womanhood, and the Throwing of the Ball. (Unlike Stolzman's *How To Take Part in Lakota Ceremonies*, *The Sacred Pipe* does not include information about *Yuwipi* and *Lowanpi*.)

In addition to *The Sacred Pipe*, there are several general sources available regarding Lakota religion and spirituality. Two such books are William K. Powers' *Oglala Religion* (Powers 1982) and Stephen E. Feraca's *Wakinyan: Lakota Religion in the*

Twentieth Century (Feraca 1998). *Oglala Religion* is a relatively comprehensive source that possibly can be considered an anthropological masterpiece. *Oglala Religion* reaches beyond a mere discussion of spirituality, ritual, and practice by not just mentioning, but by giving full consideration to pertinent cultural, etymological, linguistic, cosmological, historical, and socioeconomic information. *Wakinyan* is not as comprehensive of a work as *Oglala Religion*; it is an older, shorter book that is actually used as a resource by Powers in his book. *Wakinyan* was originally written in 1963 as a report for the Department of Interior and specifically concerns the religious practices of the Oglala Lakota and Sicangu Lakota. While Feraca's report may certainly offer additional insight into traditional Lakota religion, the fact that peyotism and herbalism among the Lakota are each respectively given an entire chapter of consideration is what sets *Wakinyan* apart from many other similar sources.

Anthropology in Native America

Almost since the initial contact between Europeans and Native Americans, anthropology—or its predecessor, proto-anthropology—has been a part of how outsiders approach and deal with Native Americans. “On his second voyage to America in 1493, Christopher Columbus brought along Friar Romon Pane for the express purpose of collecting all the data he could from the natives concerning 'their ceremonies and their antiquities'” (McNeil 1987, 13). Ever since that time, outsiders have been interested in Native American culture and society. They've collected data through observation, interviews, conversations, audio/video recordings, and surveys. Some are especially noted for the way they have coldly disrupted the graves and sacred sites of Native

Americans in search of additional data about their past. Furthermore, they've synthesized their data into books, reports, and films, most of which have historically not been particularly useful economically or otherwise to the very people who served as their subjects (Forbes 1971, Deloria 1988). All of this has been done in the name of anthropology.

Because of its extensive history among the indigenous people of North America, the field of anthropology has collectively produced countless works of literature and film about Native Americans. The purpose here is not to attempt a review of all of these works. Rather, my concern here is those works that specifically discuss the field of anthropology as it has manifested itself among Native Americans.

One of the most outspoken authors concerning the misdeeds of anthropologists among Native Americans was Vine Deloria Jr. In *Custer Died for Your Sins*, he devotes an entire chapter to the subject—"Anthropologists and Other Friends" (1988, 78-100). In this chapter, as expected, Deloria does not speak kindly of anthropologists. He opens the chapter with the following words:

Into each life, it is said some rain must fall. Some people have bad horoscopes, others take tips on the stock market. McNamara created the TFX and the Edsel. Churches possess the real world. But Indians have been cursed above all other people in history. Indians have anthropologists (78).

Throughout the twenty-three pages of this chapter, Deloria lays out his argument against anthropology. He begins by demonstrating the seemingly inherent need of anthropologists to make definitive generalizations about Native Americans like "Indians are bicultural" or "Indians are a folk people," He also implies that competition exists

between opposing schools of anthropological thought over which of these sociological slogans actually define Native Americans and which ones do not (80). He proceeds by describing how all of this anthropological one-upmanship has most often hurt Native Americans in the end. (This idea of competition between anthropologists over Native Americans is quite reminiscent of the denominational competition that Deloria discusses in his chapter about Christian missionaries.)

Most of the anthropological conjectures and generalizations that Deloria highlights in this chapter are based on an outsider's idea of what constitutes a "real Indian." These romanticized ideas have often, as suggested by Deloria, created a sense of inadequacy among Native Americans (82). Throughout the chapter, Deloria brings to light some of the more popular anthropological ideas about "real Indians" and describes how those ideas have negatively affected Native America.

Deloria claims that "like the churches, [anthropologists have] become the forerunners of destruction." He continues by stating, "Like the missionaries, anthropologists have become intolerably certain that they represent ultimate truth." As he did with Christianity, Deloria implies that anthropology is irrelevant to Native Americans, while not completely dismissing it. In the end, he implores anthropologists to "begin helping Indian tribes instead of preying on them" (99-100).

Nearly thirty years after the original publication of *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Vine Deloria Jr. released another book that addresses the field of anthropology—*Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (1997). What Deloria does in this book can possibly be dismissed as his attempt to unfairly advance Native

American wisdom while debunking proven scientific theory. Because his arguments are so compelling, however, probably a better way to read this book is as a case for common sense and a case against the myths that have been created by scientists to compensate for those things that still remain a mystery to them. Instead of simply saying "we don't know" or "we don't understand this yet," they create theories, which are oftentimes not well supported by fact or evidence, but are nonetheless widely accepted.

In the book, Deloria makes compelling and well-supported arguments against certain conjectures of science in general—and particularly those of physical anthropology. In *Red Earth, White Lies*, Deloria rocks the very foundation of anthropology as a field by seemingly exposing the truth about some of the widely accepted theories that lie at the core of anthropological research. For instance, he devotes a significant portion of the book to building a case against the Bering Strait land bridge theory (47-98). The idea that the ancestors of Native Americans crossed over a bridge of ice from Siberia to Alaska is a scientific “truth” that many people, including many Native Americans, blindly accept without question. However, through his extensive research and subsequent arguments, Deloria brings to light the need for all people to at least question the dogmas of science and anthropology, if not dismiss them altogether.

As a Lakota anthropologist, Dr. Beatrice Medicine puts a more positive face on the field of anthropology among Native Americans in her book *Learning to Be an Anthropologist & Remaining “Native”: Selected Writings*. The book itself is made up of thirty different essays. For the purpose of this review, I only focus on certain essays

from this collection that directly address anthropology in Native America, though all thirty essays, at least in some form, provide additional insight into this subject and the condition of Native America in general.

In the first essay—which is an autobiographical sketch from which the entire collection receives its title—Medicine describes the struggles and ethical considerations that she faced as a Lakota woman entering a career that is stereotypically reserved for white males (3-15). Moreover, she highlights the advantages and disadvantages that are afforded an anthropologist if she happens to be a Native American insofar as her actual ability to conduct credible research among other Native Americans.

Later in the book, she includes an essay that discusses anthropology as the “image-maker” of Indians (289-94). In the essay, Medicine criticizes anthropologists and even entire schools of anthropology for relying too heavily on the written words of misled and ill-informed outsiders—“so important in academia as the documentable source” (290)—in their research. Medicine implies that by listening only to etic voices and largely ignoring the emic ones, a false image of Native Americans has been created. Interestingly, this essay echoes some of Deloria’s comments in *Custer Died for Your Sins*, especially his call for anthropologists to conduct applied research instead of pure research (1988, pp. 80-81, 99-100).

The final essay in this book is written somewhat in reaction to both *Custer Died for Your Sins* and *Red Earth, White Lies*. Medicine uses the essay as a forum for the discussion of “the interface of American Indians and anthropologists” (323). Compared to Deloria’s writings, this is a much more positive account of the history of anthropology

in Native America. In the essay, the author recognizes the historical faults of the field of anthropology, while acknowledging the progress it has made, and making recommendations for more practical, relevant, and responsible anthropological research regarding American Indians in the future (323-32).

Lakota Music and Musicology

Among the various indigenous musical traditions in North America, traditional Lakota music is some of the most celebrated and widely acknowledged. Lakota music has a rich history and continues today as a fluid, evolving art form that has influenced and itself has been influenced by other musical traditions—both Native and non-Native. Nonetheless, it remains firmly founded upon the traditions of the past.

Frances Densmore was one of the principle researchers of Native American music in the early twentieth-century. She studied and wrote about the music of several tribes including the Chippewa, the Teton Sioux, the Northern Ute, and the Pawnee. Studying and preserving Native American music was a lifelong endeavor for Densmore.

Teton Sioux Music (1918) is the third of several bulletins that Densmore wrote for the Bureau of American Ethnology about the music of various Native American tribes. Though her research is limited to the Standing Rock Reservation and Sisseton, SD, from 1911 to 1914, it remains *the* definitive collection and analysis of Lakota music. Moreover, because it contains a substantial amount of extramusical data about Lakota culture in general, it is also considered to be “one of the most significant ethnographic works ever published about the Sioux” (DeMallie 1992, back cover of Densmore 1992).

The enormity and variety of this collection is unparalleled by any other source regarding Lakota music. Densmore and principal collaborator Robert P. Highbull collected over six hundred songs—most of which were recorded on wax cylinders. Each song is transcribed into standard Western notation with Lakota text being integrated into the transcriptions when necessary. In such instances, the songs are followed by another presentation of the Lakota text alongside a full English translation. Densmore also includes a prose musical analysis of each song, which often includes some additional information about that particular song's cultural significance.

Teton Sioux Music is not just a haphazard presentation of individual songs. Most of the songs are included in a full melodic and rhythmic analysis of the entire system. Moreover the Lakota system of music that she recorded and transcribed is also comparatively analyzed against the Chippewa musical system from her first two bulletins. Finally, these Lakota songs are presented within prose written by Densmore, which thoroughly examines the cultural activities and ceremonies for which the songs are used and with which they are associated. In doing this, Densmore extensively quotes her Lakota collaborators, who have firsthand knowledge of the songs and the culture. Additionally, there are numerous photographs and illustrations of people and cultural items to supplement the text.

Songs of the Teton Sioux (1999) by Harry W. Paige, Ph.D., analyzes Lakota music as a literary art form. The analysis includes considerations of the various poetic devices used in the songs, comparisons of older and newer considerations of various poetic devices used in the songs, comparisons of older and newer song texts in order to

ascertain the effects of acculturation on the poetry, and finally, linguistic consideration of the Lakota language—as far as its translatability and its effectiveness as a vehicle for literary expression (xviii). Moreover, according to the author:

[This] study of Indian poetry is a study not only of the poems themselves, but the contexts in which they are presented. Many songs are absolutely meaningless without the knowledge of the setting in which they appear. The study of such poetry then must include examinations of relevant contexts—physical, psychological, and spiritual (xviii).

At times, the language that the author uses is outdated—the work was originally published in 1970—and possibly even offensive. For instance, he refers to the Lakota people as “primitive” throughout the book. (During that time, as the book itself sometimes suggests, it was believed by many that Native Americans *were* a primitive people whose culture was fading away into oblivion.) It is somewhat clear then that this type of language is not really a sign of racism as much as it is a sign of the era during which Paige was writing this work. This assertion is supported by the negative tone that the author takes toward whites when discussing the historical oppression of Native Americans by whites in various sections of the book.

The author’s usage of outdated language does not diminish the significance of his work. Through his research, the author is clearly engaging in an active search for meaning and truth about Lakota culture in the texts of these songs. Moreover, some of the music that Paige analyzes is outside of the mainstream insofar as what is typically studied by scholars. In particular, his study of individual utterances and songs (45-55) and his analysis of ghost dance, Native American Church, and *Yuwipi* song texts

(104-40) are significant deviations from what would be considered typical in other ethnomusicological considerations of Lakota music.

Of the more recently published sources about Lakota music, *Songs and Dances of the Lakota* by Ben Black Bear Sr. and R.D. Theisz (1984) is probably the most recognized and widely used. The text is “based largely on the profound knowledge of Ben Black Bear Sr.” and should be considered a “personal document to some degree” (10). The book only contains information about non-sacred songs and dances. It includes basic background information about the Lakota musical style, traditional voice production, song structure, genres, drumbeats, and a short illustrated discussion of basic dance posture and steps. Included also is a discussion by Black Bear Sr. about the role of music in Lakota life, which is presented in both Lakota and English. Finally, as the centerpiece of the work, the background information and text of forty-six Lakota songs of various categories are presented in both English and Lakota. (The book is accompanied by four cassette tapes.)

Theisz followed *Songs and Dances of the Lakota* with *Sharing the Gift of Lakota Song* (Theisz 2003), which was written as a resource for music teachers. Its purpose is to provide suggestions and information for those educators who wish to incorporate Native American music in general—and Lakota music in particular—into a standard music curriculum. The book includes general information about Native American and Lakota music, transcripts of monologues by Lakota musicians about their craft, and a portfolio of non-sacred Lakota songs. (The book is accompanied by a CD.)

Another source worth mentioning by R.D. Theisz is *Sending Their Voices: Essays On Lakota Musicology* (Theisz 1996). This collection is mostly comprised of previously published articles by the author in various periodicals. Some of the topics addressed include song texts as the centerpiece of Lakota identity formation, honoring songs, and the depiction of foreign enemies in song texts.

Two sources concerning Lakota sacred music are *Lakota Ceremonial Songs* by Albert White Hat Jr. and John Around Him (1983); and *Lakota Songbook Vol. I: Wakan Olowan—Sacred Songs* by Reinzol Last Horse and others (2004). Among other pertinent information, *Lakota Ceremonial Songs* includes a discussion of Lakota song structure and vocables in sacred Lakota music. The book is accompanied by a cassette tape with three pipe songs, two vision quest songs, and nine Sundance songs—all performed by John Around Him. For each song, background information and text are presented in Lakota and translated into English. *Lakota Songbook Vol. I* is more of a cooperative effort by several individuals—performers, translators, and a musical transcriptionist. A CD where Reinzol and Austin Last Horse perform fourteen sacred Lakota songs is available separately from the book—a related DVD is also available. The text of each song is translated from Lakota to German by Martin Krueger, and from German to English by Antjepia Gottschalk. Each song has also been transcribed into standard Western notation by Dr. Paul Riggerbach.⁴

⁴ The publisher has not yet released a second volume of *Lakota Songbook*, but has released two additional CDs of sacred Lakota songs. The publisher has also released an additional related DVD. This entire collection is marketed toward Germans, whose general interest in Lakota culture is notable.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

When discussing this research, it is proper to approach it in terms of two conversations. First, in a much grander scheme—as I have established previously—it is a part of a large, intergenerational conversation between two races and two cultures. Second, at the most basic level, however, it is also a conversation between two people—musician to musician, Christian to Christian, researcher to subject, white man to Lakota man, interviewer to interviewee, student to teacher, and younger brother to older brother.

The research itself finds its very foundation within the lives and experiences of the researcher and the subject. In order for this research to be valid, both the interviewer and the interviewee must be qualified to take part in the two conversations mentioned above. For instance, the interviewer must have spent a significant amount of time experiencing life as a non-Native, Christian ethnomusicologist among the Lakota people in order to know what questions to ask and how to properly analyze the responses. Likewise the interviewee must have had the proper experiences within his own life in order to properly and honestly answer the interview questions.

The purpose of this chapter is to clearly describe the design of this research project. While the methods and procedures used herein will be thoroughly discussed, a great deal of space will also be devoted to establishing the legitimacy of both the interviewer and the interviewee through relevant biographical and autobiographical information. As I have already implied, the legitimacy of this research and its design is truly based on the legitimacy of both the researcher and the subject.

Background: The Researcher

I was born and raised in central Arkansas and have lived there most of my life. In my youth, I was influenced by four rather distinct cultures: (1) the Northern/Midwestern, urbanite culture of my parents, (2) the Southern "white" culture of most Arkansans, (3) the Southern "black" culture of many of my African American schoolmates and friends, and (4) the Italian-American culture of many of my neighbors in my hometown of Little Italy. All four of these cultures played significant roles in my development.

I was raised in a strong Catholic household and made a decision to recommit my life to Christ in my late teens. While studying music composition and vocal music at Henderson State University in southern Arkansas, I felt a strong pull toward Christian missions, and was especially influenced by others to consider a career in missions-focused ethnomusicology. I graduated Henderson with a Bachelor of Arts in Music degree in 2001. After considering several options, I enrolled in the Master of Arts in Ethnomusicology degree program at Bethel College (now University) in Saint Paul, Minnesota in 2003. (The program at Bethel integrated a Christian missions focus into a standard ethnomusicology curriculum.) In July 2004, I completed all of the required course work for my degree, save the internship and thesis portion of the requirements. On July 30, 2004, I began my ethnomusicology internship on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and in many ways, the work that I began during that internship will not truly end until this project is complete.

Of all of the people groups that there are on this earth, I was least interested in Native Americans. Though—as I have pointed-out before—I come from a culturally

diverse background, I did not come into contact with many American Indians until I came to Pine Ridge in 2004. Even though Arkansas is full of people who claim Native American ancestry, most people there do not identify themselves as "Native Americans." (Because of these ancestral claims, the racism towards Native Americans that is quite commonplace in South Dakota and Nebraska is not something that I have ever really encountered in Arkansas.) Before I came to Pine Ridge, I viewed Native Americans as more or less a legendary race of people that would soon completely fade away into the abyss of the great American melting pot. Over the course of the last three years, however, I have come to a much deeper understanding of who Native Americans are on a rather personal level.

Whereas the four previously mentioned cultures played important roles in my development as a child and young adult, the traditional Lakota and reservation cultures have likewise made a significant impact upon who I am today, and my initial disinterest in Native America has faded. In many ways, the histories of these peoples are also *my* history. For if you live among a people, their struggles and their successes—past, present, and future—also become yours. Because of this, I have always listened with pride as my parents discuss their lives as children and young adults growing up in the Chicago area. Likewise, I have also found great pride in being born in the South, and though I do not identify with its racist past, I have made attempts to understand it. As a child, I always had many black friends, and I was able to share in the richness of their history and culture as it was a major part of the curriculum at most of the schools that I attended. In the same way, when my brother authored and compiled *Boy the Stories I*

Could Tell... A Narrative History of the Italians of Little Italy, Arkansas (Dorer 2002)—a book about my hometown—I read it as an insider, even though I am not an Italian.

Therefore, it is not surprising at all to me that when I read and hear stories about the history of American Indians, I view it as a partial history of who I am. (When one of my acquaintances angrily labeled the Lakota "a conquered people" in my presence and seemingly stood proudly as a son of their "conquerors," I simply could not identify with him, and instead I stood as one of the "conquered.")

My official internship on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation was split between two separate periods: July 30, 2004 through September 8, 2004; and October 17, 2004 through November 20, 2004. Throughout this time, I focused on absorbing as much of the culture as possible. During my internship, I acted more like an anthropologist than at any other portion of my stay in Pine Ridge. I attended local church services, a Sundance, a *Yuwipi*, a traditional funeral, and four pow-wows. I conducted several interviews with musicians and pastors—some whom are rather prominent individuals. Moreover, I made recordings of the interviews and certain cultural events and also kept a rather detailed daily journal.

I returned to Pine Ridge in February of 2005 and have lived there ever since. My main reason for returning was the development of indigenous church musicians and worship leaders. I continue in this work even today, but my progress has been slow and oftentimes misguided. In fall 2005, I began working as a music teacher at Wounded Knee District School and am presently finishing my third year there.

For the most part, I made an attempt to behave more like a resident than a visitor when I first returned to the reservation in 2005. I no longer kept a journal, I conducted only one additional interview since then, and I attended cultural events mostly for social reasons. Returning to my role as an interview-conducting ethnomusicologist over the course of the past year for the sake of this research has not been easy or comfortable for me because this role makes me feel more like a tourist than a resident. However, the stronger bonds of friendship that I have formed with the subject and the greater understanding that I have gained through the interviews have made the process worthwhile.

My initial impressions of Will Peters came during my internship when I read several of the articles that he wrote in the *Black Hills People's News*. During this time, some of his articles were rather critical of certain Christians in the community. Because of this, I was reluctant to seek him out, though he had been suggested as a good person for me to interview. I finally met Will Peters for the first time on August 29, 2004, in Manderson, South Dakota at the funeral of Margaret Yankton. However, I did not really begin to know him on a personal level until spring 2005, when I approached him about taking Lakota singing lessons from him. I was not diligent in practicing the music that Will taught me at this time, so we only had a few sessions of music lessons. I learned a lot about Lakota music in the short time that we spent together, and I hope to resume the relationship that I had with him as a learner of Lakota music sometime soon. After the Lakota music lessons were discontinued, I still interacted with Will socially, and our knowledge of and trust for one another continued to grow. In May 2006, I presented

Will with the idea of conducting a series of interviews with him for this study. He agreed, and in August of that year, we had our first interview session.

Background: The Subject

Will Peters was born on January 5, 1961, in Oakland, California. His family was living there at the time as part of the Indian relocation program under President Eisenhower. Soon after his birth, his family returned back to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation—living sometimes on the reservation itself and sometimes in surrounding areas such as Rapid City and rural Nebraska. Will is the sixth of nine children.

When they finally moved back to the reservation permanently in 1974, Will's family settled in the Pass Creek area. For the most part, his father is absent from his childhood memories. He was raised by his mother and her side of the family. In particular, his maternal grandmother played a large role in the early stages of his life.

Will's grandmother considered both the Holy Bible and the Sacred Pipe to be sacred and equal. Because of her high regard for both Christian and Lakota ways, she had some children who followed more of a Christian path, some who practiced traditional Lakota religion, and even one son who was active in the Native American Church. Though the religious diversity among his family members did at times cause disunity and religious dissonance, it still played a rather positive role in Will's spiritual development. The spirituality of his grandmother as well as that of his uncles and aunts laid a foundation for the man that Will has become.

As a child, Will idolized his older brothers. One in particular—his second to the oldest brother—became interested in the traditional Lakota way of life and in Lakota

spirituality. He often talked about these things in Will's presence. Moreover, he was a singer and also often sang Lakota music around Will. In an attempt to emulate his brother, Will began to practice drumming and singing on his own—using household items such as wooden spoons, pots and pans, and cardboard boxes. At an American Indian Movement rally in Gordon, Nebraska—when Will was around nine or ten years old—he was able to demonstrate his abilities as he sat around a drum with his brother. This caused their relationship to strengthen, as his brother had no idea that Will could drum and sing. Soon thereafter, Will began singing in a drum group with his brother and some of his cousins.

About this same time, Will also began to develop his abilities in what he calls "*wasicun*" or "white" music. His eldest brother was more interested in this style of music. One day, as this brother was practicing guitar, Will took two sticks and—once again using a cardboard box—began beating time with him. (This likewise strengthened his relationship with his oldest brother.) As Will continued to become a more advanced percussionist, he was asked to play drums with different bands at several "white dances." He was also invited by his uncle—a Church of Christ minister—to play drums at certain church meetings. During this time in his life, Will's interest and participation in both Lakota and *wasicun* music continued to grow.

As time went on, Will's participation in traditional Lakota religion also grew. As he began to get involved, he went on his first *Hanbleca*, which is a sacred time to cry for a vision. This was followed by his participation in his first Sundance. Throughout this time, both his mother and his grandmother supported him in his spiritual endeavors.

In the latter part of his teenage years, Will's life began to change drastically. His mother died during his senior year of high school, and soon after, his grandmother also died. With these two deaths, Will lost the two most influential and supportive people of his childhood and adolescence. (In an event of much less significance to Will, his father also died around this time.) In his grief, Will turned to alcohol and drugs. He also became a violent, socially reclusive person.

Two distinct negative ideologies compounded Will's grief—*machismo* and hatred toward the white race. The former was instilled in Will by his friends and by society in general. (Notions such as "real men don't cry" are common beliefs among those who adhere to this way of thinking.) The latter found its way into Will's heart through his growing awareness of atrocities and injustices carried out by whites against Native Americans. In particular, oral accounts by certain elders concerning the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee had a profound impact upon Will and caused him to become deeply angered toward whites. True healing came for Will at an *Inipi*—or Sweat Lodge ceremony—where he was finally able to cry "tears of grief and mourning for [his] mother and grandmother."¹ Additionally, at the same *Inipi*, Will asked God to remove his hate for white people. Moreover, he made a vow within his heart to never again hate anyone because of his or her ethnic background.

Soon thereafter, Will graduated high school. Around this time, he also began the process of becoming alcohol and drug free. Moreover, he made several attempts at a

¹ See response to Prompt 3 of Interview I. (See Appendix.)

postsecondary education in his early twenties. These include a semester at Oglala Lakota College, a semester at the University of Colorado at Denver, and a semester at Black Hills State University.

Will met his wife when he was eighteen years of age. She has remained a strong, positive, and equal partner in his life ever since. Together, they have raised two sons and three daughters. Additionally, they raised their nephew from early childhood and consider him their son. Will has also been blessed with three grandsons.

Throughout his life, Will has continued to grow as a musician. He sang in various drum groups with his relatives from childhood through early adulthood. While he was a student at Black Hills State, he started a drum group with his wife's uncle and others. At a Sweat Lodge ceremony, the drum was given the name *Oyate Teca* or "young people," and the singers were given the spiritual task of teaching children the songs, dances, and ways of the Lakota people. Will continues to be an active member of this drum group, which has served at countless events both religious and secular. He has also continued his interest in certain Western styles of music—in particular, country, rock, and gospel. In his twenties, he started a country/rock band. This band played numerous gigs at various bars throughout the area. Will eventually disbanded the group and began singing gospel music. He is an accomplished guitarist and songwriter. Since we began our interviews, he has aspirations for and is involved in several recording projects.

As I previously mentioned, the singers in Will's drum group were spiritually appointed to teach children their Lakota culture. Will's drum group made a proposal for a Lakota song and dance class to Loneman School in Oglala, South Dakota. The school

accepted the proposal, and Will began his teaching career in Lakota culture when he was in his early twenties. In the mid-1990s, he left Loneman School to teach Lakota culture at the Pine Ridge Agency School in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. He has also been a part-time Lakota song and dance instructor at Oglala Lakota College. Moreover, he has made time for speaking engagements for short-term Christian missionaries as well as offering occasional private lessons in both guitar and Lakota music. In November 2004, Will was elected to the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council as a representative from Pine Ridge Village. During this term, he continued his work to make improvements in education for reservation students. He lost his bid for the Oglala Sioux Tribal presidency in November 2006. He is currently going through the reapplication process to return to his former teaching position at the Pine Ridge Agency School.

Because of his grandmother's influence, Will walks with his Lord Jesus Christ, and honors Him through participation in and acknowledgement of both traditional Lakota and mainstream Christian beliefs and practices. (Although, he only adheres to those traditional Lakota religious practices that were given to the Lakota by the Lord through the White Buffalo Calf Woman, he does not participate in certain Lakota rituals such as *Yuwipi*, and he no longer attends Christian church services on a regular basis.)

Because he honors both the gospel of the Lord as revealed in the Holy Bible *and* the Sacred Pipe, both Christians and Lakota traditionalists criticize him. Many Christians do not accept him because he has not given up on the ways of his people. Likewise, many traditionalists reject him because he continues to embrace what they see as the white man's religion. Will has tuned all of these negative human voices out and has chosen

only to listen to the voice of his Lord Jesus Christ in regard to how He wants Will to honor Him.²

The Research: Theory and Protocol

Given my difficulties as an entry-level ethnodoxologist living and working among the Oglala Lakota people, an inquiry into prudent behavior and culturally correct attitudes of outsiders who come to the reservation seemed like an obvious direction to go with my research. Instead of conducting interviews with multiple subjects, however, I made the decision to conduct a series of interviews with a single subject in order to build more trust and obtain much deeper insight than one could with several interviewees. Because of his rich spiritual and musical background, as well as his life experiences as a Lakota man living on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Will Peters was more than an adequate choice as the centerpiece of my research.

Prior to beginning the inquiry, the subject was allowed to read the original research proposal in its entirety. Moreover, by signing the informed consent form that I provided him at the beginning of the process, the subject agreed to answer only those questions that he felt comfortable answering and to provide thorough, honest responses to any questions that he did answer. From the beginning, the subject was made aware of the research question; while I was not always rigid in having my interview questions relate directly to that question, having it answered remained the main thrust of the interviews throughout the entire process.

² Information from this section can be found in Interviews I, V, and VII.

The interviews themselves cover several topics directly related to ethnodoxology including: whites/non-Natives and racism, Christianity, anthropologists, and music. Additionally, there are interviews that do not fit squarely into these four categories. These include an interview about Will's life, an unprompted session, a session when the subject interviewed the researcher, and a follow-up interview. Every interview was recorded on an Edirol R-09 WAV/MP3 recorder. Interview questions were derived from my personal experiences, related literature, and in follow-up to the interviewee's previous responses. In some cases, interview questions were provided to the interviewee prior to the interview session. In most cases, however, they were not. The interviews are listed below in chronological order:

Interview I – August 12, 2006 (3:10 PM)
Biographical Information I (1hr 18min)

The purpose of Interview I was to honor the subject's lifetime achievements and to make others aware of them, as well as to obtain biographical information about the interviewee in order to establish him as a legitimate subject for this inquiry.

Interview II – August 20, 2006 (6 PM)
Whites/Non-Natives and Racism I (1hr 58min)

The purpose of Interview II was to discuss the racism that whites exhibit toward Native Americans.

Interview III – September 3, 2006 (Evening)
Whites/Non-Natives and Racism II (57min)

The purpose of Interview III was to continue the discussion from the previous interview about racism. In particular, Interview III focused more on Native Americans' racism toward whites.

Interview IV – September 24, 2006 (7 PM)
Whites/Non-Natives and Racism III (14min)

Interview IV was a rather short session about racism in follow-up to the two previous interviews.

Interview V – September 24, 2006 (7:20 PM)
Christianity I (Personal Testimony) (30min)

The purpose of Interview V was to obtain the subject's personal testimony about his relationship with Jesus Christ.

Interview VI – October 22, 2006 (Evening)
Christianity II (1hr 14min)

The purpose of Interview VI was to continue the discussion of the subject's personal testimony from the previous interview as well as to broaden the discussion into the realm of Christians and Christianity in general.

Interview VII – June 5, 2007 (4 PM)
Follow-Up Interview (1hr 18min)

The purpose of Interview VII was to obtain additional information about the subject's life since there was a rather lengthy break between this interview and the previous one. Interview VII also served as a follow-up interview to the six previous interviews, especially Interviews I and VI.

Interview VIII – June 11, 2007 (12:25 PM)
Unprompted Interview (47min)

The purpose of Interview VIII was to provide the subject with some recorded, unprompted, and unlimited time to talk about whatever he wanted to.

Interview IX – June 12, 2007 (Early Evening)
Anthropology (1hr 25min)

The purpose of Interview IX was to discuss anthropologists and anthropology in relation to Native America.

Interview X – June 13, 2007 (12:45 PM)
Music (1hr 32min)

The purpose of Interview X was to discuss music among the Lakota people, continue the discussion from the very first interview about the subject's musical interests, and to discuss non-Native musicians/musicologists who come to the reservation.

Interview XI – June 19, 2007 (12:19 PM)
Researcher Interviewed by the Subject (1hr 5min)

The purpose of Interview XI was to provide the subject with an unlimited amount of time to interview the researcher about whatever he wanted to.³

The Research: Issues

Because of the humanistic nature of this research, there are some issues that have arisen throughout the process. Some of these may be viewed as weaknesses in the research. Others may be rather neutral in nature or may even serve to strengthen the research. Whatever the case may be, the purpose of this section is to discuss some of those issues as they occurred throughout the research process.

(1) Certainly the most glaring issue in the research is in the length of time

³ Edited transcripts of the interviews have been provided in the Appendix of this document. Recordings of the interviews may be obtained by written request from the researcher.

between formal interviews. There is nothing very regular about it at all. At first, the subject and I agreed to weekly interviews, and this went well for the first three weeks. After this, however, events in both the subject's life as well as the researcher's life created larger gaps between the interview sessions. In particular, the gap between the interview on October 22, 2006 and the one on June 5, 2007 was quite significant. Still, during this time, I continued to have additional community-oriented interaction with the subject and gained even more experience in life on the reservation. Overall, I do not view the extended length of the interview process as a flaw in my research, but rather an unplanned strength.

(2) Originally, I had planned to devote an entire interview to Lakota culture and traditional Lakota religion. I decided against it for two distinct reasons. First, so much research has already been conducted concerning these topics that it would be difficult to expand on what already exists. Second, a great deal of information about these topics is already engrained in the subject's responses throughout most of the interviews.

(3) There are definite issues that should be discussed in regard to the quality of the interviews. They are as follows:

(A) For the most part, as far as I can tell, there is very little incorrect information given in the questions or the responses. But, given the large volume of information, inaccuracy is likely to have occurred at times.

(B) Sometimes, I started interviews with general themes in mind that I wanted to discuss, but would have few specific questions prepared.

Almost always, however, thorough and relevant questions would unfold rather nicely as the interview progressed.

(C) At times, the interviews were awkward, because I found it difficult to state my questions in such a way that the interviewee would clearly understand what I was trying to ask. However, this was not usually an issue.

(D) Sometimes, the interviewee would deviate in his responses from the particular subject that we were discussing. Still, most of these digressions remained relevant to the scope of the entire inquiry.

(E) At other times the interviews became very informal and rather conversation-like. Given the nature of some of the subject matter in the interviews, it was sometimes difficult for me (and possibly the subject) to remain formal and not get caught up emotionally in the discussion.

(F) In many of the interviews, there are varying degrees of background noise, and many times, we were interrupted by people who came into the room where we were having the interview session. In particular, the June 12, 2007, interview was even cut a little short, as the subject was summoned home by his wife. Even so, I had completed all of the questions that I had meant to ask him, and he was already near the end of his response.

(4) Finally, on a rather technical note, the first five interviews were recorded as .WAV files and take up a considerable amount of memory. This has created

storage and transfer problems for me. The rest of the interviews were recorded as much more compact .MP3 files. This could create some minor deviation in the quality of the various recordings and/or any copies made of those recordings.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

In conducting research on relationships among diverse individuals, one has three approaches that he or she can consider: cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral. Many of the cognitive factors in regard to relationships between diverse individuals have to do with human thought processes and “the human need to classify people, objects, and events into categories to understand and respond to the events in their lives” (Johnson and Johnson 2002, pp. 48, 74). Within the context of this inquiry, very little attention has been given to cognitive factors. Rather, the focus of this research is attitudinal and behavioral in nature—how should ethnodoxologists and other outsiders behave when they come to an Indian reservation—and what attitudes should they harbor inside?

Below, I analyze the interview responses of the subject in relation to the attitudes and behavior of outsiders who live, work, and/or interact with the Lakota people—or American Indians in general. For clarity, I have divided this analysis into sections according to relevant issues.

Biographical Considerations

When considering the history of an entire group of people, one should realize that it is comprised of numerous individual histories. Where composite history often fails is in its lack of the personal experiences of common people—especially emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. When analyzing data produced through the interview process, it is important to consider the statements made by the interviewee through the lens of his or her personal history. Insofar as Will Peters’ personal experiences are

concerned, there are several factors that have had an effect on how he responded to the interview questions.

First, Will is the product of failed government policies. The fact that he was born in Oakland, California, is in itself a result of the U.S. government's failed effort to move Native Americans away from reservations and into urban areas in order to dissolve the reservation system and integrate American Indians into mainstream society. This effort occurred in the third quarter of the twentieth-century and is often called relocation or termination—depending upon whether one is talking about the people or their land ownership respectively (Nabokov, 336). Will is also very much a part of the government's poverty-laden Indian reservation policies as he has lived on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation for the majority of his life. Moreover, as a young man, he had a “very intense hatred for the white race” which came out of hearing direct eyewitness accounts of the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre—another U.S. government campaign.¹ It should be no surprise then that his interview responses throughout the entire scope of the research are infused with calls for national activism and governmental policy change.²

Will is also a product of a rich background—both musically and spiritually. Growing up, he had relatives who were Christians, ones who were involved in the

¹ See the response to Prompt 3 of Interview I. (See Appendix.)

² In fact, the entirety of Interview VIII can be viewed as a call “for national activism and governmental policy change.” The interview is a monologue about “righting wrongs” and reconciliation. In the interview, the subject touches upon many of the failures of the United States as a nation. He also discusses the Christian church in America. He says that Christianity in this country has failed because of its complacency. In addition to this, when the subject was given the opportunity to question me in Interview XI, the session was dominated with questions pertaining to the failures of the United States government and the nation as a whole.

traditional Lakota religion, and ones who were involved in the Native American Church. His grandmother—who was a major, early influence in his life—respected and participated in all of these. He had a brother who sang with a Lakota drum group, a brother who was involved in *wasicun* or “white” musical endeavors, and an uncle who encouraged him to play drums during Christian worship.³ The music of Bob Marley also has had a profound affect upon Will throughout his life, especially in regard to actively confronting social and spiritual injustices.⁴

Racism and White-Native American Relations

Historically speaking, encroaching whites have had little regard for the American Indian. They have used despicably creative deception and unspeakable acts of terror to reduce the once prominent indigenous population of the Western Hemisphere to near extinction and political marginalization. In the historic past, whites and the U.S. government have been very outspoken about their genocidal intentions—physically, culturally, and spiritually—in regard to Native Americans. While this brand of overt racism is no longer culturally popular, the fact that white America downplays this history and still views this country as having been founded upon “noble acts of freedom” instead of “acts of terroristic violence” and “extreme acts of greed” remains a source of racial dissonance between whites and Native Americans.⁵

³ See the responses to Prompts 2 and 3 of Interview I and the response to Prompt 3 of Interview V.

⁴ See the response to Prompt 7 of Interview X.

⁵ Quotations are from the response to Prompt 5 of Interview II. Similar material can also be found in Interview VIII.

Racism by whites toward Native Americans is usually subtler in contemporary times. It manifests itself in places of business, in courtrooms, and in dealings with police officers. For instance, according to the subject, police officers and officers of the court emanate an air of racial superiority when they deal with American Indians—as if “they are more sophisticated and more knowledgeable.” Moreover, when Native Americans enter a supermarket, they may be met with “looks of suspicion” as if they “don’t have any money” or as if they are going to shoplift.⁶

While it is unlikely that those trained to work in cross-cultural situations would engage in this type of racism, it is important that we acknowledge both the racism that existed historically as well as the aforementioned contemporary forms of racism. Just as important, however, is that we recognize that *even subtler* forms of racism exist that are more commonly engaged in by cross-cultural workers. For instance, whites may seek validation from other whites to confirm certain statements made by Native Americans as if what they have to say may be less truthful or ill-informed—this attitude is often referred to as “white is right.”⁷ Another form of racism that is still prevalent today is paternalism. Despite academia’s best efforts to expel this defunct thinking from the minds of its constituents, many well-trained cross-cultural workers still conduct their business as if any truly successful endeavor in Native America needs a white hand to guide it. To counteract the draw of paternalism, Will suggests that cross-cultural workers should

⁶ Material is from the response to Prompt 1 of Interview II. A related discussion can also be found in Prompt 10 of Interview II.

⁷ See related discussion in Prompt 8 of Interview II.

become like children in their interactions with those of another culture in order to gain trust.⁸

With the conditions as they are on various reservations, it is easy to get caught up in the notions that American Indians are “drunk and lazy” and that they are poor caretakers of their land. High levels of alcoholism and unemployment are major problems on most reservations—and certainly among the Lakota. Moreover, when an outsider drives through various areas of government-provided housing on reservations, it is not uncommon to see a lot of trash and junk cars.⁹ It is easy to put the entire blame on Native Americans and to make rash judgments about why these things exist on reservations. According to Will, these things should be interpreted as symptoms of poverty and are actually related to the historic effects of the U.S. government’s failures in regard to American Indians.¹⁰ One suggestion that whites often tend to make as a solution to these problems is for Native Americans to simply move away from the reservations—where there are very few jobs and high levels of hopelessness—to urban areas. While many Native Americans *do* leave their reservations in search of employment elsewhere, the subject points out that many families find happiness and security on the reservation regardless of the intense poverty that exists there.¹¹

⁸ See the response to Prompt 9 of Interview II.

⁹ One alternative explanation for the many junk cars that exist on reservations is offered by a character in Kent Nerburn’s *Neither Wolf nor Dog*, where junk cars on reservations are compared to buffalo carcasses—just as American Indians historically used every part of the buffalo to its fullest extent, they are now attempting to do the same with their automobiles (Nerburn 2002, 73-81).

¹⁰ See the discussions in Prompt 7 of Interview II and Prompt 8 of Interview III regarding trash and junk cars. See the discussion in Prompt 11 of Interview II as well as Prompts 1 and 2 of Interview XI regarding alcoholism and unemployment among reservation Indians.

¹¹ See the response to Prompt 3 of Interview I.

Because of the extensive history of racism that exists toward Native Americans by whites, a large degree of distrust and reverse racism now exists toward whites from Native Americans.¹² No matter what positive things a Caucasian person may accomplish in his work among Native Americans, they may be disregarded as the useless meanderings of *yet* another member of the feeble white race. Quite conversely, there is often very little room for error in regard to negative behavior of whites among American Indians; all of the negative character traits that a white person may bring to the table will probably be accentuated and viewed in light of his ethnicity. Moreover, the Lakota term “*wasicun*” is used extensively when referring to whites. The term carries negative connotations in regard to the greed and gluttony of whites—and in that respect, can be viewed as a racial slur—yet it also is used innocently as a general term for the white race.¹³ Additionally, whites may be viewed unfairly in terms of having more money and as having the economic ability to constantly give monetary handouts to those who ask. (American Indians with jobs are often treated in the same way by the unemployed.)¹⁴ Given the history that whites have of exploiting Native American lands and resources, some Native Americans even *expect* whites to share their money as a repayment of sorts. According to the subject, while reverse racism is understandable, it is not justifiable. The implication here is that cross-cultural workers should reject racism in every form, while moving toward an empathetic understanding of why it exists.¹⁵

¹² See the discussion in Prompt 1 of Interview III.

¹³ See the discussion of “*wasicun*” in Prompts 2, 3, and 4 of Interview III.

¹⁴ See the related discussion in Prompt 3 of Interview IV.

¹⁵ See the discussion in Prompt 10 of Interview XI. Also see the response to Prompt 1 of Interview III.

Everyone who lives on the reservation will be judged by others based upon whether they are being “too white” or whether they are trying to be “too Indian.” Given time, outsiders often do this too. In general, both extremes are considered to be negative. Moreover, a high degree of cultural discontinuity exists among many Native Americans—and the outsiders who live among them—between those who adhere to the reservation culture (which is viewed as a culture of poverty), those who adhere to the traditional Lakota culture (which is viewed as a culture of respect and generosity), and those who adhere to the culture of white America (which is viewed as a culture of greed). These issues of cultural identity are especially difficult for whites and “mixed-bloods”—those American Indians who are partially of European descent – as they typically receive the bulk of the criticism, though it can and does go in both directions. Generally speaking, outsiders should avoid conversations about the degree to which a person is “being Indian” or “being white.”¹⁶ The term “*ieska*” should also be avoided as it is often used derogatorily as a racial slur against mixed-bloods, even though it was originally used in reference to those who had the sacred ability to “translate or interpret spiritual voices.”¹⁷

Issues Related to Christianity and Missions

Throughout history, church policies toward American Indians have almost always reflected defunct government policies. Thus, when the government was highly paternalistic in their dealings with Indians, so were the churches. When the government

¹⁶ See the discussion in Prompt 5 of Interview III.

¹⁷ The quotation and related information are from the response to Prompt 3 of Interview III.

sought to destroy traditional American Indian culture, the church often condemned those cultures as forms of paganism. Even now, when the promotion/preservation of Native American culture and language is official U.S. government policy, insofar as Indian education is concerned, certain churches are also encouraging the use of indigenous languages and culture—which may or may not be viewed as a good thing.

According to Will, Christian missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries “made people suffer to such a degree that . . . their descendants don’t have a clue as to who they are. . . . They’re just empty vessels, and that’s all due to the practices of Christianity.”¹⁸ In his lifetime, Will has struggled with Christians forcing doctrines and ideologies upon him as well as generally having a judgmental attitude toward him.¹⁹ In addition to this, contemporary missionaries have aided in perpetuating some of the racist attitudes and behavior described in the previous section—especially attitudes of paternalism, distrust, and superiority.²⁰ Finally, Christian missionaries continually use the extreme poverty that exists on reservations in photograph-laden e-mails and newsletters as a means to raise money for themselves and their organizations.²¹

Compounding all of this is a continued, blatant disrespect toward Native American forms of worship by Christians—both Native and white. There are those who outspokenly question the validity of the Sundance and other ceremonies, while not even attempting to come to an understanding of Lakota spirituality. There are even those who go so

¹⁸ The quotation is from the response to Prompt 2 of Interview VI.

¹⁹ See the responses to Prompts 1 and 4 of Interview V.

²⁰ See the discussions in Prompt 1 of Interview II and Prompt 4 of Interview VII.

²¹ See the discussions in Prompt 12 of Interview II and Prompt 4 of Interview VII.

far as to publicly renounce their Nativeness and physically destroy symbols of Lakota spirituality, such as a Medicine Wheel or a Sacred Pipe.²²

All of these things have led to a great deal of distrust and disdain for Christians by Native Americans. Moreover, it leads to the branding of Native American Christians as “traitors” or practitioners of the “white man’s religion.” Those like Will, who have developed a respect for and a belief in both forms of spirituality, are criticized by Christians *and* Lakota traditionalists.²³ In all of this, it is important for outsiders to not engage in any behavior that promotes hatred toward Christians or any criticism of others’ religious beliefs.

It is not as if Will Peters and people like him believe in two separate Gods or two separate ways to heaven. Rather, they see both the Christian and traditional Lakota belief systems as being interconnected and complementary.²⁴ For Will, Jesus Christ revealed Himself to him as a Lakota.²⁵ To his credit, like Richard Twiss and Craig Smith, Will engages in a degree of critical contextualization—he has chosen to not participate in the darker forms of Lakota spirituality. Unlike Twiss and Smith, however, Will fully participates in the Lakota ceremonies brought by the White Buffalo Calf Woman—also known as the Seven Sacred Rites of the Lakota—because he believes that these were the only ceremonies that were given to his people by God.²⁶ Moreover, he believes in keeping the two traditions separate. Once again, unlike Twiss, he does not believe that

²² See the discussions in Prompts 5 and 7 of Interview VI and Prompt 5 of Interview VII.

²³ See the discussions in Prompts 1, 4, 9, and 10 of Interview VI and Prompt 2 of Interview VII.

²⁴ See Interview V and the discussions in Prompts 4, 5, 7, and 8 of Interview VI.

²⁵ See the response to Prompt 1 of Interview V.

²⁶ See the response to Prompt 6 of Interview VII.

any aspects of Lakota spirituality or Lakota culture are in need of redemption.

Interestingly, all three men—Twiss, Smith, and Peters—consider themselves to be anti-syncretic.²⁷

Ethnomusicological Research, Music, and Respect

While the intentions of ethnodoxology may be pure, we must realize that the development of an indigenous hymnody may not always be relevant to the respective cultures that we are meaning to serve. In conducting ethnomusicological research, we must learn to develop a respect for the music, musicians, and musical cultures that we are studying—even so far as to abandon whatever lofty goals we may have set for ourselves in regard to our research. In light of the various points of view concerning Christian worship among Native Americans that were discussed in the previous section, it is probably not wise for an outsider to either advocate or condemn the use of Lakota forms of music in Christian worship. Rather, individual Lakota Christians and Christian congregations should make those decisions. It is also important to realize that attempts have already been made to develop Lakota hymns and use the Lakota drum in Christian worship; Will has even been involved in these kinds of endeavors to an extent.²⁸

It is often said that the Lakota drum is the heart of the Lakota people, and its sound is their heartbeat. Traditionally, it is respected as an animate object and is to be given the same consideration that a human being is given. Likewise, songs and dances

²⁷ See the discussions in Prompt 3 of Interview IX and Prompt 8 of Interview X. A broader discussion of the views of Richard Twiss and Craig Smith can be found in Chapter 2 of this work.

²⁸ See the discussion in Prompt 3 of Interview IX and Prompt 8 of Interview X.

are viewed as gifts that are to be respected.²⁹ While some Lakota people do not believe that whites should participate in Lakota music and dance, others like Will see non-Native participation in these things as opportunities for racial healing and peace.³⁰ Just as it is important to respect the music, it is also important to respect the viewpoints of those you are immediately around concerning your musical participation.

²⁹ See the response to Prompt 3 of Interview X.

³⁰ See the discussion in Prompt 4 of Interview X.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

At the end of the final interview, Will Peters asked me the following two questions: (1) “Do you see yourself as moving on from this reservation, or do you see yourself as continuing to find a spot here in Lakota country?” and (2) When you leave here, “what is the best thing that you take from [the reservation] and that you’ll walk with?”¹ When I think about these two questions, it is easy to see how they could have been turned around in order to better reflect my attitudes and behavior during my time on the reservation. For instance, instead of asking me if I planned to leave the reservation, he could have asked me why people would want me to stay. In the same way, instead of asking me about the positive things that I would take with me when I leave the reservation, he could have asked me about the positive things that I would leave behind. While these would have been more difficult questions for me to answer, they certainly would have been relevant to the research, and in reality, they should be questions that I ask myself everyday as an outsider who is living and working among the Lakota people.

As a benchmark for successful missionaries and cross-cultural workers, Will states that the people they lived among must have been enriched or bettered in some way.² Moreover, throughout the interviews, he criticizes Christians and other spiritually

¹ See Prompts 11 and 12 of Interview XI. (See Appendix.)

² See the response to Prompt 4 of interview VII.

minded people for their complacency and lack of activism.³ The question that remains for all of us then is whether or not we are willing to make positive changes to the communities around us. In reality, this question could be a challenge to nearly everyone living everywhere—and not just those who are living across cultural lines. Still, those of us who have chosen to live among another people should be constantly challenging ourselves to enrich the lives of those in our communities.

Finding ways to make positive changes is admittedly not always easy to accomplish. Many missionaries and teachers have come to Indian reservations with the idea that they were going to “save the Indians.” More often than not, however, it would have been better if they never had come in the first place; they only made things worse.⁴ In fact, Christian missionaries and other cross-cultural workers have had and continue to have a poor track record in regard to Native America. Historically, most of their best efforts have had disastrous results.

It is, therefore, somewhat perplexing why Will would still say that among the Lakota people, there is a place for whites when—in addition to all of these whites with good intentions—there were and still are many who come to reservations with self-serving motives. It might be that he was simply being cordial, but it is more likely that he recognizes the need for old racial wounds to heal and for positive cooperation to occur between people with different backgrounds.⁵ Additionally, his motives for saying this

³ For example, see the responses to Prompts 2 and 3 of Interview VII and related information in Interview VIII.

⁴ See the response to Prompt 1 of Interview II.

⁵ See the discussion in Prompt 2 of Interview IV.

may partially be based on his desire for white Americans and other outsiders to finally come to terms with the high level of poverty that exists on reservations and how it is a direct result of failed U.S. government policies and the apathy of its citizens.⁶ Whatever the case may be, non-Natives will likely continue to flock to reservations across the country. When they do, it is imperative that they come humbly and with a desire to serve Native America in a way that will produce positive changes.

Recommendations

According to Will, it is important that people who come to the reservation “don’t weaken [themselves by] coming . . . with any preconceived notions about how [to] act [or] how [to] be.” He gives outsiders this advice: “Above all else, . . . just be yourself.”⁷ For those of us who have lived on an Indian reservation for an extended period of time, this statement may carry a special meaning. There is no longer any easy way for me to “just be myself.” Having lived on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation for almost four years, I have in a sense also become a product of the U.S. government’s failed reservation system.

On most days, it is difficult for me to remember how I used to be before I moved onto the reservation. Although most people may continue to view me as an outsider, I have culturally become somewhat of a hybrid. The struggle for me is not so much that

⁶ This desire is well noted in Interview VIII and in other responses throughout the interviews.

⁷ The quotation comes from the response to Prompt 9 of Interview III.

I've embraced the widely respected traditional Lakota culture as much as it is that I have become comfortable with the negative aspects of the lowly reservation culture.⁸

For those who may be planning to live on an Indian reservation, it is important that they become somewhat familiar with the various negative symptoms of reservation poverty—alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, and codependency. While these may have never been struggles before, they definitely may come into play once one moves onto a poverty-stricken reservation. Reservations can be ugly and dangerous places, but if you are truly looking, you will find good people and things that are quite beautiful.⁹ It is these more positive aspects of reservation life that continually draw people back despite the high level of poverty that exists there.

If you are planning to live on an Indian reservation for any length of time and/or are planning to have close interactions with the people there, you can expect to feel a high degree of hopelessness possibly unlike anything else that you have ever experienced. Not only will you have to deal with the negative affects of poverty upon your life, but you may also become the object of racial and religious bigotry. Moreover—especially if you are white and/or a Christian—Native Americans may even view you as a source of the very poverty that probably will—to a lesser degree—also adversely affect you as it has them. With so many potential problems that can result from outsiders moving onto an Indian reservation, it is extremely important that you engage in a great deal of preliminary research and prayer before making such a move.

⁸ The cultural struggles that I describe here are rather secular in nature. In spite of all of these things, I maintain a strong biblical belief in Jesus Christ.

⁹ See the response to Prompt 6 of Interview IX.

Suggested Further Research

Native Americans—and the Lakota people in particular—have to be one of the most perpetually studied groups of people in the history of mankind. In his disdain over being part of a perennially studied people, Will exclaimed, “Enough is enough; it’s time for solutions now.” According to Will, the data that is collected by researchers “is only useful when it’s applied.”¹⁰ The implication here is that even though a large amount of research has been conducted over the years regarding Native Americans, very few problems have been solved. If nothing else, academic research has at the very least played a role in maintaining an intergenerational conversation between whites and Native Americans. Still, with Will’s criticism in mind, it is difficult for me to even suggest any further research.

While there are still several stones to be uncovered concerning the contextualization of traditional Native American culture into Christian worship, Will questioned the validity of squabbling over this type of issue when there are still souls who are lost.¹¹ I have heard others make similar observations concerning contextualization. A more fruitful ethnomusicological study may involve researching the effects of hip-hop music and the hip-hop culture upon the psychology of reservation youth. An extension from this research may be how to use hip-hop music in church worship to draw young Native Americans to Christ.¹²

¹⁰ The quotations and other related material are from the response to Prompt 2 of Interview IX.

¹¹ See the discussion in Prompt 8 of Interview X.

¹² See the response to Prompt 3 of Interview IX. Related information may also be found in Interview VIII and within the responses to Prompt 2 of Interview VII and Prompt 6 of Interview X.

RESOURCES

Works Cited

- Black Bear Sr., Ben, and R.D. Theisz. 1984. *Songs and Dances of the Lakota*. Aberdeen, SD: North Plains Press. (Originally printed in 1976.)
- Black Elk, Nicholas. 1989. *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Sacred Rites of the Oglala Sioux*. Translated by Benjamin Black Elk and ed. by Joseph Epes Brown. Vol. 36 in The Civilization of the American Indian Series. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press. (Original edition printed in 1953.)
- Bordewich, Fergus. 1997. *Killing the White Man's Indian: Reinventing Native Americans at the End of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Anchor Books. (Original edition printed by Doubleday in 1996.)
- Brown, Dee. 1991. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Brown, Joseph Epes. 1989. Editor's Preface to *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Sacred Rites of the Oglala Sioux*. Translated by Benjamin Black Elk and ed. by Joseph Epes Brown. Vol. 36 in The Civilization of the American Indian Series. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press. (Original edition printed in 1953.)
- Buechel, Eugene, S.J. 1970. *A Lakota-English Dictionary*. Pine Ridge, SD: Red Cloud Indian School.
- Cabeza de Vaca, Alvar Nuñez. 1542. *La Relación*. Zamora, Spain.
- Catholic Council of Bishops, Ad Hoc Committee on Native American Catholics. 2002. *Native American Catholics at the Millennium: A Report on a Survey by the Catholic Council of Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Native American Catholics*. Washington, DC. (Accessed July 12, 2007.) Available online at <http://www.usccb.org/education/nativeam.pdf>
- Christian and Missionary Alliance, Native American District. 2000. *Boundary Lines: The Issue of Christ, Indigenous Worship, and Native American Culture*. U.S.A.
- Deloria Jr., Vine. 1988. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press. (Original edition printed in 1969.)

- _____. 1997. *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.
- _____. 2003. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.
- DeMallie, Raymond J. 1992. Comment on the back cover of *Teton Sioux Music & Culture*, by Frances Densmore. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1992. (Originally published as *Teton Sioux Music* in 1918.)
- Densmore, Frances. 1918 (1992). *Teton Sioux Music*. Washington, DC: Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution. (Published initially as Bulletin 61; published more recently as *Teton Sioux Music & Culture*.)
- Dorer, Christopher A. 2002. *Boy The Stories I Could Tell... A Narrative History of the Italians of Little Italy, Arkansas*. Winfield, Kansas: Central Plains Book Manufacturing.
- Feraca, Stephen E. 1998. *Wakinyan: Lakota Religion in the Twentieth Century*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press. (Originally published as *Wakinyan: Contemporary Teton Dakota Religion* in 1963.)
- Forbes, Jack D. 1971. Anthropologists and Native Americans: Comments on M. Estullie Smith's "Southwestern Studies: A View to the Future." *Human Organization* Vol. 30(4): 430-31. (Accessed May 6, 2008.) Available online at <http://www.weyanoke.org/jdf-AnthropologistsAndNativeAmericans.html>
- Frazier, Ian. 2000. *On The Rez*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Glover, Vic. 2004. *Keeping Heart on Pine Ridge: family ties, warrior culture, commodity foods, rez dogs, and the Sacred*. Summertown, TN: Native Voices Book Publishing.
- Hall, Dave. n.d. *Ethnodoxology*. International Council of Ethnodoxologists: Association of Global Christian Worship. (Accessed September 4, 2006.) Available online at <http://www.worldofworship.org/Ethnodoxology.htm>
- Harris, Paula, and Doug Schaupp. 2004. *Being White: Finding Our Place in a Multiethnic World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Heibert, Paul G. 1998. *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. (Originally printed in 1985.)

- Johnson, David W., and Roger T. Johnson. 2002. *Multicultural Education and Human Relations: Valuing Diversity*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Lassiter, Eric Luke, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay. 2002. *The Jesus Road: Kiowas, Christianity, and Indian Hymns*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Last Horse, Reinzol, et al. 2004. *Lakota Songbook, Vol. 1: Wakan Olowan, Sacred Songs*. Ratingen, Germany: Spirit-Star Verlag.
- Liberda, Brent. 2004. The Culturally Correct Gospel and Idolatry of Identity. (Unpublished position paper, which is available from its author; see www.LiberdaFamily.com for contact information.)
- McNeil, W.K. 1987. Introduction to *Native American Legends: Southeastern Legends—Tales from the Natchez, Caddo, Biloxi, Chickasaw, and Other Nations*, comp. and ed. by George E. Lankford. The American Folklore Series. Little Rock, AR: August House, Inc.
- Medicine, Beatrice. 2001. *Learning to Be an Anthropologist & Remaining "Native": Selected Writings*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Metzger, Paul Louis. 2003. The Gospel of Genocide and the Good News of Jesus Christ: From Victim to Victor in First Nations Ministry. (Accessed September 2006.) Published under "Contextualization" at www.globalmissiology.org
- Nabokov, Peter. 1999. *Native American Testimony: A Chronical of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to Present, 1492-2000*. New York: Penguin Books. (Originally published in a shorter form in 1978.)
- Neihardt, John 1932. *Black Elk Speaks*. New York: William Morrow and Company.
- Nerburn, Kent. 2002. *Neither Wolf Nor Dog: On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder*. Novato, CA: New World Library. (Originally printed in 1994.)
- Paige, Harry W. 1999. *Songs of the Teton Sioux*. New York: E-Reads. (Originally published in 1970.)
- Peters, Will, and Joseph Dorer. 2006-2007. Eleven Recorded Interviews with Will Peters for *An Ethnographic Inquiry into Prudent Behavior and Culturally Correct Attitudes of Ethnodoxologists Living Among the Lakota Oyate*, by Joseph Dorer (2008). Transcribed and ed. by Marsha Bon Fleur, with additional editing by Joseph Dorer. Pine Ridge, SD. (See Appendix.)

- Powers, William K. 1982. *Oglala Religion*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press. (Original edition printed in 1975).
- Schmidt, Johannes Jakob. 1858. *Aus dem Tagebuch des Missionars Schmidt in Nordamerika*. [Published later in *Missionsblatt* (Nurnberg), March 1-November 1, 1859.]
- Smith, Craig. 1998. *The Whiteman's Gospel: A Native American Examines the Christian Church and its Ministry Among Native Americans*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Indian Life Books.
- Stolzman, William. 1995. *How to Take Part in Lakota Ceremonies*. Chamberlain, SD: Tipi Press.
- _____. 2002. *The Pipe and Christ: A Lakota-Sioux Dialogue*. Chamberlain, SD: Tipi Press. (Original edition printed in 1986.)
- Theisz, R.D. 1996. *Sending Their Voices: Essays on Lakota Musicology*. Kendall Park, NJ: Lakota Books.
- _____. 2003. *Sharing the Gift of Lakota Song*. Ranchos de Taos, NM: Dog Soldier Press.
- Twiss, Richard. 1998a. *Dancing Our Prayers: Perspectives on Syncretism, Critical Contextualization, and Cultural Practices in First Nations Ministry*. Vancouver, WA: Wiconi Press. (Revised edition published in 2002.)
- _____. 1998b. Set Free to Be Native and Dance in Worship in *EM News* Vol. 7:2-3.
- _____. 2000. *One Church, Many Tribes: Following Jesus the Way God Made You*. Ventura, CA: Gospel Light Worldwide.
- White Hat Sr., Albert and John Around Him. 1983. *Lakota Ceremonial Songs*. Rosebud, SD: Sinte Gleska University, Inc.
- Zeilinger, Ron. 2003. *Lakota Life*. Chamberlain, SD: Tipi Press.

Additional Works Consulted

- Berriman, Gerald, et al. 1971. *Anthropology Today*. Del Mar, CA: CRM Books.

- Black Hills People's News* (Pine Ridge, SD). July-November 2004. (Biweekly newspaper, which is available in the Oglala Lakota College library archives, Kyle, SD.)
- Covey, Cyclone, ed. and trans. 1961. *Cabeza de Vaca's Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America*. New York: The Crowell-Collier Publishing Co. Available online at <http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/cdv/rel.htm>
- Densmore, Frances. 1934. *American Indians and Their Music*. New York: The Woman's Press.
- Dorer, Joseph. 2004. Internship Journal. (An unpublished narrative, which is currently in the author's possession detailing his life and times during his official internship from July to November 2004, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, SD, as a graduate student in ethnomusicology at Bethel University in Saint Paul, MN.)
- International Bible Society, eds. and trans. 1984. *Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Powers, William K. 1970. Contemporary Oglala Music and Dance: Pan-Indianism vs. Pan-Tetonism. Chapter 11 in *The Modern Sioux*, ed. by Ethel Nurge. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Schmidt, Johann[es] Jakob. 1989. "The Diary of Missionary Schmidt in North America." Edited and trans. by Gerhard M. Schmutterer. Appendix A in *Tomahawk and Cross: Lutheran Missionaries among the Northern Plains Tribes 1858-1866*, by Gerhard M. Schmutterer, 115-98. Freeman, SD: Pine Hill Press.

APPENDIX

Eleven Recorded Interviews with Will Peters

Transcribed and edited by Marsha Bon Fleur

Editor's Note

The transcripts of the eleven interviews contained in this appendix are meant to complement both the preceding thesis and the audio recordings. In most cases, the actual words from the interviews are presented here verbatim. In other cases, they are paraphrased for clarity. Certain proper names and other information have been omitted from these transcripts. Therefore, when the actual audio recordings are available, the reader should avoid lifting quotations directly from the transcripts and instead use the recordings.

Because Lakota was not originally a written language, certain discrepancies exist in the ways that various people have represented it on paper. Furthermore, the Lakota spellings used in these transcripts, though functional, are rough and should not be considered authoritative. When quoting Lakota words or phrases from these interviews, fluent Lakota speakers should be consulted concerning proper spelling and usage.

To obtain a copy of the recordings and the transcripts, contact the researcher by written request at one of the following addresses:

Joseph Dorer
33405 Hwy. 300
Roland, AR 72135

Or

josephtdorer@yahoo.com

Interview I

August 12, 2006 (3:10 PM)

Biographical Information I (1hr 18min)

Prompt 1: *Please give a description of yourself, who you are, and what you do.*

Currently, I sit as a representative of the Pine Ridge District as a Tribal Council Representative. It is an 18-member council that is the governing body of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. With that task comes making decisions that could have a positive, or sometimes a negative, affect on the tribal membership of the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

I'm married and have five children and two grandchildren.

Are there any other things that you are or that you do?

Right now, my entire task entails my job as a Tribal Council Representative, but sometimes I do get the opportunity to go out and give lectures to visiting groups of outreach workers from the Christian community. That's basically it.

I do have an outside interest. Before getting into Tribal government, I was a classroom instructor. I've worked with grades k[indergarten] through eighth. Before I got involved in politics, I was working at the high school level, and I was also a part-time instructor for the Oglala Lakota College. What I taught was Lakota song and dance and the different aspects of our culture such as language, history and customs, and whatever was connected to the Lakota culture, including spirituality.

But as I said, my primary focus now is to just stay focused on the job that I am doing now until my position comes up for re-election.

Prompt 2: *For my purposes, can you talk a little bit about who you are as a musician? And also just a little bit about your spiritual life?*

My Lakota name is *Tacanka Luta Waunspewicakiya*, which means "teacher of the red way." The red way refers to the Lakota way of life. On a more spiritual side, when Lakota people are given a spiritual name, or an Indian name for lack of a better term—it is that name that they aspire to be in life. So, there is a lot of different terminology to describe oneself.

In essence, I am also called a *h'oka wicasa*, which is a man who knows about songs. And that is in the Lakota context of things. I also sing at the various pow-wows and spiritual ceremonies such as the Sundance and at the Sweat Lodge. Many times I'm asked to sing at different functions such as wakes and funerals with Lakota songs.

There's a vast library of Lakota songs that can be separated into two categories: secular and non-secular categories. Many times *h'oka wicasa*, or a man who knows about songs, is called upon to sing at different occasions—either to honor people or to memorialize people. It is the singers of the tribe who are depended upon for preserving and maintaining the culture, because as a singer you have to be capable of having a pretty extensive repertoire of knowing the songs. On some occasions, you are even asked to compose songs for different individuals or different events.

So, on the Lakota side of things, although I am a believer in Christ and His teachings, I still, for all intents and purposes, practice the spiritual ways of my ancestors in regards to the Seven Sacred Rites that were brought to our people by a spirit who came in the form of a woman known as White Buffalo Calf Woman, who was sent by the Creator to bring these sacred ceremonies to the people. I am still very much involved in worshipping in those ways as they pertain to my life.

The spirituality of the Lakota is sometimes misunderstood by mainstream Christian believers, and even within the tribe, there is a wide diversity of tribal members, some who believe in the Sacred Pipe and some in the sacred Bible or *Wowapi Wakan*, more commonly known as to us, the holy book. There seems to be no grey area, which seems to me to be of great sadness that it's kind of indicative of what goes on in the country, I guess, overall. If you look at Lakota people, their spiritual beliefs somehow serve to keep them apart rather than bring them together, but the respect aspect of the culture is what in many cases allows people to meet in the middle and to respect each other's beliefs and to support each other in those beliefs.

I, more or less, am one of those in the middle, but I do advocate a lot for Lakota spirituality, given that our oral history teaches us that we were once on the receiving end of very negative government policies, and indeed, some of those policies were aimed at complete and total genocide. The intent that came from such concepts or mentalities as the Papal Bulls from the Catholic religion, Manifest Destiny, and the things of that has had a very horrific toll on our people. It was an attack on our culture and our very way of life. I kind of view it as an honor, and in my heart, I know that God intervened in behalf of the indigenous people and allowed their ways to survive. So, I walk in accordance to those spiritual ways.

On a more contemporary level, I have taught contemporary music to the children of the Lakota Nation—not to all of them, but to many of them—as far as teaching them how to play guitar. I also write songs, what we call contemporary music (by contemporary music we mean it's not traditional Lakota music.) It's like expressing myself and Lakota thought and philosophy through *wasicun* music, or white mans' music—just writing songs. Many of the songs sometimes begin as poetry, but end up in a musical context. That's, I guess, my side interest and always will be. I mean, music will always be a part of my life, and I manage to maintain my interest and my involvement in music as I am serving in this political capacity.

Prompt 3: *I'd like you to talk about your life from your birth to this point, and you can talk about anything you want.*

I guess like anybody who is asked to speak about their life, I know many people tell it all—the good, bad and the ugly. I sometimes choose to focus on the happy parts of my childhood. And I'll sometimes go into the negative. Having said that, I was born on January 5, 1961 in Oakland, California. The reason for that is that during the late 1950's and early 1960's, I believe the president at the time was President Eisenhower had a plan that he called "termination." The intent of that plan was to relocate indigenous families from the reservation, transplant them into the cities with the promise that there would be a job waiting for them, there would be a home waiting for them, and try to expose them to a different way of life; kind of like to mainstream Lakota families into Western society. To the Lakota people, the program was known as "relocation." Many times they found out that, I guess it falls into the long line of promises made but never followed through with. Many times they found that they ended up on skid row and basically had to find their way of life there.

As far as I remember, my parents did not fare well. After I was born in Oakland, California, we came back. In a lot of my early childhood memories, my father seems to be absent from them. I remember that my mother had raised nine of us by herself. I always remembered that I always had a lot of family around which falls in line with the Lakota kinship system. There was a lot of *tiospaye*, which is "extended family" around. One of my earliest memories was coming back to live on the reservation and during the summer seasons my *tiospaye*, led by my uncle and my grandmother, we would migrate to the Nebraska beet fields and live in housing there provided by the farmers, and we would work in the beet fields all day long—even the children. And what that entailed was that we were just given hoes and we would walk these rows all day long chopping off all the weeds that grew around these beet plants. During rest times, we would gather with other families and have picnics and softball games and whatnot, and many times we would all go to different pow-wows that were going on at that time in the Nebraska region. After the season of working in the beet fields, we would then return home back to the reservation where even then there was intense poverty.

I know that my mother had attempted several times to find a better way of life for us so we would move to Rapid City or sometimes Scottsbluff. Always, my mother seemingly not finding the happiness and security that she wanted for us, we would move back to the reservation. We moved back on the reservation for good back in 1974, which was not too long after the 1973 Wounded Knee takeover.

But earlier, I recall, back in the latter 60's, I don't recall having an interest in what they would call white music. Of course, I would listen to the music like everybody else, but I more or less gravitated towards what one of my older brothers was doing (the second eldest,) and he took it upon himself to go to a lot of the old men, and he learned a lot of traditional songs. Of course, I idolized my brothers, but this brother in particular (his name was Richard) started to grow his hair long and really talked about Lakota ways

and Lakota spirituality. He was always singing. So in an effort to emulate him, I would take my mom's pots and big wooden spoons and go in an old bathroom that the plumbing wasn't hooked up to. We lived in a trailer house with outside plumbing. So the bathroom was more or less like a storage place, and I would sit in there, and I would just try to get these songs together as I had heard my brother sing them. From a wooden spoon to a metal pot, I kind of elevated to a box, which had a more of a drum sound.

At one particular time, I can't remember how old I was, but I know I was probably about around eight or nine, maybe even ten years old, I accompanied my brothers to an American Indian Movement rally that was being held in Gordon, Nebraska. In the process of participating or being at that rally, I was beaten up by a couple of older boys as I was out playing and roaming around, so my brother made me stay by him. Of course, my brother was sitting at a drum with a bunch of other men, so he sat me down by him and he gave me a drumstick, and I just thought it was natural when they started singing to just join in. It seemed to surprise the heck out of my brother, who had no idea that I could drum and that I could sing. I remember with fondness how our relationship began to get even closer and stronger. He was surprised, and I guess somewhat proud, that his little brother knew how to sing, so he awarded me with a pocketknife. That was kind of like one of the happy memories I have of being a little one—a young boy, *hoksila*, "boy" as they say.

Then, as I said, at some point in time, we moved back to the reservation, back in 1974. This was not too long after the 1973 takeover at Wounded Knee. I guess we were more or less encouraged to be Lakota people rather than A.I.M. followers. My grandmother really had a high regard for spirituality. She prayed—I guess the only way to explain it is, my grandmother had 15 children. And as your children grow, they begin to experience their own type of closeness with the Creator.

I had an uncle, Eugene, who was a Church of Christ minister. Let me back up a little bit. As I learned the interest of my second eldest brother, Richard, my oldest brother, Donny, his interest was in starting a band and whatnot. So his interest was more of the *wasicun*, white music. One day, as he was playing guitar, again with the boxes being my instrument at that time, I took two sticks and began to beat in time with his music—actually playing the drums for him. Of course, that made our relationship become stronger as well.

We moved back to Allen, back then it was known as *Wagmeza Wakpa*, or Corn Creek. It's now known as Pass Creek. It's where my mother was from, on the eastern side of the rez in Allen. By then, I could sing with great ease. I would sing in a traditional drum group with my brother and some of my cousins, and I was also able to make (for lack of a better word) guest appearances at the white dances. The bands knew that I could drum, I was still a little boy but they would allow me to play different sets.

Well, getting back to my uncle, he was a minister of the Church of Christ, who are known by the misnomer as the “holy rollers,” I guess. But he was a deeply devout Christian man. He would often take me to different church meetings where my only job was to play the drums. My grandmother, one son was involved in Christianity, the other son was involved in the Native American Church, which is known as the *peyote* religion. Then there were those who were involved with the Sundance and the teachings of the Sacred Pipe. My grandmother participated in all those religious activities. When she traveled, she would always have a pipe bag with her Sacred Pipe within it, and a Bible that she would place side by side on her dashboard. And in her home you would often find that Sacred Pipe and that Holy Bible real close together. She never allowed them to be separated. Many times, she taught us, her grandchildren, that the teachings within those components were very parallel. She would say that these two are the same. I guess her influence later on had a real huge impact in my life, and indeed, kind of laid the foundation for the man I am today.

Back in those times, my interest in both types of music kept growing. My participation kept growing, and I was just living a life—of course a happy life. You know, a lot of horse riding, making bows and arrows. They used to call us “creek boys,” because in the mornings we’d get up and pack our lunch which could be some gabooboo bread—which is a skillet bread—and things like that, and we’d be down at the creek all day just fishing, hunting with our bows, and just doing things like that.

Of course, our parents had the occasional bout with use of alcohol, which I guess contributed to a lot of the hard times, but my mother was the type of person who made sure that the needs of the children and the house were taken care of first. She raised us with the help of the Social Services system. She was pretty good at making sure the needs were met first before she turned to her drinking with her relatives.

And so, my mother too, as I entered into the first... well, as I said, there are seven sacred ceremonies. And as I began to get involved, when I went on my first *Hanbleceya*, which is a time for a vision, she began to support me from the very beginning, as well as my grandmother. Then, that support followed going into my first Sundance, and the Sweat Lodge is also a part of that. My mother and my grandmother became, I guess, my positive role models, the people who I got the best of my teachings from on how to be a compassionate human being. Even though there was a lack of a father in my home, I had my older brothers, my cousins, and my uncles who taught me a lot of the aspects of being a man, I guess—some of the more macho, idiotic teachings of society, I guess, and also had the influence of the American Indian Movement, those warriors who also were involved in that, and that kind of took me down a dark path—especially after my mother died.

I was a senior in high school when my mother passed away, and not too long after that my grandmother passed away. And not knowing how to grieve, and being a victim of dysfunctional “man” teachings, like “don’t cry; be a man,” I became very bitter inside and began to use alcohol and drugs a lot and had never been the violent type, but ultimately

ended up, I guess, being addicted to violence, you know—and all this out of grief. I knew back then, I just turned completely away from everything, and I kind of became a social recluse because my pain was so great, my anger at losing the two strongest people in my life. I didn't want to be consoled by anybody. My life took a really dark turn for the worse and I was just, I guess, on a quick path to self-destruction, and was kind of pushing it along myself. You know, in talking to my brothers many years after, I found that they went through the same thing. I guess we were trying to bring about our own deaths, because we didn't know how to go on without these two strong females.

Somewhere, maybe a year after all that happened, my father died, which I'm sorry to say, was of no great loss to me. I guess the strongest thing my father taught me was to not be like him, to turn away from a family and go crawl inside a whiskey bottle.

But needless to say, my grades were slipping, I was in danger of not passing high school, and I was set to be the first of nine children to graduate from high school. Everybody was older than me except my three younger sisters. So I was kind of like somewhat of a middle child on the younger end of the spectrum there.

It was along that time that I also heard the eyewitness accounts, the oral eyewitness accounts of what transpired in Wounded Knee in 1890 in the massacre. The treatment of our people at that event, the cutting off of the private parts of our men and women that were saved as souvenirs by the cavalry; how they were gunned down when they were totally unarmed; the killing of the babies in a very grotesque fashion; and just letting their bodies lay only to come back and throw them in a massive grave. When those old people told those stories at that time they told it in very hushed tones, like they were afraid that it was going to happen again—that they weren't supposed to talk about it or there would be repercussions.

Out of that came a very, very intense hatred for the white race. I think that for us to be human beings and to be assigned colors and to go by that designation is somewhat degrading to all of us. But, for lack of a better word, I just hated white people with a very intense passion. I was always in trouble. I guess the hate was so intense that I would have rather gouged out my own eyes than to have to look upon a white person. Our elders said that the white men at that time didn't even think of us as human beings. And I guess that hate drove me to a point where soon I didn't even feel like a human being. I didn't even feel worthy of walking on top of *Unci Maka*, "Grandmother Earth." And I knew that the one thing my mother wanted me to do that was very close to losing that, you know, to graduate high school. And I knew that the way that I was conducting myself, that my mother and my grandmother would not approve.

And so I took my pitiful self into a Sweat Lodge ceremony. And there, I asked the Creator to remove all the hatred from me because my mother and grandmother, when they were alive, they were always nice to everybody—it didn't matter what color they were. They were always helping those who were less fortunate. And the Creator allowed me to know that my mother's and my grandmother's spirits were disappointed in

me. So I went into that Sweat Lodge ceremony and asked for forgiveness and asked for healing. Two very important things happened to me in there: one was I got to really cry—cry tears of grief and mourning for my mother and grandmother. And it was a very liberating experience to cry and cleanse yourself through the tears and heal yourself.

The second awesome thing was that all I had to do was ask for *Wakan Tanka*, the Great Spirit, to remove that hate, and He took it from me. Always within my heart I vowed that I would never hate anybody of any ethnic background again; that I would always embrace them as my relatives, more of a spiritual nature of there being one God, and we are all His children. Although since then many times I've had to deal with racism, I think I've learned to deal with it in a positive way. It was a combination of my culture, my love for my grandmother and my mother, and reaching out to God and asking Him to be a part of my life which allowed me to... it more or less saved my life and allowed me to start coming back on that sacred path, *Canku Luta*, red road.

With some diligence and hard work I graduated high school, and then my life just started getting better. It took me a while to put down the drugs and alcohol. I put down the marijuana first and, you know, you grow up on the rez—there's a lot of poverty, there's a lot of historical trauma and lateral violence and hopelessness that drives people to drinking—the need to self-medicate, just to escape for a while.

But as my life progressed, I got back into the Sundance and the teachings of the Pipe. I had always had an interest in the Bible from some of my relatives, and had tried to participate, but for some reason I always kind of came up, I don't like to say I fell short, but it's like the predecessors to the missionaries back then, I think they fell short. And the way they fell short was in not accepting me. Instead of hearing about God's love, I was hearing about how much God despised me for wanting to be a Lakota—for wanting to have long hair, for wanting to sing our songs because they brought me great pride and happiness.

I guess I became bitter, but not to the extent that some Lakota people have where they just refuse to accept the teachings of the Bible. They refuse to accept Jesus Christ. They constantly chastise those who are Christians. And I don't think on the Christian end that they're the victims either because I see them doing vice versa. I've learned to just cut out all the humans from the spiritual picture and just focus on the Lord, and just walk with the Lord—*wakan wicoka omani*, to walk in that sacred manner. And so, I felt like the church didn't accept me, and Christian people, I think, can learn from that story because as they made me feel unaccepted, I also felt that the Lord didn't accept me, because these were his representatives. And that's what happened to the people at the turn of the century. In the boarding schools, our ancestors were punished quite severely for speaking their language in the effort to "kill the Indian and save the child."

At that young part in my life, I was just going through these things in my mind and trying to ascertain, you know, the church looks down on me and makes fun of me for being Lakota, and the Lakota spiritualists, they look down on me and make fun of me for my

love for Christ. That's when I learned how accepting the Lord is, because I realized that I didn't need any of them, and that the Lord accepted me and that's enough for me, you know. My relationship with the Lord has grown very strong; it's very sacred to me, something I guard very closely. It's something I try to share with other people.

The bottom line is that people who were supposed to represent the beautiful sides of these spiritual ways represented them in a very unattractive and harsh way, so I couldn't really knock the people who turned from God, because of very poor representation. I think that I'm striving to live my life, because I don't want to be the [cause] of somebody turning away from God.

As my life progressed, I met a beautiful woman when I was 18 years old. I had come from a family where there was no father; she had come from a family where at least her father wasn't in the picture any more. But she still has a positive relationship with him, and she had a positive relationship with her mother. I think our commitment to each other was that if we were going to connect in that way, that we were going to do it for the long haul and that our children would be our children, not a family comprised of children from different mothers and different fathers. Our union would be considered something of the spiritual nature. And I guess our role models were the older couples, the elderly couples, and they were the ones we went to for advice and they were the ones who taught us about the eagles who mate for life. The eagles don't fly from nest to nest, so to speak, and when they mate it's for life. There were still problems in the relationship though, because I had not been totally emancipated from the bonds of macho idiocy yet. I still had some occasional problems with drinking and running around with my macho idiotic friends. And so, this relationship took time.

The first time my children came around I wasn't a very good father. I didn't have a lot of patience. I was more career driven than anything else, and there were times when the other side of me and myself, in the Lakota way I refer to her as *ma hasanni*, the other side of me, because she too is a free spirit and she doesn't belong to me. In Western society thinking, she's not my wife. Her lot in life is not to serve me, you know, that's not what a relationship is anyway. So, there were times when we hit some lows, there were times when we separated, there were times when we had arguments, and there were times when it turned to violence. And we were young, certainly no excuse, but you know, we had relied on people around us as role models, and that's how we learned to come together. Our relationship is very good now, but it took a lot of work, and she's the boss—I totally gave up any aspiration of being the chief in my lodge. I'm happy that I have someone there with more wisdom and more maturity than me to help me in my path in trying to be a good man.

In my early 20's I tried college several times. I went to Oglala Lakota College for a semester, I went to the University of Colorado at Denver for a semester, went to Black Hills State College before it became a university in Spearfish for a semester. By that point, while I was in college in Spearfish, we started a drum group. I had been singing with my relatives in different drum groups, but as we grew and started families, that kind

of dissipated. So in my life as a *koskalaka*, a young man, when I went to try to better myself so I could better my family and be more of a positive contributor to my people and their struggles, we went to college and we found out that there were a lot of Native American students who sometimes get very homesick and agitated. Their answer to it was to go down to the bars and then bad things would happen. As the other side of me said, you know that woman that I married, that nothing good comes from drinking. Every time you drink, something bad happens in spite of your best intentions.

And so we started a drum group up there, a traditional drum group. We would meet twice a week and on weekends if necessary, and it really helped alleviate this need for Native American students to go to the bars. So we had a good time singing. We would cook a pot of soup. We would do potluck and all that stuff.

In the course of that, every drum group gives its drum a name. That tradition has been more or less lost amongst our people, but some of our people still follow it, so when a drum group is called a name some people think that's the name of the drum group. Actually, that's the name of the drum. Lakota people believe that there is a spirit within that drum and that our singing, every time we use that drum, we are to teach people or help people with the appropriate songs, whether it be honoring songs, spiritual songs, or memorial songs.

Our drum keeper, who happens to be in the Lakota way my father-in-law—the lady I married, her uncle—was our drum keeper. He brought the drum down, and we came to have it named in the traditional way. My uncle, he was still alive then, was known as a traditional, Lakota spiritual leader. We went into the Sweat Lodge and different aspects of ceremony, and he gave that drum the name *Oyate Teca*, and *oyate* means “people;” *teca* means “new” or “young.” So the name of that drum, the way that he gave it, was meant to refer to the younger generations. Thus the name *Oyate Teca* was bestowed upon that drum. Not only did that drum receive a name, but the singers of that drum at that time through spiritual guidance were given, more or less, what you would call a spiritual task—that was to teach our children the songs and dances and ways of our people.

The very first four years of that drum group's existence, we did not go to any contest pow-wow—that is pow-wows where there are singing contests and prizes given. We went to assist at a lot of Sundances and a lot of traditional pow-wows, and that's what we still do today. In the course of trying to find our purpose—how we could do what we were given direction to do—we had a Sweat Lodge ceremony.

After that, when we came out, most of the guys in the drum are Vietnam vets, so we looked at the world back then—the Lakota world anyway—and we realized that many of our songs and dances, our history, our culture was falling by the wayside as it pertained to our young people. So we thought we've been taught that we have to teach these ways, and the solution was [that] we would write a proposal for a Lakota song and dance class and submit it to a local school. The school that we selected was Loneman

School in Oglala, South Dakota. And, to our delight, and to our surprise, they accepted our proposal. So, we had the opportunity to integrate Lakota teachings into already established academic curriculum.

We went back to the Sweat Lodge to pray for further direction, and then we had the discussion of who would actually be the teacher. It was decided by the older men, in a joking way, that since Will has the biggest mouth, he can be the teacher. So, I kind of more or less stepped up to the plate. I was very excited. I was very young, just into my 20s. But, the agreement was that I would do the teaching and the older guys would help me as I needed it.

So I began to hone my craft at Loneman School. I worked there a total of I think eight years. But in the course of that, sometimes, when you're trying to preserve and maintain a culture, you run across those who are somewhat colonized and assimilated, and at one point, I kind of unknowingly stepped on some political toes, so my contract wasn't renewed. For a year I lived in Chadron, because there is virtually no housing available here, and I was the manager of the Chadron Native American Center, which also doubled as a homeless shelter. Then I was asked to come back to Loneman School.

By that point, things had started to progress. The older guys in the drum group had taken to being instructors of the Lakota language, so everybody who was involved in this drum group, more or less became part of the young people's lives, either through being a teacher, at the secondary or high school level, or serving on school boards and things of that nature. Although the direction was given many years ago, we're still on that path, you know. And I, as I said, became career oriented. This was the time that my older children were very young.

Sometimes just having a job isn't enough, so I also started a country/rock band. All the guys in the band were drinkers, and I was the only one who didn't drink, but I would drag them all weekend, and we would do gigs at the various honky-tonks to get some extra money to put food on the table and whatnot. It seemed like my life then was just my job and my gigs, and just coming home exhausted, and just being very impatient with my children. It started to again affect me emotionally and spiritually, so I again went into prayer, asking for direction and guidance. Sometimes in Lakota culture, you hear that—at least long ago—that when you needed guidance and direction, that sometimes the Creator would send to you an animal that you were to learn from its life— you know, learn by watching it. That was when the turtle came into my life. And suffice it to say, it taught me how to slow my life down, it taught me how to move slow, and while I was moving slow, it allowed me the sense of patience. I started to become a better father and a better husband, and I'm grateful that that occurred in my life.

But all my life has been built around music—either Lakota music or contemporary music. And in the mid-90s we moved to where my other side of me, where her mother is from; that's the Slim Buttes community. We moved out there and I obtained a job here in Pine

Ridge doing the same kind of teachings, except this time, that's when I became a part-time teacher for the college as well.

I didn't want to be in a band no more so I disbanded the band. I got into a lot of gospel singing. Many times I would be seen going to wakes and funerals or weddings with a hand drum in one hand and a guitar in the other. In the course of events, I kind of tired of the music I was singing, so then I started to write my own songs. And I spent a lot of time with writing.

In writing, I want to share my life and different perspectives, at least in regards to the social injustices and the spiritual injustices. I'm an avid believer that spiritual people cannot afford to become complacent anymore when there's so much spiritual work to be done. There's still a matter of bringing hope to the hopeless sinners. So, any opportunity I get to be involved with music, I get involved in it.

Two years ago, my life again took a different turn. That's when the people asked me to run for the position of tribal council member. I did that, and gosh darn, to my dismay, I won. I was probably the first candidate in political history to ever really hope not to win, but I won. So I stepped up to the plate to do that job. It's been a very hard job, to the point of where sometimes my life gets threatened. But it's fulfilling, because you get to help a lot of people. Sometimes you get to hire some, but that comes with the territory.

I guess the down side for me is I haven't had time to do a lot of reflective writing on the book that I'm working on. I haven't had time to write more songs, but I do have a repertoire of songs that I am trying to get recorded.

And, I guess, that's where I am now. My relationship with my Lord is strong. I'm happy in a place of darkness—you know, in a place of extreme hardships. In my family, things just keep getting better and better for us, you know as far as our relationships with each other. And that brings us to today.

The other side of me and myself, we were blessed with five children. And these five children, although they've been a constant in our life, there've also been a lot of other children come in and out of our life. But my oldest, my first-born, is a girl... Her Lakota name is *Egna Waste Wi*, which means "a good woman amongst her people." She is a very strong person. She has a lot of potential that we are constantly trying to get her to look at. She's very bright. She's very loyal to the family—very into being a Lakota woman. And she's now 26 years old. She has [three] boys... Her first-born son died at the age of two months... and that had a very, I guess, a very unfortunate impact on her life. But it was through our cultural ways that, I guess, she was able to survive it emotionally. It also had a really hard impact on the whole family. Needless to say... I enjoy watching her continue to grow and to see her life become better.

My second eldest daughter, she is now 24 years old... Her Lakota name is *A Ina Geyapi Sni Wi*, which means "don't give up on her woman." The interpretation for that name is that although she goes through hardships and all that, and it looks like she's going to

succumb to the hardships, don't give up on her because she finds a way to pull herself back up on her feet. She's also a very strong person.

Then comes my oldest son. He's 22 years old... His Lakota name is *Tuweya Isnala Najin*—"scout who stands alone." He received this name at a Sundance when he went into the Sundance for the first time at a young age and went through the piercing ritual. It was at a Sundance held for Vietnam veterans and veterans of all wars to help them heal emotionally. When he was going to pierce, the leaders of the Sundance kind of gave direction that nobody else could be out there, that there was something going on and he was the only one that was out there. They talked about one so young willing to honor the veterans or warriors, and that they wanted to acknowledge that honoring, so it was very humbling. It was quite an experience to see your son, the boy, getting laid down to be pierced, and then to be stood up as a man. But at the time of that event, he was given that name, and somehow he's learned to live up to that name. I mean, in spite of all the attempts to recruit him into the gangs, he resisted. And sometimes he's lost a lot of friends, but he still *Tuweya Isnala Najin*, stands alone in his convictions, the Lakota teachings that you don't have to be a man that goes around inflicting violence and terrorizing people. He's got his different ideas of what being a man is, so he's a pretty cool guy.

I always say I have five children, but I want to say there's one I want to mention... whom we raised ever since he was a little boy. He's my nephew. He is my sister-in-law's son—the sister of my wife (I don't like calling her that, but my wife's sister). And his Lakota name is *Oyate Owancekiye*, which means "he helps his people." And so, we raised him although he's aware that I'm his uncle and he's my nephew. Sometimes he calls me father, and I always call him son.

And the son after that... he's 17 years old. His Lakota name is *H'oka Waste*, which means "good badger." The badger is an animal that is a fierce fighter and it's small. But even when it's outnumbered, it maintains its stand. So [he] was given his name, because they recognized in him that he's not a tall guy, and that sometimes he over-compensates for that smallness by trying to prove how strong he is. When they gave him that name, they made sure that they put *waste*—"good"—as a reminder to him that he needs to use his strength and his aggressiveness in positive ways—in good ways, to either protect the people or to help the people.

Then there's my baby girl... She just turned 11. She doesn't have a Lakota name yet, that will be coming up at the next Sundance.

So these six children, kind of like a Lakota Brady bunch if you will, are our children, with the exception of [my nephew,] but we raised him, and we feel like he's ours... I have to say with all honesty that I love them; it's an unconditional love, and that to me they are very cool people, you know... In our prayers ask for the Creator to make himself known to our children. We have a lot of nieces and nephews that are sometimes adversely affected by those things. They are also constants in our lives and we're just working on

them, you know, and we know that there's a value to making mistakes, to having a lot of different life experiences.

(CERTAIN INFORMATION PERTAINING TO WILL'S FAMILY HAS BEEN OMITTED.)

And so, with the things that we have learned, we feel that we're able to offer them shortcuts in life. That is, if they want to know the outcome of using alcohol all the time that we can more or less share that with them. We've seen whole families die because of cirrhosis and things like that. We have had times when maybe our family couldn't have survived, and that was mostly on me, when I was still struggling with the alcohol part of it. I don't blame the other side of me for wanting to pack up the children and just leave me. What it boils down to is if I had a choice between alcohol and family, I'll choose my family. It's through them and through the saving grace of God I have these beautiful things in life.

Like I said, my children are very cool. We've got a long way to walk together and it's so awesome to be able to depend on them. They have this way of knowing when we need them and they step up to the plate. I don't see how I can ask for anything more.

Prompt 4: *What are your plans for the future?*

My plans for the future, first and foremost, is to obtain a house that we can call our own. Since our family developed, we had always lived with my *ma hasanni* family—*ma hasanni*—the other side of me... We had always lived with [her] mother and her family to a certain point, when I started teaching. Then, our housing always depended upon the kind of job I had, so we were always in teacher housing. Now, I'm certainly not a young man any more. My future goal is to get a house, a permanent home, for [my wife] and our children and whatever grandchildren that might be coming. I'm working on that goal now. It's extremely difficult. We've been on the housing waiting list forever, and the housing needs are so, so extreme here. But that's one of my goals.

In my future, the next goal I have is kind of a two-part thing—one thing depends upon the other. But I'm going to make more of a concentrated effort to finish my book. The title of the book is "Spiritual Justice." I would like to have my music recorded and just put out there—not for fame and fortune's sake, but just to get out there among Native American people who might appreciate the music, and non-Native people who might find something they can relate to—to kind of spread a different kind of perspective of consciousness.

I would work on those two goals regardless of what happens to me. But what I've got going on now is that I'm coming very close to the end of my term as a councilman. As I said, it was the first time I ran for political office, and I won; I got in. It's been one heck of an experience, especially for me who despises politics, but I seem to have not done bad at it. Of course, the next step is that I'm running for President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. That will be decided by the tribal members of this tribe.

If I'm elected, then there are a lot of other goals—a lot of other benchmarks. One is to try to restore our land base. We control approximately 49 percent, and 51 percent of our original land base is controlled by non-Natives. I suspect that these were land deals done back in the 70s, 60s, and I suspect that they were illegal. So to expand our original land base, or what we have now, stabilize our Tribal government, strengthen our financial management system to see if having an agenda of goals will keep us so busy as a tribe that we won't have time for the in-fighting that usually takes place wherever there are pockets of poverty—wherever people are stuck there. A lot of it is to establish a place away, to support the educational needs and efforts of our students. But all of that, I guess, depends more or less on whether I'm successful in this bid for presidency.

Should that fail, my plan is to go back to my first love, and that would be teaching. I would go back to teaching, put the politics behind me, and really, really try to nurture the social growth of our students and really aspire to enable them and empower them to be equipped to live this life through their culture, through a well-balanced mix of academics and cultural teachings.

That's what I see so far, those things that I've laid out. But one thing's for sure, there are three goals I've really got to concentrate on and that's getting a permanent home for my family, to do more work on my book, and to do more work in music.

In music I have three goals. One is the original songs that I'm writing—to get that music out there, kind of off the reservation, into other reservations—just out there.

The other music project is an old-time gospel CD that I'm working on with an older friend of mine, and it's just gonna be raw— just me and a guitar, and him with his harmonica. That, we want to do for the elders who like that old-time gospel music. That will probably just have a local release.

The third project I want to do involves young people. That's to put out not so much a traditional Lakota CD, but maybe a Lakota social songs CD, because there are a lot of young men who... You know, I can't be arrogant and boastful and say, "I taught these young people how to sing." It's hard to express that. I've contributed to them learning how to sing, but the greater part is that they were open to it —so it's not my success, it's their success. All these young people I've had in my life, they're now juniors, seniors, some fresh out of high school. I want to gather them together and do these social songs— Lakota social songs CD. And in there we'll do social dances like *mastincala waci*, the rabbit dance, or *naslohan waci*, the round dance songs, and then some honoring songs, and some hand game songs.

So [these are the] three musical projects that I'll be working on, and they're from both spectrums: contemporary and traditional Lakota.

Prompt 5: *After you're gone, what do you hope will be your legacy?*

I don't know. When I talk to older people, in spite of all the positive achievements I've had in my life, I always tell the older people, "*ikce wicasa imanca*," [that] I'm just a just a common man. Some of the awesome teachings that I've learned in my life, I hope would be my legacy if you will. I hope that people will be more understanding of each others ways of prayer, and more understanding of each other's thoughts and philosophies and come to the understanding that when you open yourself up to learn from other people, you are the one who benefits the most, because you enhance your life by other people's teaching and philosophies. I think that's what we can all do as human beings. If the different ethnic groups realize that Lakota people in their prayers, we say *mitakuye oyasin* –it means we're all related.

In a spiritual context, I believe that. Although we may be given the color assignments of black, red, yellow and white or whatever, and we have different languages, we're still all God's children; we're still all a part of that Sacred Hoop. We can do things to enhance each others' lives and to better the circumstances that children have to forego and that women have to forego because women are really one of the most demoralized people on this earth. They're treated with great disrespect, and to me, that's spiritually wrong – very spiritually wrong. I guess that would be part of my legacy.

I would hope that people would learn the value of prayer; I hope that I've taught that. That people would learn the value of music; I hope I've taught that in an adequate manner. And I hope that people would learn as a part of my legacy to utilize prayer and music to spiritually help themselves and to live a happy life and to become closer to God.

In my quietest moments, I think about the things I've done as a politician. I think about the many death threats that I have gotten–the many people who have more or less stabbed me in the back. Although those came as the result of me making a stand that could be could be viewed as very courageous, sometimes I wonder how I made it through that. I know it's just a matter of my conviction not to be a complacent follower of God –to be active and participate and to better other peoples' lives. I've always noticed that the women are supporting me, a lot of the old people, a lot of the young people.

I guess I want people to learn that if people come to trust in you and depend on you that you do whatever is necessary to keep those bonds–to not disappoint them, to be dependable. And in that way you empower them and enable them.

A legacy is, I guess, just one that I'm a part of. I guess the greatest legacy has already been left by Jesus, and that's "above all else, love one another." If after I'm gone somebody does something and they say this is what Will Peters taught me, or this is what my dad taught me, or this is what my grandfather taught me, and he was a good man, I guess that's enough for me. There've already been so many awesome legacies left behind, and I'm part of that –those legacies. I just want to share that I've lived

accordingly, in a fashion that will enable other people to also be a part of that legacy. I don't know if that makes any sense, but that's all I can say.

Prompt 6: *Anything else you want to add?*

Not really, no.

Interview II

August 20, 2006 (6 PM)

Whites/Non-Natives and Racism I (1hr 58min)

Prompt 1: *What has been your experience with white Americans? What are some typical attitudes of behavior that you have noticed?*

There have been times throughout my life when I've been the recipient of some racial behavior—acts of violence perpetrated on me for no other reason than that I was a Native American.

But I kinda grew up in a tough predicament, because I have light colored hair and green eyes, so I was catching it on both ends—from Native Americans and the so-called white America.

The racial treatment from the non-Natives was the stuff that was consistent and is still going on today. Being born in the 60s and growing up in the 70s, the racism was a bit more flagrant and in your face than it is today. Today, it's changed; it's kinda toned down, it's very subtle, but nevertheless, you can still feel the sting of it. Examples of that would be looks of suspicion when you enter a supermarket or any place to shop. You feel like there are people who have always got their eyes on you, because maybe they feel like you don't have any money or maybe it's perceived that everybody of your race tends to like to steal—shoplift or whatever.

Then you get a sense many times when you're trying to deal with police officers or judicial systems or non-Native political entities that they seem to think that (and you can feel) that their sense is that you are still inferior to them, and that they are more sophisticated and more knowledgeable than you are. Logically, anyone would know that that's far from the truth, but it's just a symptom of a social illness that continues to prevail in America.

Throughout time, and it still goes on today somewhat, especially in the Christian missionaries that come, and non-Native teachers feel like they're coming here to save us. That old mentality is just outdated. My viewpoint is that if you think you're coming here to save us, don't trouble yourself. Just stay home, because you'd just end up making things worse and just end up getting a lot of people perturbed. I guess it's just this mentality of white superiority that continues to run rampant in America.

Fortunately, I wouldn't say they're isolated cases, but it's just refreshing to say that not all of the non-Native Americans have that kind of pigeon-holed thinking—that kind of tunnel vision. So that's the refreshing part of it. I guess those kinds of old dysfunctional ideologies will continue to remain in place. Hopefully not, when it comes to the future

generation, that they will have a healthy world viewpoint and that they will be more respectful of each other's ethnic backgrounds and how each of those ethnic backgrounds do have something positive to contribute.

But, to say the least, racism is sometimes very difficult to deal with. When I was younger, I had a tendency to deal with it through violence—just getting mad about it and hurling racial epitaphs back to those who would disseminate them, and like I said, sometimes turn to violence. But, suffice it to say, I think when you allow yourself to sink to that level, you're just—you know, like the old saying, "Two wrongs don't make a right." It's just not worth it to endanger your own spirit and your own relationship with the Creator to satisfy real petty, human needs to retaliate like that.

As I grew older, I feel I've found a better way to deal with it. It's just to ignore them and realize that they suffer from a kind of social illness and just pray for them. I try to teach that to the young Native people, so they don't have to grow up feeling everything that I felt.

I guess that's just my take on it. I don't know if that's sufficient.

Prompt 2: *What is the most typical negative thing you see among the whites here.*

Well, the most typical thing, I guess, for me, outside of the scope of racial attitudes is a total innocent ignorance that there are other cultures that exist within this nation. Along with that innocent ignorance comes these ideas that are distorted. One can tell that they were the recipients of distorted teachings about Native Americans. But, most people are open minded and once they experience a Native American culture and have the opportunity to make contact with different individuals and have their questions answered, it seems to enlighten them more. But again, I wouldn't call it ignorance in a negative sense, it's just that they weren't taught, and so you don't really know about things that you weren't taught.

Overall, the attitude in today's America is a lot more refreshing than I guess it was for my ancestors. Back then, if they didn't understand different cultures, they had a tendency to hate them, or they were misled to believe that it was their God-given duty to go forth and "civilize" people. Now-a-days, people just have a real intellectual curiosity about people that can be easily satisfied once they take the healthy risk to investigate different cultures.

Prompt 3: *The next thing I want to know, as we've talked about some of these attitudes that white Americans have, what toll do they take? What affect do these attitudes and behaviors have on the people living here?*

As always, when you look at the long, drawn-out effects of historical trauma, the negative behaviors that they bring out, of course, is of racial inferiority. They tend to

make Native American people feel like, not so much like they're inferior, but that white people in this day and age still have the audacity to make people feel like they are better than them. Out of that comes a number of adverse affects—bitterness. It's kind of like a tit-for-tat kind of thing. If you hate me, well then I'll hate you. If you think I'm stupid, I'll think you're stupid. That's just real negative stuff. Of course, that affects social growth and spiritual growth, which I believe there will be spiritual consequences for.

Living today, I think that the most damage that is done because of those negative viewpoints comes from politicians that are in positions to better the well-being of Native American nations. It doesn't at all help Native Americans to achieve economic growth or just have the same advantages that those in well-off economic communities might have. But I'm not one to cry over spilled milk. It's just a matter of accountability.

There again, it's an awareness issue. It just kind of behooves people to recognize Native Americans and my people—Lakota people—as human beings. And, from a spiritual worldview, try to be of assistance—to help their fellow man to have a better quality of life. But whether they are aware of it or not, that's something that we strive for, those of us who are educated and have found ways to deal with negative racial treatment. That's just some of the adverse effects.

I think if people are not careful, the social consciousness of this country could easily slip back into the 50s and 60s where there was just blatant racism. I guess if that's the case, we all fail.

As I said, I don't view myself as inferior, so I'm willing to take the risks necessary to educate others outside of my ethnic group. I perceive myself as being equal to any man alive, but it behooves those of us who have risen above all that, on all sides, to try to empower other people—enlighten them, and help them to have a better quality of life.

Prompt 4: *I have a few themes I've written down. Some of them are just single words; some of them are sentences. The first one I wrote is... I think back to one of my first experiences here when I went to the Wounded Knee gravesites out there— the mass grave. Leon was talking to a group that came down here; he does that quite often. He gets pretty graphic. I think he wants to send them away with gruesome images, but that's a good thing, I think. But, I remember a kid, maybe about 12, 13 or 14 years old, who didn't believe the history. He said basically, "This history isn't real." I want you to talk about somebody who would say, "This history isn't real."*

First of all, just a very quick comment, you can't expect 12 year-olds to have a deep sense of history and to embrace reality like that. Even though those things have happened in the past, they still are a very real thing in the sense that—I guess I would say, of course, those things are real and we still see the effects of it today. There are still people who mourn for the loss of those people out there. They were not of the same

sub-tribe; they were of the Hunkpapa Lakota, but they're still very close relatives to the Oglala Lakota.

I guess anybody with a sense of consciousness can go up there and really experience the heavy grief that comes from a time when there were those who didn't think of Native Americans as human beings—thus it was so easy to slaughter them. When I talk about those kinds of things, it's not so much in a sense to lay a guilt trip on anybody, it's just to make the point that it's a very small piece of a very big picture that speaks of decades of lack of accountability on the part of federal government to live up to its obligations to Native American nations, especially those that they signed valid treaties with. Other countries are going to have to look at America's treatment of indigenous nations, and there they can get a sense of how well they're going to be treated— how well their treaties are going to be honored and things of that nature.

So when I think of those events, you can still see the ramifications of those events a long time ago—today you can still see them. I think the old governmental military tactic of divide and conquer has served the Federal government well. Our people are so divided about so many different things that it's really hard for us to heal—both spiritually and socially. And, again, it's just a reality-based fact based on reality-based history, that things were set into motion a long time ago that still have very real ramifications today.

Prompt 5: *I didn't mean just the 12 year-old. I've heard this from [other people]. And it's not just [having] to do with Wounded Knee, it has to do with the entire history, like you're saying, "well, you're down there so you should have them read this book, because this is what this book is saying." That's really what I was talking about.*

Well, then we have to get to the truth of the matter. I mean, there's all kinds of academic and biblical scholar type of layers that you can use to cover the truth, but it still, in effect, doesn't change that truth. I mean, the truth may be covered up, but it remains the truth. So a lot of Americans that have real patriotic mentalities, really downplay what happened to indigenous people. They still [perpetuate] the lie in academic settings, and even in a biblical sense that this country was built on, noble acts of freedom, patriotism, and people just wanting freedom to express their religious views any way they want. When, in reality, we know that this country was built on extreme acts of terroristic violence—extreme acts of greed and lies and not keeping to your word and all this stuff.

It's kind of like the gangs that you see today. Their strength comes in their numbers. They run around like a pack of dogs. If there was one person walking, then the gang would immediately prey on that individual, because they know they have their strength in numbers. However, if you were to catch one of these gangsters by themselves, you would see their true face, and that is the face of a coward, who is just weak when they're by themselves.

That is the equivalent of what America did to indigenous nations. They had the number, the superior technology, not the superior mindset or sense of being a human being, but the technology and the resources, so they, in effect, just bullied their way across this continent. As much as people despise racist groups like the Arian Nation and the KKK, that was, in fact, the mentality of the early Americans. They were very brutal people—very, very violent and whatnot. For us, we had to resort to warriorism to actually save lives—women and children and old people.

There was a time when I was very bitter about that and indeed was a racist myself. But, I've come so far beyond that where I don't want to disrespect the Lord in that way, but I will continue, as long as I live, to be a keeper of those truths and a keeper of those stories, and I will pass them on. Not to [perpetuate] hate, but just to keep that truth alive in the hopes that someday there will be well-balanced and truly Christian oriented leaders of this country, who will reconcile with indigenous peoples. But, I guess in the end that truth itself will free itself, and people will see it for what it is. And I hope they see it while they're living this life. I hope they don't have to wait and become educated about it when they're standing in front of the Lord.

There are all kinds of truths in this world and people who are oppressed need to always be given the benefit of the doubt, because it's all well and good if the majority of Americans are eating well and they don't have to worry about other people, but when you grow up in a nation of poverty and you know why that nation lives in poverty, and you see the suffering, then you know the truth. So no matter of ignorance or denial of it is going to change the fact that that's the truth.

Indigenous peoples were the victims of really brutal, violent tactics. It's easy to sit in a group of people that have the mindset that you do and just laugh it off. But I just challenge people to come out here. Come out here as a man or as a woman and try to spout that kind of ignorant rhetoric. You'd be chewed up and spit out. I mean, around here you'd see the truth. And anywhere where there are pockets of poverty across the land, that's where the truth is. I don't think the Lord hangs out in places that are upper class or middle class; wherever you see poverty and despair, that's where you feel Jesus the most—that's where Jesus is working the hardest. That's where the Creator is.

That's why I say I am just a common man and regardless of my achievements and successes in life. I don't have that kind of "me, me, me" attitude. I'm all about "we." What can we do to try to empower and enable other people to help—to look at the sufferings and try to come up with solutions?

I can tolerate innocent ignorance better than I can just totally blunt ignorance. So I have a low tolerance level for those who don't have compassion and who wouldn't recognize the truth if it was standing right in front of them. That, in a sense, is my take on it. And I suppose I could go on about it all day, but you know, for the sake of saving time, we'll just end it right there.

Prompt 6: *Okay, this is coming from a person who... I go up to Wounded Knee or go out to Fort Robinson, I go out to these places—these exact places where these things happened—and I feel, well, those places can make me cry sometimes. But still, of all these things on here, this is the one thing I’m guilty of. I say this next phrase: “That history has nothing to do with me. My family came across after all this happened.” And I know it’s a bad statement, but talk about that.*

Well, yes, that in a sense is true, because that plays a very, very critical role in—well, it becomes an obstacle for all of us. Because, back when I hated white people, I had to ask myself that question too. These people weren’t alive back then. Maybe some of them moved over here. What am I gonna do? Hold all white America responsible for what happened to my ancestors? Never mind the fact that I wasn’t even there. I can only account for the time that I’ve spent in this world. But, that being said, if that’s people’s idea that, “You can’t hold me responsible for this. My people weren’t even here.” That’s all fine and good, but that’s not the point anyway. What I’m saying is that if we see something and it affects us and we know that we can contribute to it in a positive way, that it behooves us to do so. It’s not about that. Even though those things served as a catalyst and still are a major factor of the struggling that goes on today—the historical trauma and all that—each one of us can help try to heal and bridge those gaps between us, try to bridge those racial gaps, try to reach out to each other, and to enhance each others lives with what we’ve learned so far in our life on earth.

Say there was a crime that occurred in a crowd of people. A lot of people are going to claim their innocence. “It wasn’t me, it wasn’t me.” That allows the perpetrator to get away because people are so not wanting to be involved. That’s kind of what Native America is going through today. People are saying, “That was a long time ago; it wasn’t us who did it,” and all this and that. But, there’s still the matter of doing the right thing.

When I say that, I not only speak about indigenous nations, but everywhere where there’s poverty—whether it’s white children or black children or children of Asian descent, any place where there are women and children going through such social suffering—and especially if it’s here in America. America can no longer claim to be the greatest country in the world because until all of its children are fed and until all of its economic problems are solved, as in the case of communities stricken by poverty, then this country fails to live up to its greatness. It’s cool shipping off billions of dollars to foreign countries in foreign aid, but what about aid to the people that live within the interior boundaries of this country?

And for that, whether you were there or not, wherever you happen to be in your little piece of the world, then again, you have to be a positive contributor. Even though you think, “Hey, I’m just one guy. I can’t make a difference.” But if you can make a difference in a few people’s lives, then I’m a great believer in the ripple effect. That those people will in turn do good deeds to others and try to help them.

But that's where I say spiritual people, or even Christians, any group of believers, you can't afford to be complacent any more. You can't afford to be so blind to human suffering, because the things that the Bible requires are not just mere suggestions. It's a reality-based thing that we're looking at here. Going to church, doing your little church group things, yeah, that's cool man—it might get you on the porch of heaven, but where's your spiritual time? How much have you invested? 'Til you work your fingers to the bone; you're emotionally, spiritually, physically exhausted, but somehow, you know, the power of the Lord just keeps you going, and you never give up. That's the kind of effort that's needed now in Native America.

We don't need any people to "save" us. I think people now more than ever in this day and age, rather than being political observers and striving hard to be good patriots—don't waste your time doing that, because you're wasting your time because your old red, white and blue isn't a cloak of salvation. That's not the robe that Jesus wrapped Himself with. There are political ideals, man-made ideals and then there are God's ideals—the Lord's laws—natural, spiritual laws.

I guess I just maintain the philosophy of "just put up or shut up." Step up to the plate, but if you don't want to swing the bat, then get out of the way for somebody who is willing to do it. So, wherever you happen to be, deal with what you gotta deal with and don't wait 'til you think you're spiritually strong enough to do it or wealthy enough to do it.

I suffer just as much as anybody here, but I don't have time to cry around about it man. I want to rebuild, I want to help others who are trying to rebuild our nation to stand on our own two feet. A lot of that healing, like I said, needs to take place within ourselves. So, in that regard, I have a lot of hope. It's interesting, bringing up these questions like they are—very tense—right now, I guess I'm too busy to pay them any mind.

To those out there, I mean organized groups like Peace Corps, should now try to focus their efforts on this country—different regions in *this* country. Because that is a valuable resource that people within this country just need—have dire need for.

Prompt 7: *The next theme I wrote down is one that I think lately people have been angry about. I've seen people running around here with this 19th century idea of Manifest Destiny—that Native Americans weren't, and aren't—they don't know what to do with this land and aren't doing anything with this land. So God sent white men, or whoever else, to make sure this land is farmed and this land is used the proper way. And I guess I've noticed that this is tied into this acquisition of tribal land by non-Natives— not just Natives that might not be members, but people that are just whoever and they've got all of this land. I've really paid attention to that because I guess I know a member of the Yankton Tribe and she said, "We don't have a reservation any more. It's not even recognized." I didn't know that, so there's an anger in me because I hear people around me speak this kind of rhetoric—this Manifest Destiny—so how about talking about that.*

Well, there are two separate issues. It angers me too. If you could look at the original land base of the Oglala Lakota in the sense of a pie—if you had a graph—of that 100% we only control 49% of that land base. We still have to contend with the B.I.A., which is a branch of the federal government, in how to deal with these lands, but it's still 49%. So 51% of this is controlled by outside interests, whether they be non-Natives or your Ted Turners or people like that—but then other tribes.

Every story has an origin and that's one of my priorities is to go back and to look at the origins of these land acquisitions and how they took place. I'm willing to bet my very life that there were discrepancies in these land deals—that these land deals didn't run by a certain process that was laid into place. I feel that if we go back and research the origins of these land acquisitions, it would give us enough to present a law suit in federal court on different entities or whoever was involved in these land deals.

Here's where it becomes dangerous because part of these unlawful land deals probably took place with the help of I.R.A./tribal government officials in the past. That was part of the corruption that has this tribe, this nation of Lakota people, in social turmoil all the time. They know that there are corrupt and self-serving people in there. So if we can go back and research that and lay a foundation of truth on that, and take it into court, the objective would be to restore some, if not all, of our lost land base and acquire it more, strengthen the regulations and stipulations that govern land acquisition deals, even with churches and outside enterprises, that when they are finished that all the land reverts back to the tribe. Those kinds of regulations are in place now; it's just a matter of enforcement.

That angers me too, but I know that it's not an anger I have to live with—it's an anger I can channel into positive efforts to research these things. If the objective is to restore our lands, then we just have to work together and stay focused on that effort. So that's that part.

It's kind of a messed-up notion, because Lakota people they say never had that sense of owning the land. They didn't say that this land belongs to us. It's more like we belong to this land. And so, that was learned behavior from the *wasicun* people or however you want to say it.

As time progressed, there are certain ways that this land took care of our ancestors in a way that we take care of the land now. But there are a lot of things that come into play—the social illnesses. You see Lakota people who don't even have a sense of who they are and they're so oppressed and their spirit is so broken that they have no regard for the sacredness of the land. There's litter all around, there are junked cars, things of that nature. That has a lot of outsiders questioning, "Well, I thought Lakota people were the caretakers of the land." Yes, we were, and we are. But to those whose spirits are broken, the trash and junked cars around the house are a symptom of the spirit that

lives within that house. For that matter, as God's children, we're all caretakers of this land.

So next comes the question of Lakota people not knowing how to use the land. Again, people have become so far removed from God and God's laws that they're very bold and arrogant—so bold and arrogant that now they even claim air space; "This is our air space." I'm curious to see what kind of fence they're going to put around their air space. It's becoming too bold and arrogant, because when you become evil-driven and that bold, you just have worked God out of the equation.

It's like atheists and people who believe in evolution. They've taken God totally out of the equation and they're in for a rude awakening when they get to where they're supposed to be getting. When their spirit is done walking this earth they're in for a rude spiritual awakening.

I don't take myself out of that context. My belief is strong and firm and it's gonna be like that until the day I die. But you really have to question how America has used this country. It wasn't in the Bible that you take the minerals from within this country and develop a bomb that can take us all out with just a push of a button. I'm sure it wasn't in the Bible that industry grows so much that you pollute the atmosphere and you pollute the earth and the very waterways of this country.

So in that sense, I would look at corporate America and industry as some of the biggest sinners around, who are so padded by money that it clouds their thinking. They too are also guilty. Not to judge them, but in a sense they're guilty of putting God out of the equation. I know people make fun of tree huggers, but to me, tree huggers are cool people, man. If you view a tree as having life, or grass or water and all these things, having life, then you have more of a sense of walking in harmony in God's creation—being that you are a creation of God too.

But then there's that dilemma. We know that the land took care of us back then. Let's pray and debate and have dialogue about how this land is going to take care of us now in these times. When I think about that, I think about zelite mining. Zelite is used as a purification agent, it's right beneath the surface, and out of all the minerals that you're going to mine, the best chance of restoration of the land is to take the zelite out and restore the land. That will not only help us spark economic growth, but will provide our people with jobs, will provide our social assistance programs with funding, elderly funding, things like that. So there are a lot of different ways we can utilize the land without destroying the land and rendering it useless to anybody.

They say the Lakota, a long time ago, had enough wisdom to think seven generations ahead. They thought of their great-great-great-grandchildren. Well, nowadays people are so closed-minded they can't think of their relatives that far ahead. They already want to forget their relatives behind them. They put them in the ground and they stick a

headstone on there and it's done. They can't see the future, and I think it's going to be a crying shame if we don't really look at this progress.

We really have to view, "what is progress?" If at the end of all this progress there's nothing left for the future generations, then to me, that's a shame. If they will never experience what it's like to swim in water that's not polluted. If they can live in a pollution-free environment, I don't think that's going to happen, because in these times you can easily see and understand the story in the Bible about the Tower of Babel. To me, it's like that Tower of Babel is being built here in America, but it's in the form of progress and technology.

As for Manifest Destiny, those who think things of that nature, you're going to hell! That's where you're going. You're going to hell, man, if you believe that and you live your life according to that. I've researched the Bible for that thinking and it's not in there. It's not in there. Manifest Destiny is a humanistic, political idea. That's all that Manifest Destiny is. It's just a very well thought out plan to justify the rape and pillage of so-called weaker nations. So Manifest Destiny, if you want to use that to justify all their terroristic actions towards indigenous nations and people of other foreign nations, because of your arrogant thought that you're so superior that it's your God-given duty (and I wouldn't think that unless you had a memorandum specifically from God Himself) because that's very, very bold.

That's Manifest Destiny—a humanistic, political idea. It's not found in the Bible. Why? Because it's not a spiritual ideal. It's not one of God's laws. It's not what Jesus taught. It's not what Jesus advocated. So, not to sound judgmental, but those who are driven by the philosophy of Manifest Destiny, yea I say, "you're going to hell!" That's my thought on that. I don't know if you're going to hell, but pretty close to it. It'll be pretty hot. Bring sunscreen or whatever man.

Prompt 8: *One of these themes that I hear said every once in a while is that white is right, but they portray this idea. But I feel, not so much lately, but I've noticed that once in a while somebody comes here and they've heard something from a Native person and they come and check it out with me. I don't get that so much any more, because I think the word is around that I'm not for that kind of thing, but what are your ideas on this "white is right" thing?*

I think there again, if that's what you believe, you're going to hell! No, I better chill out, because you have to put things into perspective. You look at my people—they have become just like those who oppress them. You look at our Sundance and it's almost like the equivalent of organized religion now. *E hanni*, as they used to say—a long time ago — when our people gathered there was just one Sundance. But now we have over fifty. And I don't mean to speak of my people in a negative light, because there are pros and cons, but over fifty Sundances. And sometimes there are cases where they don't attend other Sundances, because they're following this spiritual leader—they're respecting his

spiritual leadership at this Sundance and at this Sundance and at this Sundance, so in effect they're just split up like a bunch of denominations. All these spiritual leaders have their own congregations who don't interact with other people from other Sundances.

So they have become just a bitter and racist as those people who subscribe to those kinds of notions. They feel like Christianity is weak—that it's the white man's prayer. It's really a distorted kind of view they have. You can understand why, because of the past history, the historical trauma. They found something that enlightens them so they think that if you don't pray this way, then you're not going to the Lakota idea of what paradise is, Shangri-La, or heaven if you will. All these little societies within this one big society that is America are all infected by the same social illnesses and philosophies.

I wouldn't say white is right or red is right or black is right, but I would say that, by gosh, have enough wisdom to know which things in those societies are right. You know what I'm saying? Because I've benefited as a human from taking the best out of what I could find in different nations. So no society has it 100 percent right yet. I think the day that they do, that they will be on a more positive path to having it right, is when they start to embrace each others' teachings and philosophies; those things that you feel can in your heart, "Oh, that's good, that's good. I can get down with that." If there's a teaching that's kind of funky, then you need to walk away from it.

People can only heal if they can heal within themselves. There can only be true reconciliation if you embrace the other culture, and if you can't embrace that other culture, then, dude, you're sick. Especially if you think that white is right. Especially if I think that brown is right or red is right. The only thing I can do is encourage my fellow human beings on this traveling sphere, is to do what everybody says now—think outside of the box. I say that [being] grateful that I've never been in that box. I learned a long time ago that we're all human beings. If you really have a deep, deep understanding—I'm not talking about what you hear the pastor say getting up every Sunday at church, or watching on TV—way beyond the sermons, way beyond the ceremonies conducted by medicine men or shamans, it's way deeper than that. These are just components of worship.

There again, you, yourself, have to take responsibility for your spirituality. You can get as close to God as you want if you take that healthy risk, to the point where you can feel the presence of the Lord. I've felt Him in the church, in the Sweat Lodge, in the Sundance and amongst people of other cultures. I'm not one to look at a race and say, "Oh, they're doing it wrong. They got it all wrong." I'm saying that God is with us all, and the sooner that we learn that and try to understand that, the better off we'll be and we'll increase the chances of our leaving something of substance behind for the generations to follow—if that makes any sense. If it doesn't, I don't know what to tell you, but I'm tight with, it man.

Prompt 9: *I noticed sometimes that there's this white paternalistic idea that there needs to be a white hand guiding everything. I grow frustrated with this white paternalism, because I see the dangers of it, but I want you to go ahead and talk about that.*

I get really frustrated with it too, because it's a great disservice to people of different ethnic backgrounds, and to those who are... You know, sometimes I believe that way too. I believe, okay, okay, enough of this. You've sent missionaries to our people for years and years, and thank you, but no thank you. Let me go out there and be a missionary now. Let me return the favor. Maybe I can teach the men of your community how to be true men. Maybe I can teach different things that I feel will get you closer to God.

Yes, unfortunately, that attitude still prevails, especially in the political arenas where "I'm white, I'm a senator, I have to have my hand in there if anything's going to work." But if you look at Native America today, if you think about the late 1800s and early 1900s where the official government policy, after total genocide failed—failed—they next started to force political ideologies of forced assimilation and oppression. The idea of assimilation—kill the Indian, save the child—the sooner that these Native people embrace our way and do things our way, the better off they'll be. That failed again miserably, because that way down deep spirit in people who know that they are Lakota or Danae or Cheyenne or Arapahoe or whatever, when they feel that there is nothing you can offer me that's greater than what I already have, and I'll be this in spite of all the hardships that go with it.

I don't know if I've digressed, but I guess the point is, no, the Big Brother concept is not going to work. It's going to do more damage than good. It's just like teaching children. You have to have a positive relationship with those children, take an interest in what they're interested in and almost become like a child yourself for them to trust you—to establish the credibility and you can empower them with teachings that you know are going to enable them to live a productive life.

There's still a need for that kind of inter-racial dialogue. As long as this paternalistic attitude goes on, it's always gonna fail, because you need people from different ethnic groups. If you're interviewing somebody from the ghetto man, it's still the same concept. Somebody has to rise from the ranks of the ghetto, get to the point where they can dialogue with the big money people who control this political world so they can get their view point involved. It's as simple as if you buy a new Dodge car and it breaks down, you don't take it to a Ford dealer, you don't take it to a Nissan dealer— you take it back to a Dodge dealer because they at Dodge know about this Dodge car. So if you want to make policies regarding Hispanic communities, or Black American or Asian or White or Native American communities, you stand a better chance of success if you have the view point of those different ethnic backgrounds as to what's gonna work.

So yes, in a sense, I despise that kind of paternalistic attitude. It's just dysfunctional. It's been going now for generations, and it's just not working. It's never going to work. Again, it's just the audacity of human beings to think they can play God. It started with the arrival of Columbus, which is probably our fault for not having stronger immigration laws. We could have prohibited him from coming onto the beach along with the Pilgrims. Talk about ungrateful people. But that's where the nightmare began for Native America. That's where the oppression began.

But ever since then, that's where you start to see the boldness of man. Where they came forward in a sense with the components of religion, but to me they seem to be devoid of the very Spirit of the One whom they proclaimed they represented. So that misrepresentation by human beings is what drove a spiritual and social wedge between us as ethnic groups. Some people might look at that as too liberal of a view; some people might look at it as too conservative. Either way, somebody, or some bodies, or all of us have to do our part to dislodge that wedge and start coming together.

It's as simple as Black Elk talked about when you read his book, *Black Elk Speaks*, when he prophesies about the seventh generation, how they're going to make or break this nation—they're going to mend this sacred hoop. But if you put your different interpretations into it, they're not going to have the natural abilities to do that unless they are guided by some very strong teachings from their foundation, from their home, from their families. So whether or not the seventh generation succeeds depends upon the teaching they receive from the adults. If those dysfunctional teachings are passed on, they we haven't enabled them a whole lot.

The mending of the sacred hoop for the nation—he's not just talking about the Lakota people, he's talking about all those who inhabit this earth, coming together as one. That's all of us together, which of course the Arian Nation will have a fit over. The hate groups, the KKK guys, even Lakota people or indigenous people who have become like the oppressors themselves and are so bitter that they are racists too, they will never come to the table with each other. It's up to those who have emancipated themselves from that dysfunctional kind of mentality to connect as a catalyst for them to do that.

Prompt 10: *The next thing I have written down, I'll put a little story behind it. A friend of mine was in a VA hospital in a town close by and his sister and I went to visit him. While we were there we went to a certain restaurant (and I've been to that restaurant a lot by myself, because when I first got here I'd go on little excursions by myself because I couldn't adjust here and I'd eat by myself). This time was different. I had two Natives with me and wasn't being served. They just weren't serving me. There was no one else in the restaurant. So I asked, "Are you going to come and ask for our drinks?" And then, they wouldn't come and ask about our food. I travel with Natives, that's who I hang with now, and I don't see this kind of behavior all the time, but occasionally I see this border town racism. Sometimes there's this drunken Indian or lazy Indian mentality. So could you talk about this racism around the rez especially? I come from Arkansas. Nobody*

does this if a Native comes in, so this is a new thing for me. But I see this, especially within a hundred miles around here.

Yeah, well I'm gonna have to move to Arkansas man! Racism, again, it's really ugly, it just messes with you, it messes with you. Therefore I consider it something that's *wakan sican*, it's the opposite of holy, it's a bad holy, it's evil. To me that's gotta be the Devil at work man; getting people to hate each other over their differences and skin color – their languages and all that.

But it's there and there are different ways to deal with it depending on how you feel. Sometimes if you don't want to tolerate it, then you don't tolerate it. But it's always good to point it out. Had I been in that position, I probably would have pointed it out. "Look, you're not coming over here. I'm not recognizing this as being a restaurant in any sense that I've been to other restaurants. You sit down and they come and ask you what are your drinks, give you a little time to order, and then they come back. Because I'm not recognizing that, I have to ask myself what's wrong. I have to ask, does your restaurant have a policy of being racist? If so, let me know so I can let other people know, so we can avoid this and not have to deal with it."

So sometimes you can deal with it, depending on how you feel. Or hey, man, just take your business elsewhere. Taking your business elsewhere is no guarantee that you're going to find somebody who's not racist, but some racists are willing to put their hatred aside for the love of money. The only color they're not racist against is green!

I remember once I took this young Native American drum group, some singers, and we had some time to kill so we went into [a sporting goods store.] I never have a lot of money, just enough to take care of the people around me, but this was our last day in Rapid City, so we went into this sporting goods store, and there was one of those Orange County Chopper bikes that you operate by the pedals. I saw it and I was like, "That's pretty cool." So I called my son over and he and his friends totally freaked out. They're like, "Wow, man, that's a cool bike man—really cool." They were all hyped-up about it. So I was checking them out, enjoying the fact that there was something there that bridged the gap for me, an older guy, and these young guys. We were liking the same thing— had the same idea of what coolness was. Next the conversation got around to, "Aw, it's a nice bike. I wonder how much it is." So there was a lady there at the counter and a bunch of jackets that obscured her view. She couldn't see me, but I was standing there looking at the bike. So my son turned around and asked this woman, "How much is that bike?"

Her attitude right away was, "Oh, it's expensive. I don't really know how much it is, but you probably couldn't afford it." Then she turned around. I had a little over \$200 in my pocket so I took a chance. I took out my wallet and just slammed it open on the counter. So she turned around. I said, "No kidding, they're serious. How much is it?" When she saw the green that flipped out of that wallet, it was like the difference between night and

day. "Oh, wait a minute sir, I'll get you some help right away, and I'll find out how much it is."

So I more or less made a purchase to combat racism; to break that stereotype, where I wouldn't be coming in here if I couldn't afford what was in here. When I did that, it seemed to bring up the self-esteem of all these young guys I was with because they felt that sting of, "Oh, these are just a bunch of broke Indians here. I ain't got the time of day for them."

So my son benefited, because his father just had to teach this young non-Native person that, "Hey, I got a J-O-B too man. I can throw down some money if I need to." So he rode the bike out of there, and the boys are walking out like they just won the king of the hill battle. It was cool and I'm glad they felt that way, and on the way back we had a talk about that stuff, and as always I tried to tell them to "keep your cool about things. There's a lot of this so don't waste your time and energy on one racial incident. Just give a little bit of yourself to either turn it around or to enlighten somebody, because you're gonna have to deal with this all your life. I dealt with it all my life and I see no reason that it's gonna change unless the Creator steps in and takes care of business."

Unfortunately it's out there, but what are you gonna do? You can't wave a magic wand and it's all gonna disappear. It's out there, it's reversed. People of all colors... you haven't experienced racism until somebody of Asian descent looks down on you, until somebody of Hispanic descent looks down on you, or an African American brother looks down on you. I've been the recipient of all that, but to me it's like, "Well good golly oh Molly. When did you get to the point where you too think that you're better than other people man?"

In my younger days I also did my part to dish it out, but by in large... of course, we're not the majority here. But when we leave the rez, talk about gambling man. Every time you leave the rez you're taking a chance. You don't know if a cop's gonna pull you over just because you got "65" on your plate and he knows that "65" is from Shannon County. That's where Pine Ridge Reservation is. So it's out there.

I think as indigenous people we need to better equip our young people to handle it so they don't have to get bitter about it, but just learn how to deal with it in a way that will keep their self esteem intact, and their dignity intact.

It's out there and it just depends on how you're feeling that day whether you want to deal with it or whether you just want to walk away. But I'm kind of surprised by your story. I haven't met a racist yet that won't acknowledge green. That's one color that racists seem to enjoy, that they all welcome in their hearts.

I could have been mistaken, but it seemed like it was the issue.

It could be because I've been through it too. Sometimes I make my point. I keep things professional. I ask for the manager. I ask them what their policy is. I let them know darn well that if this is racism then I might as well put my name on this restaurant, because I will sue you. But sometimes it has to be combated. Sometimes if you're too emotionally weary to combat it, you just let it go man.

Prompt 11: *A couple of words I said that I just kind of threw in, and they're kind of related, because I understand the dynamics here. When I first came here I heard that this is just nothing but drunks and lazy people here. I mean, I don't know who actually said that, but maybe I just kind of got that idea. But I understand why people drink. I understand why people don't have jobs. I understand that now, I do. But people away from here don't understand that and maybe I don't fully understand that, so I wouldn't mind you talking a little bit about that.*

There's a lot of work that needs to take place here. I see the dynamics that will improve our chances, but it's work that we're going to have to do as a nation, you know. Some people come in here, and they think that the answers are so simple man. It's like, "you have an 80 to 85 percent unemployment rate. Why don't you create something that will provide jobs?" Okay, yeah, cool. We know that. Easier said than done. "We hear that there're two, three families living in one house, because you guys are only equipped to handle a population of 15,000 or so and now you're up to 30,000 or so." Well, duh, the solution is more houses. But then again, easier said than done.

So then a lot of it goes back to the conditions of the 1868 Ft. Laramie treaty where they asked for peace, we gave them peace. Even when they broke their word, we kept to our part of the treaty. And now, because some time has passed, they say, "Oh, that was way back then. We should even just do away with it." You haven't even lived up to it to begin with. The terms of the treaty were that they would provide shelter, education, health care, all this stuff.

Again, I hate to always play the poverty card, but it's a fact of life. You know, we don't attract the best of doctors here. And until we deal with stabilizing the tribal government and the financial management system, which we so direly need to do, we're not going to attract investors here either. But once we take care of those, this would be the best place in the country to set up businesses. But we have to make this place business friendly first.

So people come here with a lot of ideas, with a lot of rhetoric, and that's all fine and good, but if you're sincere and if you're true then, you know, put your money where your mouth is. Take a healthy risk. Come up here and set your factory up. You'd have access to the largest untapped working force in South Dakota you know. Especially here on the

Oglala Pine Ridge Reservation, home of the Oglala, because we are the largest of all the Lakota tribes you know.

But I'm sure the other reservations have the same kind of statistics, but I'm with you man. I know why people get involved in all kinds of escapism and all that stuff. If they can't escape physically, then they're gonna self-medicate, whether through drugs or alcohol or all that. I understand that. I don't condone it. But, it's not something you could just put a band-aid on. It's not something that rhetoric is gonna fix. It's being a part of setting something into motion that you might not live to see the outcome of, but to lay the foundation. Maybe your grandchildren will reap the benefits.

Any place where a man and a woman can feel a high sense of self-esteem and have dignity and integrity, they're going to prosper—and we're using this word “prosper” in the sense of emotional well-being and spiritual well-being—they can prosper that way. If they're allowed to make their own livelihood, live in their own home. That's what will help decrease alcoholism, drug abuse, abuse of all natures, of all different kinds. It's going to take a lot of work that people are just going to have to be willing to do.

First and foremost here as Lakota people, Lakota people have to become motivated to heal within themselves and start building a foundation for the youth. Anybody else on the outside that wants to come in, sure your help is needed, and your help is appreciated. But come with more than just your intentions and your religious and humanistic doctrines. If you really want to come and make a difference, then bring it on. But if you're just coming to say, “Why this, why that, why the other thing,” you know what, just stay home. Stay home and look at the hungry people in your community and feed them.

Trying to rebuild a nation is no easy task and it takes a lot of effort. I start to see that here with a lot of different people, and we just gotta keep that momentum going until we have more and more people involved. And the more people you got working, headed towards a collective objective, the better it's gonna be.

So it's either that, step up to the plate, or just walk away. A lot of people have walked away. There're a lot of us who've been doing this our whole life since we gained that consciousness and our educations and our strong spiritual strength. We've been working on this, but it's not gonna all take place in the blink of an eye. It's going to take time.

Some people want to look at improvements, and they want to look at it in the form of structures and things like that. Well, you could even start to see some of that too, but it's just a lot of work and it's an on-going process. Like I said, a different generation will reap the benefits. But maybe by then the standards of the world will change. Maybe the world's system will crash and burn man. Maybe gas will get so high, we'll all have to go

back to riding horses around you know. Maybe we'll all have to go back to learning what plants we can eat, what plants we can't eat, things of that nature.

But until then, like the old people say when you try to tell them to rest they say, "Well, when I die, that's when I'll rest." And that's what working on social issues is like. There's no rest. You work till you die, but you just have to have a lot of hope, a lot of faith. First of all, first and foremost, you gotta have the commitment. I know what all the problems are here. But I don't waste my time talking about them. I spend a lot of time doing something about it. Thankfully, there're a lot of people within my tribe and a lot of people of people who come from without, non-Natives who get embraced by our people, who are standing side by side with us. We're trying to make a difference here. Of course I'm not satisfied with it, but I'm just happy that there are people doing things rather than just sitting back and getting involved in rhetoric. Words are cheap.

Prompt 12: *What about one theme that I wrote down, I didn't know if I was going to include it, but I don't know where else to include it. So listen to this: "Here are these pictures of these poor Indian children. Please send me money."*

Yeah, do some research. To a lot of indigenous people of cultural background, when the spring time comes they don't even... there used to be a time when they say the tourists are gonna be coming back. They don't even say that any more; they say, "The money's again. Here comes the money." So they view tourists and outside contributors as dollars. A lot of our people have gotten well versed into being poverty pimps, and not only they, but also different religious organizations. I wish I could mention some names, but I've seen some entities fail doing that. They've got the pictures of the poor little Indian kids and they just caught them in that state.

I remember one time these people actually paid a family to do this whole poor scenario. And they're laughing them off, saying to these people, "You guys are cold blooded man." I despise that. There are some religious entities from the organized religion places that do that. Shame on them. You're going to hell man! You're going to hell! You're putting out misinformation.

So, White America out there, you gotta stop being so gullible. I'm not telling you to stop contributing, but do some research. Every community has different people within their community who the people know and trust, who do a lot of hard work. Instead of doing your research within an organization that's asking you for money, find out from reputable source within that community. I think you'll find that a lot of time... I believe the third world images— countries that have that kind of poverty. And I think in the Bible when they talk about the first shall be last and the last shall be first that they were talking about indigenous nations, and although we get referred to as third world poverty type countries, we're not. We're not that bad off. I see hunger out there in the real third world countries, but having said that, we still need help here.

Do your research. Don't just willy-nilly send money to somebody. Do some research. Better yet, I encourage people, especially those who come out here and they ask, "How can you stop from being tricked?" Make your own contacts and serve as a sponsor to certain individuals or families. Know the people within the community. There are those of us who do outreach work among the people of our own community, maybe not in an organized sense. My family and I every year do a Christmas drive. Now we're doing back to school drives. People contribute to us in the form of notebooks, backpacks, pencils, things like that. During the wintertime, we do coat drives. Each community has people who do these things who honor the contributors and distribute their gifts. But other places, you're just funding somebody's checking account.

As always, if I contribute to something, I want to make sure that my money is being well spent. So, please do your research and don't be so gullible. I don't mean that in a negative way. I'm trying to encourage you. Don't let anybody victimize you by ripping you off through some kind of pity tactics—being a poverty pimp. A lot of people make a real good living off of being poor. I don't mean to slam people of my own tribe and entities that are here, but it's kind of universal wherever poverty exists. Somebody finds a way to make a living off of it.

It goes back to the days of the old Indian agents. I'm sure there were people contributing to the efforts going on out here, and most of the goods and the money went into the hands of the Indian agents. They just passed on the crumbs to the people.

By all means, act civilized, act educated, do your research, so you don't get taken for a ride. That's my take on that.

Prompt 13: *We're going to change gears here and there are only a couple of questions left. I'm employed here on the reservation, and I didn't come here to be employed. I really didn't. I came here and I did find a job substitute teaching which is not a very glamorous profession and I don't make a lot of money, but a job came open that I had no idea was going to come open, just out of the blue, something that is a pretty professional job as a music teacher. That's not something that I wanted to do on the outside world, but here I see it as a huge opportunity. I'm still a young man, but you said something a year ago. You weren't talking to me, but I overheard it. You had talked to one of the teachers at a school here, a white teacher, and I believe you told her (and maybe I'm misquoting you), but you told her that ideally her job wouldn't belong to her and she was offended. Ideally, a Native person should have her job, and she was offended. I wasn't offended by that, but it stuck in me to the point where I have this job now, and I need this job, I really do. But as a young man, I'm looking for people— who among the Native people could do this job? I'm looking for that, because there's a reason. The main reason is number one that what you said stuck in me. Number two, I know that even if I became a really good singer, a really good singer and I learned all the songs, nobody would respect that. They might, some people, but they wouldn't respect that enough where I could teach it. It's almost a novelty now that I can sing a*

couple of songs. The kids challenge me and I sing a song or two that you taught me. But I realize that my job really should belong to a Native person and it's hard for me to deal with, because what you said stuck in my so that's my thinking now, but I need this job too.

I'll speak to that. In the meantime, try to un-stick that. If I used the term ideally, what I'm talking about is, yes, to this non-Native, ideally and in theory, this job should go to a Lakota. But what I mean by that is that there should be Lakota people who are qualified to do this job. What I'm saying is that if, of course I'm gonna advocate trying to put my people to work. Of course, first and foremost. But if they're not qualified to do the job, then there is no racial barrier. In my mind, the job goes to the highest qualified person. Even in my own tribe where there's an 80 to 85 percent unemployment rate. Say I was hiring a surgeon and the white guy was more qualified, I'm not gonna hire the Lakota based on the fact that he's a Lakota and I'm loyal to my tribal members, because he'll get in there and he'll slice somebody up and who knows what in the world... a Lakota and a white guy and a black guy competing for the same job here on the rez— whoever is the most qualified by ethics and by rights should get that job. If it's the black guy or the white guy, fine. But if it's the Lakota guy, of course he's gonna get the job.

So ideally, I would like to see my people qualified for the jobs that they apply for. That's also a part of what's kind of holding us back socially, because a lot of people have gotten their jobs not based on the basis of their qualifications or their experience, but because of whom they were politically connected to. So if you're so-and-so and you're director of let's say the land office and your only qualification for that was that your uncle was on the council, dude, you don't deserve that job. That job ideally belongs to whoever was most highly qualified for it.

I guess that's what I was talking about to that woman. I don't know if she was offended. If she was, she certainly could have approached me, and I could have elaborated, and I could have told her that. And in a sense, maybe she would have agreed. What I'm talking about is trying to encourage my people to take advantage of the opportunities that they have in front of them, rather than sit back and criticize those who are educated and qualified to work.

A long time ago, when I was young, our elders told us, "get educated, whether you have to leave the reservation or if you can do it here. Get educated, come back and start helping your people." So I'm following the advice, the direction of the old people. But there are times when I've been criticized by my own people— at times when I have to articulate terminology in a different fashion so people will understand, they say, "Well, now you act too good for us. Now you act just like a white man." Criticizing me for getting that education and doing what I have to do. But my situation has changed because of this education. I can get a job anywhere. So I don't have time for that. That's kind of what holds a lot of our people down.

Sometimes I even catch myself downplaying what I've achieved. I see school kids do it. They really don't want to answer questions and show people how smart they are, because they don't want to be criticized for it. And sometimes I do that. It's not dummy down, but try to be more grass roots level and talk with a real thick Indian accent and talk like a rez boy, because I don't wanna be ostracized. But now, I'm more comfortable saying, "Hey wait a minute, why should I look down on myself just because I'm educated, or because I can master this English language."

The people we are ultimately gonna have to deal with to uplift the Lakota nation don't have the foggiest notion of who we are. They don't speak our language. So you have to articulate to them in a way they understand and a way they can comprehend to deal with them. That's the advice given by the leaders a long time ago. You have to learn to speak their language, understand their world to better help yours.

Now I encourage people, you don't need to be ashamed of anything. The sky is the limit. Keep going forward. Don't let anybody hold you back.

So in essence that's what I mean. Yeah, when I envision things like a school where from the principal down to the janitor it's staffed completely by Lakota people, I don't view that as offensive or racist. I view that as a social victory for our people, because all those people, from the top to the bottom, are educated and qualified for those jobs that they have. Yes, I would love to see that. I would love to see that! That would mean there would be more Lakota families that have the basic means to survive.

But, we're all human beings too. Sometimes it's real complex, and sometimes it's real simple too. I certainly wouldn't want to see anybody being affected by... that's me. A lot of Lakota people have a viewpoint where poverty anywhere is bad. Families suffering and all that stuff is bad. That's why I hope you understand that and I want you to unstick that from your heart, because if you need that job, bro, you keep that job. You were selected for that job for a reason. You're crazy to be looking for your replacement. Just go to work man. That's all I'm saying.

I don't know what they call that in Western society. A lot of white people were all upset, because they thought a lot of black people were getting their jobs because they're black because of some act that they did—I can't remember what it was called.

Affirmative action.

Affirmative action. But see, that doesn't work, because if you've got people not qualified for jobs they shouldn't get those jobs. We have of course Indian Preference here. But that's just to say, if they're both equally qualified, then the job goes to the Lakota. Why? [It's because of] 80 to 85 percent unemployment. And that's a tough choice to make too, because if you don't look at it right that has a racial flavor. That means we don't care if

the white man suffers and all that stuff. That's not the point. The point is that we have to try to better our community.

To me, I don't care what color you are. If you're qualified, then you get the job. I also do believe that our Lakota children, they do need to experience cultures of other kinds. They do need to be exposed to that and other people can offer those viewpoints, and I can only hope that it will be positive viewpoints that they're sharing with the children. For example, if there was a white teacher who came who had that sense of superiority over and "I just came to save you guys and teach you," well, you're not gonna make it here. Just move on.

Prompt 14: *I think one of the things that angers me too is I've been to the hospital. When you go to the emergency room (this is unheard of anywhere off of the reservation) they literally need family members and friends to take care of things, because it's a joke. The emergency room is a joke. People are there and they either can't get a job somewhere else, or they're using this job as a steppingstone. And when I'm saying this, I'm meaning non-Natives. I'm not often critical of Native people and I have a reason for that. But non-Native people, it gets under my skin. I see this in the schools and the hospital— wherever there are jobs where non-Native people get jobs on the reservation. I am so honored to have my job, and it just [makes me very angry] to see people (and I'm not saying that I'm the best and most qualified. I'm honestly saying I don't know what I'm doing. I may not be the most qualified, but I'm trying to do the best for the kids at my school teaching music). But I'm not saying that, I want to be the best I can be. There are people who just don't give a (expletive). They don't care at all. They just want to have a job and move on if they can somewhere else.*

I hear you, bro. I'm glad you did the ranting for me and saved me the trouble, 'cause I've been there, done that. But now, fortunately, I'm in a position to watchdog those kinds of things. In the schools, yeah, if that's bad, then it's bad. But it's even worse when it comes to the health care profession. We've got people here who are just working off student loans man. They made a deal with the government to have certain parts of their student loans done away with, if they just put some time in on a rez somewhere at a hospital. So they have no vested interest here.

When I deal with them, or when I hear of how they treat people, I've been to that emergency room when there's a box of pizza open, and they're laughing and joking around, and in the waiting room, you've got old people groaning, suffering, people sick. I don't know how many times I've gotten security called on me up there for advocating for members of my own family and other tribal members. Every time, I write people up and I follow it through.

But now that I'm on the council, I let the people know, "if something goes down anywhere." I'm talking anywhere. If it's our own people who are not thankful for their jobs, who don't have that sense of *wopila*, that sense of gratitude that they have a

livelihood, we'll deal with them. But if they're of the non-Native persuasion, that's it. You're done. Hasta luigi—get the hell outta here. You're going to hell!

But, just don't tolerate it man. I get treated different because I've established myself. People know that... and some of my own people talk in bad ways about me when I'm trying to deal with a non-Native who's working here and acting like I ain't crap, and I start standing up for myself. People say, "Oh, that's Will Peters. He really likes to make trouble." Well, what they call trouble is me stepping up to the plate and not tolerating those kinds of abuses towards other people.

So I really kind of watchdog these health profession things around here because these guys, like you said, have no vested interest. They could care less man, 'cause they don't know these people; they don't know the different *tiospayes*—extended families. They're just here working off a student loan. So they could mess up and say, "Oops." But no, no, no, no—there're higher expectations here. We're human beings here.

That's why I say there's a difficulty here. We don't attract the best doctors, but we do have some good doctors that we're thankful for. I will sincerely do my part to expedite people and escort them to the borders of this rez if I find that kind of attitude in them. Nobody needs that kind of attitude in their community. White, red, yellow or black. None of us need that and it shouldn't be tolerated.

So I'm with you there, and thanks for cussing on my behalf so I don't have to do it man. I'm with you, and I'm grateful that I'm in a position to do something about it. And that's what I want to do. I want to stay in a position to do something about things that adversely affect our people.

Prompt 15: *There's one more thing. How should I view my job? On the reverse side of what you just said, how should I view my job? How should people who have jobs here view their job?*

First off, for you personally, I wouldn't go around saying, "I'm just figuring out what I'm supposed to do."

I know.

Don't go there man. I appreciate what you're saying to me about that, but I know you're qualified. You know what to do. You work with these young people. You need this job? How should you view your job? View your job seriously. Take it seriously. You know I don't buy into that lame philosophy of "If we only reach one child then we've done our job." Dude, if at the end you've only reached one child, you should be fired man! But if you get eight students, do your utmost. If you get ten, twelve students in every class, do your utmost to get to each and every child. So take your job very, very seriously.

As most of us well-balanced human beings know, learning music and being able to play music is a great source of therapy for you. It's a great escape other than the alternatives—booze, violence, sex, drugs, whatever. Just take a lot of sincerity, a lot of compassion, a lot of love for your students into your job and give them all that you can. Of course, they're the other part of the equation. If they're open to it, then they'll learn. If they're not, then ultimately you're gonna have to find a professional, cool way to deal with those. Every classroom has them—rabble-rousers and whatnot.

But take your job seriously and be open to learning experiences. Be open to having a good time with your students and establishing good relationships that last for a long time. Before I got into politics I taught for twenty years, and I still have good relationships with my students, and it's awesome now that my former students will bring their children to me and say, "This is my child." So it's good to teach multi-generations of my own people. It's just awesome. I just like maintaining positive relationships. But, I took my job seriously. I believe that teaching is a job of great, great responsibility. I'm glad you feel honored to have that job because that's exactly how I felt about having a teacher's job. It's just an honor, it's just an honor to have it.

So the long and short of it is be real sincere about it.

I think the reason I say I don't know what I'm doing is it's my first year, number one. And I think ten years from now I'll feel like I could do more, I could do better.

Well, that's the most logical way to do it. Again, Joey, I'm with you. The first year that I was teaching, I'm like what in the heck's going on here? What am I supposed to do? And this thing about lesson plans and schedules, they were a drag, a complete drag. I still view them as a drag. I just love the time that I spent with the children. But, as with any craft, there's a sense of bewilderment, the anxieties that you have like, "What the heck. What am I supposed to be doing here?" Yeah, I'm with you on that. But I never admitted it because I needed the job. But after a while, you learn as you go, but you said the most important thing is that we as adults are also lifetime learners. So there's always going to be room for improvement. So it's just a great sense of personal growth, when you notice that with each passing day or month or year that you do get better at it—depending how you're committed to it.

I've seen the other side where there are teachers that have just become complacent, sit at their desk, pass out handouts, and they're not a part of the equation of learning. It's like they're sitting there waiting for retirement to come and take them out of this classroom. They're sitting there drawing a salary that somebody [else] sure could use, so I think that there should be real strong regulations for people like that. As soon as you burn out, you're outta there. You shouldn't be allowed to sit that at that desk, and that's as I said, the negative side.

But I've seen the other side of people in their fifties and sixties who just love teaching, and they live for it, and they're in every sense of the word a teacher. That's the kind of role modeling I had, and that's the kind of teacher I strive to be, again because of what I view it as. If this school didn't exist for these children to come to it wouldn't provide me with a livelihood. That it does provide me with a livelihood, I am thankful and I'm honored. It's an honor man, to be in there and doing your part.

So it sounds like you got a good handle on it and hopefully you can role-model that to other people. It doesn't matter what color you are; it doesn't matter what age you are. We still need positive role models. They say, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." Sure you can if you roll up a newspaper and smack it on the head and get its attention you can teach an old dog all kinds of new tricks. But some people, you just can't afford to become complacent in this life. You have to open to new experiences and personal growth—until you're dead. Or else otherwise, what's the point.

Prompt 16: *You've mentioned "stepping up to the plate." A person who's a non-Native that wants to "step up to the plate"—how do they do that? If you would just mention some general things...*

Of course, you have to establish yourself amongst the people that you've moved into. By all means, you shouldn't rush in. Don't come in all gung-ho and all that stuff. If you do, you're just going to set yourself up for some disappointment. Just come in and take some time, start to build relationships here, and just get involved in the positive efforts that people are involving themselves in. Whether it be participating in bringing awareness to women's rights, children's rights, or the rights of Native Americans—if you believe in that.

Just like back in Martin Luther King Jr.'s time, you had people of all races that embraced the same kind of philosophies he had. So that's why you saw people of all colors walking with him. That's how you can basically "step up to the plate," but knowing that you'll never be able to run for tribal council—you'll never be able to run for tribal president or vice president. You'll never be able to take a leadership role among the adult population, because of—sad to say—the cultural differences.

Sometimes when people get upset here, they get really personal about things. For us it's like, "Well they're a white person, what are they doing here?" And from that, it can become, "Well they're not even from this tribe." And from that, it can become, "Well they're not even from this community—they're not even from this district—they're from over there." I went through a lot of that myself, being from the eastern side of the rez.

So, "stepping up to the plate," is being willing to share what people are getting involved in—just participate in those things too. But, sometimes "stepping up to the plate" can be as simple as making connections with different families, maybe different elders, doing your part to make sure they don't freeze in the winter and get dehydrated in the

summer—just take care of them—especially if you see somebody who doesn't have anybody. To me, that's stepping up too—there's a lot of different levels of stepping up.

For Lakota people, there's a lot of inner strife that I wouldn't recommend any non-Native even try to get involved in. Because, I guess it's just not tolerated. I wouldn't advise my white relatives in Christ to support me in different things, because in those different things, I have to step up and show that I won't be bullied, that I won't be manipulated, and that I won't be played. And if I physically had a white brother or sister beside me, I wouldn't want to put them through what people are gonna put them through.

And so, you would make me stronger by just letting me know, "Hey I'm with you, man; my prayers are with you." But there are times when I have to stand my ground in the bravest way I can, so that people will know that I'm representing a portion of people who are just oppressed all of the time. Because even within our own tribe, we oppress each other. There are the "haves" and the "have nots," so that means that we have bought into the Western society's type of thinking.

So, I despise uppity people—I don't care what color they are. I despise people with attitude. I'm with that portion of the American population that doesn't get why Paris Hilton is so famous—why she's so celebrated. In a lot of our books, you should be famous for so much more than just "your daddy's rich." And so, it's the uppitness of people in any society that I don't tolerate. If you're so blinded by your ego and your social standing that you can't see the people suffering, then who needs you? Who needs you? I hate to sound that crass about it, but I'm with the Lord.

The Lord said, "I didn't come for the self righteous people; I came for the hopeless sinners." My life is for the hopeless sinners. I know that I am far from being the Lord, because I'm just a common man. But, I'll hang out with the poor people, and I'll be fine—thank you very much. Because wealth comes in [many different forms.] Did that make any sense?

Yeah.

All right then.

Interview III

September 3, 2006 (Evening)

Whites/Non-Natives and Racism II (57min)

Prompt 1: *Will, last week we talked about what white people do wrong here, but today I want to focus on when right-minded white people come here, the struggles that they have and what can be done to make things better.*

When I came here I wasn't prepared for the level of, I call it racism, but another woman says it's displaced anger, or reverse racism, whatever you want to call it. I face what I deem racism in a lot of places when people don't like me just because I'm white. Maybe sometimes I'm perceiving that when it's not true, but I guess what I want you to talk about is, do you see that or am I just imagining that? Is that around or what?

Yes, it's definitely around, and you're not just imagining it. Unfortunately, even good-hearted and good-minded white people, when they come here with good intentions and they roll up their sleeves and they help contribute in a positive way, unfortunately, the bottom line is that they're still perceived as "white." I guess it is a combination of displaced anger and racism, but regardless, two wrongs don't make a right. It's still not right.

There's still a matter of putting your best foot forward to try to enlighten each other about exactly what the issues are. I know that people of different ethnic backgrounds are constantly criticized, because they appear to be hanging on to anger, pain and sorrow from incidences that happened over a hundred years ago, but still that doesn't condone racism or the displaced anger.

But what has to be understood is that when you look at the area of social injustice and spiritual injustice, and you feel that somebody was the victim of social injustice, especially when it resulted in displacement of original land where people lived, where they had access to their geographical worship sites, and in some cases the taking of innocent lives, I guess people know that those people back then didn't receive positive justice. So they're angry on their behalf or they're sorrowful on their behalf, they're bitter on their behalf. Mostly, I guess, because they really don't see a change. We still feel that there's a dual system of justice here in South Dakota where we live, and we can see the unfairness of it all.

To some people who I guess are not healthy enough, or well enough to move beyond that, it just starts to pile up within them. So yes, they have this tendency to blame every white person for the atrocities committed to Lakota people or indigenous people in general. That's why it becomes imperative for those who are spiritually well and socially well to help them to achieve some type of wholeness and some type of closure.

Closure, I guess, is the bottom line. Some people still need closure and, as I said, they just not well enough or healthy enough to continue on. Even though in many cases racist feelings, no matter what you call them, they should never be condoned, but still an effort should be made to understand—to come to an understanding.

To me, I guess it has a lot to do with the spiritual reconciliation of God's people—of all God's people. For too long, those, especially indigenous people, but it applies to all—everybody who suffers from the despair of poverty—the scales are never tipped in their favor. So there's always that bitterness. But, it's a case-by-case kind of situation.

I guess to some degree I'm somewhat guilty of that too, because sometimes I really, really have suspicion toward different non-native people that come here. I always question their ulterior motive, especially when they're hit-and-miss kind of people. I guess I can use for example (since they get dumped on quite a bit anyway) attorneys. I see non-native attorneys come in here and it seems like they milk a lot of money off the Tribe, then I don't see them anymore. Then pretty soon they come back. Those are the kind of people I suspicion right or wrong. I guess eighty-five percent of the time I feel like in my gut that my heart's telling me what's going on.

But I don't have a problem with *wasicun* people—white people, who come here and at least invest some of their time and their effort. I do believe that there needs to be an understanding between our different ethnic backgrounds. You know, it's a simple message to me—we're all God's children. I think we should all give each other the benefit of the doubt, but then still, that's just me. The reality is, there are a lot of obstacles that will prohibit us from coming together like that. It's just an indicator that we have a lot of work to do to try to reach out to each other and find a good place in each other's hearts.

Prompt 2: *Okay, this is an aside. You mentioned the word “wasicun”. I ask around about that word quite a bit. One man told me... that [it means] “somebody who hands out things.” And then, someone says its “a taker of the fat,”— someone who's greedy. Then, the hardbound Lakota dictionary [implies] that “wasicun” [could] mean [a person that's] “holy.” Some people won't say that word because it's seen as a racial slur, and others throw it around. I sometimes struggle with that word, whether I should be offended or not.*

Well, it's a back and forth kind of thing. I am not totally, but slightly annoyed and offended when I'm being referred to as an “Indian,” because obviously I'm not from India. I don't like being referred to as an “American Indian,” because I just know that we have names for ourselves. Even sometimes I would slip and use those terms loosely. Probably the one I use mostly is “Native.” I'm more comfortable with “indigenous.” But other than that, I come from the Oglala Lakota people so I have a problem being called “Sioux.” That's what we're commonly known as. The old people are fine with it, but I can't stand it. I don't like being referred to as a “Sioux.” I see it as a derogatory term.

They say it was a mixture of the Ojibwa and the French-speaking people and that Sioux meant “snake in the grass” or something to that effect.

I guess when people have angry feelings or they observed a portion of one ethnic group, they have a tendency to judge all by the actions of a few, so the term “*wasicun*,” the way I understood it, it’s just an evolution of how to describe the white man. I don’t know who originally gave us all as human beings color assignments, who color-coded us, (I suspect it was an agent of the devil to find a way to keep us apart) but, when we first had contact (by “we” I mean my ancestors) according to our oral history, the first contact that we had was with representatives of the U.S. Government’s Armed Services, if you will, back then. Cavalry people. And their leaders wore sabers. So the best terms that the people could use to describe these people was to call them “*mila hanska*.” “*Mila*” means “knife” and “*hanska*” means “long.” So basically they were referring to these people of Caucasian persuasion who were with the Calvary as “long-knives.”

After spending a bit more time with these people (that sounds like a real diplomatic way to put it— “after spending time with them,”) but you know, when you start looking at people who tear up the land and who break treaties— legally binding treaties—and take the best of everything: the Black Hills, the buffalo (the common term for them is “bison,”) but killing off an abundance of buffalo for no other reason than to help facilitate the genocidal attempts of this country, and even now, we’re stuck in an area where we don’t get a lot of tourist traffic, we’re in pretty much of a remote area, but as it related to the times back then, then they started to refer to these people as “*wasi-cun*.” “*Wasi*” is “fat” and “*cun*” is “take.”

The interpretive meaning is that they’re so greedy that they’ll take everything— even the fat. And in some regards, some Lakota people back then regarded the fat of the meat in some cases as a delicacy, and in some cases it had its uses too. So in some ways it can be perceived as a derogatory way to address a white person’s background. But in other ways, it’s just a use of terminology that has existed for so long that when we talk about white people among ourselves, utilizing the language, there’s been no modification of what to call them. So they remain “*wasicun*.”

I guess linguistically we’re conditioned to do that, just like the African Americans brothers. For some reason known only to them, they get to call each other “nigger.” When back then, that was a derogatory term for their people.

Prompt 3: *But you’re not calling yourselves anything; you’re calling somebody else something. In my house the word “nigger” was the worst word you could say. Even today if that word comes up, my Mom would be appalled where as if the “f” word and other words like that, she wouldn’t be appalled as much as if one of us said “nigger” in front of her. I don’t use that word other than for this kind of purpose, so what I’m say is that with the word “wasicun,” if you were calling each other that it would be one thing, but*

you're not calling each other that—you're calling someone else that. And there are alternatives in your language. There are words for "white man."

Right, well, there are alternatives. When we're specifying gender we can say *wasicun wiyan*, white woman, or *wasicun wicasa*, white man. But it's not an exact literal translation. To be literal, we'd have to say *ska wicasa* or *wicasa ska* or *wiyan ska*. But in these times, when we look at the inner battle—the battle within the Tribe—the internal strife is that we've got derogatory terms that our people call each other, like a "buck" or a "hawk" or a "big Indian." Those kinds of comments are directed at people who are very noticeably Lakota—you know, dark-skinned and all this stuff.

Then you have the other side of the coin where they're calling them "half-breeds", you know, "mixed-bloods." And then they took a sacred word and took it out of context to refer to the half-breed people or the mixed-bloods. That word is "*ieska*." *Ieska* in the old days was actually a spiritual word, and "*ieska*" meant that they could translate or interpret spiritual voices. Just like if a spirit, or for lack of a better word, if an angel spoke a word and there was somebody who was in tune with that spiritual side, they could interpret; they could become an *ieska* to interpret those spiritual messages. Now, when they would start moving up to dealing with the *mila hanska*, *wasicun*, white people, whatever you want to call them, the people who knew both languages, Lakota and English were then called "*ieska*." And I believe that's where they made the mistake. They made the mistake of taking it out of its proper context, and so now we have that word being thrown around in a very derogatory way. "*ieska!*" And it's usually said with a hint of anger. It's kind of a bastardization of the word and it talks about the evolution of the word.

It's very sad nowadays to hear racial slurs being utilized by Native people directed at each other when they're ticked off at them, man. So, I guess, we can introduce an ideal, and all that stuff, but it's hard to break from the norm.

In the old Lakota songs there's reference to the Caucasian people still as "*mila hanska*." So "*wasicun*," sometimes it depends on how it's used. To me, Joey, for all intents and purposes, you're *wasicun*, but not what is meant by you're greedy or you're the taker of the fat—that's just the word that was assigned to you guys.

Prompt 4: *Usually the context you say it in never offends me, but sometimes at my work, when people throw that word around, they're not saying it like you say it to me.*

Well, it's when they connect it to a color. When they connect it with a color, to me it becomes totally ignorant and degrading. Like back in the days our people were described as the "red devils," the "red savages," and all that. Now, our people pray with a combination of four colors, black, red, yellow and white. But coincidentally it coincided with the color-coding that somebody gave to human beings. Any one of us, when we're

asked to point out a color that we think the world perceives us as, we can point at a specific color within that black, red, yellow, white.

What I propose, and what I've adopted, is to utilize those colors, because I know the spiritual meaning of them in Lakota society, but to use them as a teaching tool. That is, to confront something negative face to face and with courage and say that you're going to modify these teachings and use them in a positive way. In a way I could say that I'm proud to be a red man—red power, you know, things like this. When people talk about red power, they go, "Oh there's an ethnic group trying to rise up from the depth of suffering." But if you hear somebody say "white power" it's deemed as negative. "Oh, KKK, Arian nation."

In essence, I have a hard time addressing people as a color. When we talk about reconciliation, we start a dialogue about, "Hey, how would you like for me to refer to you as?" In most cases, I think we should just take the color out of it, maybe the ethnic backgrounds, and just address each other as human beings. And if we want to dialogue further, then we can talk about ethnic backgrounds and the positive things from those ethnic backgrounds. I don't know if that makes any sense, but that's just coming from me.

Prompt 5: *I think for me, one of the hard things I have to, I think one of the balances I have—it's like a balancing act because I live here now. And there's never been this, anywhere I am, I start adopting the ways of where I'm at— that's just the way I am, because that's how you adjust to your surroundings. And here there seems to be a resistance. Like, I'm not ... what I'm trying to say here is there seems to be this balance that I can't quite find of being too "white" and being too much of a "wannabe" and I don't know where that balance is or if I should even worry about it. I just want to be who I am and sometimes I hear, "Oh, you're trying to be Indian," or "Oh, you're just acting like a white man," and it's enough to rattle your brain, because you're just "being."*

I don't mean to minimize that statement of what you just described to me because to me, I get involved in things that have the same outcome—that cause me headaches, heartaches, and real frustration that's working with the outcome of things that were set into motion a long time ago. And I speculate that for Lakota people too, they probably go through that struggle too. When do I pour on the whiteness that I know to prove that I'm educated, articulate, and all that stuff, and when do I shut it off before I'm deemed as a sellout, or I'm deemed as somebody who assimilated into—I like to say Western society, but Western society now is much more of the mix of different cultures. So, for lack of a better work, yeah, you are acting like a white guy.

There's all that stuff, and the best advice I can give is let it be like water off a duck's back. Don't stay up too late pondering it. Just go with the flow; just go with the flow. If you don't, then your life is starting to be directed by somebody else's perception of you.

For me, I don't have the time of day for that. I've got my day ahead of me, I say my prayers, I make my prayers, then I walk inside my prayers and I walk out my day. Like I said, I still, I probably will never live it down or outgrow it—I'll probably take it to my grave. I still get hit with people don't know what I am. There are some of my people who don't accept who I am because I'm green-eyed and brown-haired, and yet when I'm on the other side, it's just the different old dysfunctional side of the same old story, so why bother with it man?

To me, in my case, my philosophy is to come on stronger with something else than the mediocre; to move way past that and challenge people with, "Okay, man, you talk a good talk, but can you walk the walk?" As I said, go with the flow, and if the heart's alright, and you're feeling good with what you're doing in your heart, then just go with it. If somebody else is putting some junk on you, don't take ownership of their junk, man. Drop it. Drop it right there, man, because if you pick it up and walk with it, you're walking with their junk.

The bottom line is, we still need good-hearted people to do what they have to do in order to uplift people. And I don't care who uplifts anybody, as long as they're doing the task of uplifting somebody. Then the social priorities for me change. That's just me.

Of course it can be annoying when people perceive you as this or that, but ultimately it doesn't amount to a hill of beans. I've just learned how to not take ownership of other people's misconceptions, and actually pray for them so their consciousness can be enhanced and they can be enlightened. Easier said than done, but it works for me.

Prompt 6: *One of the things you're talking about is this intra-Tribal—within the Tribe racism or hatred of different groups. "This one comes from the districts or this one comes from the village and this one is light-skinned or this one has this." There's what I consider in my mind, Oglala people who they're calling white people. Certain people at my work are saying, "This one's white." I don't know. Their last name is Black Elk so I'd like to think they're not white, but maybe I'm wrong. That's just an example. I almost don't want to be part of those conversations. I don't want to have anything to do with that, because I hate it. I like to get into conversations about white people. I like to bash white people; that's one of my personal issues and I'm probably wrong a lot. As far as any bashing any race other than my own, or getting in this intra-Tribal stuff, I try to stay out of it. Am I right in doing so?*

I would say so, man. My last name is Peters. You wonder, "What kind of Lakota name is that?" "Where did that come from?" But within my own family history I can trace that name. The tracing of my genealogy, I can go back as far as the 1800's on every kind of mixture that we had within my *tiospaye*, my extended family.

I guess you can look at things on the surface. You've got Will Peters here. He's got green eyes, brown hair and he's lighter skinned, he's articulate in the English language.

How could it be that he came to know more about Lakota spirituality and Lakota songs and dances to the point where he taught it for twenty years, when there are full-blooded people who don't know it?

To me, speaking Lakota and all that, even those aren't benchmarks. It doesn't prove that you're Lakota. It's a different frame of mind. Keep in mind that Lakota people... like I said man, it's universal, no matter where you go, it's just different variations of it wherever there are pockets of poverty. Lakota people can be divided over just about anything they can be divided over. You're talking those who speak the language, those who don't; those who know the Lakota ways, those who don't; those who pray in the realms of Christianity, those who pray in the realms of Lakota spirituality; traditional, non-traditional; A.I.M., Goon; half-breed, full blood; educated, uneducated—every little thing. And to me it's just symptoms of a society that took a major, major blow when the government enacted its various policies of total genocide, forced assimilation, religious oppression, all this and that.

So yeah, I could probably join you when it comes to white bashing right there. But then, I continue in the philosophy of white bashing. To me it becomes a problem when that history is ignored and denied. When you continue to teach these things about this country being built on noble acts of freedom. You need to come clean. You need to be fair. This country was built on greed. No matter where you go, the poor people now get the short end of the stick.

I think every race has people and philosophies within that race that deserve some bashing, including mine. I mean, when you see African Americans or Hispanics or Asians being so assimilated and Americanized to the point where they've learned that the white people view these indigenous people in a low way, and so they figure that's a part of being American is looking down upon indigenous people, and that's when I bash on anybody's society, man, when they learn that, because my contention is that everybody that's born into this life is worthy of dignity, respect, and love. If you think that your race has risen so far to the point where you can have that Manifest Destiny mentality, then you're going to hell; that's all I can say.

Man, if you can't utilize the uniqueness of your culture to uplift other people, then what good are you? You know, go ahead, die, get it over with. You're taking up valuable breathing space here, man. You're taking up valuable resources. I know that sounds negative, but it's hard fighting negativity. So, like I said, I resent that about other cultures, I resent that about those within my own culture who can't rise above that; who just totally can't rise above that. I think we're just doing all of each other a major disservice, a major disservice.

So, to me, again, it's a matter of accountability. I've been studying that word, accountability; studying about how it applies in different ways. You know, how to hold parents accountable; how to hold myself accountable; politicians, police, the whole nine.

But, the ones that are in dire need of accountability, who need to take a reality check, is those of us who proclaim to follow the Living God, those of us who are trying to teach, to pass something of substance on to the next generation. You know, we're the ones who can't be sitting around twiddling our thumbs.

I think there are a lot of us out there, but it's just a matter of connecting. We just need to connect. There are different things that point to that statement, like Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition and all these other different types of people who subscribe to the same thoughts, and they come together. But it needs to happen more, on a more national level, and sometimes on a global scale.

There are some things I've seen in my life. I've seen forty-five seasons in this life, so I've learned how to prioritize things. There are things that I won't turn back to. There are things that I'll walk away from in a Pine Ridge second, you know. Doesn't warrant my time, doesn't warrant the potential gray hairs that could come from it.

I have a spiritual path to walk, and it's hard enough staying on any spiritual path, man, you know. But my focus is to stay on that path; to see positive outcomes. And yeah, I can do some white bashing when it comes to looking at my people, and how just torn apart we are—just wounded souls walking all over the place. We can't understand there's a reason why we're like this. Dialogue the reasons. Analyze it, and then do the proper healing and then walk forward, rather than continuing to walk being socially ill at our own expense.

Prompt 7: *You've been around, and a lot of the answers you give me I actually expect. This is one I won't expect what you say to me, because it's hard for me to figure out. Being around, I've seen all kinds of people here. The next question I'm going to direct towards you is about non-white non-Americans. I've seen blacks, I've seen Hispanics, I've seen people of Asian descent, I've seen all kinds of people here even from Europe, they're not just common run-of-the-mill white Americans, then there're some people that are Americans, but like I said, they're of different descents, so I haven't been able to get a feel for what would be the common view of the Lakota people for these people that come. I don't know if there is a common view, but if you could...*

Well, I'll tell you directly, there is no common view. There is no common view at all. That's how divided we are socially. What one person may view another person as just doesn't apply to another Lakota. Many of us have gone out, we've become educated, we've had access to the "outside world," and, to me, you can have that world. I'm gonna stay right here on the rez. In spite of all the hardships, this is a place I understand. This is the place that keeps me spiritually strong. So, no, there isn't any common view.

I speculate that that's probably common in all races. Some people still have a very derogatory view of us as a whole, be it white, black or yellow, but there are others within those races who don't have that view. So it's a case-by-case kind of thing here. It does

come down to the individual, and it depends spiritually and socially on how well they are—how well their worldview is.

But there are definitely some things as Lakota people that we can come together on, and there are different instances where we all share the same view of what's happening in regards to this incident, or what's happening in regards to this other incident. Like, the former governor who killed a biker and used diabetes as a crutch to explain his actions—all of us collectively felt that this man was evil. To use a sickness that adversely affects so many Lakota people, to use it to try to beat the wrap.

So that's what we see here. It depends on who you are, your social status and your money, and your ability to provide adequate "BS" that you get treated differently. You get treated more favorably than us. As Lakota people, there you'll see some commonalities on our perspectives. But otherwise, if we've got a white person walking in the middle of twenty different Lakota people, each one of them is going to have their own view. And it depends on how they present themselves. I'd be one of the first to feel, if I didn't feel some good vibes, I'd like to say, "Get off the rez, man. We don't need you here. We've got enough to contend with."

Prompt 8: *Throughout the world, Native Americans are respected, from what I understand, people want to know if you're a Red Indian. Are you a Red Indian from America or they want to know that, because it's something that's respected. I don't know if it's the same completely throughout the world, but in various places for sure that's what I've heard. I'd like to know if there are any run-ins with any non-white Americans, non-Natives that are not white Americans that you had that are of note. Are there any on the reservation that you can talk about.*

Yeah, actually you're right. I mean, after Kevin "Custer" (I believe it was Kevin Costner, but I call him Kevin Custer) came here and made that movie, "Dances With Wolves," there kind of was a renaissance period when everybody became completely romanticized by Native Americans. So a lot of people made treks out to different indigenous nations. We had a lot here because it was our language that was being used in the movie, our persona, and all that stuff. And so the philosophies, the social and spiritual philosophies that the Lakota people had of taking care of the land, and all that stuff, never using more than you need, and things like that, keeping it clean, just blew a lot of Europeans away. They were shocked about it. They're like, "I've been through your communities and I've seen all the junked cars and the trash and all that stuff, and I thought you guys were the caretakers of the earth; that of all the places in America this would be the most beautiful. And I'd have to concur. Yeah, to me this is the most beautiful piece of land in this county. Now, I should take that back; I've seen a lot of beautiful places in this country. But, when a people aren't allowed to be who they were born to be, and you put all these social regulations on them, you are in effect killing their spirit. And so there becomes that hopelessness. Yeah, the trash and the junked cars

that you see have become indicative of what you see in poverty stricken areas throughout the world.

So instead of looking at it, you should question, “How did this come to be? How did these people become so heart-broken?” Then, the final conclusion is that you’ll find that it’s still, for this country America to be calling itself the “greatest country in the world,” you can see where they’re not so great at keeping their word. You can see where they’re not so great at addressing issues that really adversely affect people.

To these people that are upset and just heart broken and the victims of New Orleans, the victims of the Katrina hurricane, the things that they’re going through—“Hey brothers and sisters, welcome to the club, man. We’ve been going through that for over a hundred years.”

A lot of people seem to think that when you offer constructive criticism, you’re anti-American. I’m like, oh, when you walk that path, you’re walking a dangerous path. Above all else, you should question the integrity of your leaders, your programs, FEMA—look at FEMA. It’s under such scrutiny, and the scrutiny is warranted— the slowness. And I hope the victims of Katrina fare better than indigenous peoples, and people everywhere affected by poverty’s despair. The victims of Katrina are a year into this thing, and FEMA was painfully slow, this country was painfully slow. I hope and pray that you fare well; fare better than us anyway. You’ve been waiting for a year. We’ve been waiting for over a century.

Did I digress a bit, or did I answer your question? I apologize for my digressions.

Prompt 9: *I guess one of the hardest things for me to do is for me to know how to be, especially since I work at a school now. I find myself thinking, “I represent this place now.” When I went to the Northwest Indian Youth Conference, when I signed my name, I had to put a tribe and I had to put “Oglala,” and it was weird for me to do that. And it was so weird that there was a kind of a march where you hold your tribe’s flag and I refused to do that, because I didn’t feel like I deserved to do that. The people were saying that I had other motivations for not walking, but I didn’t feel like I deserved to do that. So, I almost don’t know how to be or how comfortable people here are when some white people, especially towards each other, because to other whites, we are the experts sometimes, we’re the ones who know, and there’s no one else around, and so we have to say what we know. Some times it’s hard to describe this place without making it sound like what everybody thinks. It’s hard to talk about the unemployment and the alcoholism without spending hours on it so people will understand, so they don’t just think, “Oh, drunk, lazy Indians.” It’s hard to do that because people don’t want you to talk for hours; they want a three-minute answer, and then it’s done. I think the hardest thing for me to do is to represent this place, whether it be in conferences like that or with people back home. It’s hard for me to know how to do that.*

The first response is, if you look at things culturally, socially and all that, you probably didn't qualify to carry the flag or the sign or whatever, but geographically, and working with the young people here, that certainly qualified you—and you live here—to walk with those tribal members who were there representing the Tribe.

Other than that, I guess cultural differences are kind of unique to those who care about them. Other people really don't. I reflect on the Bible that talks about the last days when things will just be fast—so fast that even the minute hand on the clock, you could actually see it moving. When things are like that, when you're in a fast-paced society, then you're just like sheep being led to slaughter, man, and you have to make the decision that if I'm gonna learn, then I'm gonna take every step necessary to achieve that goal; even if that means slowing down.

I've been in that position many times, talking to various church groups here. When they want to know about your culture, and they give you an hour to talk about it, I'm like, "Whatever, man. I can't teach you in an hour what it's taken me a whole lifetime to achieve. I mean, if you can be specific with your questions, then I can be more direct, but to me, being more direct means you won't get a three-minute answer; you'll most definitely get about an hour and a half answer, because I take my cue from the elders—I take my cue from God—things don't move that fast for me." I will never be that direct. In providing instruction, people can't ever be that direct; people can't ever be that fast. That's why a lot of people fall through the educational cracks, and that's why a lot of people fall through the social cracks. They have a natural, healthy sense of curiosity, but they don't have a natural, healthy commitment to really learn about things.

So, if I had to bottom line things happening here on the rez, I would say, yes, on one hand, it's bad. We have a lot of things that are happening that contribute to this being a hard life, but on the positive side, we have a lot of different people—not only Lakota people, but those who are not afraid of us, those who don't view us as inferior to them, non-Native teachers and people who come and live amongst us and work amongst us—those are the people we're more than likely to embrace and hold close to us.

We've had other people come here, you know, fly-by-night people that tell our people bad things, taught our people to be like them, to run the rat race, but I don't get involved with them because I don't run with rats, man. I don't hang out with rats. Those kind of people who just come here to either rip us off socially or monetarily or spiritually, you know, "Just stay away." That's what happens to us—we're always getting ripped off. And people find a way to capitalize.

There are non-natives who come here to learn the ceremonies and Sundances. They go back to their communities, and because of the romance that people have for us, the attraction they have for us, these other people can just very easily pick their pockets. "Here, I've been taught by this medicine man and been given his blessings to teach

these spiritual ways so I'm inviting you out to my sweat lodge, but I'm gonna charge you \$500 a pop." People like that, and they're going to hell too, man. They're gonna go to hell. There's a lot of people gonna be down there, man. I'm just glad I'm not gonna be there cause I've tried my whole life to stay away from rats like that man.

But, it's a case-by-case thing. Like, it's real cute, like when the Tribe used to try to provide some kind of guide book of the "to-do's and not-to-do's while attending a pow-wow." You know, removing your hat during all honoring songs; before you take somebody's picture ask permission first, those kinds of things. And at various times when indicated, turn off your camcorders and tape recorders, because these songs are not sung in that context where they can be shared that way—recorded—one way or the other. And that's cool; that's a cool attempt, but a lot of that's just common sense.

But there are things like that that I guess if outside, if western society wants to learn those things, then you're not gonna learn them reading from a book. Yeah, you might be able to learn from somebody who has a first-hand account of their experiences here, and that's cool too, depending on whether they had positive or negative, and that's gonna be cool too, because there's positive and negative in every society.

But, you've got to actually come here, and there are boundaries; there are definite boundaries that people have to adhere to when people are around here, living among Lakota people. Because there's so much that if you don't know, you could probably end up getting yourself into some trouble, man. You probably won't get scalped or anything like that. As I said, we're not the originators of the scalping thing, but you could be asked to leave the rez and not come back. Or, just get involved in some inner strife.

But otherwise to me, just like in any other society, you can run into the wrong people or you could run into the right people; you could have a very good experience here or you could have a very bad experience here. But above all else, don't weaken yourself coming in here with any preconceived notions about how you should act, how you should be, this and that—just be yourself. Row with the flow. Take people for face value—always assume they're a friend before anything else.

There are positive attributes that our people are attracted to and there are negative things that the world over people don't like. I could tell you I don't like arrogant people, no matter what race they are. I don't like uppity people, no matter what race they are. I don't like people who are so much more than innocently ignorant. If you're ignorant and you can't find it upon yourself to enlighten yourself, then just step out of the way.

And it's weird, but I even have that belief toward some of my own people. Like the saying goes, "Either lead, follow, or get the heck out of the way." If you can't contribute anything at a positive level, then just shut up. If your presence makes people feel uncomfortable, just stay home. I don't make the rules; I gotta live within those rules. I've gotta zig and zag and roll with the punches too.

But those are just my personal feelings man, because I just feel that if it doesn't feel spiritually good in the heart, then I don't want nothing to do with it. So I think people can best learn what's happening on the rez if they can take the healthy risk to come here. Chances are, you're gonna find good people to hang with.

Interview IV

September 24, 2006 (7 PM)

Whites/Non-Natives and Racism III (14min)

Prompt 1: *Will, I was reading a book called “Oglala Religion” (1982) by a white guy named William K. Powers. One of the things he said is that traditionally the way the Oglala people looked at other races, tribes and peoples is that if those people didn’t consider themselves to be inferior to the Oglala then the Oglala would consider those people enemies (implied on p. 123). Do you know anything about that? Is there any substance to that statement?*

William K. Powers is a noted author in regards to Lakota religion and social customs. But, one has to keep in mind that William K. Powers, being a man of Caucasian persuasion, writes from that perspective; as a man that’s of Caucasian persuasion. Generally, he’s not writing on behalf of the Lakota people. He’s more of an anthropologist of literature so to speak. So he’s writing for a predominately non-Native audience. I don’t agree with his academic pretension of how Oglalas view those of the seven council fires—the great Teton Nation. I think when Lakotas end their prayers by saying *mitakuye oyasin*, “we’re all related,” that says it all in a nutshell. They don’t believe that anybody is beneath them.

There’s a lot going on in the wellness movement. When you think of being healthy in mind, body and spirit, the Lakota people, in that aspect, believe everybody else to be more important than themselves; especially a man who calls himself a “*zuya wicasa*,” a man who calls himself a warrior; somebody who’s entrusted to protect the people. His whole existence is to be as a benefactor to all the other people. He deems his life worthless, unless he can spend it doing something of benefit to other people.

Lakota people, especially the Oglalas, have great respect for all others. That even transcends into today’s contemporary world. Those who present themselves as a friend to the people will always be a friend to the people. On every level possible that you can have a relationship, if you deem yourself an enemy to the people, then that’s on you; that’s the choice that you made. So, you become an enemy to the people.

Getting back to William K. Powers, all his work is not to be discounted, but it is to be academically questioned, as is every other non-Native author that has written about any indigenous culture; any culture other than their own. They’re not writing on behalf of those people. I imagine that my ancestors had great fun with these non-Native writers when they came around, basically just telling them whatever they thought that person wanted to hear, utilizing a lot of humor. There are a lot of stereotypes that people create about us and then they become duped by them, because they become so gullible. I imagine that I can go anyplace where there’s an enchantment with Native Americans

and convince them that I'm the next Messiah by chanting some songs and waving some feathers around. People have to fight against stereotypes.

William K. Powers also wrote another book that, to me, has a little bit more credence than some of his other works. It's called "*Sacred Language*." The difference in this book is that he did some actual interviews with some Lakota people on specific topics and they answered within the context of that. I'll credit him for that. I think that's a much more enlightening read than some of his other books.

I wouldn't believe things about another culture of people unless you are reading a book that is authored by someone from that specific culture. So, no. Oglalas have great respect amongst the Teton Nations and other nations. There's a lot of resentment toward Oglalas and jealousy, but the Oglalas have made relatives out of even their enemies.

There's an old story that goes back to the *Sahiyala*, the Cheyenne people. They used to be our traditional enemies until our ancestors came upon them and they were in a weakened manner. It had something to do with the Pawnees stealing their seven sacred arrows. We retrieved four of them on their behalf and there was a mutual love and respect. So we went through the *Hunkapi*, making a relative ceremony with them and made them relatives.

So, no, Powers' contention contradicts things. If we would have thought the Cheyenne were inferior to us when we came upon them in that weakened state, we would have wiped them out. Instead, we assisted them and made them our relatives. That relationship still stands strong even today. The Cheyenne know the story well and many of the Oglalas who know their culture know this just as well.

Prompt 2: *I guess [for] the capstone of this interview about racism, I'd ask the following questions: is there a place for whites and other non-Natives on the reservation? Is there really a place for them?*

There really is a place for them because when we talk about race, I know it sounds cliché, but we're all of the human race, thus all of one race. Many people have been married into the tribe. Many people of white descent, coming from descendents of white people, or they are the descendents of white people, have trouble talking about people in terms of color. But they are adopted into the tribe, are married into the tribe. In many cases some just come here to work, and they become a part of the people.

I guess it all depends on how you come. And there's a lot of different levels of that. Some people come to take advantage. Those are things we talked about before. Sooner or later people recognize people for who they are, what they are, what their ulterior motives are. Then that's it; it's time for them to go. So, amongst the Lakota people, there is a place for anybody here, no matter what color you are. My people are very

good at spotting phonies and spotting people who are coming here trying to convert us or anything of that nature. They try to get us to go along with the way they view things, but we definitely have our own world view which is kind of too broad to expound on, but given the time, I'm sure I could adequately do it.

So, to answer the question directly, yes, there is a place for everybody amongst the Lakota people.

Prompt 3: *I guess this is one of the questions I forgot. I have a lot of struggles financially here. It's nothing to do with here, it's just the way I am. I don't like to say to "no" to anything. If someone asks me for something and I feel I can help out, I will. Sometimes I feel like I walk into a parking lot and everyone swarms me. I wonder if that has anything to do with my color or what it has to do with. It bothers me sometimes. I even go to the point of calling it "racism," because somebody thinks that you're a certain color and you just happen to have money all the time in your pockets. Will you talk about that some?*

Welcome to the club. My life is very much like that. Even though I'm not white, I do have a job, so people at times swarm me and come to the house or call the house because they think that just because I have a job I have money to throw around. But you and I know that I have a rather large family—even additional children besides our biological children.

When you become known for being generous like that, you more or less have to learn that what you've done is you've allowed people to treat you like a water siphon. They've opened you up and they expect it to keep coming, and coming, and coming. There's nothing wrong with giving. A lot of us do that all the time, but you have to eventually learn how to say that two-letter word, man. You have to learn how to say no, because there is such a thing as giving too much, whether it be financially, spiritually or emotionally. You're of no use to anybody if you're laying along the roadside all used up, money-wise, energy-wise, spiritually-wise. If you want to be a contributor you have to maintain your own well-being as well. Although it sounds selfish, you never want to give beyond your means. You never want to give to the point where you're suffering; you can't pay your bills, you can't buy enough food (but I guess in your case that wouldn't hurt you much, Joey.)

There is that conception there though, especially in the summer time. Everybody makes beautiful arts and crafts. As soon as they see a non-Native person they assume that this is a tourist who has money and wants a memento. But when you're living here and you're going to be here for the long run or any long period of time, then you yourself have to establish yourself here. Learn how to politely say "no." Always keep in mind though that you've got to eat too; you have bills to pay; you have to survive here too.

So, like I said, the conception is there about white people, but it is also there about those of us who have jobs. Shoot man, if somebody won at BINGO, somebody would be hitting them up. As I've tried to share with many non-Natives here, I just try to be wise in my giving. If people say they need food, I'll give them food. If they say they need diapers, I'll go buy them diapers. I mostly trust the elderly and I give them money; people I know, who are going to use it wisely.

Don't forget there's a lot of suffering here, thus a lot of self-medicating with alcohol and drugs. That's universal wherever there is poverty. And, it's accessible. If it's accessible, then people go after it.

Interview V

September 24, 2006 (7:20 PM)

Christianity I (Personal Testimony) (30min)

Prompt 1: *Will, if you could just give me some of your background. I know that in the first interview, we talked about your biographical information—what I’m interested in more specifically is your testimony as far as Jesus Christ is concerned.*

For me, I don’t think the Lord had any trouble finding me, but I, as a person, had a hard time finding the Lord because of human ideologies and humanistic doctrines. I dare say that a lot of people, even Christians themselves, are [not] conducting themselves within the context of what it is to be a Christian.

I guess that’s saying a mouthful and being too judgmental, because there are a lot of levels and degrees of being a Christian. A lot of people interpret the Scriptures and the holy words in their own ways—ways that they can feel within their own *nagi*, their spirit, that they can feel is truly *wakan*—holy or sacred. That’s the way that I walk with the Lord. Sometimes it’s a hard path; sometimes it’s the most beautiful path and really empowering path.

I got to know the Lord better when He revealed Himself to me as a Lakota—somebody I could relate to, somebody who spoke a language other than English, and somebody who had values other than the monetary, material values of this earth, things of the earth—as far as things that can be envied, that people can lust after, and people can feel greed over.

I guess my testimony has a lot to do with living in a multi-cultural world and seeing the Lord through others’ eyes rather than your own maybe a bit too self-righteous eyes, especially in this place where there’s still so much resentment and bitterness towards organized religion and those people that represented the Lord. I should say that in a retrospective way that the only obvious conclusion is that they represented the Lord—they were very bad representatives of the Lord. They were horrible representatives of the Lord. And they’re all going to hell. But anyway... they probably won’t go to hell; I’m just saying that.

But I’m just saying, it’s real simple when you look at the adage, “If you’re gonna talk the talk, then walk the walk.” You can’t be trying to preach to people about things; you have to be able to model certain “Jesus” behaviors, because of the different learning styles of people. You just have to be willing to model those kinds of behaviors; especially those of strength and self-determination and being independent and being spiritual—being really kind—kind when you have to be kind, strong when you have to be strong, [and] wise when you have to be wise.

Those are just things that people need in this life. When they see those attributes in you, then they'll want to know, basically, what makes you tick. That's your opportunity to very lovingly use patience and to help them get to the point where they can stand on their own with Christ. I think a lot of people really do the Lord injustices, even though they're not aware of it. That's called innocent ignorance.

It's hard for me to try to find a really positive way to relate to the people how awesome the Lord is because of those historical events that happened in our people's history. I'd rather take my time, even though there are those doomsday guys who say, "There's no time, there's no time." To people here who have had to contend with a lot, they don't like to rush into things—any fly-by-night beliefs or things like that. They want to know that they're embracing something that's strong and really sustaining—life-long sustainability.

I don't know what the Christian perception would be of me, nor do I care. I'm just as comfortable reading from the *Wowapi Wakan*—the holy book, as I am praying with the *Cannunpa Wakan*—the holy pipe. I know that the Lord is in my life. He's my personal savior. That relationship is very personal to me; very sacred to me; very important to me. I care not what others think. I'm not on this world to please human beings. I'm not here to look favorable in their eyes. I'm here to live my life the best way I can, and do things to honor God, to honor Jesus; to do things for him to see, and do things in his name.

I strive very hard to do very positive and very empowering things, because I too am a representative of Christ. I opt not to go the way of conventional believers because if I can't feel a spiritual sense in it, I really don't want anything to do with it if it becomes so much empty rhetoric. From a people that suffer and have lived a long time suffering, they want that salvation, and to a large degree, they already have it. They just don't know it because the world judges them too harshly. If they stay true to those things that the Lord—I can only probably use Lakota language to say it—if *Tunkasila* has put something *wakan*—if He's given them that and they stay true to that, then they are abiding by what the Lord has set forth. We can't be judges of that. As human beings, we can't; if we left it up to human beings, none of us poor folks—none of us people with hearts and minds—will ever be deemed as being a "bona fide Christian."

The best source is the ultimate source and that's the Lord Himself. People have to be spiritually empowered to feel the love of the Lord and to feel his very presence. I have that; there's no turning back for me. As I said, I care not what the world perceives. I know what's in my heart, and I'm spiritually bound to pass that on to those who need it and to those who are looking for it.

The people in the world are really searching for things of that nature, so they're resorting to any kind of faith where they can feel—they can feel the Lord. Sometimes they might

not be “racially appropriate” in whatever they view. One never knows how the Lord’s going to come to him.

These are ways that I can’t talk in front of the majority of my people, because they know me as a life-long Sundancer and all these things. But to those who want to know what sustains me, I start to tell them this, and I explain Jesus to them in terms that they can understand—where they too can see Him as a Lakota.

We’re all pieces of Him and that’s the way it is. Just like the philosophy that the land doesn’t belong to us; we belong to the land. And we belong to the Lord—we’re pieces of Him. It’s not the other way around—that we can bend and shape Him to fill our own convenience—whatever we need to do that for. So people have got to quit doggin’ on the Lord unless they know spiritually that they’re coming correct. If you can’t come correct, then don’t come at all, because you’re just a big hindrance to what the Lord wants. The expectations are high, even where the poorest of the poor live. Does that answer your question?

Prompt 2: *To an extent [it does]. In follow up to that, can you talk about what Christ did on the cross and what it means personally to you as a Lakota?*

There were two things that had a major impact on my life as far as the graphic details of what the Lord did for us. One of them was—I don’t know if you would call it a sermon, or what you would call it—but my sister-in-law... at one service that we had here, brought in a board and a hammer. She gave a very vivid account, a very graphic account, the way she was pounding the hammer on the board and things of that nature. She hit the board so hard that it rattled the windows and everything. I could just visualize what the Lord was going through. Even what the scripture says itself, about the Lord knew he was facing something hard, and even though there were those who said He could call down ten thousand angels to save Him from this, and even he—the fear touched his heart—but he knew what his spiritual destiny was.

So I take what the Lord did, and I visualize what I see at the Sundance when those people are going to go through the piercing ritual—for lack of a better word. When they go there, they’ve made their prayers, they walk inside those prayers, and they know what their vow entails. So there’s no need for anybody to physically drag them to the spot where they would be laid down to get pierced. They go there willingly; they willingly go through the pain. It nowhere comes close to the pain that Christ went through, but, nevertheless, you see the commitment there. That’s why I really have a lot of love for my people, those who are willing to give of themselves in a way that we understand—in a way that the Lord gave us that we understand. Then, much love, respect, admiration and honor—all those things that you can give praise to the Lord about—Scripture tells us what He went through physically, emotionally—just horrible. To think that He loved us that much when He could have opted to bail out. God, the Father, actually giving one of his sons. I couldn’t even stand the thought of anybody hurting one of my children, much

less giving them up to save people who maybe are not even worth saving. But to the Lord they were worth saving, and to Jesus they were worth saving, so we honor his Father's request to the ultimate because He loved us that much.

Sometimes when I think of the Lord Jesus I think of the word "*ate*," which means "father." He's my Father because my own father couldn't love me enough to stay with me – to stay with my brothers and sisters and our mom. He wasn't strong enough to stay in that family. He chose to go crawl inside the whisky bottle. So in the absence of that physical, biological father, I have my Lord Jesus Christ– my *Ate* –my Jesus Christ... He's my Father.

I cry—I cry for Him and how much love He had for us. I am blessed to be loved, but when you think about it as an individual, man, who loves you that much that they would go through that for you. That's why I know that if Jesus Christ would appear today, those of us who understand amongst the Oglala Lakota what he's done, we'd probably have a big dinner in His honor. We'd probably sing Him honoring songs. We would hug Him, cry, shake His hand, [and] give Him the highest honor that we can. That's why He's referred to as the greatest of medicine men by our elders and by our ancestors.

To understand what the Lord did, you're going to have to put your mind and heart in a place where you can actually feel it– [where] you can actually understand it. That's what Him giving up his physical life means to me. That with every lash of the whip and pounding of the nails that he felt those things.

Even grabbing a rose the wrong way will cause a thorn to prick your finger. Most of us would be shaking our hands, causing that rose to fly. But you think about what the Lord went through—intense pain times twenty—and yet He endured it. He went through it because He loves us. Where are you going to find a love that's that strong? That's why we are all representatives of that love. That's why we have to love. It's really hard, but that's what it means to me.

Prompt 3: *Correct me if I'm wrong, but in our first interview you talked about how you grew up in an environment where I believe it was your mom's mom who held both the Pipe and the Bible sacred. Talk about that some—how it affected you—more specifically.*

Again, my grandmother and my *tiospaye*, my family—my aunts, my uncles, all those—their very lives were testimonies and actually set up for me what was to become my life. As I said, we had those who preached the Word of Jesus Christ in our family. We had those who walked with the Sacred Pipe and utilized that as an instrument of prayer. They don't pray to the Pipe, they pray with the Pipe.

I was, just as I am today, when I would hear derogatory things about one towards the other; that would really hurt my heart. But for the most part, they learned to really accept each other and to love one another. Their offspring—mostly all my relatives have a deep,

deep regard for the Sacred Pipe and the Lord Jesus Christ, because we know that that's what our family embraced through the simple visualization of Grandma who never left home—who was never far away from her Pipe bag and her Bible. For those who paid attention, it instilled within us an enhancement of our spirituality.

That's the way it stands for me. That's what I try to model for my younger relatives, for my children, my nieces and nephews either through blood or through marriage. There's just a lot of wisdom there. Grandma's way of thinking was, "What's all the hubbub?" To put it in contemporary terms, "What's all this drama about?" It's real, real simple: if anybody professes that the Lord walks with them exclusively, it will only be a matter of time before they're participating in erecting a tower of Babel.

Being awed by the different ways in which the Lord communicates with people—that is truly, to me, *wakan*—very holy. That's so mind-blowing that the Lord understands each and every one of our hearts—each and every one of our songs and our languages. That's a God to be awed—not they type of human the way some people have their ideologies where the Lord, He's just on our side. We've already seen the ramifications of that through Manifest Destiny, the Papal Bulls, eminent domain, [and] all this really unhealthy thinking. We see it today in the "English Only" legislation—in the immigrant stuff.

To me, it doesn't matter how human beings want to be; I'll find a way to turn it into something cool that will benefit some people. To me, a lot of relatives in my life, and even our greatest leaders back then that I knew, like grandpa Chief Frank Fools Crow—ceremonial leader of the Teton nation. He was an avid churchgoer, but he was well known for being a ceremonial man—for being a leader of all the tribes. When they wanted to do Sundances and things of that nature—when it came to issues of holy sites among the Lakota people—he was the man that everybody came to get either his approval or his input. For all that he was the epitome of being all that an Oglala Lakota is, he was still an avid churchgoer.

His philosophy was awesome. I know people have Martin Luther King Jr., but we have our own Martin Luther King, Jr. through grandpa Frank Fools Crow. He said that no matter what his own people said about him or how they felt, he would never hate the white people. That's just the equivalent of Martin Luther King Jr. saying, "I shall not stoop so low as to hate another human being."

There are spiritual standards that are so humble that people will think that you are weak, yet they are so strong that they set the highest benchmarks on a global scale. There are a lot of people like that. I could give you names and talk about these people all night, but in the end I'd feel lonely because I miss these people. They're just awesome, awesome people. They taught that, I guess what now we call *wolakota*—walking in harmony and balance. If we didn't have those elders to teach us those things, if I didn't have them, I'd probably still be one of those macho idiots going around peeing on trees and things of

that nature. But it's given me a different perspective on being a man, and being a man in awe of the Creator—if that makes any sense.

Prompt 4: *Many Christians have a point in their life that they can point to where they can say, "This is where I was transformed; this is where I accepted the Lord into my heart." Is there a point in your life that you can point to where you can say something like that?*

I guess I would say adulthood. As far as an awareness of Jesus Christ, I'd say somewhere around my early to mid-twenties. Only with age do you realize that Christ has been there all along; it's just that you haven't been aware of it. Maybe you didn't walk inside the prayer that you made. I remember as a much, much younger man seeing things that people go through, things my own family went through, things I went through. When I reached out to the Lord, said the prayer that they said to pray, but didn't feel like it was there for me, because of other human beings—these idiotic ideologies and doctrines on me in their human way. A side of me could say that I maybe resent that, but then again, I look at it, and I forgive them for that and try not to be what they were, and realize that there's a much bigger, bigger picture.

I've always had spiritual options before me. They served me really well with the full knowledge that these spiritual ways are a product of what the Lord is communicating to us. In a lot of ways, He communicates to us in ways that we understand as far as people with different ethnic backgrounds. But more and more (and this should be the wake-up call) that He's communicating with us in ways that we should all be able to understand by now. And it doesn't all have to be in one language; it's all in the language of the heart and the feelings that He puts there. So, total awareness, like I said, came in my early to mid-twenties.

I would shut off people who would talk about the Lord; I would shut off the people who would try to preach to me about Him, and all that stuff, because in order for me, from the way that I viewed it and the way that they said it, was that I had to be like them before the Lord accepted me. And by gosh, Joey, man, you know quite honestly, frankly I didn't want to be like those people. They weren't my role models. It seemed like they were kind of [ex]clusive—only those who thought and believed and acted like them were allowed to be around them.

To me, that's when I started, again in contemporary terms, to see that they've imprisoned the Lord and they've made him inaccessible to the rest of the people. Like I said, I've never been inside of that box. All I can do is encourage the people to let the Lord outside of that box and to feel Him—feel Him in the wind and in the rain—things of that nature.

My perception of the Lord, the acknowledgement that He's in my life, was a blessing to me and it was a big breath of fresh air. I cling to my Father, because He's probably the only real father I've had in this life—and all praise goes to Him.

Prompt 5: *We're about to conclude this part of the interview and what I wanted to focus on this time was just your personal testimony. Is there anything you want to add about your personal testimony at all?*

No, not really. My personal testimony is ongoing— it's an ongoing thing—*takuskanskan*, something sacred, moving. I don't know what my testimony is except my life. So I live my life to try to honor the teachings of *Ate Wakan Tanka*. I know Him by other names and that's fine because He's known by all kinds of names.

As you know, I'm running for president of this tribe and I've been to some rallies (I just came from one) where everybody's really good at reiterating the issues. To me, that's cool; we all know the issues. But what kind of a solution do you bring to the table? What kind of plan do you have that will make you capable of being president of this tribe? That is my testimony. I don't talk about the Lord. I don't bore people that way; I show them. Those who tend to lean toward the old adage, "actions speak louder than words", then there's really not much more I can say beyond that except "*hecetulo*" I have spoken, and to me, this is truth.

Interview VI

October 22, 2006 (Evening)
Christianity II (1hr 14min)

Prompt 1: *Will, last time we talked about your Christian testimony, and I guess my first question would be what difficulties have you faced in being a believer in Christ and being a Lakota man?*

The difficulties that I say that I would face in being a believer of Christ is probably two-fold. The first part is facing, I don't know what the right word is here, but being betrayed as a... (being betrayed— that's the word!)... being *portrayed* as a traitor amongst my own people who are still... It's a bit complex, because they still harbor bitterness towards the church, bitterness towards Jesus Christ. But, in my view, they're the ones that are hurting, because they don't know the truth. They are still carrying the deeds of people who badly misrepresented the Lord back then, which drove them further into their spiritual world, be that as it may. So, that's a difficulty that I have to contend with.

The other is non-acceptance from individuals who are already involved in the church and its doctrines. But, I should point out that is, however, something that doesn't concern me. There they stand as obstacles, but obstacles to other people. I'm already way beyond that as far as my own personal relationship with Jesus Christ and how I walk with Him.

On the surface, you know, people who are already involved in the church can at least look at me to some degree and say, "Well, at least he's on a path of growth." When I'm involved in a Sundance or a Sweat lodge people can say, "Well, I guess he's okay because he's adhering to our ancestral ways." None of them have the foggiest clue that what I do is based on the teachings and the life of Jesus Christ when He walked here.

Even more than that, it's probably those that adhere to His great teachings, people that are not in the limelight. If you look at the Christian limelight, so to speak, you have people who are definitely out there and have received notoriety and prominence, so they're leaders in the Christian world. I say that there are people even greater than that that the world never even heard from yet. Those people probably come from the bowels of poverty and despair and things of that nature. I think that's where the greatest of work is being done.

So the obstacles I face are no longer obstacles to me. People can still perceive me as being one mixed-up Native, but I'm ahead; I'm ahead in the game. That's as far as I see it. I don't intend to look back nor will I be made to look back by any human entity ever again. My faith is exactly... I'm comfortable with it. It's a strong faith and that's all I want to do is pass that on to other people who need strong faith in their lives.

So I don't know if that answers your question, because in the past those were the obstacles. And those were people that I didn't want to spiritually... that caused me to remain spiritually stagnant, because I was living my life trying to appease them. Now I realize that was just a complete waste of time, so I no longer have the tolerance or the inclination to do that.

Prompt 2: *I don't want this next question to be too time consuming, but from your own viewpoint and from what you know, just as a point of information, could you talk about the past as far as Christian missionaries coming to Native America in general and especially to the Sioux, and talk about the church and anything you know about those things?*

Well, all I know is that the hardships that had to be experienced, for lack of a better phrase, happened in the late 1800s on up to let's say about around the 1940s or so. That era in Christian involvement on indigenous reservations everywhere should be looked at as the biggest (probably not the biggest because no one organized religion,) but one of the most shameful eras, which to me put a real black eye that all Christians have to overcome.

But, from what I can see as far as the apathy and the ignorance, whether it be innocent or not, that black eye is still pretty prominent. I mean, to have made people suffer to such a degree that the remnants or their descendants don't have a clue as to who they are. I mean they are completely void of any kind of happiness or a spiritual level that's nothing that you can even see. They're just empty vessels and that's all due to the practices of Christianity back in that time era.

Now, I'm just saying that... I'll put it this way... I talked about that before... I've come to the conclusion that probably 95% of those involved in organized religion and Christianity. I'm convinced they're going to hell. Because they don't walk the walk, they just talk the talk. They're too complacent. They're not out lifting up the people back like when the Savior did, when the Savior walked this earth. So anybody, whether it be Christian or within my own Lakota spiritual realms, anybody that is too complacent and doesn't have that kind of spiritual courage, are just a hindrance.

So there's a lot to be said for the actual presence of those things that are deemed "wakan," that are "holy." I feel that the Creator is going to let mankind know who He is via His Spirit, because those He sends down to represent Him are hardly doing the job. That's not all of them, but I would venture to say that's the majority of them.

Does that answer your question? Because right now, right now when I see missionaries come in it's, "Wham, bam, *pilamaya*" if you will. Wham, bam, thank you. They're here, they apply their little band-aid, they're up and gone. Nothing has really changed. And there's a minute few who come here and are totally embraced by this place and they embrace the people here. They manage to stay themselves in this place. A lot of people

think that to work amongst the Lakota people you have to become Lakota, and that ain't what we're looking for either man, because if you try to become one of us, then it doesn't say much to you being a grounded person in who you are. So, I have much admiration for people who solidly know who they are, whatever their ethnic background is, but we co-hebetate in a social, positive manner here. So I've got more respect for that.

But then again, you know, you're just talking to one Oglala. You put five of us in a room and we each have a different opinion. But there are certain things that we can come to valid conclusions on— mutual conclusions.

Prompt 3: *One of the attitudes I've seen from people who say they believe in Christ, but they're not a Christian, because a Christian is someone who is certain things—they don't drink, don't cuss, don't do these certain works. I'm in disagreement with that personally, but I want to know what you think.*

I think that people who think in those kinds of realms are more or less fooling themselves, because whether you're a Christian or not, it still falls on you as an individual to what degree you're gonna cuss, you're gonna drink, you're gonna smoke, you're gonna do this and that. Those things are kinda like the indicator in your lives. If you find out that all of a sudden you look at your life again and you realize that you spent more time being sober than you did being drunk, you're ahead in the game. If you spent more time being non-violent than you did being violent, then you're ahead in the game. It's what's in each man's *cante*, their heart, or their *nagi*, their soul. What their own personal spirituality is.

I sometimes don't like hanging around Christians, not because I find them to be... what's the word... wussy-like, because they don't drink, they don't smoke all this and that. That's beside the point. My only disappointment with them is that they're not strong. They're not strong enough to say, "The Lord is my shield. I'm gonna get out here and I'm gonna truly make a difference." I guess that just pertains to living here or wherever there is poverty.

But, no, I don't put a lot of stock in that and if other people do, they're at a disadvantage to themselves, especially here because we know excessive alcohol use and drug abuse, and domestic violence and violence to one another, we all know the adverse effects of that. You can hardly look at people of Christian backgrounds as your role models. That's when it becomes important to find the Creator within yourself.

I guess that's as far as I can take that.

Prompt 4: *About this idea that the gospel of Jesus Christ is only for the white man, can you talk about that some?*

That's the most ridiculous piece of propaganda that people continue to perpetuate. Those who eat of the meat daily, as they say, or those who have eaten from the meat at all will come away with a spiritual understanding that the gospel of Jesus Christ is for all mankind, regardless of race, creed or gender, or anything of that nature. I guess, to me, I can best say it in the realms of Lakota spirituality when I hear that phrase "*mitakuye oyasin*," we're all related. Yes, to the Lakota people that means more than just on a human level, on a Lakota level because it pertains to the four-leggeds, the two-leggeds, the ones who have wings, the ones who swim under water, even the ones who stay stationary. To us, in Lakota thought and philosophy, it means all those things, yet it means everybody who inhabits this earth; *Unci Maka*, grandmother earth. Because everything that's in the sacred hoop must be kept that way.

So, no, I guess the more direct answer without too much digression is the gospel of Jesus Christ is not just for white people. People of different ethnic backgrounds should not continue to perpetuate that myth, and realize that the gospel of the Lord is there for them as well. It belongs to them. They have a spiritual birthright to that.

And, the non-Natives should realize that they don't have a monopoly on that either, but I guess if we continue to be arrogant that way, we won't find that out until we pass from this earthly life. It's gonna be mind-blowin', that other life.

Prompt 5: *On the other side of the issue, there are those Christians that say that the Lakota religion is not of God. It's dealing with spirits and things that are ungodly and unclean. What are your responses to those claims?*

Those guys are all going to hell.

I imagine if the Lord came here amongst the Lakota people—because all Lakota people, all indigenous people have knowledge of Him—if He came here, I imagine we would celebrate with a big honoring for Him; a big dinner. We would sing His song and place it in those places in Lakota songs where they honor people. There's a place where they put their spiritual names. We would sing those songs of honor to Him and place his name within those songs.

The Bible is chock full of things that are deemed unbelievable and superstitious in nature. A lot of supernatural things are happening in the Bible. When Lakota people talk about spirits and things like this, they're the spirits of those who have gone before them; their relatives. I believe that everything has a spirit; everything can be made to have a spirit.

When the Bible talks about the Lord being visited by the devil, well, that's a visit from an evil spirit, *le wakan sican heca*. That's an evil spirit that came to see him. Then, when Mary was visited by Gabriel, this angel, *le wakan heca*, that was something holy—a visit from a spirit. But they just attach different names to them and get bogged down on those words. An angel is a spirit.

You ask your own people that really have a deep belief in Christianity to the point where they keep Jesus in the box and they look at everybody else's spiritual ways and say, "Well, those aren't things of God." Ask them, ask them, "What is an angel? What is an angel?" I bet you, as a last resort, for lack of trying to explain what an angel is, they're gonna say, "Well, it's a spirit."

I know within my heart that, just like everything else, in Lakota spirituality, the Sundance, the Sweat Lodge, the various ceremonies... as I've lived through them and practiced them, I've found that they enhanced my spiritual life. Many times they're all I have, and they're all these people have. My people are really in a bad way, because of things that were set into motion a long time ago, because of the failure to realize what it takes to go forward, those lies that they come to believe and the lies they still believe within themselves. You see, that's that failure for us to sit down as relatives, as God's family, and to have the courage and the respect to learn a little bit about each other, because that argument doesn't hold up with me too well.

I believe that the ways of my ancestors are, the way we were taught about them is that they were a gift directly from *Wakan Tanka*, the Great Spirit, the one, who in later years we had a visit from someone who claimed to be his son— that's the one that they call *Tasina Tanka*, the big-robed man. We had a visit from this one who claimed to be his son who told us about our ways and all the other ways of his father. The advise, the encouragement I was given at that time is the way that they are, that's the way that you live by that. You don't build onto them; you don't make things up as you go.

So, the very roots of what I believe in, in the Lakota way, I've already found them in that *Wowapi Wakan*, that holy book. To me they became just a confirmation that my elders had a valid form of worshipping. But that kind of mumbo-jumbo came in with the... again I can't stress it enough... it's just idiotic beliefs like the Papal Bulls from the Vatican, the Manifest Destiny thinking from the early foreigners. Just because they had the numbers to bully and so-called "conquer" people, they believe that what they have is how everybody should believe. That should serve as an example of the greatest ignorance that ever, ever was.

You see that happening now. You see that happening when America wants to go and force its might over other countries who don't want to be Americans; who don't want to walk away from a path that they have already. There're a lot of layers of it. There's the fanatics of all countries, especially those who say that if they give their life and take out many other lives in the process for a cause like Al Qaeda or Jihad, that's just absurd.

The only reason they're doing it is because of all this passel of virgins that's supposed to be waiting for them. That's hardly a reward.

So there are people from all walks of life who take their spiritual life to fanatical levels and these are the people that are hurting mankind. To me they've become the false prophets that the Bible warns about. We're really seeing them. The most well-known, prominent, wealthy of all these people, to me, are the false prophets, because their existence hasn't benefited anybody from the side of town I live on. If I come from the wrong side of the tracks, then I've seen nobody, whether they be Christian or a medicine man, come to lift us up to a higher level.

That's just me. I hope to someday put that message out to the world. And I'm willing to say that there are probably other people who are stepping up to the plate. People of that magnitude are people that I will follow, that I will help, because I know that they are walking in the true essence of how the Creator tells us to be.

People think that a long time ago we didn't have no civilization, but we had a way to govern ourselves on all fronts be it social, political, economical or spiritual. We had a very sophisticated, yet very grounded way of keeping order in our camps, and had the non-Natives come and embraced that, then we wouldn't have to see the level of suffering that we now see even in their communities.

I guess the number one symptom of that would be the demoralizing way that women are being treated, because the women no longer have that sacred place in society that they would have had had the politicians and cavalry guys at that time hadn't been so greed driven.

Hecetu, I have spoken on that.

Prompt 6: *I'm going to talk about a couple of things that I've encountered since I've been here; a couple of things that have affected me. I still think about them, probably all the time. Whenever I first went to a Sundance, as a Christian I didn't know how to behave and I think probably my biggest mistake there was when the Pipe came around I refused it because I just didn't know what it meant. Can you talk about that especially for others that might face similar things?*

There are real simple rules in going to a Sundance. Most importantly is the knowledge that they are protected ceremonies, not only by the people, but by the spiritual instructions that were given with them that they are not to be recorded. You cannot bring in your camcorder; you can't bring in your camera; you can't bring in any audio recording devices; you can't even sit there and try to draw what's going on. Those things have been violated in the past, which has the people more and more on their toes about things like that.

The area where the north gate is, where the dancers come in, and at the end of the Sundance ceremony, after the four days they come out of there, that area, while the ceremony is going on, is never to be crossed.

And then, you have different levels of involvement in there. You've got the people who are actually fasting and Sundancing. These become the most important people in the ceremony because of what they're doing for us. Then you have another level of that circle where you've got the *wicasa wakan*, or the holy man and his helpers—the cedar men who are out there burning the cedar—*azilya*, we call it. In other realms that's known as incense, but this is done to a bigger degree. People who are involved with making sure the dancers are okay, and whether they need to do some special praying for them or help with piercing them. Then you have the other helpers who are in the back who are making sure that once that fire starts on the tree day that it is not even allowed to go out. So that fire is kept alive for four days until that ceremony is done. The dancers come out and cleanse themselves through there and then it's allowed to burn out. But those are those people; the integral parts.

The people on the outside, some who go there don't realize that they too are also part of the ceremony. You're not to bring water or coffee or drinks or any kind of food into that area where they're going to sit and observe. There are certain things going on that require them to stand, and it's just to stand out of respect. After the end of each Sundance round, what brings that Sundance round to an end, is that the Pipe man will go select individuals to come and receive those Pipes from the Sundancer. And that's all they're there for. Those people who are offered that Pipe, after that forth time and it's held in their hands, the singers stop, those individuals will take that Pipe, either take them to the drum or certain people out there to smoke. Not to smoke the Pipe if a Pipe is offered to you... children are not supposed to be allowed to smoke it. So some are being taught to do it and some are being taught just to kiss it and say "*mitakuye oyasin*," to acknowledge all our relatives.

But smoking the Pipe is not like the conventional taking a drag and inhaling it. What you do, because remember a long time ago we didn't have tobacco, that *cansasa*, that mixture of willow bark; they didn't smoke that. They didn't inhale it. By smoking it meant that you draw the smoke in and you blow it up in the air and that is your prayers going up to the Creator.

So those who come here need to understand that. And if they feel uncomfortable... I guess first of all when you're gonna go to a Sundance, you should go with a heart, a good heart, and an understanding that you will also become a part of that ceremony. So there might be times when you actually participate in that ceremony, but if you don't want to pass that line into thinking that you're doing something wrong, then at least hold that pipe, at least inhale a little smoke and just blow it out and simply say, "All my relations" or "*mitakuye oyasin*" then to go on.

That would be my advice to the people who are going to ceremonies like this. If you're going, people assume that you're there because you need the prayers, you need the healing or you need the spiritual uplifting. Mostly all the ceremonies are like that where everybody who is not even playing an integral part in it is also a part of the ceremony.

So you just have to be prepared like that. In a good way, if you're not prepared, then the best advice I can give is, "Well, then, don't go. Don't go." Just like if I go to the church, I'm gonna be there for the duration, whether or not there are things being said that offend me, I'm just there as an *ikce wicasa*, a common man. I don't go to church for that. I go to church for spiritual enlightenment, for that thing that they call "fellowship," and more importantly, I go there to be raised spiritually. So if I go, it's for the duration.

That works both ways. It's a double-edged sword. The respect that we give those things that are sacred to ourselves, we need to have at least enough compassion for our brothers and sisters that when we go and participate in those things that they believe in wholeheartedly, that we shouldn't disrespect it.

But there are all these ways to do these things gracefully. Of course, personally to you I would say next time you go to a Sundance, come to ours and I'll be right there for you, and would like you to experience how it can spiritually enhance you and lift you up. It's just I think there's a bitter life to live, rather than being stuck in a box. So that would be my advice to anybody coming in here. But don't rush it, because our people have had enough of outsiders coming in, and they're always gonna cast a suspicious eye on them, and that's something I can't change unless the people... they have valid reasons for casting suspicious eyes there.

Prompt 7: *Another thing that I experienced, I guess it was during my first few months here, I went to this— I don't really know what to call it. It was this event and it was Native led but there were white people there and they were all Christians. The first evening was a worship service, and at it they sang songs and things like that, but there was one guy who talked about how his "Nativity" interfered with his relationship with God and this kind of thing.*

And the second part of this event was the next day. We went up to Belle Fourche and I was just there observing these things, because it was relevant to what I'm studying, but I look back and I'm almost embarrassed of it. But we went to Belle Fourche and there's this place up there that's this butte, and you climb it and there's these monuments up there, these old shepherds' monuments that they built a long time ago (or somebody did). But they took I think it was some quilt work, the medicine wheel, and a Pipe, some sweet grass, and even just this plate with some Native-looking designs on it. And they were chopping these things up with a sword to show how they were breaking free of these things, and I look back now and I think of what an odd thing this was that I was a part of, and I'm embarrassed of it. But, I want your reflections on this kind of thing.

Gee. You kind of touched a place in me that's, even though at my age, I still have all the attributes of a protector and a provider, and a warrior. If I was there, I probably would have knocked somebody on their butt, because of the spiritual symbolism that those things have. But either way, man, if you don't understand either way and you're stuck in the middle, there's still gonna be spiritual repercussions.

When you hear somebody talking about there's gonna be all kinds of sins that will be forgiven, but blasphemy towards the Holy Ghost will not be. That's something that's real powerful. That's something that's real *wakan*, in my mind—something real sacred.

But it kind of saddens my heart to hear that there are people who have been fully knocked to their knees in any semblance of who they are, that the way the Creator created them is not even there and these are the ones who are truly brown on the outside, but nothing on the inside. If they had a chance to physically turn themselves white like Michael Jackson did, they would probably do that. But nothing's gonna hide the fact that they are who they are, and I think they've lashed out at animate objects, but I think if they can do that within themselves, then they shouldn't have to worry about what all these other things represent.

You flip the script, and we had a young man who, because of his frustrations, burned the American flag a couple of years ago, and his own people turned on him. But I understand his frustrations. You know, it's just a flag. If somebody would listen to this young man they'll know where he's coming from. You know, it's just a flag. You know, none of this world, we have nothing to fear, whether it be the U.S. government, the C.I.A., F.B.I., B.I.A., I.R.A., none of these things. These are all meaningless in this life, because none of them have anything to do with the idea of being saved.

So on one level, had I been there, I would have thrown myself over that Pipe and allowed them to chop me. *Cannunpa wakan, he lila wakan*. But it must not have been a Holy Pipe. It must have been just an empty thing to them. I would have stood there and probably just tit for tat would have chopped up a Bible just to see how that made them feel.

I'll tell you what happened, and it's powerful to me. Eventually the Pipe did break, but upon the first hit, the sword broke.

A *ho*! Right on. We wasted a lot of time talking about this when the event itself, thank you for sharing that with me. That can be done either way. You can drive the Christian beliefs out of people. It can be done to a certain level, because when worse comes to worse, where's your courage? Some people can have a Bible burned in front of them, constant threats until they show now semblance of being a Christian. So, what's good for the goose is good for the gander.

But anyway, had I been there, it probably would have been a different story. I would have drove all those people on their knees with the power of Jesus Christ had I been spiritually ready for that, but as a Lakota, I probably would have physically took the sword from somebody. I'm always willing to do that. That's what this world needs to know about Lakota people is that there are many of us who are willing to give of ourselves. So yeah, I wasn't aware of that and to me they're the actions of some very colonized and assimilated people—very oppressed. If anything, when all's said and done, I just feel bad for them. I feel real, real bad for them that they... I don't know. Enough said.

Prompt 8: *When I read this book here, and I don't know if you're familiar with this book, it's "The Pipe and Christ" (2002). Have you read this book?*

Yes.

What I gather the man, William Stolzman, he basically says the Lakota religion is to Christianity as a glove is to a hand, and that they're complementary. Do you see this to be true or not?

I would say that it's true, but I don't like to talk about things sometimes, about how one ethnic group believes and how another group believes, because I don't like to get around that, "Hey, we're better than you guys." I don't like to get around that thinking. But, I think before European contact that indigenous peoples lived a life that was 100% accurate with how the Lord wanted us as mankind to live. But there were no temples, there were no pulpits and pews and anything that would be recognizable to outside Christian believers, so that's why I think that they deemed it as paganistic. It was virtually Spirit-led. Spirit-led. I'm not talking about paranormal entities or anything like that, but how it made you feel, what it did to your own spirit, the happiness that it brought you.

I'll have to go on record, since we're on record by saying that I don't 100% agree with everything that is contained within *The Pipe and Christ*, by the author. But he does make some really valid points— points of conclusion. And to me, it goes back to grandma with the Pipe bag and he Bible sitting on the dashboard. And the simple understanding from her is that "they're both the same." They're both the same.

And, you read further into other works like *Fools Crow* by Thomas E. Mails, what he was able to derive from Fools Crow is that both the white man's ways and the Lakota's ways are almost on an equal setting—they're about the same. But as far as different components can go, if we weren't so naive and arrogant, we could take one from the other, and we could enhance the other. Taking elements from Lakota spirituality and incorporating them within Christian beliefs and doctrine—which has already been done for a long time.

You know, churches in an effort to get more Lakota congregants... you take the Catholic Church who the Sacred Pipe. You look at one of their hymnals, and they even have the "Four Directions Song" in there. They use an eagle feather when actually that's against the white man's laws. According to the white man's laws, a so-called white man is not supposed to possess an eagle feather. And yet, here are the "Black Robes" using it.

That was responsible for the Massacre at Wounded Knee. When the Paiute, Wavoka, took elements of the Christianity and mixed them with indigenous things and it looked attractive. So people back then actually died because they were seeking Jesus. "Huh?" They were seeking Jesus. Because that's how Wavoka presented it—is that "If we put on our shirts and dance, the buffalo will come back, our ancestors will come back." It's only been until lately where it's been revealed that he was also talking about "Jesus would come and He would save us."

So, to some of those old time Lakota, what they understood is that they were seeking Jesus' help. They were seeking Jesus to come. That's where they were actually put to death, because they were trying to invoke the presence of Jesus.

So, I apologize about the digression, because I know in analytical societies, they like to have direct answers. But yeah, I agree with what this guy says, so I'm done there.

Prompt 9: *I guess that one of the things that I've experienced is a lot of people saying things about Christianity and I almost feel like I have to hold my tongue, because I really don't know what to say, and I don't want to be branded as "this" or "that," and I just let people say things just as much as I let them chop the Pipe up.*

The community where I work, a lot of people go to the [Catholic] church there, and there was a teacher there—we were on a field trip or something—and a student asked her, "Do you go to church?" And she really became very offended or something, and she said, "Really, I don't see church as anything we should do. The white man hung his God out to dry—left Him hanging out to dry. And you know, we never did this type of thing." And I just didn't know how to respond to this kind of comment, so I just let it fly. I didn't say anything.

Yeah, well, the teacher who voiced that to the child should be immediately terminated and not be allowed to be around children in the first place. That kind of question and therefore response is... when you're talking to children must be handled in the most respectful and loving way that you can.

However, that question and the ensuing response is a question for the ages, you know? It's complex. For others, who I guess are spiritually right, we could see that real simple and say this is just another example of things that were set into motion a long time ago. However, if we needed to explain it, then it would become complex. But, it goes back to

why we are still divided; why we are all bad representatives of our ancestors and of our religious doctrines and things of that nature.

Because to say that it was the white man who killed Jesus Christ is wrong— is definitely wrong. You can't hold a whole race of people accountable for the actions of a few. And that's universal; that's across the board. None of us want to see that, because intuitively and spiritually, it's wrong. I don't want to be held responsible as a Lakota for something my people did in the past.

That's why there's a need for you know... there comes a time and a place when like someone like you Joey would be deemed as too young to weigh in on something like this. That's kind of a shortcoming we have too as younger people, but I'm not even close to being as young as you are. But I adhere to the voices of the elders, and I speak when they tell me to speak. But I think we've come way past the point where we need to stop being so tight-lipped about things. And eventually, you're going to progress to that point where you're not going to be allowed that luxury anymore. Even though you know how difficult it is, there's going to be a time when you're going to have to make a stand. You're going to have to make that voice of Christ inside of you be heard. I remember I used to be like that; I'm still like that.

I take, for example, my sister in law... whom I love with all my heart. I'd do anything she'd ask me to. But, the one thing that I'd never want to do with her is get into spiritual debates with her. Because, I'm her brother, and as her brother, I'm supposed to be protecting her. Not trying to point out things that I think are wrong with the way she believes. Because, I know the Lord has blessed her. I have no problem with the way the Lord works in her life. So that's the only time I'll become tight-lipped, when I don't want to have any hurt feelings with people who I love and who I'm close to.

However, if there's a misrepresentation of Christianity or Lakota spirituality—hey, you can count me in man, I'll be at that table. Because, some of us people... adults... we think we're gonna live forever. And so were not really as responsible as we should be as far as the ideologies and whatnot that we're passing down to the youth. For all intents and purposes, we're just setting them up to be locked in the same boxes that we are. I won't do that to the youth, because I broke out of my own box—many, many years ago. And my vow was to never come back to it. My vow was to never, never allow somebody to get spiritually stuck in that way.

So, on the surface, you could say things like that. At a different time, in a different setting, it might even be humorous to other people. It might be really profound to other people. Just like the notion that, "Man, hey, if we had better immigration laws back then, we wouldn't have to put up with the likes of Columbus and the Pilgrims and this world... this continent wouldn't be in such bad shape that it is now." There's a lot of ways to say that—humorous ways, realistic ways. It's a matter of how you actually decide to move

your tongue. And that's why the elders say, "Be careful how you move that tongue," because you can really hurt somebody with it, or you could just cause hard feelings.

Yeah, some of these people that you're talking about—I don't know who they are. But if I knew who they were, man, they'd definitely be on my hit list—not for me to go out and kill them, but just to go talk to these people and to weigh in. Because, one thing that Lakota people should understand is you don't want to push your ways onto people. Because that was done to you, and now that you do that, you become the oppressor that oppressed you. You got to be true to yourself.

That's the greatest, greatest lie that nobody understands. Everybody thinks that people came here from other countries and from nothing, built the greatness that is America. But they came here because they were trying to escape oppression on all fronts. And what's first thing that they did after they came here? Well, after we taught them how to survive here, they began to oppress those who were here. So they're living a life of perpetuated lies. That's the bottom line, it goes on today, we're going to see more of it—it's coming—right around the bend.

On a political level, Senator McCain, who I'm deeply, deeply disappointed in—disappointed in this man. He is a Vietnam War hero, and so he has all those cool insights of a Vietnam vet. And we honor our warriors here—a lot of Vietnam vets here. But now he's taking political action to have all... trust obligations taken from the Lakota people and the reservations done away with. He's bringing that to the table. Governor Rounds, he's publicly stated that we are not considered citizens of this state. And it's all over economic issues.

So now instead of trying to deal with things that are problematic and trying to solve them, their only answer is, "Well, let's just be bullies on 'em." And I say, "Bring it on." I say, "Bring it on, because, I'm willing to die." I know many Lakota who are willing to die for this. More importantly, we're willing to succeed, to get our point across.

So have times changed? On one hand, you look at it, and it's changed drastically—within a blink of an eye. The sentiment remains the same.

So I took the long way around to answer that question, I know, but that's basically it. I can't expound on it any further. Just go back and listen to the words and there you'll see it— if people want to see it at all. Keep it in mind that you can either take it or leave it, because I am not a hoity-toity, fancy-shmancy man in this world. I come from the bottom; I'm more comfortable on the bottom. Every now and then, I come up. But then more or less, *ikce wicasa imanca*, I am just a common man.

Prompt 10: *So, I kind of gave you personal thing about eventually learning not to be so tight-lipped. But, say for someone coming here, they're going to experience some of these things. I'm sorry, it's just going to happen. I wasn't here very long and I seen what*

I consider to be a large attack on the Lakota religion. Nobody else has heard anything like this—what I told you. And then I hear this crazy comment about Christianity. And I mean, I hear it all of the time. I hear, “Oh, Jesus Christ is the white man’s hero. He has long hair, so they should all have long hair.” And all of these kinds of crazy things... Jesus Christ isn’t technically a white man anyway, he wasn’t. They may have pictures like that, but he wasn’t.

So, I hear all of these things, and I keep my mouth shut. But maybe there’ll be a point when I need to [speak up.] But, what about a person who is just coming here? What do you say to them? Should they keep their mouth shut, or how should they be?

Well, in many cases, there’s more power in silence than there is in noise. Not to the point where you’re driven to be a... What they say about children, “Children should be seen and not heard.” I disagree with that. To me, children need to have that freedom of expression. But, they need to be taught that there are times when they need to be silent.

That’s why I say that silence and observing should be the benchmark of what you’re going to do when you first come here. Yeah, zip your lips, open your eyes, and open your ears. Try to learn something first, don’t try to rush your way in here, find people who you could start asking questions and getting answers from— realizing that humanistic junk is out there to the point that it’s just ridiculous now. “Jesus is the white man’s god.” That’s a ridiculous notion. And like you said... just that little piece of what you said—Jesus wasn’t a white man. “We’ll perk the ears of somebody who wants to hear this; well tell me more.”

So to these new people that will come in, I would in a good way encourage them that silence is more powerful than noise—and in some cases for your own safety, you know. Talk about what you know, don’t about your perceptions of what you think you know about the Lakota people. You’re bound to have your welcome mat jerked-out from underneath you. At least where I’m commin’ from; I have no time for that.

So, be observant, and recognize the value of silence. Try to absorb some things. Sometimes we have a tendency as human beings to say, “This is how I see it, this is how I understand it, I want everything to wrap around the way I know things.” But that’s the trademark of somebody who is spiritually stunted.

The only reason that I spoke to you is that, Joey, I know you. I’ve known you now for a while. And so, of course, you’re somebody to me and I’ll always... you know me... I’ll always talk to you; I’ll always give you advice on things—on things like that. That’s because you’ve taken the time, you’ve shown respect, you’ve earned a place in my heart a lot quicker—I might add—than some that I wish would just go away. Because, if you don’t get it, then leave, because you’re not helping us. Go back to your own place. I’m done there.

Prompt 11: *I guess the term “Lakota Church” is kind of an abstract term, because there’s so many denominations and things. But, what would the “Lakota Church” look like if there was an ideal “Lakota Christian Church?” Give some example of what you think it would look like.*

Real simple. And that’s what we have here in the Pine Ridge Gospel fellowship. The pastor is a Native American. A lot of people may say things about the language. Well, that’s up to the individual, whether or not they want to incorporate the language. But a Lakota church to me would promote building the community. It’s activities would entail dinners, activities for everybody involved in the church in an effort to keep them participating.

I’m not really one with authority to talk about what the ideal Lakota church would look like. I always tell people, “If you talk to me, you want to know things, I won’t lie to you. And if you ask me something that I don’t know, that I’m not sure about, then I’m not gonna sit there and make something up.” And this is one of those things. And I say that “if I don’t know the answer, I can point you to someone who does.” So at this point, I would either refer you to [my brother-in-law] or Gerry Yellowhawk. Gerry is an elderly Lakota. You know Gerry? Yes, yes, I would refer this question to him. He could answer it twenty times better than I.

I can tell you what the ideal Sundance would be to me; that would be just one—just one. So, I’m sorry bro.

Prompt 12: *I guess that you mentioned there being an indigenous pastor, a Lakota pastor [in the ideal Lakota Church]. For me, one of my reasons for coming here was not to be a music teacher, but to develop... well, [your brother-in-law] asked me to be the worship leader, and I reluctantly took that position, but with the understanding that I was going to develop a Lakota worship team or a Lakota worship leader, and that’s become very difficult for me. It’s become... at times it feels impossible, because I don’t even know where to begin. So, I think that the struggle for a lot of the churches here is not just in the music thing, but the entirety of it—the entire leadership. I guess that what I’m trying to ask is, in your mind, what’s the best way to develop leadership in the church—indigenous leadership?*

Well, there again, to me it is a somewhat difficult question, because I don’t have a lot of great interest in the church. I kinda feel that even sometimes it crosses those ethnic lines. To me, it’s whoever can... whoever’s got the flow of things, whoever wants to take the initiative to step up and possesses those leadership abilities, then that’s naturally the one you want to encourage more and nurture more so they can take that leadership responsibility. Because, a lot of the times... you know, I’m Lakota; nobody has to beat me over the head with a tomahawk to tell me that—I know that. But, as I get older, I try to see beyond the color boundaries and look to people in leadership roles in those different areas and try to see if we can do more building into the philosophy of the Sacred Hoop—

or it doesn't even have to be called that. It's just a matter of seeing if we can all come together and communicate and do things together to enhance things. But as far as the church goes, whoever shows the drive and initiative should be encouraged.

My disinterest in the church is temporary. There are going to be times when I'm going to have to come back to the church—I know that—but not for replenishment or rejuvenation or anything like that. If I ever come back to this particular church, which is my church, it will be to help. And that's... I'm sorry if I left you hanging dry on that one, but I'm done there.

Prompt 13: *You can tell me if it's not my business, but this leads me to a question. How is a Lakota Christian disinterested in church? What is it that makes you disinterested?*

Okay, a large part of it is none of your business. It's between me and my pastor, which we'll in time take care of each other. I mean we have no choice but to someday really look at what's between me and him, because we are brothers—I love him with all of my heart.

The other part is, for the time being, I don't want to make people feel uncomfortable in the church. My participation can only be limited, because I'm "old school." I like the way the new Christian songs sound, but all I can sing are old gospel hymns. So part of it is me feeling like there's no place for me right now. I'm not saying anything here, but I likes my preaching a little more exciting—a little bit more right on your heart and all of that stuff. Right now, the only time I get that is maybe if I go to a Sweat Lodge ceremony of if I'm involved in a Sundance, because I know that I'm a part of it.

Sometimes the church to me is like the rest of us are all there just as an audience—you know what I mean? We're just an audience in a show. I think that if the church found a way to involve me more, I'd be more than happy to come back. But right now, it just doesn't interest me. And I know that in no way does it endanger my spiritual standing. In other words, I'm not afraid that if I died today that I'm gonna be going to hell, because of my disinterest in the church. Because I'm more interested in the Lord than any—and I know I'm going to say this wrong—than any staged way of worshipping Him, whether it be in the church or in the Sundance.

I spent too long to just find the creator in my heart and to walk with Him. And it's a real comfortable place that I'm at that I'm blessed that He brought me to. But of course, the Lord is the "Grand Poobah." Whatever the Lord puts in my heart, you know, I can't escape that. This is just where I'm at right now as a human being.

So that much I can tell you, the other part, I'm sorry. I have to tell you as an older man to a younger man, "It's none of your business, bro."

Prompt 14: *Is there anything else that you'd like to add to this particular line of thinking?*

No. So far, I've been really enjoying myself in these things, because I think that everybody should get the opportunity to participate in things like this. That's why I believe in the value of what they call "domestic violence circles" and "AA circles," when they try to use the Lakota perspective to implement these things. They call them the "talking circles." And I think that this is what everybody needs including young people and older people. They need to have the opportunity to express themselves. And frankly, a lot of people need to be talked *with* and not talked *at*.

And I think that maybe that's why as a teacher I was fortunate, because I somehow learned how to shut my mouth and open my ears and not chastise young people for the way they see things. And even if they saw things wrong, I think I was successful, because I didn't chastise them. I just more or less offered them a different perspective. Just by saying, "I hear you, what you're saying and this is the only way I can respond, and this is me." I know that that has nothing to do with this or that or the other thing, but I just wanted to say that, because I think and I know that people need to be allowed to talk about things. And when you do that, you stand a greater chance of educating them, not only academically, but spiritually and socially. That's what it's all supposed to be about—empowering people and enhancing their lives. So, *hecetulo*.

Interview VII

June 5, 2007 (4 PM)

Follow-Up Interview (1hr 18min)

Prompt 1: *Will, it's been a while since we talked and a lot of things have gone on in your life. Our very first interview was about your life, and at the time you were running for Oglala Sioux Tribal President. I just need you to talk about what's gone on since that time. That was about August or so.*

Of course, I ran an unsuccessful bid for Tribal President. Then I tried to move on and get my teaching job back at Pine Ridge School, however I had to start all over again from the initial application process. It's still a BIA funded school, therefore, a federally funded school, so I had to fill out the application. Now I'm just waiting the outcome of a federal background check. It entailed getting finger printed, your name being put through the national database and all this stuff. I guess checking for felonies and whatnot. So, I've been assured that once that process is complete that they'd be happy to have me back. So, that's kinda left me unemployed since the conclusion of the election. So, I've been mostly just living on a prayer. The political position didn't allow for unemployment benefits or anything like that, so it's been rather difficult, but we manage to get by.

I still try to do some work in the community. My latest endeavor was to do an expose on one of the more... they consider themselves "notorious"—I just consider them to be "dangerous" nuisances... a gang called the Wild Boys. I did an expose on them in the newspaper and I'm catching a lot of flack from that from people who I dare say are upstanding in the community, but serve as a perfect example of why there are gangs in Lakota communities because of their constantly living in a state of denial and apathy, and just a refusal to see these issues that adversely affect our young people; that and drug dealing.

So lately I've just become somewhat of a target, but what are you gonna do? I'm here today, but I guess the bulk of the traditional people have been very supportive, have been letting my family know that they've been praying for us, praying for our safety, and supporting our cause, because I believe that it's our collective cause to offer our children something of more substance rather than just being a watered down version of somebody else's culture, and that is in regards to the negative side of the sub-culture of the hip-hop generation. And so that's all that's been going on lately.

I've been speaking to various visiting groups of, I wouldn't call them missionaries, but church groups, things like that. Just helping out wherever I'm needed. That's basically what I'm doing. And the Creator has been taking care of us. So we're literally living on a prayer.

So I'm just looking forward to the summer. I've got some projects that I'm working on. I'm continuing to work on a book that I'm working on entitled "Spiritual Justice". June 15th my son and I will be going into the studio to lay down some original tracks for hopefully a CD release of an album called "Reservation Nights".

So other than that, a lot of self-reflection, going out and just being one of the people, which is what I am from the beginning. And going wherever they call me, whether it's traditional Lakota ceremonies or to go sing gospel songs and all that. And as you know, I'm not a religiously uptight, egotistical kind of person. I've never been inside the box and I know the Lord has never been inside the box, although some people like to put Him inside that box. So I've just been *takuskanskan* like my Lord, something sacred moving. So that's the update in a nutshell.

Prompt 2: *Do you have any desire to return to politics?*

No, not at the present moment. A lot of people have asked me to consider running for Council again in a year and a half's time, but I believe like many positive contributors to the community that I think I can best serve the people in my community by teaching in the classroom, helping empower the young people—equipping them to avoid the social pitfalls of society, as it were, and to just be a community-oriented guy.

But I do have to say that the social pitfalls our young people endure are no longer a unique thing to the Lakota Nation, it's nationwide. So, I'm just alarmed at the complacency of spiritually-minded people to just let it go. There seems to be no proactivity in all these things; especially for those who view our Lord as being a radical in his time. They seem to be willing to just sit and just pray about things, but in the Lakota way we talk about making a prayer and *wakan wicoka omanni*, to walk in a sacred manner, to walk wherever the people walk, so you become a living roll model of that representation of however you view the Creator.

You know very well about me. I see nothing wrong with the culture of my people. And the reason there are misconceptions is because of those who came over here early and viewed our culture as being paganistic and "that of the devil," and to top it off, they engaged in political and violent acts of terrorism that I dare say were hardly Christ-like. But at the same time, I hold no bitterness, because I don't want to be drug down by their sins. So I come to know the Lord through the way the Lord so gracefully allows me to see Him. Otherwise, I guess I would be like these ones who've suffered historically and religiously and be very bitter about the past history. As you know, a lot of our people don't give two hoots about the Lord and the church because they view that as the white man's god, but they just don't realize that the Lord died for all of us.

So, I'm still very, very grateful for my personal sacred *wakan* relationship with our Lord. The Lord was without fear when He walked among the *ikce oyate*, the common people

back then. He walked out and had a living ministry. So that's the most humbling, yet honorable way I know to honor my Lord.

They say, again, that one of the objectives of being a Christian is to become Christ-like, so I'm not one to be sitting on my hiney. Wherever there's chaos and negativity, those issues are not going to be resolved until we become proactive and we're actually out there, being in places where the preacher man and the medicine man and the politicians and the cops don't want to go, or they're too scared to go. But every person born into this life is worthy of dignity and love, plus the biggest is salvation. So, when you talk about the lowest of the low, those who are deemed more hopeless, that the rest of the society walks by... you know, the work is not yet complete. So we have to be out there.

So as an *ikce wicasa*, a common man, I don't feel like I'm a martyr or a savior or a messiah or anything. I'm just one of the common people who has a great love and passion for my people and a desire to see them overcome the societal obstacles that lay in front of them on an almost daily basis, and kinda empower them with the tools necessary to cope with this life, to not sit back and blame another person's culture or another man's religion for their own personal state in life, but to stand up and say, "I'm a child of God, too, and I take responsibility for my own life." That's the best way that I believe I can represent the Lord, by saying, "This is what the Lord has done for my life." He hasn't made me pitiful, although I know how to be humble without being pitiful. I came from poverty and I've had successes in my life, but because of the political stands I made, I'm paying a price now. So I'm poor again, but I've been poor before, so I know how to be poor and have dignity.

But here, it's going to be nearly impossible to bring about positive change until a few key ingredients are implemented into the Tribal government program—the Tribal governmental structure. That would have to be separation of powers. You know, the government saddled us with a dysfunctional form of government back in 1934 in the Indian Reorganization Act. They gave us a government that's unlike their government with their separation of powers. We don't have that so the whole rez is at the whim of 18 Council members. So we need that separation of powers, a Business Council, and things of that nature. So no, no politics for me right now.

Prompt 3: *This is more of a follow-up interview today so there's gonna be all kinds of different questions. Earlier we talked about Christianity and things like that and your own personal testimony. From what I gather from what you said, the Lakota people already knew the one true God before the Christians came here— in their own way. My question for you is, would it have been better if the Christians never came here at all to the Lakota people or to Native Americans in general?*

Well, some people speculate that had we not been invaded by the original immigrants that we would still be living as a primitive people. But I beg to differ, because we were made to adapt to whatever the times were, so it's ridiculous to think that we wouldn't

have adapted. We would have progressed as a people. But our gifts, our contributions, Native Americans' gift to humanity, are different. It's just like everybody brings something different to the table. There are those who bring technology, those who bring science and all kinds of other advancements, but when you look at those strong believers here, whether they embrace the Sacred Pipe or the Bible, I believe our contribution is our commitment and our sincerity when it comes to worshipping and being believers. Knowing our culture, with the different moral values and whatnot, I still believe that we can be big contributors.

So it's kind of a wide open question. On one hand, having looked at what has become of God's world today, I guess I could easily say that maybe it would have been fine for the Christians to come, but all the other political riff-raff and socialist riff-raff that came with them, I guess this planet and this country could have done without all them. Nevertheless, the die has been cast, so it's too bad that they refuse to acknowledge the fact that when they first came here they were treated as guests and they were treated with the utmost respect, and they reciprocated by, like I said, turning out to be just horrible people, and worse yet, just being just really poor representatives of God. It's too bad they can't acknowledge that and reciprocate how they were treated in the first place, with honor and tolerance. As Native America continues to suffer, as well as other poverty-stricken nations, people are hard pressed to see God, and the only evidence they're gonna have of God is if the true believers stop reading the Bible and start living the Bible, and stop being so complacent and start getting out there and being like Christ and going out there and doing some work.

But it all seems to be a capitalist mentality to me. Like I said, long ago an old guy, his name was *Wasu Duta*, he was Dakota (if Lakota say it, they say "*Wasu Luta*"), which means "red hail." He had lived a long time and he jokingly said, "You know, my boy, one year me and you will take time off and we'll become Christians," he said, "because there's a lot of money in Christianity." And you see that the poorest of the poor are still poor, and the only ones that are helping the poorest of the poor seem to be celebrities, rock 'n rollers and this and that. So like, I said, the die has been cast and we just have to make the best of it, to just live in this world. And for some of us, it's to be persistent in how the Lord allows us to perceive things and just to keep moving in that direction.

When one starts to indulge in what-if thinking, it can just drive a person kinda bonkers, because what if they didn't steal the Black Hills, what if we knew the value of gold to these new immigrants? Our people wouldn't be living in such abject poverty. What if Crazy Horse wasn't lied to and what if he wasn't assassinated. And what if there wasn't a federal policy of total genocide aimed at our people?

You can look at it in two ways. The first one I prefer is that the Lord wouldn't allow the new immigrants to totally eradicate us off the face of what He created. The other is that we're just the product of a failed government policy. I think everybody can agree with what failed government policy is because we've had example after example of it. Again,

there just seems to be a lot of absence of the presence of God. For people to talk about the presence of God, they sure conduct themselves in a way that lead you to believe that they are not acting in the name of God, just like their predecessors did– the atrocious acts they did in the missionary boarding schools. You can't tell me that shoving a bar of lye soap into some little Indian child's mouth because he spoke the Lakota language is an act of God. Invariably, you're gonna have to come to the spiritual reasoning that even that Lakota language that that child spoke at that time was a language created by God. And He would understand that more if you took a prayerful part with you when you went to go eat of the meat (which is to say when you went to go read the Book.)

It's just like a marriage when they say, "What God has put together, let no man put asunder." That really applies on a broad scale here. God has created many languages and many different nuances of people, but yet, it's predominately those who come from organized religions and have a conservative egotistical view of what they perceive God to be communicating to them constantly have that view of people that they look as their underlings, or people that they are superior to.

For the most part, that just has to be forgiven because, as they say, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." Apparently the spiritual lessons haven't been learned yet. But, that's just things for people with greater influence and greater intelligence than me to ponder and try to set into motion, about bringing the presence of God back into the fold of our lives. But, having read the end of the Book, we all know what's gonna happen, but in the meantime there's still a lot of work to be done. So, I apologize about the digressions, but you know I've never, ever given a direct answer to a question unless it's "Are you hot?" or "Are you cold?"

Prompt 4: *On these same lines, I'm part of a church here and other ministries connected to it, and it's, for the most part, indigenous-led ministries. But what I'm seeing here is white people from off the reservation coming here and masquerading as Christians, or being Christians, and just having their own agenda. And recently, I just feel embattled myself with these people. Most of the time when it comes to Native people here that I have a problem with, I really don't get into conflicts with them, even if they've gone out of their way to hurt me, I try to stay out of conflicts. But it's hard for me when it's white people. The deal is, I'm embattled here on the reservation with white people, it feels like. And not just me, other people around me. What do you suggest to deal with this kind of thing for someone like me? I'm here on the reservation. How do I deal with people trying to use laws to take over things that really don't belong to them?*

Well, that's just always the case. Most, let's say, well I guess there's no nice way to put it, but ignorant non-Native people who come here, come here with this false sense of thinking they're gonna save us, but they're wasting their time. Half the time they're not even wanted here, because we're not *onsila*... you know, pitiful and just like children who need to be led by the hand. They ought to look at the needs in their own community. When I run into people like that, I very quickly invite them to leave because,

if anything, they have no orientation about the kind of people that they're dealing with and they still have that kind of Manifest Destiny mentality about people without even knowing that Manifest Destiny is just a political, humanistic ideal—there's nothing spiritual about it in the least. I try very hard to be tolerant, but it taxes your patience when there's so much work to be done and you have to slow down and wait for these ones that seem to just worsen situations.

We're at this juncture in time when the only ones that can save the Lakota people are the Lakota people themselves. There are those who come here with good hearts; brothers like yourself and other people that I know of who through the years have become real close to me and I acknowledge them as my relatives in Christ, but there are those who still come here with doctrines that are way, way out of place, and you can't even, as hard as you try, you're hard pressed to see the Lord in these people. You see people with, like you say, agendas. They feel like they have that big brother mentality. And those times are over.

But do you know why, Will? Because the money's here. There's money to be made by saying, "I'm on the Pine Ridge Reservation." If you say, "I'm in Whiteclay, Nebraska or Rushville, Nebraska," no one's sending money.

Well, we've seen it time and time again. Our own people are guilty of doing it. But back when I was on the Council, some email was sent to me from some missionaries that are still here, and now they've deeply rooted themselves in a community out north. And I'm still waiting for the day when the people say, "It's time for these people to leave." And I'll be the first to go, because these are very, very arrogant people. I don't think they're here for the love of Christ or the Lakota people anyway. But we saw their emails and their view of our people, and they were just like some of these relief societies who put on a picture of some starving kid and say, "Oh, I'm here trying to help these poor people. Send contributions to here." So outside people have to be leery of sending contributions to somebody's personal mailbox. Even if they say they are a Christian and they're doing missionary work, they're not, because the missionaries I'm speaking of seem to be very prosperous, *VERY* prosperous. They're making a good living exploiting the poverty here, and that's very frustrating. To be honest with you, Joey, I really wouldn't have a problem running these people out of this rez, because to me it would be the equivalent of Christ going into the temple and chasing out the money changers—these people that are just in love with money.

So, it goes back to what I said *Wasu Duta* said. There's a lot of money in Christianity. The modern day terminology that fits the situation accurately would be "poverty pimps." It's bad enough that our own people do it, but to have outsider people come in and just pimp off the poverty here... But some of the people who've done that are now sitting in prison; that drug ring that got taken out. People were mesmerized by this woman who painted this Mother Teresa story about herself, and all of a sudden she was on the front page with President Bill Clinton when he came here. Relief organizations from all over the place just funneled a lot of money into this place, bought her trailer houses, washing

machines, dryers, contributions. And she used it as seed money to develop a drug empire. I know because I was here and I watched it develop, and I was very, very glad to see it taken down. Unfortunately there were a lot of young people who, because of poverty, had no choice but to take up that way of life.

But it just goes against everything Lakota, because when you're an elder and you have a position of responsibility and young people are drawn to you, you're supposed to lead them in a good way. But because she was empowered by those she knew were gullible enough to fall for the, "Oooh, goo-goo, ga-ga, me poor Indian," she led all these young people straight into the prison doors.

And if it ever does, like I'm known to do, I will name names and talk about things instead of being vague about who is here capitalizing off the people's misery. The greatest atrocity those people are committing is that they're misrepresenting Christ and they're just going to breed another generation of people who don't trust those who represent Christ, thus they will never trust Christ, they will never be capable of receiving His salvation.

The Bible talks about a lot of things that we shouldn't be doing, that were called sins. But even that, people look at the Ten Commandments, and they look at them as ten suggestions. They don't look at them as God's law any more. And there are a lot of different levels of sinning. If you're a con man, well, you're a sinner. If you're a poverty pimp, you're a sinner. You're going to hell!. If you capitalize off other people's suffering, I guess prison's too good for you.

When you were talking about that, you brought out that same frustration in me, but the only difference here is that, like I said, I believe myself to be, still, a societal and spiritual warrior, not only for my people, but for Jesus, and even more so the ways of my ancestors that taught us *wakan wicoka omanni*, to walk in that sacred manner. I am always willing to make myself available for whatever the people want...

So, when people are immersed in poverty, you can hand them \$20 and they'll be your best friend; they'll be totally loyal to you even though you only hand them \$20 annually. So, that's the shame of what comes of Native American nations. And not only Native America, but the rural communities, inner city communities, and it adversely affects every race of children. It's a dilemma.

I don't believe in what America's doing now. When you talk about things, when you disagree with things that America's doing, you'll swiftly get accused of being anti-American or anti-patriotic, but I don't really give two farts in the wind about that kind of thinking because this is not America in every sense of the word. This is God's creation here. I'm more apt to follow God's natural and spiritual laws than to give too much consideration about what America thinks.

They have this thing with the immigrations. First, they perpetrate the lie that this country was built on noble acts of freedom, and all this, when it was built on the bones of

indigenous people, ancestors. It was built on extreme acts of terroristic violence, bio-warfare, deviant acts, deceitful acts, greedy acts. They perpetrate lies; they tell their own version of the story. More importantly, it was built on the backs of immigration labor, and now they're talking about this big ol' wall that they want to build. I wish that we could build that wall around this reservation; that we could have real strong immigration laws; that we could run people through the proverbial "grill" about what their intentions are here. And after watching them for a certain amount of time and we know their just doing a big ol' snow job, then we invite them to leave.

But people are so lost and so confused. They will look at that statement there and say that's pretty extreme or that's bordering on the outskirts of being a rather large cult. But people are really good at manipulating words, manipulating intentions, but it becomes the most horrible thing when they start manipulating the words of God. Whether it be, once again, through the Holy Bible or the Holy Pipe. I'm probably one of the few Christians that was led to the Bible through the Pipe and was led to Jesus Christ through my culture. There are a lot of considerations and a lot of mysteries. People are not humble. People are not God-fearing. People are very arrogant.

So yes, I've got my eyes open. I'm watching what's going on. I've got my eyes to the north; got them to the west, to the east, to the south. And I run into these kinds of people. The people talk, there are those who let me know. And there are those who I know I can depend on too.

It's about a way of life, and it's becoming that way for those who proclaim, and for every intent and purpose, are true believers. It's gonna come down to them experiencing the Native American experience when they have to fight tooth and nail to fight tooth and nail to maintain a way of life, especially if that way of life pertains to their belief in Christ. It's coming to that, because the Lord is very clear about how the devil knows that Bible backwards and forwards; he knows that Sacred Pipe backwards and forwards, and people are not alert as they used to be.

But it looks like, as time progresses, when you compare these times with biblical times, the health and the wisdom of our people are on the decline. People are not as wise as they used to be and they certainly don't live as long as they used to. And they deviate from those who do have wisdom, because everybody's running a scam, man; everybody's a con artist. And a lot of that happens wherever there's poverty.

At one point it might not even be necessary to run off these missionaries to the north, because at one point they're gonna build themselves a very nice nest egg and then they'll go back to their communities and talk about their time that they spent among the "primitive Natives" trying to bring them salvation. But, you know, they're failures. They failed from the moment they got here, and when it comes to being truthful in every sense of the word, they're gonna be failures when they leave, especially if nobody has benefited from their being here.

I believe that's a benchmark of being a spiritual person, that at least the people benefit from your very presence there. They've either learned something, they've been enriched, they've been empowered, and they feel safe, and they can walk. It's just like that concept of if you've taught them how to fish, then you've succeeded.

These missionaries to the north, this man and his woman, are very good at fooling people, but *itenunpa*, they have two faces. There are faces they show to the right people, and there are other faces they show. The poorest of the poor, when they look at these people's faces, they see disgust in their faces. These people are disgusted at being amongst the Lakota people. They don't even want to be here, but you know what, there's money to be made. And if somebody smells them for the rats that they are, oh, they'll come crying around and they'll have people who are quick to defend them.

It's actually a very sad state of affairs, brother Joey, a sad state of affairs. And I know your frustration and I can feel it. But, see, that's where I say Christians come in every size and shape, you know. And people have to realize that having a personal relationship is not a one-size-fits-all. The Lord uses you the way He wants to use you. And maybe some of are supposed to be the turn-the-other-cheek, Bible-reader, complacent type of followers; no disrespect. But, maybe some of us are, when the time comes, maybe we're the ones he's chosen to wield the swords and all that stuff. He's chosen us for our heart and those things that Lakota people hold high—generosity, respect, wisdom and courage.

And so, at my point in life, I ask my other, older brothers, "Do you think this ever stops for us? When do we get to enjoy being old? I'm forty-six years old now, and I know that's not old, but do you think I'm ever gonna get to live in peace?" And my older brothers and the older men say, "Probably not. You're gonna struggle all your life, because you have to live that life and model that life, so you'll be training the next batch of strong people to replace you." And that's what life is; somebody trains you to take their place, and after you take their place, you gotta find your protégés next.

So yes, I've got a real big, big problem. And if I could reach out to the Christian community, I would tell them to, like the young people say, "keep it real and come correct." If you're gonna come here, then come correct and keep it real. But if you're coming here under some kind of false mentality that you're coming to save people and you pound nails for about a week and then you leave, or you plan to stay here and see the good deal for what it is, you know, there's people out there that get taken advantage of every day, because they have a generous heart. But they don't know that they're contributing to all kinds of con artists, scam artists. They're like beer cans and dirty diapers—they're everywhere. So, people who unknowingly contribute to them, I don't blame those people because there will be retribution, there will be justice for them. So, those *itenunpa*, two-faced people. And when you smell a rat, if it's your nose that smells the rat, then they don't like you. They don't like you.

I don't mean to judge people, but I know a snake oil salesman when I hear one, when I see one. When I smell a rat, I know it's a rat. I don't even know why they gotta go there, but when they resist any attempts by people to correct their behavior, they become even more arrogant

So, young brother, it comes to the time when you just have to turn that over to God. Turn it over to God. There's only so much we can do; that God will let us do. And people have to start taking responsibility for their own actions. That's just a part of what I say, that you end up sinning because of their sins. You end up becoming spiteful and bitter because of how they are. My advice would be, don't let them do that to you. Don't let them do that to you. If anything, just pray for them.

I just want to get some whips, like you said, swords or whatever.

Well, the Lord understands all this. Sometimes a church just doesn't cut it. Sometimes it's just going out there where you can really feel and smell and taste *Tunkasila*. Just go off, drive somewhere, get out of the car and go stand on a hill somewhere and really *waonsila* yourself, have compassion for yourself as a human being. Talk to the Lord about these things and cry or holler or whatever. Express your heart. And the Lord has a way of healing you. But always remember that God has His own timeline and we don't understand it and that's why we get frustrated.

But usually a rat will, sooner or later, bring themselves where they have to be dealt with in a humanistic, physical way. For those who might be hearing these words or reading these words, it doesn't mean anything criminal; it just means being proactive and taking something out of a community that brings a community down. That's why I'm glad we have exclusion laws here. Being somewhat of a quasi-sovereign nation, the law basically, if there's a bad white man amongst the Indians, they have the legal right to remove that white man, black man, yellow man, purple polka-dot man from the exterior boundaries of the reservation.

A long time ago, *ata e hanni*, as they say, our ways even allowed for us to remove members of our own nation that were kinda bringing down our ways, kinda bringing down our people. We had banishment laws, and we had the traditional societies where they could be whipped in public and then banned, never to come back again; unless they came back correctly.

There's so much other bigger fish to fry, bro. Let's take for example the security and dignity of children and what they go through; especially the women, the female counterparts of us. They have been so disgraced and demoralized. The women have for too long been carrying the burden of the ills of society. People don't even look at women as being sacred any more. They look at them as being subservient, and it's horrible that a beautiful woman, or any woman, has to exploit her sexuality and who she is just to survive in this world. Apparently people are not reading the Bible deep enough to get spiritual understanding. Many times it just blows my mind how in Lakota society, Lakota

males who supposedly subscribe to the Lakota way of spiritual life, how they really disrespect women.

It's the same thing with Christians. I don't care what color they are. The only thing I can recommend is read the book, especially about Jesus himself when he walked this *Unci Maka*, grandmother earth. Maybe, perhaps, if you're fortunate, and you read deep enough, you'll find why women and children have a special place in the Lord's heart. Then again, if your objective is to be Christ-like, then maybe you too will have a respect for women and children. It's so wrong that women become the larger percent of these violent crimes, and these little girls are raising babies all by themselves. It's just horrible. It's probably not my place as a man, but I'm deeply interested in empowering females so they don't have to be the victim of another macho idiot.

Does that answer your question? I already forgot what the question was.

That answers it.

Prompt 5: *I don't know why this is, but I woke up the other morning and thought about the Sundance and the piercing and the things that go on there, and most of what I hear from Christians is that at the Sundance, people are trying to do what Christ already did; that it's not necessary; and why are people trying to go through these things that Christ already went through? Is that what they're trying to do, just replace what Christ did? I want you to respond to that.*

Well, you know, I don't want to be too passive when I respond to these things, because there's a bigger picture, so much more than what people sometimes see. Then again, like I said, it goes back to that arrogance, that being stuck in that box with all your little ideologies and religious and humanistic doctrines where all of a sudden you act like God's your next door neighbor, He's your home boy and you talk to Him every day and He gives you the straight up skinny, and so you go around telling other people this is the way it is.

People don't understand that there are many mysteries of God, many mysteries of God. They always look at what's on the surface. Again, it goes back to language. Jesus didn't speak comprehensive English, this language that we know now. He spoke a different kind of language, and throughout the years, the generations, the decades and all this stuff, as these were started to be translated into different languages, there are a lot of things that got lost in the translations. And so people are aware of the miracles that Christ performed in his life while He was here, and the ones that He still performs. And even though they believe that, they can't believe the logical, spiritual notion that maybe he gave other people and taught them different teachings. But they were all still good—*wakan na waste*, they were sacred and they were good.

It's not for me to lay blame on those who don't understand what a Sundancer does. Even Lakota people will very quickly disregard the notion that this was taught to us by the Creator. Because within our culture, they've become like the oppressors; they

become like those who oppress them and say, “Well, God brought them this way of prayer; God brought us our way of prayer, so they should just stick with their way of prayer, and we’ll stick with our way of prayer, because that’s segregation, that’s a separatist kind of mentality where you’re dividing God up. There’s no two Gods, three Gods, four Gods for each nation—there’s only one—one God. But that one God is the creator of the languages and the songs and everything else, of diversity – great diversity.

You know, maybe for this group of people, He gave them the Ten Commandments because that’s what they needed. Maybe for this group of people, and I can only speak from the knowledge of Christianity and Lakota spirituality, that maybe He gave this people the Seven Sacred Rites, because that’s what we needed at the time. To me, the imagery and the presence of the Lord is more prevalent within that sacred circle of the Sundance ceremony; or the *Hanbleceya* ceremony, the crying for a vision, standing on a hill fasting or these other ceremonies.

So what else can I do with my life other than what God taught me to give of myself so that my people will live? These times of one people oppressing another seem like they’re uncalled for now, but they’re still here. People still haven’t found themselves. In the sixties they talk about people going off to find themselves, but they haven’t found themselves, because they’ve never sat down and broke bread with all these different kinds of people because they’re too afraid, and in their fear they have dishonored and disrespected God.

I can break bread with my Christian brothers and sisters because we have that common belief, but if they look down on what I’m doing, they’ve betrayed me as my brother and sister. That’s the real thing here, is that I would never betray them. I’ll sing gospel songs and do whatever. I’ll never put down the way they pray or what they believe because I pray and believe the same way. But the thing is, I know that they will never be able to come with me because of their fear of what they don’t know, what they don’t understand.

I’ll just put it bluntly and say that I believe that these Seven Sacred Rites of the Lakota *Oyate* has the stamp of approval of the Lord. When I look at the Sundancer with his crown of sage, and just the different images that I see that are so prevalent in Christian society, symbolisms and all that stuff, I know that these sacred ways came from God. Again, being a Christian, in my view, is not a life of spiritual complacency; it’s one of being proactive and doing the work.

So, I guess to each his own. I’m fine with what I have done in my life as a Lakota. I’m fine with the many scars upon my chest and my back and my arms and all that, because that’s what my Lord taught me to do, to give of myself, to benefit the people. He was the originator. He totally gave 100% fully of Himself so the people can have salvation. We merely give of ourselves, not to the degree that he did, out of pure sincerity and love for our people that we’re willing to undergo the pain of piercing and

bleeding, and breaking the skin, and all this stuff. If that's their understanding, that it's not necessary for you to do that because Jesus did that, you need to really explore that statement there, because I've heard it time and time again, but I very quickly dismissed it because my faith is strong.

But if you're stuck there, you're never gonna make progress until you go beyond that. But this is what you learned from Jesus and this is what I learned from Jesus. And I'm not gonna sit there and tell you that there's something wrong with your relationship with Jesus Christ. That's not my place. It's enough for me to know that you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, but it's too bad that you can't acknowledge that other people also have one. So the images that I see of Christ are the ones that He planted in my *nagi*, my spirit, my soul, to help me understand and walk with my Lord. He very gracefully allowed me to see these beautiful things because everybody's relationship is a different thing. As I said at the beginning, it's not one-size-fits-all.

I've taught, not me myself, but as a collective member of Lakota society, the *tiospaye*, the extended family, the *tiwahe*, the family, I've had a hand in teaching generations of younger people, as well as my own children and nieces and nephews, and eventually my grandchildren this way of life so that they can *wolakota ommani*, they can walk in balance; that they won't criticize one or the other, but they will feel safe and at home, and blessed by their relatives and each one. Because, like I said, sometimes Pipe keepers and Bible keepers just can't seem to get along. And to me, that very act alone is a discredit to both of them. You're hard pressed to see any sacredness in either one of them.

So religion is hard to talk about, but I, and many others like me, like you, we probably, if times went "primitive" on us, we would be the guys most likely to be burned at the stake for our Christian beliefs by fellow Christians, because they would view us as heretics or radicals and all this stuff. They've invited the Lord into their hearts, but they've not been inside their hearts; they haven't gone deep enough. They've just stayed on the surface in a spiritual comfort zone, and they're really totally missing out on the opportunity to appreciate the sacredness of that personal relationship with the One that has many, many names; and he knows all those names. The Lord knows, when He's being called upon in prayer by many different names. He's praised in many different languages. Only in the country of so-called freedom where they want to pass legislation that says "English only."

I'm in conflict with my light-skinned relatives and whoever goes that far, whether they be red, black, yellow or white, when they get lost in that cesspool of egotistical, self-centered thinking. I feel sorry for them. I don't think you can on one hand say, "I'm a follower of Christ," and then in the same breath, if you're a politician, say, "Vote yes," that this country's only language should be English. What in the world? What in the world?

But with these times, the capitalist mentality, you know, oppressive mentality, all these things, and it's always someone who pays the price. It's the poor people paying the price for the whims of mad hat politicians now. And it's the poor people's children who are dying because of macho idiotic mentalities—this need to be animalistic and go around urinating and marking that as your territory and starting wars over it. That's 'cause men just wanna be men and never see the forest for the trees and they forget about the females.

I think if people want to spout that kind of stuff, I think they should just keep it to themselves, because they're never going to stop those who walk with the Pipe from ever considering stopping the act of laying down to be pierced or to offer flesh. If anything, they might cause us to do it even more. I might decided to say, "*Tunkasila*, I'm gonna offer this flesh, four big pieces, I'm gonna believe for these Christians so they can have understanding, so they can have compassion for us, so they can come to know you the way we know you and have their lives spiritually enhanced.

So, nobody appreciates that kind of criticism. And I understand how hypocritical that may sound with the way I'm talking now, but that's my story and I'm sticking to it. I'm just never gonna change, and that place where we all believe we're gonna end up, we all have different views of that too. But that's the only place we're really gonna learn about all this stuff.

People, just gotta, like they say, check themselves before they wreck themselves. I don't even think people should be talking about religion unless they can come correctly, because you never know who's listening. You might turn them off and then you might endanger their very soul.

Prompt 6: *I have one more question. It's about when we were on the way to see [your wife's uncle] in the hospital, and you mentioned that there are certain aspects of Lakota spirituality that you don't even adhere to, or maybe I'm stating it wrong, but maybe a darker side or something like that. I can't even ask the question properly, because I'm not sure.*

In Lakota society, they say when you're a Christian you have to "die unto yourself." There are certain things that you have to put down, because they don't fit into the parameters of those beliefs that they're not pleasing to the Lord, because God is a jealous God. Well, back in the day, the missionaries (and there's probably still some today) that would tell us that we need to stop going to powwows, that we need to stop going to the Sundance, to the Sweat Lodge because we're gonna go to hell for all this stuff.

For example, I have a bro. He came here originally as a missionary from New Zealand, and he's a Mormon. I guess a lot of Christians would have a lot of funky stuff to say about that. Regardless, he's my bro. He's a Mauri native. And he was telling me, "I still speak my Mauri language and there are still parts of the Mauri people, the customs that

I practice. But,” he said, “our people used to be cannibals,” But cannibalism does not fit into the realm of his beliefs and the things that he practices.

Well, in Lakota society, in Lakota spirituality, one must look at that same thing. Not to appease the Christian beliefs, but to satisfy the components of Lakota spirituality. In Lakota spirituality I was talking about the Seven Sacred Rites. I’ll go through those real briefly, just briefly enough to name them. There’s the Sundance, there’s the making of relatives, there’s the sweat lodge, there’s the keeping and releasing of the spirit, which is a grieving process, there’s the throwing of the ball, there’s what’s commonly known as the vision quest, and then the one that is really hard to translate, but it’s the *Isna Ta Awi Ca Lowan*, they sing over her—it’s a ceremony for a young woman; it’s a puberty ceremony, a transition from girl to womanhood.

Those Seven Sacred Rites... when this woman came from the Creator to bring us these, to this day we don’t know what this woman’s name is. We called her *Pte san Wi*, white buffalo woman, because after she brought these spiritual gifts to us, she walked away and metamorphosized into a white buffalo calf. It was the people who called her *Pte san Wi*. Maybe she has another name, but that’s what we called her. After she brought all this stuff, the strict adherence that she left to the people was that only good can come from this Pipe.

So I look at things like *Yuwipi*, which is a ceremony where they call the spirits and all this stuff, and I ask where does that fit in on the Seven Sacred Rites. Sometimes others have told me, “You know that *Tunkasila, Wakan Tanka*, will give the people things as they need them. So *Yuwipi*, calling of spirits. If you look at it... I’ve been to them. Are they bad, are they good? There are aspects as a lifelong learner, some people say they go to *Yuwipi* ceremonies to make medicine against other people. Every time I’ve been with good hearts, I’ve had a good time at a *Yuwipi*, but I don’t go to them any more, because if *Yuwipi* is a part of something that we needed, then I assume because it includes the *Cannunpa*, I assume it falls under what *Pte san Wi* said, “Only good can come from this pipe.”

When you look at other parts like the concept of making bad medicine, which is in essence making bad things to other people, I totally reject, I totally reject them. And I don’t even consider them to be Lakota, and I tell my own people, those who involve themselves and believe if they can make prayers out of bitterness and anger and cause suffering to other people, it’s not Lakota spirituality nor Christianity that you’re practicing, but rather you are practicing witchcraft or voodooism, things like that. The ability to *h’munga* people; *h’munga* is to spiritually attack them, when you cause their fact to be distorted and their skin to be dead and fall. There’s something evil about that. That’s evilness. So it’s anything within that realm. If you know intuitively and spiritually that it’s not good, then it has to be rejected. Or from a Christian viewpoint, it has to be rebuked.

And that’s what I meant by that when we were driving that day, that there are those things. Like, Native Americans get a lot of credit for scalping, so would it be safe to say

that to be considered a Lakota I would have to scalp somebody? No, I reject that because scalping didn't come from Native America, it came from the colonists. There used to be a bounty for Native Americans killed, but you had to have proof of that kill. Originally it was heads, but I imagine it got too messy hauling a burlap bag full of heads into town, so they modified it to be the scalps. And I'm speculating that when these people warred with each other, that it was just kind of like some people were doing deeds to others that they were doing to them. So I don't prescribe to that notion.

But as a human being it doesn't really matter, you know. There's so many arguments that can be raised when we tie it into culture. And then we're just putting more junk in the way. But you always take it down to the degree of just being a human being. So there are things within Lakota culture that I don't participate in, that I do not believe, and that I reject, because true, true, life is extremely difficult here, but I don't see that's there's any place where you can go that life won't be extremely difficult. It's hard all over the place.

To me it's just, again, that people are just not being spiritually attuned to what's going on. There are a lot more people that are spiritually attuned, and that's why it's easy to ascertain and say we are living in the last days, because if you've read the Book, then you know the events that are gonna happen. And even if you studied Nostradamus or studied other cultures and looked at their prophecies, they vary a lot in how they present it, but it's still very parallel, very parallel. But we don't have the time frame, the precise time frame. It could all end tomorrow, it could all end twenty years from now, but in that time there's still a lot to be done.

Why involve myself into things, whether they be cultural or not cultural, that just result in a massive waste of time? As far as my culture goes, the things that I'm involved in just bring me happiness and joy, stuff that I can't find anywhere else, like at hand games, singing songs, things like that just bring me joy. So that's what I meant by that.

Interview VIII

June 11, 2007 (12:25 PM)

Unprompted Interview (47min)

I've been given a little pre-instruction to speak about whatever's on my heart, so today I guess what's really important to me is a little concept I hear that exists in the Western society called "righting wrongs." From a spiritual perspective and a Christian perspective, I've often wondered about the atrocities committed in the name of God. I've often wondered how those will be treated on judgment day, as it were.

It seems like we're living in a society where we're discouraged about talking about God, or *Ate Wakan Tanka*, one of the many thousands of names that He goes by. This is where it all comes to is now they talk about separation of church and state. It's like mankind has gotten to the point where they feel like they don't need God any more, or his laws, so they separate themselves from that. And I feel that they've only created a way to justify their political actions, and even their social and religious actions.

It's kinda like back then I imagine the ferocity in which they embraced the concept of Manifest Destiny. It was almost like a document that gave the early immigrants carte blanche to run through Native American communities and to exterminate the people that were there for the natural resources. And it seems like first these indigenous people paid the price, and now it looks like we're all gonna pay the price by the destruction that the planet has gone through. It's not repairable. The huge chunks of flesh torn out of *Unci Maka* and all her veins which are the waterways of this great planet are contaminated with toxins and pollutants.

Many times the Bible is quoted when mankind wants to proceed with these acts. Then it's like it's used to justify these types of acts. Then later, when they settle into a state of passivity and economic gain, they don't want God in the picture any more. So, as mankind it feels like we're on a fast course to self-destruction with no thought about the spiritual repercussions.

Starting from my ancestors' time, we hear about how children were just brutally abused for the most minute thing, whether it be forgetting that they were in the clutches of the oppressors and uttering a Lakota word; the severe ramifications that they had to face. We're living in this present time and when we look at these things, for indigenous it's always a source of deep pain. Forever on their tongues they will hold the truthful account of how we came to be to our present day condition.

When we talk about the things I'm gonna talk about next, in this land of so-called freedom of speech, freedom of religion and all that, one may look at you and say that you're anti-American and you're anti-patriotic. But I would challenge those who would

say that and say, "Isn't that a part of what democracy is all about?" When one gets up to voice their opinion whether it's opposed to the status quo, isn't that like being involved and participating, and involving themselves in positive activism?

So instead of labeling these people and trying to shut them down, and shut them off and suppress them, then there's a greater need to listen to these people. But you look at the state that this country's in with the total demoralization of women and of the elders. We here in Lakota country try so hard to honor our elders and protect them, and we look at the news broadcast and see where they're being severely beaten in other communities; other type of ethnic elders.

So we have teachings here that can at least bring America closer to being truly the land of the free, and having this healthy fear of God, but we're never gonna get there unless we stop perpetuating these lies about how America was built and fess up to the facts that what goes around comes around. The Oglala Lakota people will be the first to attest that we know what it's like to be the victims of violent terrorist attacks, because America played the role of the terrorists and all the different terrorist cells as they moved forward to eliminate indigenous peoples all across this continent, Turtle Island, here. They also moved to oppress the language and a spiritual way of life, all because they just didn't understand it.

I have to say that it seems like wisdom was pretty much lacking in the so-called forefathers that came here, who we know as the original immigrants. The more we learn about Christianity and the way that they pray—although some of us have embraced it, some of us have turned against it because we see it as just a hypocritical way of life that we don't want to be involved in. To preach the Lord's teaching and love and then, instead of acting accordingly, acting the total opposite.

I'm glad that the day is gone when it was considered a sin to go to powwows and have long hair and try to speak the Lakota language and try to be involved in the ways of your ancestors.

This country needs to check itself before it wrecks itself, so to say, spiritually. "God bless America" is just a phrase. You have to look around and you have to wonder has God really blessed America. What kind of country would involve God on something so dirty as money? "In God we trust;" this money changes hands many times. It goes into the hands of child molesters and drug dealers and those involved in gang activity. Something so necessary to surviving in this capitalist world is so dirty.

This country can only be restored to its true greatness once the Native American voice is heard. The so-called melting pot theory is that everything goes into the pot and it all becomes the same thing; that's racial cleansing. When you force somebody to assimilate, to become what you are, then you've turned them into nothing under the guise that you want to make their lives better.

That's not what creation is all about. It's not one-size-fits-all. It's not everything the same color. Everything has different nuances, and that's a more accurate picture of what creation is; when we look about at the trees and the flowers and the animal life, and the life of those with wings and those that live under water. They're very diverse. Yet as human beings, we all want to be one thing. The "English only" movement of this country is a great slap in the face to the Creator.

You know, it's the same thing that... wisdom needs to be applied on all fronts. As I've said many times, you can be the most intelligent person in the world, but if you don't have wisdom you're little more than a smart dummy who knows a lot of things, because you don't have the wisdom that would allow you to apply what you know into real life situations.

Even with religion there seems to be a lack of wisdom. It's all this mad race to have everybody be all the same, saying the same old dead, robotic prayers. But one you apply wisdom and that deep sense of love and spirituality, then you know that the Bible or the Sacred Pipe, these things are not inanimate objects—these things live and breathe. I just feel like just because we can't see the Lord or touch Him, that we think it gives us carte blanche to just be arrogant. I know in my heart that there's just gonna be a real, just awesome enlightenment about what the truth really is.

And so, there seems to be a spiritual agenda that this country needs to embark on before it can be all those things it claims to be. Allow those people, however they were born, to be what they were meant to be and not be so arrogant as to think that it is only one race that holds all the salvation for all the other races.

So, in time, this nation will collapse. Partly because of its own doing, and partly because historically nations that rise to prominence usually end up doing themselves in, and so a certain type of civilization or empire doesn't last too long. This country is just over two hundred years old, and already we see the great disturbances within. And those who speak the truth are heavily persecuted. Politicians are out of control, and if there is a politician who stands up in the name of truth and in the name of God, he or she is very quickly beaten down.

As a country, we need to challenge ourselves in what we believe in. Is it the almighty dollar? Is it the almighty political system? There seems to be no checks and balances either way. Corporate America has run amuck and is very shady in its methodologies about how to just squeeze every dollar out of the consumers.

When you look at the negative impact that we're dealing with, with the negative side of hip-hop and the sub youth cultures, this country is to blame. It is this country that glamorized the so-called "thug life." Corporate America is totally responsible for capitalizing, for seeing an opportunity to capitalize off the sufferings of those who are stuck in poverty, because no matter how poor young people are, they will find a way to

buy the latest CD that talks about the bling-bling and adverse treatment of women. They will find a way to purchase whatever brand of tennis shoe the latest rapper or sports star is wearing.

We've become so tolerant and apathetic about it, we just go along with the flow—going along with the flow. I think there a lot of misinterpretation that goes into that turning of the other cheek. That's where I believe, if we're talking in terms of Christianity, where it's just failed. It's failed its objectivity because it's content with those who easily comply with the methodologies used to convert them per say. It doesn't do enough to go out there and reach the hopeless sinners; those ones who are in just dire need of some sign of love or some sign of empowerment or enrichment to help them get on the road.

It's a slap in the face when we see this country just pour billions of dollars into outside economies. It's a slap in the face when we see these massive charitable movements to help other countries—which is all good, it's all good—but it's a slap in the face when those very same conditions exist right here in America. And they affect not only indigenous people, but they affect all God's children, whether they be black, red, yellow, or white.

Somewhere in this so-called great country tonight, there are children that are going to bed hungry; children that are going to bed in fear of whether or not someone's going to come in and rape them. It's even happening in the churches, but they're so forgiving that they allow the perpetrator to move on to a different area so he or she can go and endanger other children.

In this country there are elders who live in fear day in, day out. Nighttime is probably the worst for them, because there's no respect for them; there's no love for them. They're just easy, easy victims, just like the children.

Then, of course, the women who fall prey to every vile ideology or act of corruption that men can perpetrate upon them.

So the work that's being done, in these areas at least, to me is a slap in the face of God. This rez, this little piece of land that I live on with my fellow tribal members, I would love to see this country pump billions of dollars to restore what they have destroyed here; to even live up to the terms of the legally-binding treaties. And if other countries dug deep enough into this country's history, I wonder if they would move into agreements with them so easily if they could look at how Native Americans were treated here; if they could see all these large pockets of poverty within this country.

So the thinking is so far removed from what the Lord instructed and it seems to more of a self-centered, egotistical world that we live in where the truly the rich get richer and

poor get poorer. It's sad when some of the "rich getting richer" are some of the organized religions.

There is no voice in this life that can be trusted. There's no human voice that can be trusted. The only voice you can trust is the voice of God. It's imperative that the people of this world, the people of my nation, and the people of the nation of immigrants (we're not talking about the Hispanics from across the border you know—we're talking about everybody who doesn't originate from here; we're talking about the original boat people, the descendents of the Pilgrims and Columbus, the colonists and all these people—these are the original boat people)... It's very important that the nations of the immigrants truly, truly, truly walk their talk and practice what they preach, because all I can see is just hypocritical conduct beyond comprehension.

I know it sounds like a harsh judgment, but I don't see it as that in my heart; I see it as just plain and simple observations, which is what leads me to believe that you still can't be trusted, and you're suspect, because I know enough about my Lord, and I know enough about the Bible, and just by looking around I know that this is not the world the Lord intended us to live in; these are not the conditions.

I would love to debate this, whether it's in the academic arena or in the Biblical arena or whatever, because the voice of truth is much stronger and louder than the voice of intellectual babblings. So you can see who are the descendants of the Tower of Babel, because when they talk it just sounds like babble. They're babbling on and on and on with the self-righteous rhetoric that still leaves people hungry, both physically and spiritually. The poorest of the poor and the most oppressed find it hard to find God in this world, because of all the unjust, terrible things they're going through. Then this country wonders why there's the voice of protest within its exterior boundaries.

Just like a brother of mine was wondering where the next strong Lakota leader is coming from, I always wonder where the next strong leader of the nation of immigrants is coming from. But if they are all for following their laws and everything, maybe that's where the solution lies. After they build that big ol' wall and announce that everybody who's not from here has to go back over there, I'll be standing there waving bye-bye to all of them. As far as I know, the Oglalas and the other nations of the *Oceti Sakowin* were the original inhabitants of this country.

There are a lot of academic lies that are being pushed about how we migrated here and conquered this land from other inhabitants—academic and Biblical lies just fabricated to justify their treatment. It flows from a nation of denial. People can't bear the thought that their forefathers were terrorists; that their ancestors were very sinful people—especially those who came to seek the new world, to find a new world. They found a new world but they brought their same ol' sinful habits with them. In the space of a little over two hundred years they totally infected this country, and their disease is rampant.

But those who truly believe in the Lord and do his work and do unto their neighbors in a kind fashion, because that's what they would want done to them, they know the truth of which I speak. The denial factor and complacency factor is just, it's just pathetic is what it is. Sitting in the lap of luxury talking about "God bless America" when you can see clearly that God has not blessed this country. Natural and spiritual freedom is being maintained by the forces of violence. It's the American way. It's the American way; if all else fails, bring out the guns.

There are those who have the foresight to worry about what kind of world their grandchildren and great-grandchildren are gonna be living in. What kind of people are they gonna have to co-exist with?

I see that there are true believers who come here, and come here in a good way and try to co-exist with us and help us. There are those among us who are not looking for handouts, we're not pitiful in any sense of the word. If someone moves forward to help us, then we'll participate. That's good right there.

These other ones who come to exploit us and just to feed their own egotistical need for self-prominence within their own religious communities— just stay home. Stay home. Look for the poor side of town in your community and go help them. Because even though we all speak the same language, English, there are Lakota that can sit and talk in English and still people cannot understand what we're saying. If you don't come to honor God, then stay home and just front to people who will believe you. God doesn't exist in the mouth of men. God is felt in actions. God is only heard in words that truly mean something.

I'm grateful for the concept that was put in my heart about spiritual justice. Although I might see my people and other peoples just suffer (and I think it's just too much to bear for those who suffer), which explains the epidemic rates of alcoholism and drug abuse and gang violence and HIV and AIDS. People are indulging in self-medicating types of behavior. They'd rather kill themselves, drink themselves to death than have to live-up to standards that they'll never be able to attain. They'll never be given the opportunities. They'd rather die than live among people who will never accept them.

That's where the biggest hypocrisy comes from, this talk about "accepting the Lord and it will change your life," when those who bring that message will never truly accept those who they don't want in their churches. They don't want people who have strong opinions; who have other teachings of spirituality that can actually contribute to the church family.

That's why for the longest time I've been a Christian without a home—a Christian without a church. There's no church that will accept me, but as the young people say, "It's all good." Because I know that the Lord accepted me the minute I asked Him to. So, yea I say unto thee, you better learn how to accept people, or you'll be responsible. You will

be held spiritually accountable for turning a people away from Christ just by your representation of Him.

These are the questions that run through my heart. And through my Lord I've been assured that there will be spiritual consequences. You'll see the usual suspects lined up on judgment day—the shamans, the clergy, the missionaries, the medicine men. They'll be standing there like a police lineup having a lot of explaining to do to the greatest Common Man this time and this world has ever known or will ever know; the greatest medicine man; the greatest preacher; the greatest judge.

As I struggle in my own life, at times being the enemy of my own people, not a majority of them, but it's the saddest thing to try to help your people out of spiritual and economic oppression when they're the ones who are bringing you down. But I can *waonsila* them, you know, have that sense of compassion for them because they've been made also to be like little children who know not what they do. When you suffer from these kinds of conditions, your first instinct is to lash out at your own, thus the term "lateral violence from historical trauma" really applies in that fashion.

The coming of the Lord, they say, for me will be a day of celebration. It will be a day my soul, my spirit, will be emancipated from the bonds of this hell on earth. It just feels like it doesn't have to be this way. This life that we're all living here with these extreme judgments of each other and harsh judgments and being overly nitpicky about how people are living their lives, all the preaching in the world isn't going to make that any better. Actually getting up off of your butt and getting out there and rolling up your proverbial sleeves and truly breaking bread with your neighbors, however they break bread.

This Lakota world that I live in is all right with me. I already know that the Lord put a stamp of approval on me and my way of life, because that's the way that I understand Him and that's the way that He blesses me and graces me and humbles me all at the same time.

So I'm happy singing my Lakota songs. And even when I write so-called contemporary English songs, they're still about this life. I'm happy learning to reach my goal of one day being fluent again in the language of my ancestors. I'm happy with the ceremonies that I go to because I can feel God and He's very much alive, very much alive. And even more so, I can see the sacredness in other people's ways.

There used to be a term when it comes to whether a person was a racist or not. They used to say they were "colorblind," which means to them, they didn't care what color a person was. They didn't hate them. But it's all in how you interpret the words. I, for one, am not colorblind. I can see the colors out there. And I can respect those colors for what they are. I honor my black relatives and my relatives of Caucasian persuasion and my

so-called yellow relatives. I see them and the colors that they were born to be and I honor them and I love them.

And I will, when it comes to the children, will continue to honor all of that, because this country is just trying to establish a comfort zone where they feel comforted. And once again, we see other peoples going through the Lakota experience, if you will, about having their language by law beaten out of them; their ways of prayer disregarded and labeled as “paganistic.”

So, if anything, I’d say “shame on America; shame on you.” You are trying to undo what the Lord has done. So, if you’re gonna represent the Lord, then you’d best be knowin’ what you’re doing. Watch that tongue, how it moves. If that tongue moves in the wrong way, you can break somebody’s heart. You can drive them into a dark world with your tongue. So when you’re waggin’ your tongue in the name of the Lord, make sure you got it correct. Make sure you can walk the talk. If you’re gonna be spittin’ out words, make sure you can back them up, because when humans call you on it, it’s proven time after time that you fail.

So there’s a great need to humble oneself to the power of God. So speak only of that that you know. And I can’t stress it enough that if you’re gonna speak in the name of God, make sure that people feel just enlightened after they hear you; that they feel hope, that they feel that salvation.

Like I said, if you’re gonna make a journey to my homeland, make sure your heart’s in a good place. If you’re one of these arrogant believers that nobody has any use for and you’re just taking up valuable breathing space for the next generation, you might find others who will live like you do here, but I’d like to try to reverse that. So I encourage you with all my heart, you know, God bless you, love you, and all that, but just stay home; just stay home. Don’t add to the many issues that we already have to deal with here.

If America never truly lives up to God’s Word, then I guess we’ll be happy dying here poor, but with dignity; dying hungry, dying of diseases— the many thousands of ways there are to die—as long as we die with the name of God on our lips. Then when you hit God’s courtroom that’s when everything’s gonna be alright; it’s gonna be alright. That’s where you better hope you’ve lived in accordance to what God put forth.

That’s what I have to do. When I hit God’s courtroom, I gotta be sure that I walked my talk; that the words that I have spit out, that I’ve tried hard to live up to them. I don’t believe in the concept of hell; totally do not believe in it, because I believe that God is much more loving than that. So I don’t worry day in and day out about going to hell. But there are mysteries to life, or there are those who think they’ve gotten the golden ticket to go through the golden gate who are probably gonna end up goin’ the other way,

because they've misinterpreted things. *Iktomi* the trickster has bit them and in the end will laugh at their suffering.

Those are the things that I wanted to talk about. I guess it falls in the area of reconciliation and just righting those wrongs. But first you have to come clean about them. The things that this government has done are atrocious, and this government is still here. So you can't push it off to the back burner and say, "Oh, I wasn't alive back then. Those were my ancestors; that's in the past."

How many chances is this country gonna ignore? This country has so many chances to restore itself to greatness, but if they don't take advantage of those opportunities to turn those wrongs into rights, then oh well, talk amongst yourselves, come up with your own conclusions. If you're fine with that, then God bless you. Hang in there. Hope that your arrogant beliefs are enough.

So, like they say amongst my people when they're done speaking, *a ho hecetulo*, I have spoken and it is the truth.

Interview IX

June 12, 2007 (Early Evening)
Anthropology (1hr 25min)

Prompt 1: *[In Custer Died For Your Sins,] Vine Deloria Jr. writes this: "Indians have been cursed above all other people in history. Indians have anthropologists" (1988, p. 78). I haven't really talked with you about anthropology. Do have any idea why somebody would say that or write that?*

Well, if you look at the concept that where the ground has been broken to build a church or in the Lakota way make a Sundance ground or a sweat lodge, in a sense, that becomes hallowed ground. But the ultimate, the final resting place of a lost loved one becomes hallowed ground in every sense of the word.

Anthropology, being the study of how humans once existed and all that, there's a real lame philosophy behind why they do this. Anthropologists think that they are learning about people that once walked the earth and that these people and the things they find can tell them stories about who these people were. It's a really sickening process that they do.

As a matter of fact, it's probably more than a coincidence that a couple of nights ago I was watching this thing on South Dakota state public TV, and it happened to be about anthropology. These people, professors and young people, were at this dig, and they were talking about the work that they were doing, and one young lady was talking about how she was digging out a pouch and the process they would have to do to preserve that pouch. And they're talking about a process and educating people about what anthropology does, when at the same time I was just sick to my stomach, because there was no regard for the hallowed ground that they had invaded.

Most of the items that we see in so-called American Indian museums are, for every intent and purposes, items taken off dead bodies; especially as it pertains to the indigenous people back in the 1800s.

I had the opportunity to travel to Virginia to speak to a church group, and while there the sideline activities went to Suitland, Maryland and I had with me a letter from the President of the Tribe encouraging repatriation of all these items. So, I had gone into this area where there were things like baby bonnets, war clubs, clothing artifacts, drums, and on some of these things, like the baby bonnets, you could still see strands of hair on them. I was heartbroken and I'm not ashamed to say that I just wept— wept like a little baby.

They have that air of superiority that you can't even let them know. They can't grasp the fact that it's horrible to be studied like you're a non-species, where the graves of your ancestors are constantly being meddled with, interfered with. To us that's taboo; it's heartbreaking. For every intent and purpose, they still act very much like the new arrivals, the original immigrants who come in here with their overbearing curiosity about this land and the people that once walked it. It's just horrible. To me it seems sinful to be disturbing the resting place. So I have to say that I have no love of anthropologists in my heart.

Here's the thing. One of our sacred ceremonies is called *Isna Ta Awi Ca Lowan*. The simplest translation of that would be, "They sing over her." What it is is a puberty ceremony when a girl becomes, for all intent and purpose, a young woman, and with the advent of her first menstrual cycle, she is taken and there are certain songs that are sung for her and she's being given words of encouragement and advice and instruction on how to walk as a woman. It's a women's ceremony; men are not there. So that ceremony teaches them that that cycle that they go through every month (they call it "being in their moon,") that that cycle is a sacred cycle. Those days that the woman is having her moon are sacred.

I realize that to women outside this culture that time probably doesn't feel too sacred to them, the things they're going through, but it's how that society was indoctrinated to think about these times that the woman goes through. The men are the worst because it's all derogatory, everything they say about it. Be that as it may, when the Lakota teaching is that these times are sacred, imagine a Lakota man and his daughters sitting there watching TV when all of a sudden a commercial comes on about women's hygiene products, you know, tampons, feminine napkins and all this. To most people, it's just another commercial, but to people who know about the women's sacred time it's an embarrassing thing for both the fathers and the daughters where you have to actually turn away from the TV.

The question that comes from that, in this society where corporate America rules, is it really necessary to have advertisements about women and women's hygiene products? If you ask the women they would say, "No." Because women know how to communicate with each other about that time of the month; that special, sacred time of the month. There's no need for men to capitalize off of that, or advertising agency or anything like that. There's absolutely no need for that.

So, we get back to the anthropologist, there is absolutely no need for anthropologists in today's society. These people that wanna study... we still live as a result of failed government policy. And I say that because it was once government policy to practice complete and total genocide of the Lakota people, for example; but they failed. So next they had policies of assimilation—forced assimilation—and that failed. So if the anthropologists wanna know about a certain tribe, you know, these tribes still live and exist. Take a note pad and go visit them. Go visit them, because many of us still carry

the stories and the songs. We know how we came upon this earth. We know the genesis of... well speaking for the Lakota, I know the genesis of the Lakota people. So if an anthropologist wants to study what's become known as the Sioux, "Yo, give me a call." You don't need to go digging up my great-great-great-great-grandma's grave, you know, or this little baby or this woman. It's just, in a spiritual way, it's sacrilegious.

Outside society would never, never condone that concept if I decided I was gonna do an anthropological study of the white man and the progression of how they got here and how they lived, and if I went up and started digging up old gravesites; studying up the bones, putting them back together, having their artifacts put into a Caucasian persuasion museum. When you go in there, you could see those things that mean something to them. But it don't mean nothing to us. We're just there to study these. That's the mindset that they have.

And the anthropologist is the worst of the worst. It's fine you know, I guess, if he wants to go looking for dinosaur bones and all that stuff, or if he wants to go looking for fossils of maybe plant life and all that, but as human beings, we are supposed to have that compassion. Anthropologists are way at the bottom of the pecking order, the lowest of the low, you know. Why anybody would want to go into that field is beyond me; they must can't make it as anything else; can't be a teacher, can't be a cop, can't be a lawyer, oh well, at least I can get on my hands and knees and play around in the dirt and piss people off. The lowest of the low. They rank right along down there with the meth dealer, the drug dealer.

So, Vine Deloria Jr., that's just my elaboration of what he had to say. He was one of our top academic scholars and as an educator, he was well respected. We lost him not too long ago, and we lost a good man. But at least we still have his words through his books. So anthropologists, I think they're gonna go to hell too.

Prompt 2: *Okay. I was reading this morning that anthropology, the definition of I found (and I'm sure there are many definitions) in a book that just happened to be in a room where I'm staying at in a box full of old books and things, and there was one on anthropology and I read it, and it said "it's the comparative study of mankind." It said it compares every, basically, holistically, mankind throughout the world at every level and throughout history.*

What I know about anthropology and what this book clearly stated well, there are several divisions of anthropology. You have the physical, and that's what you just talked about. That's where these guys go and they dig and they look and they try to piece together how society was, who these people were.

Then you have the cultural and social anthropologists and those are the guys that you suggested. These guys exist and they come here. In fact, I would be called an anthropologist in this role right now where I'm talking to you. These are the guys that

come and they put out surveys or they take out their cameras or their video cameras or their recorders, or they do interviews. A lot of them are students; a lot of them aren't. In the end they have to make recommendations. For instance, right now, what we're putting on this tape is data; it's a different kind of data—it's qualitative, it's not numbers. But some come out and they collect surveys and they crunch numbers and they make recommendations based on their research.

Now, Deloria, he addresses quite a bit these physical anthropologists, like you did just now. What I'd like to know is your ideas about cultural and social anthropology; the guys that come out here and have these research projects that they're working on. Some of them are making recommendations to the government even about what the government's policy for the Tribe is here. Do you run into any of these guys?

Well, if I did, I probably wouldn't have given them the time of day. You know, for me it's just as equally imperative for me to put the correct face of the Native American struggle here on my homelands in the event that we run across somebody who would be willing to help in any shape or form. But enough is enough. What else is there to know? If you look at the suffering that continues to prevail here in Lakota country, enough is enough. It's time for solutions now. Unless we are the victims of the most wiley, devious, ingenious country there ever was, who's continuing to keep us here in this state as lab rats to see how we are doing in the new millennium.

There's a great deal of stupidity that happens with governments, because they rely too much on data and all this stuff. It would be fine with me if some politician got off of his big, fat, pimply, hairy butt and made an effort to come out here himself to see what was going on. If a politician has a special area of interest that he or she wants to be involved in, and to make things better, then it behooves them to come out here.

Again, the same principle applies. If you want to know what's going down on reservations today, don't send your anthropologist or your data collectors. Come out and see for yourself, because data is only useful when it's applied. They need to stop looking at us as social experiments or social guinea pigs or whatever they study. I think time would be better spent if they studied solutions and try to bring those solutions here.

You've got a people here that, save for the people who have things going on, who had the determination and the drive to get an education, to set a business up, to become somebody not for the sake of feeding the egotistical need for self-prominence, but to help people. We ourselves see the suffering of our people and it breaks our heart. They're like the proverbial frog in pot of water that you bring to a boil. They're living a slow, painful death here with almost nil opportunities to experience what true happiness is, and true spirituality. Being that it's the new millennium, and we're still in this stage, a lot of times I question, "Are there Christians out there? Are there good-hearted people out there?"

Every time I speak for my people, I want to make sure and include all the other people that suffer through this too; not only Native Americans. You've got your youth coming up in inner cities, African Americans, black communities, who are losing their values. And I guess their parents must just be heartbroken because they were the ones who marched through the civil rights movements and all this, and now these young ones are beating on their own elders, you know, to get something for the fix, man, just to rip them off.

Then you've got white children living in rural communities who, because of adult negligence, are going hungry, and they don't have the same opportunities. So that's why I say I'm not colorblind anymore; I see the colors out there. I acknowledge those colors and I respect those colors.

What's happening in our country is a national disgrace. But all we've got are these macho, idiotic leaders who just wanna go around and pee on trees and have wars. That's the male nature. There seems to be no meaningful dialogue with women of prominence, women leaders, because women know about nurturing and loving and caring. The resources of this country, it's imperative that we stop human suffering in this country. Everything else is on the back burner, and quite honestly, it's totally meaningless to me; totally meaningless.

So, if I'm ever confronted with an anthropologist, in whatever capacity they come, I'd rather send them to someone else. I'd rather not waste my time. I didn't know you were an anthropologist. This interview stops here. No, I'm just kidding. But, you, Joey, I like. I consider you my little brother in a spiritual way, and I know you're doing this for a school project, so, you know me, education, education is very important.

Prompt 3: *I went to study Ethnomusicology. And there was a particular reason why I wanted to study this. What was made known to me and what I was totally ignorant of is that throughout the world, the entire world, missionaries went spreading the gospel message. And wherever they went, and this might not be the rule everywhere, but wherever they went, and this is the 19th century, early 20th century, mid-20th century, maybe even nowadays, but wherever they went with their gospel message which is pure, they brought their own culture, and they made that as if it was the same thing as the gospel message. To follow Jesus you must take on this European, Euro-American culture as well, because this is the Christian way, which is garbage. And I'm smart enough to know that, and there are a lot of people who are smart enough to know that.*

Who?

And wherever they went, they also took hymns and they took European-American hymns. And sometimes where they went they couldn't put those hymns, or they would try to put those hymns into the language of the people there or a local trade language or something like that. The people basically didn't identify with this music that they were singing in church, thus they really didn't identify with that aspect of worship. This is not

everywhere; there are some places where they did. But there are so many different kinds of people out there. Every corner of the world there are different kinds of people.

So, what I got into it for, is I wanted to reverse that in any way I can. And probably the place I didn't want to go at all, the place that least interesting me was Native America; least interesting. I was not interested. Send me away on a ship somewhere. Send me to Africa, India somewhere. This is where I ended up. This is where God put me.

I didn't know I was going into what's considered partially anthropological. I didn't know. I had to learn the meaning of the word at the school I was going to. I had to even look up the definition this morning to get it exactly down, or one of the definitions that exist out there. But I know my first month or two here, that [Deloria] book was sitting in the bathroom and I read that, and he wasn't just addressing the diggers— the physical —he was addressing people like me going around with recorders.

That's just fine. I mean, you're not digging up bones. You're not digging up village sites and taking part in that sacrilegious kind of behavior that's justified by academic philosophies. You're studying music. You can't go wrong when you study music, especially if you can tap the language of the music. What are these songs saying? What do they represent?

A lot of us Native American musicians, we like to fuse these musics together, because we can find the traditional beat in contemporary music and vice versa. We know how to bring about thoughts and philosophies utilizing the English language and the contemporary forms of music. You see the young people doing it today with the elements of hip-hop; rap, you know, rapping about how it is to be a Lakota.

So music... you just can't go wrong, because if there's anything that's universal, it's music. I tried to bring about my ideals in a song that I wanted to sing in the church. And when I look at this song I wrote, to me it's like, "Man, I wrote myself a gospel hymn." But maybe it's a hymn nobody wants to hear. But it speaks of my relationship with Jesus Christ, and I'm not trying to push it on anybody else, but how the Lord tells me to do things.

You can't mess with somebody's music, you know; you just can't. But at the same time we can't be totally tolerant when it comes to young people and the kind of music they're listening to now, man. We have to guide them. If you've got a young man listening to 50 Cent and he's talking about bling-bling and he's talking about doing these degrading acts to women, you've gotta remind this young man, "Hey, wait a minute now. You come from a family unit. In the *tiospaye*, in the extended family, there are a lot of women folk. First of all, would you allow it if some other young man saw your women in that way? If the response is no, then why do you have to listen to this and be influenced by it, and go victimize another family's women?"

But getting back to the song that I wrote, the opening, the first chorus, not the first chorus, but the first verse is (and it's kinda set to an old-school country kind of rhythm), and it says:

Oh the Lord has many children; they come from many nations.
They make the path so hard; they make the journey long.
But that don't bother me, 'cause I believe.

And that where, again, I just take the human elements out of my relationship with Jesus Christ, you know, because as human beings we're so arrogant to the point where we're gonna try to confirm to them when they do have a relationship with Jesus Christ and how that relationship should be. I'm sorry, that's too bold for me. Like they say, "The Lord works in mysterious ways." So those personal relationships are just that. They develop, they grow. Jesus is the captain of that.

So, any time we come in the church, we have all this diversity of what the people bring with them in the church, and the wisest and the best leaders will be in tune with every one of his followers. It's hard enough work to get somebody to come to church, but once you get them there, how are you gonna keep them there, without deviating from the scripture? And people of color, when they come together, there are still things that they don't tell the pastor, that they don't bring to the church, but there are still things from their cultures that they hang onto, that they don't wanna see exploited or talked about in offensive ways.

When I come to church, it's understood that I come to pray, I come to take part in the singing. I don't need to sit there and have somebody deliver me a sermon about how I'm not there yet because I haven't given up the Sundance, I haven't given up the sweat lodge, I haven't given up singing these Lakota songs.

The languages and the music are what make a culture the culture, and if there's gonna be any fusion of this music or any collaboration, then it should be done in a good manner where it doesn't water down one or the other and turn it into the cheesiness. So sometimes I will put those *when we were studying music—(Lakota singing takes place here using vocables.)* Interspersed within my contemporary music you will find those kinds of elements. But I'm not the originator. It's been done before. It's just that it's my turn to stand up and say something.

So the kind of studying that you're doing is... I don't find it offensive at all. But if it is offensive to anybody, I would have to say it's the least offensive of anthropological studies, whether it's a different branch of it, it all comes out of the same tree. If that's offensive to anybody, then it's the least offensive. If somebody's offended by that, then I'd say, "Seek help as fast as you can 'cause you're just nitpicking things to death."

Prompt 4: *I can see where it could be offensive and this is how, because you're not the first person I interviewed (you're the first person I have clearance to use interviews), but you're not the first person I interviewed. I came here on an internship, that's when I first came here, probably the first year or so, and I went around places with my little recorder. Sometimes I interviewed white people that are around that knew things; sometimes I tried to go to people's houses, and I'll tell you, having that recorder, people aren't comfortable with it, because one woman in particular, her daughter said, "You can't have that on. Why are you here anyway?" And that woman in particular, what I know about her is she's been recorded a lot. Her words, her music, and I've been to her house, and I don't think she's with us any longer. I've been to her house, and for as much stuff there is out there using her words, her songs, she has nothing. And I paid her, and I didn't even get to record her. I had to run home and write what I remembered. I'm not gonna get to use that interview, but I have it all here (pointing to my heart). I know what she told me.*

That kind of thing is going on. And these are just people studying music. They're still exploiting it. So, no, it's not always innocent. What gets me is when I tell people, "I gotta pay Will," they're saying, "You're paying him how much?" The reason why is because people here have only so much, and what they have is treasure. To the white man it's treasure, because they can write a book about it, or me, I can continue my education because of it. There is something wrong about not paying the highest price you can think of or what you can afford. I think so.

I think so too, but I'll tell you what, it's all different man. We've seen a lot of incidents where people come in and they weasel their way into our hearts and they gain our trust, then they turn around and burn us. This particular lady you're talking about, I know who you're talking about and I love her dearly. For those who have recorded her, you know, there will be spiritual justice for her, because if they ripped her off and they're capitalizing off of her, then God will deal with that too, because she is one of the most trusting women (she was rather). But the payoff to me is that we have her stuff; it's recorded, it's down. I will use it in my classes and my students will benefit and will learn from her. She *wana wiconi ignake*, gave up her earthly life now, but her teachings will continue.

As far as people concerned about what you're paying me, you know, people are really busy bodies around here. There's so much poverty that people develop a lifestyle they call scheming. But the bottom line is, mind your own businessman. And become I'm a bit of a public figure, people like to weigh in, but there's nothing more cowardly than what I call a telephone tough guy. Oh, they're the toughest people on the phone; they talk smack, but what can you do when you see somebody face to face. If you can't measure up with the physical and spiritual presence and it makes you angry or it makes you scared, then that's not me; that's you.

I've worked hard to get where I am in life. What do I have to show for it? Nothing, materialistically. I'm in the same boat as a lot of my people, but I won't scheme off them, I won't exploit them, I don't compete with them. I'm just who I am. I wake up in the morning, give a prayer of thanks first of all that I woke up at all, and walk through the house. I look at my children, my grandchildren, these other young people at our house, I look at the other side of me, that woman that I married, and I check on them. They're all breathing and everything's good. I thank the Lord for just that morning right there. Every morning, every day.

What you were talking about is very, very true. People are always guarded about that, like you talked about this old lady's daughter. She's probably seen enough of that up to the point where she's guarded.

So we talk about these few bad apples that spoil it for the bunch of us as human beings. Somebody will come in and burn us, so next time we have our guard up. And maybe the one who's gonna come and really help us and really do us some good shows up, but no, we've already been burned and we're gonna put that on this person 'cause he's gonna eventually burn us too. When all that time he's not that kind of person. Which is why I'm sitting with you. I can feel your heart, and I know I can trust you. I've heard you speak about different things and I've heard the passion in your voice.

So I agree with you about these other scallywags, these poverty pimps, and these cultural pimps who go out and exploit these things only to put money in their own pockets because they have no honor and maybe they don't have any talent; these things that they can't do for themselves. It's sacrilegious to steal from other people's souls, whether they're living or dead. To steal what comes off their tongue, to steal what comes out of their heart and to manipulate it in a fashion where you have capital gain or fame.

In Lakota society, they view music and dance as gifts. You take the Sundance, for example, or the kettle dance. These dances are gifts to us to help us help each other and to help us heal. Some of these dances are healing dances. It's because of these dances that... The conservative religious mind wouldn't think of this stuff, but that's why I always say, whatever I'm saying, you can check it in the most knowledgeable of our elders who know Lakota culture or you can check it in the Bible. These songs also serve many different purposes. They can uplift somebody or help them cry; help them go through the grieving process.

To some degree, that kind of diminishes when we get into the powwow world. You have people competing for money, especially if there are singing contests. So I usually don't like that, but I don't make the rules. I go to powwows for the enjoyment of it, for the opportunity to sing, and every powwow offers day money, but they don't view it as paying the drums to come. This is how we honor this drum, because if these drummers

didn't come here, we'd have no music to dance to. So, in that respect they're still respecting the gift of song and dance.

When you look at other societies, there's just a total evil infiltration of these musics, of these song forms, of these dance forms purely meant for capital gain; taking things like the river dance, all that clogging around and stuff. I'm sure that came from a culture where maybe it was a social dance where maybe it was meant to enlighten the people and have more fun. But somebody found some value in it, some monetary value in it, and then it became a whole spectacle. You wonder if that steals away from the original intent of the dance.

So, I guess we could go on and on about that. There's a lot of variables, but it's important for our elders to put their knowledge down, whether it's in a book, because the spirit of the oral tradition, for the most part, is dead amongst our people; especially people who don't know our culture. The only ones it means something to is those of us who were raised as Lakota people. This woman you were talking about, other people, I can recall the words that they said, their stories, the relevant songs and all that. I recall them in my heart as fresh as if they just told them to me about an hour ago.

That's my responsibility; to also pass those on to somebody who's gonna be responsible and worthy enough to carry those things, because if we don't have that spirit of the oral tradition, all we have left is what technology can do for us. That lady you were talking about, if I want to hear her sing and remember her fondly, there are places I can go and get a hold of a CD that was recorded about her. There are different books and all that stuff.

So that's one advantage of technology, but to those who are out there and have ripped her off and are capitalizing off her, shame on you. I hope you make a good living that allows you to never have to come back here; because if you come back here then... Let's just leave that as a big ol' question mark. So for those who come here and did that to us, let's leave it as a question mark so they can wonder about what's gonna happen to them if they come back here. And that probably has nothing to do with scalping or killing, but people will get in their face.

Prompt 5: *They're never gonna quit coming and this is why. Cultural anthropologists are never gonna quit coming, because the culture evolves and everyone knows that. In 2017 the culture's just gonna be a little bit different. New songs are gonna be written. People are gonna have a different perspective on it than they did ten years ago or ten years from now. So they're never gonna quit coming because it's of interest; people are interested. They're never gonna quit coming until somebody says, "You can't come here any more." Then maybe they'll quit coming. They'll probably sneak on then; jump across the border or something.*

There are well-meaning people, and there are people with not so good intentions. Then there are people who might be well-meaning, and things turn bad. What I want you to talk about is, for me it was a growing process, that one story I shared with you. I was told to just go bring her a can of coffee. When she and her daughter told me what was going on, I did the best I could, and what I got for my money, to some other people, wasn't very much. "You paid that much for something you couldn't even record?" No, I can say that I talked to that woman, and she doesn't even know who I am. At the end of her life, she probably didn't even remember me or talking to me, because she's talked to so many of us.

But I was told just bring a can of coffee to people when you go. And what people had to share with me (and some people were willing to do it just for free), but should people be going around asking for things for free or for a can of coffee? Is there value beyond that? What I want to know is that; that's in the initial stages. And later on, to have these recordings or this interview, and then they like, "You know what? I can make money off of that." And these things are tempting— to get something for free or for a can of coffee, and then later on use it for money. Someone even told me with your thing just recently, "Oh, you have all these recordings of Will. Write a book." You know what, I can't write a book. Will said I can only use this for a certain purpose. They're saying these things, and you know that stuff's tempting. You and I have a legal contract, but some people, who just go around, they don't worry about contracts or whatever. So, I want you to talk about, if somebody was listening to this or reading these words, I want you to talk to them right now about, say they have good intentions, but how to avoid it going sour.

As human beings, if we want to further the cause of (people just say it so much it almost just cliché and cheesy) of world peace and global harmony; if we wanna truly reconcile as God's children, then what's of major importance to understand, that if you have gained the trust of somebody and then you have betrayed them, I'm sure that under the category of sin, that that would fit in there. You can no longer, just because of academic interest and scholarly minds, you can't use those things to justify the continued raping and stealing of what other people hold dear.

Like I said, I'm putting my own music out; I'm putting my own book out, because I want what I say to be heard. First of all, good luck trying to find somebody here to fit your needs, because most of our elders are going now, and those of us who have inherited this knowledge, we're really guarded man, we're really guarded. Oh, you'll find some people to talk to and they'll impress the beans outta you, they'll impress your wallet right out of you pocket and into their own, but they have betrayed their own teachings and their own people in a sense. So what you're gonna get is a watered down, almost prostituted kind of version of what the real thing is.

I don't mean to burst so many academic bubbles in one sitting, but our people have great fun with people who come to study us and interview us. It started way back in the time of this Father Buechel guy and Neihardt and William K. Powers and these guys.

They were coming out here interviewing and our people through the “moccasin telegraph” were telling each other, “Yeah, this guy wants to talk to you. If you talk to him he’ll give you some money. Just tell him anything.” So we had fun, just making up stuff and telling you guys and all that. If I had the mind to do it, I could make a pretty good, good living just going out there amongst the gullible population. That’s something you have to remember, because people are very guarded. They’ll tell you things that they think you want to hear because we know people are not writing for us. Whatever gain they get is gonna go in their bank accounts: it ain’t gonna do jack for us man.

Usually, for the people who believe this stuff, I mean you can take a can of coffee to certain people and they’re like, “What the heck’s wrong with you man. Go give it to an old person or something.” But if you’re looking at a family, and the wealthiest elder in that family is the one who knows, who has the information that you seek, that’s what makes them wealthy. And if you wanna gain their trust, and if you have the best interest in mind, you always come back to your best interest and your original idea. When you go to see that family, keep in mind that, yeah, there is poverty so I would take them a bag of groceries; a couple loaves of bread, some stew meat, or some vegetables; stuff that they like.

For me, when people come to see me, and they wanna bring offerings, you know, they might bring sage and tobacco because they know I use those things. I don’t smoke the tobacco, but I use them to make the prayer flags and all that stuff. Some people who know me in a cool way just bring me a can of chew, or they would bring me guitar strings, or they would bring me offerings of music, they would bring me books that they got something out of and they know I got a brain with a bunch of little “graboids” on it. I like to feed my mind. I Like to feed my spirit. So they bring me those kinds of things. There were times when people brought me money or people brought me food, and they helped me.

I have never been ripped off, except for maybe one time. I’m very guarded about it. In the case between me and you, I came here free of all that kind of thinking. But I will have to say honestly last night when me and [my wife] were talking, your name did come up. And she’s like, “Now tell me again what you and Joey are doing.” I said, “He’d doing a project for school and he’s interviewing me.” “He ain’t gonna write a book, is he?” “Naw, he ain’t gonna write a book, man.” I said, “We knew there were agreements and I have to approve of everything before it goes forth. Joey made it very clear that stuff is mine and I wouldn’t be doing this is I felt like my words and things were going to be taken to be capitalized on. The only one I wanna see get something out of this is I wanna see Joey succeed as a student. So it’s more like a teacher/student thing. He came to me for whatever reasons. I look at how I looked at him. He’s a spiritual little brother. He’s a student. I’m older than him. I’m an educator. It’s a school project. I want him to succeed.”

Unfortunately, a lot of people, those things you described, it has happened to them. But, a lot of people are gonna come here thinking they hit the mother load when all the while they find that (and they never realize it because they don't know the culture) that they just make fun of them. I mean, they just have fun with them; tell them anything because they believe anything. You know why do you think that when they go to powwows they ask the non-Natives to come out and dance under the guise that, "We're gonna honor you. Come down and dance with our people, you know"? Do that so we can laugh at them 'cause it's a form of entertainment. They don't have the rhythm down and it's not done in a racial way; it's just that, "Oh good, here come some of our white relatives. Let's have fun with them; make them dance. They look funny when they dance 'cause they don't have the groove, you know." But it doesn't hurt anybody. People learn about it.

I don't do anything unless I know what I'm doin', you know? I don't step out in that dance circle; I mean I wouldn't if I didn't have the rhythm. Because out on that dance circle, there's dignity out there; people carrying themselves with pride. But we like to laugh a lot, you know, so a lot of people become the victims of our jokes unknowingly.

A lot of the early academic writers, that's what they got, man. They got some good stuff, but then they got, "Just tell them anything, man; you'll get some money." A lot of families here are in need and a lot of people deal face up. You can trust them; especially if they trust you. If you get into that kind of a relationship, where you've made a relationship based on trust and likeability, why would you want to betray that? And even if you do, that's on you, and all you did was send blessings to the people that you ripped off, and that's cool.

But, a lot of my people here, they've become very gifted at knowing how to extract dollars out of walking ATMs—out of white people. I always say, "It's summer time. We're gonna be getting a lot of tourists." We have to find a way to capture that tourist dollar and put it into things like education or do some manmade lakes and stuff because we have to develop an economy here, because these tourists, that's the name for these human beings who like to go around and see things. I call them "tourists." It's almost tourist season. The tourists are coming. There are other Lakota out there who say, "Yeah, money's coming; the money's gonna be here soon." They drive those big buses and all that stuff. So they're looking at human beings as dollars with arms and legs, and their scheme for that day is probably gonna buy them a bag of weed or a hit of coc[a]ine or probably some alcohol.

What about the children? Oh, they'll give them some money and say, "Go to the store and get something to eat for yourself." And whatever that child is gonna get is probably gonna be soda pop packed full with sugar, potato chips packed full with grease, and all these preservatives and all this stuff. That's a bad scheme, man.

Then you've got another level of people who say, "These tourists are coming. I'm gonna try to make some beautiful beadwork and share a story with them." Then when the transaction is made the tourist walks away with something made by an authentic Lakota. Then the one who capitalized for that day will go back and say, "Ah, this is how much I made. What's going on in the house?" "Well, baby needs diapers; the baby needs milk. We're almost out of this; we're almost out of that. We need to put some of it on the electricity. We need to pay the phone bill."

So people have a really viable livelihood here and other people will prostitute themselves for the pure gain of money. Other people will share with the same intent of making some money, but this is how they survive. This is how I live now, until I go back to work. This has been the worst six months of my life. I started working when I was a young man, so I have that established work ethic.

So, as far as me and you are concerned, I don't let too many people this far into my life, you know. Not even my own people. There's just a very few people, but the people who I've let this far into my life, whether they be black, red, yellow, or white, because they all are different colors, and different tribes, different races, as far as I let them into my world, they've let me into their world, and thus their heart, and I guard that with a fierce intensity. I won't put a proverbial knife in their back.

It goes without saying, Joey, that I trust you and I trust that you're gonna do the right thing, but there are guys older than you with big ol' hefty pocketbooks that I wouldn't even let close to me. I wouldn't care if you waved five Benjamins at me and said, "Oh, Will." Keep it, man, because the trust isn't there, and the feeling of the spirits, like they say in the sixties, "The vibe just isn't there, man." You ain't got enough money in the world to buy me, man; you just don't.

It could be Bill Gates himself, and he'll say, "I'll make your world alright, Will, but just let me come into your Sundance and film it." And I'm like, "What are you, drunk? What are you, sitting too close to computers?" "Well, I'll make you a millionaire for life, Will. You'll never have to worry about money." And I'm like, "I'll make you dead for life if you just don't leave."

Because there are places that I won't go for no amount of money, because I can't take that with me and buy my way into paradise; whatever that paradise is after here. Money is not taken at the pearly gates; neither is MasterCard or Visas – they don't take those things. It's how you've lived your life as a human being. So if you've burned people, whether you know it or not, you're sinning, man.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. You want people to take advantage of you, con you and manipulate you and burn you? I don't do that to other people and I certainly don't appreciate if it's done to me. I'm very conservative about that; very conservative about that. It's just wrong to do that to other people.

So, like you said, they'll never stop coming. Well, until I die, I'll be here and I'll be keeping an eye out for them; and not just myself, but a lot of other people. And not just Lakota people, but the white members of our family, who we have brought into our hearts, and they know us too, and we protect them just as much as they protect us. I can identify amongst my own people who's most likely to rip you off. You can identify amongst your people who's most likely to rip us off. So, together we make our stand. We identify these people. We smell these rats out. We smell these weasels out, and we just protect each other.

I have friends who have a camp and every time they ask me to go up there and share things, I won't share a spirituality in the sense that I won't go into a sweat lodge with groups of people as a teaching thing or a Sundance or anything. I'll share anything in my culture, because I believe the *spiritual* part of our culture is *wakan*, it's valid, stamped approved by our Lord Himself, because there are other types of prayer out there that have failed to really spiritually enlighten people. So people of all colors come to us seeking spiritual help. We can't just say, "Well, this is just for us, the Lakota people." Then it's not sacred any more. So we have to be trusting like that.

So these people who do this, there are transactions. Sometimes there's money, sometimes there's guitar strings, sometimes it's clothes, sometimes it's a lot of food from the food bank. We bring it back, we know who in our community is most likely to be struggling and those people become the recipients of these things that we were able to get. They thank us and we say, "Don't thank us. It was just a good day. Some friends gave us some stuff, and so we passed it out." It's taking care of people.

Prompt 6: *I can remember on my way out here, I can easily remember my first days out here, and you can just kind of, unlike most parts of the world, when you come here you can just live a regular American life if you want to or you can try to see what's out there. And my job was to see what's out here really. I had a choice of just staying here at this church and pretending around and just going to the store like I usually do, or going out in the districts, going out to see people, sometimes putting myself in bad situations, sometimes messing up.*

But, I come from a place where, or from an educational background where the word "Indian" is the wrong word. Indians are in India. People use it all the time here. When people hear me say Indian that don't know it's like, "What are you doing? Don't you know?" But use that word here all the time, and where I'm from the word "s-q-u-a-w" is a completely respectful word. I didn't know that people don't use that word here. "Don't use that word," I got told. I went through a lot just to be able to function without offending someone or without looking like an idiot. I don't know, maybe I still do, but at least I know in some ways not to.

Do you have any advise for anyone who's just getting into their car to come out here? Or they got sent out here by their professor, "This is where you need to go." And they

don't have any idea. As far as they're concerned, they've never been to the rez before, they've never been anywhere. They're not even really interested, maybe, like I wasn't.

Where I'm from everyone says they're Native. I don't have any Native blood in me, but a lot of people in Arkansas do, and they'll tell you, "Well, my great-grandmother was this." This is black people and white people both. I felt left out when I was in school. Everyone talked about their ethnicity; everybody had something in them that was Native, but I didn't.

So, as far as I was concerned, you guys were almost a lost people. You guys were just kinda melted into everyone else around and just part of people's genealogies, not really... And then I come out, and this is where God put me. And like I'm getting into this car, and I end up getting out of my car here, and man, I have to go through a lot just to get where I am. Do you have any advice for people like that?

Well, first of all, because of the inter-racial mingling and all that, there are tribes that exist, Native American tribes that exist today, that for every intent and purpose look like white people, but they're Native people. There are tribes of people who all the tribal members are black, but they know their songs and dances and all their stuff.

But, yeah, of course, everybody wants to be Indian now man, 'cause it's legal for us to own casinos. So there again, it's the mind of the capitalist working.

But, first of all, if you're gonna come out here, if you're being sent by a professor, I would think that that professor has equipped you well and I would hope that that professor is talking about things from a firsthand account; that he's not passing on information that was academically obtained. You're never gonna get the true essence of a person, or how they are today, how they function in society, how they conduct themselves, by reading academically. There's no "How To" guide. You did the best possible thing; you came here.

But words of advice for those out there, "Don't come here with any preconceived notions." Yeah, mind your Ps and Qs, man. You don't wanna be using that "s" word around here, that "s-q-u-a-w" word, 'cause that'll get you slapped in the face by some of these women around here. That's a cuss word to them. It's not even a Lakota word.

We around here, there's so many words for us, but we know we're not Indians because we don't come from India. We're not American Indians; those are the real Indians that immigrate over to this country. We use things, because that's the terminology out there. I use the term "Native Americans." It means they were here; they were the first ones here. But the words that we have for ourselves, like I said, I'm an Oglala Lakota. That's the specific nation I come from. My father was a *Sicangu* Lakota. He was never around so I honored my mother's people, so I'm Oglala Lakota and that's what I like to be

called. I don't know what other people like to be called. If all else fails just call me by my name or something, you know.

But recognize the colors, and acknowledge the colors, but come in here and take your time. Try to get to know people. Don't get involved in any inter-family squabbles or anything like that, because anytime you come in and you're non-Native and you side with one crew or the other, or even though you think you're on the winning side, you as the non-Native will lose. Because, if there are conflicts and all that, the ones who you sided with, their opponents won't even look at the ones they're feuding with; they'll look at you.

So try to just mind your own business and don't cross any lines. You know, we're not a primitive people. We're just as evolved as the next people, but we do have values in all that. And if we're adamant about something, don't try to change us, or don't do the opposite of what we're adamant about; especially when it comes to our children. If we feel like our children aren't ready to be put under a microscope and all that; there will come day when they'll be ready, but if we tell you, "Don't talk to our children," we mean don't talk to our children. If we say, "Don't do this," we mean don't do this.

When you come here, you come as a guest. Just like when I leave here, when I'm in other states, I'm a guest there. I mind my Ps and Qs over there. That's just having a mutual respect for other people's communities.

So yeah, number one, don't come with any preconceived notions; don't come out of pure nosiness, and if you're coming from the anthropologist's view and intend to conduct yourself as an anthropologist, you're on your own. But don't come in here and think you're working with primitive subjects.

I just realized that all the times when I'm talking like this, I'm leaving some things open-aided; I'm dropping some innuendoes of violence or something, you know. I know that people might get that feeling. But when I say you'll be dealt with, what I'm saying is that you'll be escorted to the border lines and, "See you later." But if you come in here... This is a dangerous place, man; this is a dangerous place. When I'm talking about the violence you might face, I'm not necessarily talking about you might face it from me, but there are families out there, there are people out there... shoot, now we have gangs out here. You never know, if you're dealing with somebody strung out on meth, coc[aïne], or drunk outta their mind, and they feel like you've wronged them, they will go and take care of you.

So first of all, try to find some people you cant trust here; people who are respected. Or if there is a certain person that people despise and they don't like, try to go meet that person, because chances are that the person who stands up hard in the community; he stands up hard against drug dealing, so all the drug dealers and their relatives hate him; he stands up against gang-banging so all the gang-bangers and their relatives hate him.

There are a lot of guys here just stay too well liked because of the stands they take, and those are my kind of guys, man; those are the kind of brothers and sisters that I stand with, because I think we give a truer representation of what being Lakota is; it's not being poor, it's not being pitiful. It's being able to take care of yourself and to take care of others, and having the means to do so.

The college usually tries to keep a list of people that you can go to as resources, so try to come to the institutions first if you're coming here sent from a church or a Bible college. Come to one of the churches first. If you're just out here for academic reasons, you don't have a good place to start, then go to the college. But take your time here. Be careful. Don't assume that everybody's happy-go-lucky, you know. You need to hook up with somebody who knows what's going on in their community.

But don't come to take anything, man. You're dealing with a people who've already had so much taken from them; illegally and sacrilegiously and all this stuff. The best advice I can give is come correct. Come in a good way and you'll be received in a good way. But if you come and you've got an ulterior motive, you're not gonna last long. People around here aren't that stupid. If you come out here with the intent to con somebody, chances are our local talented con artists will get you before you get them. You come in here in a nice car, you'll be walking out "Chevrolegs," man; broke than heck, you know. Every community has it; it's not just Native Americans. It happens in the inner-city hoods; it happens wherever there's poverty. You have to have been living in poverty to understand poverty. You have to have some kind of psychological background of people who live in poverty; how they're gonna conduct themselves.

If you come here looking for beauty, then you'll find that too. If you come here looking for good people, you'll find that too. It's whatever's in your heart before you come here. Make sure you know what's in your heart before you come here. Like I said, what's your move? Think about that; plan that. What's your first move? Who are you gonna hook up with? Is it relevant to whatever your agenda is?

The conditions are the same for me if I go out there. But there's nothing of interest out there that I don't have here, or that I can't drive to. I don't have to study white people. I see them. If I want to know something about them, I'll talk to them, but they don't really have nothing that interests me. I don't mean that in a negative way, I mean, I like people that come from different cultures. If you've got a different language to share, or a different song, or different stories that other people don't get but that mean something to you, chances are I'll get what you're talking about.

I just don't want us all as people to lose what we hold dear to us. Life isn't worth living unless there's a deeper, richer quality of it that doesn't have anything to do with money and social status. But that's just me; a guy who has managed to survive forty-six years here. I know there's a younger generation that's coming. They might have their own

ideas of what things are, but I hope they learn well and they take it to a better place than we do.

I'm sorry about the digressions. I can't ever answer direct questions. I'm a victim of my own tongue.

Prompt 7: *I was at the powwow the other day and I notice now when I go to powwows I'm there for more social reasons. I go there to talk to people, see people I know; sometimes just to walk around and think. I remember when I used to go when I first came here and I really was recording, I never went back and listened to those recordings. It was mostly just that I was here as an intern and that's what I was supposed to do, record things. Or if there was something that was of interest to me, I'd bring out my camera. Boy, I hated bringing out my camera; I really felt like an outsider when I did that. I don't even know what camera... I was using my dad's video camera. I never looked at any of that stuff again, but I was just doing it to get the experience doing it.*

And I remember I used to just really pay a lot of attention to all that stuff. And I was there the other day and I realized, I don't do that anymore; I miss that. I wish could just come and sit down and watch. I think I need to get back to that, but I know in my early days, when I had all that equipment and I had a camera and I had a video camera and I had a different recorder, but there were times I had to turn it off, and there were times...

I know this one time when I was out to the very first thing I went to (event) was the Kicking Bear Wacipi, out to Manderson, and I didn't have any bad intentions; I was just lazy. I sat behind a particular drum group, I'm not gonna say who they are, I don't think I know anybody who actually are in that drum group, but I know when I hear the name of their drum group I know who they are, I've heard their sound, I know their sound even, but I sat behind them, and I was right there so I mostly recorded their stuff because I was sitting right by them (I don't even know where that recording is), but when I came a month later to the big powwow here in town in August, the Oglala Nation Powwow, man they took notice of me and I think they realized, "This guy, he sat behind us at Manderson. Here he is again." And they were saying things that almost, because I didn't have any bad intentions, I was kind of in a dream world, I didn't even know what they were trying to say, but what I got out of it reflecting back, they didn't want me recording them any more. They must have thought I was capitalizing.

And then when I went to a Sundance later on, I couldn't turn on a recording. There are things like this, there are times when you have your equipment. I just want you to talk a little bit about these people when they come with equipment. I just want you to talk about the respect.

Exactly. Especially at pow-wows. There's been developed a protocol where you should ask if you can record them. If there are singers you want to record, ask them. Give them

that common courtesy, and if they say that it's okay, then it's okay. But ask. If it's okay, it's okay. The same thing if you're taking pictures. Whatever your subject matter is ASK, because people are suspicious, because it's happened before.

You know, there was a picture of a little Lakota boy taken and used on a rock album's album cover, you know, and in their video, they burned the picture of the little boy. And in our culture, when somebody dies, we take all their personal effects, and sometimes there are pictures, and we burn them. And this traumatized this little boy's family. This was years ago. It was just horrible. So, we're highly suspicious people, because we're not museum displays; we're not animals in a freakin' zoo that you come and do documentaries about, and do this. We're human beings.

The best advice that I can give there is to mind your Ps and Qs. There are things going on. The announcer will tell you, "No recording. No cameras." Everybody adheres to that, even us. But we record songs too. Our people record songs, because they want to learn those songs. The other drum groups are fine with that, but nobody wants to go into a Native American store and all of a sudden find their group's name on a compilation CD when they weren't asked, you know. So, ask and then state your intentions, and then be true to your word, 'cause like I said, if you rip somebody off, that's on you, and spiritually the blessings will go to them. They don't know they've been victimized by you.

I hope people will start learning to stop coming here in a shady manner; stop coming here in a shady way.

Interview X

June 13, 2007 (12:45 PM)

Music (1hr 32min)

Prompt 1: *Will, I guess what I want you to clarify or just talk about is the different kinds of music there is among your people or just on the rez. I'm sure it's infinite as far as people here listen to so many different kinds of things, but I mean the music that's unique to the Lakota people.*

Okay. Music in Lakota society is very unique and it can be easily divided into the secular and non-secular categories. In regards to the secular types of music or what we would call social music, in the old days I remember we would have what we would call social dances, and here at these dances there would be a number of songs.

Some of the songs have no words all the way through the songs and just have these series of meaningless syllables or what can be termed as vocables; that's just sounds like wey-ha, yah-hey, ay-ha. On its own it means nothing until the melody is applied and then it's (sung) wey-ha, yah-hey, ay-ha. And that's the context of some of the songs. But even they don't have any words they still have meaning. Most of the songs do have words, and those songs do have specific meanings.

In the social dance aspect, you have what you call *naslohan waci*, which means the round dance. These are just social songs that are done and the people would gather in a circle and do a sideways step kind of dance. It's also at times referred to as a friendship dance. Whenever we have guests that come over and we want to help them experience what it is to be dancing.

We have other kinds of songs called *mastincala olowan*, which is *mastincala* is a rabbit. The rabbit dance song is for the rabbit dance, and these dances are done in couples. There's kind of a protocol about how single people can hold hands and how married people can hold hands.

We also have what they call the owl dance, which is kind of a takeoff on the old time square dance amongst the people of the Caucasian persuasion. The owl dance utilizes various calls that the dancers respond to; changing partners, moving in different directions, dancing forward, dancing backwards and whatnot.

Like you said, the choices are infinite, because we have songs to specifically honor various people; like young people for the achievements they have made, whether it would be graduating from high school or college or just living an exemplary life, there are songs to honor them. There are also songs to honor the veterans. I think about every war that there has been, there has been a song made for it to honor the warriors

or the veterans that participated. Then we have songs to honor the children, the grandchildren, the grandparents.

For every occasion in life, even in death, there are songs that we have to memorialize people, and some of these songs, as a singer, you're to know appropriate songs. And then you're also to know the voice style in which to sing it. For example, for songs that are sung to memorialize people, they are usually very sad sounding songs, however the singers manipulate their voices. So these songs are sad, and what that does is it promotes grieving, to help the people grieve; help them through their grieving process. Then along with that they also have encouragement songs, which will lift the people's hearts and things like that.

When we get into the powwow scene, it's really, for a singer, it's a great deal of responsibility, because you have all these categories and different styles of dancing, like traditional men's style. You have to sing songs that are appropriate to the traditional man dancer, so this is where we see a lot of the songs with words; also for the women's traditional dancers. When you're singing for women they have to be songs about women; when you're singing about men, they have to be songs about men. Some of the dances we've adopted, like the jingle dress dance and the grass dance, they have appropriate songs too. The fancy dance songs, that's where you find more of the songs that don't have words. They're a faster beat, more dramatic type of singing, and a really aggressive type of singing.

Along with singing, there's also different drum beats that go with the songs. Some are straight beats, some are double beats, some are what they call the parade march, just a steady, slow beat. That's how some of the honoring songs are, or what they call penny songs. They use that steady, slow beat while the people who are being honored are walked around the circle so the rest of the people can come acknowledge them and show a sign of respect and shake their hands. Then it turns into a double beat and the whole procession turns into a *naslohan* style of dancing, round dance.

In the olden times they had waking up in the morning songs. If you were the owner of a wild horse there was a song for that. There were lullabies and there are love songs and there are just songs upon songs.

All of these songs, when we get into the ceremonial part of it, or the non-secular category, we have to take into consideration—and I won't call it a recent development, because it's been something that started somewhere else, but our people kinda embraced it—and that's the Native American Church. These songs are done with a water drum at a very, very fast beat and a totally different voice stylings than your conventional Lakota singing.

There's also the different type of instrumentation, like the rattle. Rattles and gourds and things like that can exist in the Native American church where it's a Native American

ceremony, which utilizes the taking of the plant peyote. Back in the sixties the hippies used to take it to get high, but in the Native American aspect, they consider that a medicine. A lot of the old people take that daily, and they take it at these tipi meetings, at these meetings of the Native American Church, or the peyote religion. They've incorporated the Bible into these teachings so in this form of worship you hear a lot of music that pertains specifically to Jesus Christ. They are songs that normally are not sung in public, but there have been recordings made of them.

To me, I don't really subscribe to the Native American Church way of life. I do go occasionally, but for me it's just about the music. The music is very soothing to me. When I need to relax at home, I have a number of Native American Church CDs, and I will just burn a little sage and I will put this music on and it helps me to reflect; it helps me to calm down; it has a really healing aspect to it. Most all the songs do.

Another type of music that is not widely practiced, save for a few, is the *ciyotanka*, or what they call the flute. It's made out of a tree branch. It always has at the head of it a bird to honor the loon. This particular kind of music is very beautiful. It's played in different kinds of notes; lingering notes, short abrupt notes, and that's the instrumentation involved there.

We also have another kind of *ciyotanka*, which is an eagle bone whistle. You see them at the powwows, but just specific people are given the honor of carrying them. Where they're more prominent at is at the Sundance. The Sundance ceremonies are not to be recorded, either audio or visually.

So now we get into the non-secular aspect and some of the ceremonies. There's the usage of gourds. There's the *Yuwipi* ceremony. Again, there are specific kinds of songs that are to be sung there. Sometimes the drum beat in different types of songs will tell you what that song is for; what it's being used for; why it's being sung. The drum beat will tell you how you're supposed to dance. There are *Hanbleceya* songs, which is crying for a vision. These songs are not danced to; they're part of the ceremony. Then we have prayer songs; songs that I guess would serve to be the equivalent to a worship song, but nonetheless they're done for this specific kind of ceremony.

Then we have the Sundance songs. The dancers accompany the music, but it's hard to put it in terms of musical arrangements, how these instruments go. It's just these ceremonies and these songs are what they are. They were handed down; they even predate the coming of the immigrants and their new age religion known as Christianity. For all intent and purpose, it's still kinda new to us because we had a way of prayer. In any event, when these songs are sung at the Sundance, it's really hard to say that the Sundancers accompany the music because they are blowing their whistles as a part of their dance.

So, as you said, and you said it best, when you talk about Native American music, it's really infinite. And as I said, there's songs for just about every occasion in life, like when you're gonna sing a song to honor the veterans, again it depends on which veteran is being honored what type of song you're gonna sing. A lot of people equate our present day veterans to the *akicita* and *tokala* societies that existed back then. They were more or less warrior societies. *Akicita* these days is meant to mean "soldiers." *Tokala* is like a band of warriors who are protectors and they're very organized. So there is a difference between *tokala* songs and *akicita* songs.

For the purposes of this interview, I think I've offered the tip of the iceberg because it would take all day. For me it's just kinda difficult to sit here and talk about it. I think I would better serve the purpose if I had a hand drum with me and can give those different examples of music, but then I don't know how you would put that down on paper in black and white. Suffice it to say, there are hundreds upon hundreds of songs with new songs with new songs being made daily. The younger singers come up with a style they call contemporary singing; the drumbeat is much more fast and aggressive. They sing a lot of songs that most of the people don't know what they mean, but they're known to these specific singers. It's the older singers who usually take care of the old style of singing and know the appropriate songs, and they know when these songs are to be sung and all that.

I guess that's about as much as I can say. I know it sounded like just a rambling on of digression after digression, but it's really hard to put it all in a nutshell, when it's so broad.

Prompt 2: *Okay, this might seem a little humorous to you because you've seen my own attempts at it and failures, but say I was just getting in a car in this situation again and I was coming out here to study music, how do I get started to begin to understand? I just come out here, open my car door, I step onto the rez and I want to study music.*

As we talked about the other day, it's important that you connect with people who know the resources of their community; they know who a singer is or who a dancer is. In our particular case, first you met [my brother-in-law], then you met me. If your heart, your intent is true and you carry it through, then you'll find yourself successful. To meet up with a singer who will sit and take the time to teach you about the different nuances, as you know, when we were going through the music we did some stuff with hand drums and then with the big drum.

I have to say that you were a good student, and I still feel that there's a lot of potential in you. You caught on very, very fast. It's rare to find non-Indians who can catch on very, very fast. In the same sense, this music can be learned. There have been multitudes of people who are not Native who have learned these songs who have been brought into Lakota families, so they've learned the ceremonies and things like that.

That's the thing that's kinda hard to trust, 'cause we now know that some of these people go out and have Sundances in their communities and they charge money. That's what makes it hard to trust 'cause you don't want people making money off those kinds of things.

Nonetheless, it's all about making the right connections in the community and finding somebody who is stable who has a commitment to keep engagements and honor the music and to hand it over with trust in the hopes that those people who learn this stuff will be responsible with it and will respect it just as much as we do. Again, I know it's a reiteration, but I can't stress it enough, it's just that you make the right connections here. Trust goes both ways. It has to be someone that you trust as well; somebody who's not gonna burn you. That's just how you do it.

A lot of people, when they come, they would come to the college, Piya Wiconi, in Kyle. The people over there are very well-versed in the natural resources that we have. I mean by the people who serve as resources about who you can go to learn this or to learn that, whatever subject matter that you're interested in. In many cases, people can be fortunate because they run into people who know a whole lot about their culture; who not only have expertise in their culture, but who live in accordance with that culture. It just depends on who you first hook up with.

Prompt 3: *Can you talk about honor and respect specifically in the area of music? I know you just mentioned the words honor and respect, and we talked about that a little bit yesterday, but if I learn this music or someone learns this music or even has a CD of this music... I've heard people make fun of the music, white and Native sometimes. So, please talk about honor and respect.*

When you look at it through Lakota eyes where we are taught in regards to our own traditional music forms that songs and dances are a gift and they're to be respected because the songs have healing aspects as do the dances. Now, that same principle can be transferred over into other types of music whether it be gospel or R&B or the blues or whatever. It depends on what you do with the music. If you really want to give music honor, then your music, the honor that comes in music is that it's practical as well as functional. It can heal. It can produce tears. It can produce feelings of pride. It can lift your spirit. In many cases there are messages within the songs.

So, when you honor the music, it's like they say, when you have the ability to sing, you're being gifted by God. And if you abuse that gift, then you're not gonna be very good at it. The chances are He'll take it away from you. When you talk about respect and honor, you look at the aspect of the drum that a group of men will sing around.

The group that I sing with, the name of our drum (it's not the name of our group), the name of our drum is *Oyate Teca*, which means the new generation or young people. When you look at the group of men around it, we're certainly not young. The drum's

name is *Oyate Teca*, and the duties that were given to the men of that drum were to preserve and maintain our Lakota culture. We were never to turn away anybody who wants to come and learn how to sing, whether they be one year old or a hundred years old.

We teach them the responsibility of taking care of that drum because we believe that that drum has within it a spirit and so many places, the drum keepers have a responsibility to take care of that drum; to remember, even when they are eating food, they will put a little bit of food aside to not only honor the spirits of those who have left us, but the spirit of that drum. So that drum in many Lakota households where the drum keeper lives, they have a special place for that drum.

That drum is treated with respect. When you're sitting down around the drum you don't sit back and recline and put your feet on that drum. That will get you a chewing out faster than you know because people will chastise you for that and will ask you, "Would you put your feet on your grandmother? Would you put your feet on your grandfather?" Many times the tobacco is put on that drum. Prayer is said every time that drum is set up, even before the first song is sung. Some guys would *azilya* smudge it with sweet grass or sage.

This drum is given all the consideration that a human being is given. If there's a storm that broke out, while everybody is grabbing the children and the old people, there are those who are grabbing these drums to make sure they don't get hurt and that they are kept safe. Around that drum there are certain areas of social conversation that you don't want to go into. So that drum serves as a catalyst for good conduct for respectful behavior. It's therapy.

I've known fellow teachers of this culture who take the so-called worst of the worst of these students, the kind of students that nobody wants to deal with because they're a hand full, and bring them around that drum. And that drum therapy really transforms these children into respectful children. They learn how to work together. The more and more that they involve themselves with this drum therapy, the more it transforms them to the classroom. They carry that kind of respectful behavior in there.

When you look at these aspects of Lakota music and methodologies going on, the singers really honor each other. First of all, because the singers first and foremost are the ones who are keeping the culture alive, because it's their responsibility to know all these many songs that go with all these many different aspects of Lakota culture.

So, the songs are of honor. The singers show their respect and that honor and respect is a mutual thing in that the people honor these singers and they respect them. So there's a lot in life that is taught and that is preserved and maintained through the very act of singing.

When we talk about singing it can either be done as a group or as an individual. It can be done with a drum or it can be done without the drum. The best of the best of the singers, I guess, will know how to make their own songs if they were called upon to do so. The best of the singers can sing in any type of conditions – where there's a sound system, where there's not a sound system; where they don't even have a drum, where they can just stand and sing and bring that kind of strength and stuff.

I don't know if I answered your question directly, but I tried my best to cover what I can.

Prompt 4: *I remember, it was probably about two years ago, maybe even getting close to three, when I first came here, I looked at a website, and on that website there were some Native people condemning a white drum group or white drum groups they've seen or heard of, and what it said on there, and I'm not quoting it exactly, but the gist of it was that white people have no business, non-Native people have no business being anywhere near a drum, that we wouldn't understand. I don't know what they were really talking about exactly, what caused them to put this on a website, but it angered me because then I was like, well, it made me want to go get everybody's guitars on the rez, that's what it made me want to do. "Well, give me your guitars then and you can have your drum." That's the thinking. It angered me. It was like, "Well, you wouldn't understand this, so take your drum and I'll take my guitar."*

I know what you're talking about and it's people like that that we have to be strong in dealing with and make sure that they don't get under our skin, so to speak, because all that stuff is just very shallow pettiness.

When I look at my own *tiospaye*, my extended family, my sisters made the choice to marry white guys, for lack of a better word, you know. So I have nieces and nephews and grandchildren who are blonde-haired, blue-eyed. Some of them come from the African-American. I've got about every nationality within my *tiospaye*. So when those young ones come up to me, first of all, the birthright as a Lakota, whatever Lakota blood they have, entitle them to sit at a drum, entitle them to participate in these ceremonies.

As human beings, whether they don't have a drop of Native blood in them, it's in their heart how they choose to be. If they want to honor the songs and learn the songs, because there have been numerous non-Natives who have come here and showed the appropriate respect and all that, and they were adopted into one family or another, and they're about as white as white can be, but nobody sees them as that when they're sitting at a drum. That speaks of wellness as relatives. I've seen that many times. When somebody tries to make a comment, even against white people, and even our own people will stand up and say, "Well, give them back their clothes and their houses and all that." And I'm like, you know, that's uncalled for.

So I even tell you, Joey, you'd have a heck of a time getting my guitar. That's uncalled for. We can't let people take us to that point. That's petty, that's shallowness. For me, if

somebody wants to look at this culture, and that's where I have to really choose my words carefully and say it's not my culture per say, it's a culture I was born into, it's a culture that I know, it's a way of life.

So if somebody wants to invest their time and their spirit into looking into this and learning it, and if it enhances their lives, then to me it's just a confirmation that I live a good way of life, especially when devout Christians come and they learn and participate in the non-secular aspects and they too feel the presence of God there. It promotes racial healing, it promotes more of a global humanistic unity, and we more or less validate each other in that way. I respect non-Natives who come here with a good heart, but I'm also not so naïve to think that there are some here, as we've discussed before, to capitalize and to rip us off.

In all disciplines of music, in all genres of music, if you don't respect that music and you don't honor it, you're not gonna be very good at it; you're gonna be cheezy-wheezy man. Nobody's gonna feel it and then no one's gonna wanna be around it.

I've seen powwows where there's, for lack of a better word, white people dancing out there and white drum groups. If they're good at it, well, that somewhat impresses me. That's kind of an honor, respect, you know. I'd rather be honored by that than by a bunch of drunken fans up in the stands wearing turkey feathers and inappropriate face paint and doing the tomahawk chop. So if they're good at it, and they respect it, and they hold it dearly, then to me they're like diplomats for our people. They are people who got to know us, and they can help dispel a lot of the stereotypes and racial attitudes about us. Like I said, as long as they respect it. But the only problem is that, how loving and how open can we be? The best we can do is be guarded about it.

We're living in a world where the freedom of religion act was made specifically for Lakota people, but it's a law that pertains to all people. So maybe that's a gift that we gave to the people of the United States, that they can utilize that very same law to protect their way of life. But sadly the Federal Government, by law, will send a white man to prison for harvesting peyote when we, by law, are authorized to harvest it. The Federal Government will, by law, send a white man to prison for having eagle feathers in their possession, but, by law, we're authorized to do it. So how do you balance that? Because there are some who have come amongst us who were gifted and were honored with eagle feathers, especially veterans or people who have become dear, dear friends to specific families.

You have to remember, no matter where we go, especially in Native American communities, the majority of the people that we're dealing with are people with wounded souls; they're harboring resentments, they're harboring racial attitudes, hate, all this stuff, so they have a tendency to nit-pick and it must be a very sad way to live. They even nit-pick their own people about how we sing, whether we're singing right, whether

we're singing wrong; all this stuff. And that, I believe, can go into the waste can of shallowness and pettiness.

So I encourage you to not pick up other people's emotional junk and carry it for them. Don't take ownership of their junk; let them walk with it. That's their junk. Just walk with what's in your hear and at the very least/most, when you walk away from negative people like that, say a prayer for them, because it must be really hard to be that kind of person where you wake up and nit-pick things. You must not get to sleep because of all these things that bother you and you don't have the emotional capability to say, "Oh, well" and move on and search for your own happiness and for your own whatever makes you sedate, whatever makes you feel that peace.

As I said, as long as people are respecting each other's uniqueness, whatever they have; for example, I respect this church. I would protect this church and my pastor (who coincidentally is my brother-in-law). When I come in this church and there are prayers going on, I act accordingly. It would upset me to have one of my own people to come in here and say, "Oh, you know, this is the white man's way of prayer," and start causing a ruckus. Just like I would not appreciate it if I was sitting at a Sundance and a white guy comes in and says, "Aw, this is just paganistic." That's just wrong. That's infringing upon what each race holds sacred to them or special to them.

The ultimate of respect is to, even if you don't understand something, to take the time to learn it and increase your understanding. When you increase your understanding then you increase the chances of peace more and more. But sometimes you do have to be tough-skinned. We see a lot of junk in this world so pick and choose your battles carefully. But if something is bothering you to the point where it exasperates you, just let it go. Let it go and let God deal with it, because there are a lot of mysteries that a lot of people can't comprehend and it just drives them nuts. When you run into things like that, it's just best to put it in God's hands, and in time you will understand. You will understand, because our God graces us like that.

I hope that answers your question.

Prompt 5: *I find myself in an interesting position, and one I'm grateful for. I'm not only a music learner here—any musician should actually continue to be a music learner, but particularly me, as I have a lot of learning to do in a lot of areas of my musicianship—but I'm also a music teacher. My knowledge of music is one that is general; I don't excel in any specific area. My excellence, so to speak, is that I know a lot about a little bit about this and a little bit about that, and a little bit about this, and I can do a little bit of this and a little bit of that. That's what I bring into the music classroom, and my goal is that I can bring all these areas of knowledge to my students in many different areas.*

And I don't know if you believe me or not, but I remember things that you've taught me, and I remember specific songs, especially we learned a couple of hand game songs

and one in particular was fairly easy. At my school we've got kids who play hand games and I've been for the past couple of years a hand games sponsor. I went in at first as a hand games sponsor, who knew nothing about hand games, but now I play and I enjoy it.

I knew at the time, you know, this is what I know, I mean, I know certain things and there are times when I go, "What am I gonna do today?" Or we're playing musical chairs and I gotta do something so I broke into a hand game song one time. And the kids, I know they've heard that song before, but some of them haven't. And they wanted me to teach it to them, but I'm guarded about any knowledge I have about any Native, especially Lakota things, I'm guarded about it because I was told by some people, "You have nothing to teach in that area." But my belief is that that school, or any school here, should be a forum... any classroom should be a forum where a student can learn about their culture, even if it's from somebody who knows just a little bit. That should be part of the curriculum, if that person has some knowledge at all that's legitimate. So, I don't go around telling people that sometimes that goes on in my classroom.

I guess I want you to talk about what is okay for a non-Native teacher [to teach] in music in particular.

There used to be a time in my life, and it still sneaks up when people try to hit me with it, because I have green eyes and brown hair and when I was growing up they used to call me a white boy, so I'd go hang out with the white boys and they used to call me dog-eater and wagon-burner, and I really had no place to hang out—the safest place for me was to hang out with the old people.

So, I lived an interesting life when all these guys who were darker than me, who speak fluent Lakota, when somebody is called upon to sing a certain song, or say a prayer or something, and they're holding back, they don't wanna do it. A lot of times, I'm the one that's called upon.

And when it comes down to a classroom, to me it depends on who's willing to do it. Whatever you know, you bring to the table. So if somebody, somewhere, has problems with a white guy teaching Indian kids hand game songs, then I would encourage them, "Well, step up to the plate then. Get your drum out and you teach these children." The only place where I'm never guarded about the music is with the children, because this music belongs to them. We want them to learn it and to walk with it.

When I first started teaching, my repertoire of songs were many, not as many as there are now, but everything I had, all the bit of knowledge I had inside of me, I passed on to these kids, to these children. When we're competing with the negative elements of hip-hop and whatever's the trend and all this stuff, then that's hard to compete with. So by any means necessary, if we can sit down with children and teach them a song then

we've already planted that seed within them, that they're Lakota; or even if they're not Lakota, that we planted that seed that later on can promote racial harmony.

So, there are those who do, and those who don't, but don't complain about those who do. So again, I would put that in the wastebasket of shallowness and pettiness, and encourage you not to walk with somebody else's junk.

The only thing that really, really counts here my friend, is what's happening in that classroom; your personal relationship with these children, if they trust you then they're gonna look up to you and they're gonna depend on you. Your task is to teach them with compassion and love and great concern, and eventually you'll see that you'll respect your students and you'll depend on them too. You teach them something, and if they embrace it that's their success.

Other people would get jealous about how well you can... it used to happen to me all the time; I'd walk into the lunchroom and children from all grade levels were saying, "Hi, Will! S'up Will?" And I'm not the stuck up kind of guy, whether I'm a professional or not, I acknowledge my students. I remember in a staff meeting they were saying, "We've gotta find a way to have those kids stop hollering whenever Will comes around." And I'm like, "What are you, drunk? Don't you know how much that means to these children when a teacher acknowledges their presence, who returns their greetings? Regardless if we're in the lunchroom— there's all kinds of noise in there anyway." "Well they do it when they pass you in the hallway." And I'm like, "Same, same!"

That's all that counts with me is the relationship that I made with my students. And if somebody else don't have that kind of relationship, don't put that junk on me. I can't teach you how to have that kind of relationship. My students know I love them. I'm trying to teach them about how to be a Lakota and the aspects of what being Lakota is not. Drinking is not Lakota. For young men to be beating on women— that's not Lakota. Fighting over what color snot rag you carry, that's not Lakota. It's being a good human being and if somebody does something wrong to you, how to take that Pipe and forgive that person and pray for that person, or even if you don't have a Pipe or a Bible, how to stand alone. And the music teaches that stuff.

So I don't care if they're learning from a CD or a DVD or by whatever. To me, what's important is that they're learning. So as you can see, there are things about my people that irk me. Sometimes their shallowness, it's just a sign of not being emotionally well; not being at peace irks me and it agitates me to the point where I figure, "I don't need this junk, man." And sometimes the turning of the other cheek means you just let them ramble on, man, because everybody living in this world today, we're all descendants of the Tower of Babel, so it's ingrained with us that there are times when some of us will just babble on and on, and you just gotta let the babblers babble. Try to get away from them where you don't have to hear them babble and just stick with what you know,

because if nobody else is doing it then—who's gonna do it? If you let them bother you and you pull away from it then those kids aren't gonna have anybody.

So, develop that tough skin. When you're a follower and you're a believer and you're not the type of person who wants to sit on their butt and preach all day; when you wanna go out there and be a part of what's happening out there, then you just have to be strong and know that there are gonna be detractors out there who will try to pull you down. I imagine that it's like that living amongst the white people, the black people, yellow people, red people— it doesn't matter, especially where there's poverty. Everybody's looking for the next person they wanna pull down and drag into the gutter with them.

It's never gonna be me, and it's never gonna be the people I teach, and I don't mean that in an egotistical way. I work to empower people so they too will be equipped to resist the urgings of other people to be down in the gutter with them. I've reached a certain level in my life and I'm reaching down pulling up other Lakota people to get to that level, and when they get there and I see the potential in somebody to go higher, I'll get under them and tell them, "Take a step on me. Get to that higher place." That's how it has to be.

My life is already more than half way over, so who's gonna be the next batch of people to walk this world? We need to start teaching them now and empowering them now. I'm already looking for people to take my place. I know who they are and they're strong young people. It's not my legacy; I'm just a part of somebody else's legacy. I think I spoke about that before. I'm a part of somebody else's legacy and that legacy just needs to continue.

You've gotta focus your heart, focus your mind, and focus that place where all feelings come from, and learn to ascertain if criticism is constructive or if it's just shallow. You can learn from everything; even from negative people who sit there and spout off endlessly. My thing has always been if there's something that needs to be done, give it to me, I'll do it. That's a song of the *tokala*—if there is something difficult that needs to be done, give it to me.

I hope that answers your question. It's kind of a loaded question so you got a loaded answer. You can pick through it later and, believe it or not, it will make sense.

Prompt 6: *There were a lot of loaded questions today, and this one's pretty loaded too, but I'm trying to cover all of this area of music in one session (which maybe is not the best of things). I know you have interest in this area and knowledge in this area, because I've read some of your writings, but I want you to talk about non-Native music, particularly rock and roll, country, and hip-hop, and the influence they've had on reservation culture, negative and positive, history as much as you want to talk about it, anything that you want to talk about in those areas.*

Well, music, just like all people, also plays an intricate roll in Lakota society, being that we live in these two worlds. Some music is very empowering and makes you feel happy, and some music you listen to, like country music, is very popular among the older people. I like country music too because I was raised with that and we used to have a band and we'd go and perform it.

But there are songs, when people hear, they say, "That's a good beer-drinking song right there." So it might actually promote that activity of going out and getting some cold ones and playing these country songs. But a lot of it has to do with feelings that bring back these emotions. You try to recapture those emotions.

Rock and roll, like music from Bob Seger and Credence Clearwater Revival is just priceless here and it just spans the generations for whatever reasons. I dig it, because I like the beat, I like the guitar, I like all that stuff. And you see that young people turn on to it too. So, it's an inter-generational kind of thing.

A lot of people have talent here, but they have no format in which to promote their music. But I've never seen anything as influential as the negative side of hip-hop. I'm always careful to acknowledge that there is a negative side of hip-hop, and there is a positive side. Just like back in the day of Bob Dylan and his protest music inspired a nation to get up off their butts and to do things.

Hip-hop came about because there was a need for people to know about the plight of the young black people in the inner cities, what they were going through. Then it gravitated towards something negative where now it's just garbage for the ears or turns into pornography for the ears. You look at these young guys who are influenced by the negative side of it and it's just a shame. They don't know anything about their own Lakota culture. They don't know how to mourn; they don't know how to honor. They have a different idea of what respect and honor is.

This mentality of being a gang has really hurt communities nationwide because it means it's taught these young men that they don't know... that they have to run in packs, like a pack of dogs. It doesn't teach them how to stand on their own. So, it's breeding a nation of cowards who find their only strength in the bottle or in the bong or in the needle or in their group of gang members. It's a real pitiful life to live. It's kinda like the modern day equivalent of the KKK—the Ku Klux Klan—a bunch of cowards hiding behind sheets and stuff, intimidating people. It steals from the very essence of these people.

So I kinda more gravitate towards young hip-hop artists who've got something to say; who use the genre to put out positive types of music and all this stuff.

As people, as human beings, we seem to lack the understanding of what we allow to come into the various channels of our heart, our *nagi*, our spirit. You've gotta be very careful about what you ingest. You take alcohol through the mouth and it's gonna have

an affect on you. You take negative music into your ears and it's gonna have an affect on you. So whatever kind of music you do listen to, it does have an effect on you.

I couldn't remember what I wrote about, and I don't know exactly what you want me to get at, but that's just my take on music and that's why as a musician, I started out playing drums for our band my brother had and just wanted to play guitar. I don't know, I don't have a lick of knowledge of notes or anything, but I would watch people play and I would just emulate and all I do is just play rhythm. So, I'm not a very good musician. Even at my age I'd love to play lead guitar; I'd love to learn how to read notes and everything.

But I played a lot of gospel, a lot of country, a lot of rock. I got tired of picking up my guitar and singing the same ol' songs, so I just started writing my own songs. Every musical influence I've ever had, that's how I write in the spirit, because we've had other Native American artists like Buddy Red Bow, Floyd Westerman, Exit, Red Bone. You know, Red Bone reached the pinnacle of success in mainstream music society. You still hear their songs today. "Come and Get Your Love" is one of the most well known songs and people don't realize that this is a Native American band. Then other people like Bob Marley, of course, John Lennon, Bob Dylan, all these other people. So it's the music that you're influenced by. And the ideals, the concept of putting ideals and social positive messages into your songs, it's a valuable thing to have.

So, my friend, I don't know what you wanted me to get at, because I can't remember what I wrote about, man.

It wasn't about that, it was just you saying whatever you wanted to. I just said I knew you had knowledge because I read your writing. I can't remember exactly everything that was in it. I hope we find that article.

I hope we do too because now you've got my curiosity running wild. But music has just always been a part of my life, and I hope it's a part of my death. But there's all kinds of music being jammed wherever I go, and I don't really care how they do it, man, I just don't want it to be no big deal.

Prompt 7: *I can't let this interview go without at least having you talk about Bob Marley a little bit; his influence on you. There's gotta be influence, because it kinda comes out sometimes.*

Bob Marley, man. I think the master of... sometimes you listen to his music and it is as timely today as it was in his time. The more you learn about the man, the more you have a deep respect for him. In the beginning, he sang a lot of songs, man, and people looked at Bob Marley and they looked at him as, you know, this ol' Rasta guy, man, you know. They smoke a lot of that herbal remedy, mon, they smoke a lot of weed, and his songs are about weed, and it was a source of contention with me and my mother, when

I would listen to Bob Marley. She's like, "People told me that that's all about drugs." And I'm like, "No, it's not; it's not. Some of it comes from the Bible. Some of it comes from spiritual experiences. Some of it comes from social experiences and all this stuff."

My older brother loved Bob Marley. My whole family, my children, my sisters, brothers, we all turn on to him and even my cousins and all this stuff because we like his messages. One song in particular called "Who the Cap Fits" is a cool song. It has a mellow groove and it talks about people who stab you behind the back. It talks about people wanting to persecute you and crucify you just because you got something positive to say. And it also encourages you in that way, to just let them, like water off a duck's back.

I'm a big fan of his music even though he no longer lives. I like that his children are carrying on and they're doing their own type of fusion with their father's music. They're doing their own songs. They're fusing it with the good elements of hip-hop and all this stuff, but their music is the same—encouraging us as human beings to be more aware and more compassionate and better global citizens. It's also a very cultural kind of groove, you know, with elements of the drum and all that stuff.

So, my particular style of writing, although my genre of music isn't reggae, I can't play those kinds of rifts and those beats, I write my music in the spirit of Bob Marley, and also Buddy Red Bow and Floyd Westerman who write music that educates people, that touches that consciousness and all that stuff.

So, my drug days and my alcohol days are far, far behind me, but this music just—it motivates me, it inspires me, and knowing the kind of man that Bob Marley was... you know, Bob Marley, they tried to assassinate him, man. They tried to use him as a political pawn, but he brought his music to bring these two opposing political forces together, and urged them to do what's best for the people of his homeland. And there was a mysticism about him that wasn't drug induced—that was natural. When he was on stage at one point, just going off into his music and bringing it up, there was a lightning bolt that struck behind him. And they say that the day he died there was a prominence of lightning.

So there was something about this man, and we can still see it in other people. And if other people would recognize things they would see it; that God reaches out to us in physical ways to let us know that He's around, He's involved, as long as we're involved in Him. In my life, there are things that I see that I don't tell everybody because they'll probably think I'm nuts and stuff like that.

But there are a lot of Lakota people who go through things and see miraculous things every day, especially when they're being broken hearted and everything, something will happen. An eagle will come visit them, or a hawk.

So, Bob Marley, just his style of writing, not the genre itself, but his ability to take the spirituality that manifest itself through this man. So I like his music and I honor it. It's obvious when you look at the man. I've got my Rasta colored bracelet on and my Bob Marley shirt. There's a fusion of Lakota and who he was and all that because I write in the same spirit as he does. I'm just a fan, just like the guy who goes around wearing a Tupac shirt, he's a fan of that man's music. I'm a fan of Bob Marley, so I represent the guy that I'm a fan of, if not every other day, then every day. I just like his music, and I'm just one amongst millions.

Bob Marley's music will never die; it will never be outdated, it's always very timely. To think he wrote these songs back in the sixties and seventies and eighties. He died in eighty-three, but his songs, you listen to them, they're just as timely today. Serious. Serious, spiritual music that speaks of strength— speaks of faith.

I don't know what else to say about it. I could probably go deeper, but there's probably nobody that will understand except a Bob Marley fan.

Prompt 8: *In the late 20th century and the first part of this century, there was a push to bring in elements by some particular men, one in particular was this guy Richard Twiss, and Gerry Yellowhawk, and some others to bring more traditional style of music into the church. When I came here, it was more or less to look at that, and of course my focus became a little bit more vast than that, and that's just become an aspect of what I think about or consider. But, one thing about this church as long as I remember there's always been a drum in the back, but it doesn't ever come out; it rarely makes it out to the front room because there are people here who would be offended. Talk about that some.*

First of all, Richard Twiss is a controversial figure to be sure. He doesn't actually bother me all that much. I don't have a problem with him. Gerry Yellowhawk is a dear, dear friend of mine. I catch the spirit of what they're trying to do and that's acknowledging Lakota people, even in the prayers of worship, and they have a task before them. However, I respectfully disagree with things of that nature, especially if they hurt people's feelings, then it's just not worth it.

I think bringing a drum into the church, if the congregation is cool with it, then that's okay. But if there's somebody who's bothered by it and they came here to pray, then just don't do that to them. Just like if I was at a Sundance and somebody wanted to integrate gospel music there, it's not the time or the place. I know that the Catholic Church has made it a habit of bringing the drum in and all that, and other people will say that's cool, but it's just like taking something out of context to me and trying to mix these things.

I've got an open mind. I can roll with just about anything. I see the coolness in it. But when you look at other people who are young in their spirituality or who are stuck in a

rut with their spirituality, I don't want to jeopardize that to them. I believe that when you mix these things you disrespect both of them. It waters down both sides of them. Drum in church is not as exhilarating as a drum at Sundance.

If everybody's cool with it... if you can develop a song on the drum about Jesus and have that message be felt by everybody, then you've got something going there. When we get to where we're going, when we're done with this earthly life, I imagine we're gonna be turned onto all kinds of music. The bottom line is that I just think that things are probably better left the way they are for now. Like I said, there will probably be a time and a place for those kinds of things.

I know guys like Gerry and guys like Richard and a number of other guys who finally realized that it was okay to be Lakota so they dance in the powwows, and on their outfits you find representations of their beliefs; you see the sign of the cross or just elements like that. But they don't compromise their beliefs. I believe that anybody who embraces who they are and walks with all these things are some of the strongest people. They're probably some of the most made fun of and persecuted people as well, but I believe they're the most stable people around.

If the example was that the church was trying to oppress my culture, I wouldn't bring my drum to church, but I'll sit right outside the church and sing me some good ol' songs to let them know that it's never gonna happen. They tried it before. They tried to oppress our culture. They outlawed our music and our dances and our language, but we just went out into the hills and we did these things. They were not too successful in driving it out.

The saddest thing is to see a Lakota person throw away their whole identity and heritage and culture, because they were fooled by whoever taught them that you can't have these things and be a follower of Jesus. That's balderdash. That's hypocrisy at its highest level and it goes back to, well, that's just a humanistic view. You might not accept these people, but it's guaranteed that the Lord accepts them. And the Lord accepts them, and the Lord will move in their life, and the Lord will implant in their minds and in their hearts what's cool and what ain't. It's just a matter of good and evil. So, they throw away a lot of things that are good, because they label them evil. It's just because they don't understand them.

I've been there; done that. I was happy coming here and just being one of the congregation, every now and then get up with a guitar and sing some old school hymns and all that. But then when I was asked to do something else and bring a bit of the culture in here and it got people upset and everything, I was just, "I don't need to bring this drum in here and have it insulted or have me being offended because people are offended by me because I'm a Lakota." But I put that offensive nature aside and said, "You know what, there are people here who are really upset man, and they didn't come here to be upset. So I'll just bow out of the picture here gracefully. I won't come and sit

in the church and listen to that kind of garbage about, 'You can't do this; you can't do that. You can't sing these songs. If you're gonna come to church it's either the church or go back to your Sundance if you still believe in those Indian ways.' " I'm liable to walk up to some preacher and stuff a Bible in his mouth, because that ain't what the Bible teaches—the spiritual side.

So as you can see, my buttons can be pushed. My buttons get pushed easily because there's a much, much bigger picture that needs to be focused on and that's the hopeless sinners, the ones that nobody gives a darn about, nobody's out there trying to communicate with these guys. These guys' souls are in jeopardy, but because they're drunks or drug dealers or gang bangers, nobody wants to go give them that opportunity to turn their life around. They want to stick with petty and shallow issues about mixing of religion, this and that. It's nit-picking, man, and it's a major slap in the face to the Lord. We get stuck in these little ideological ruts.

So, that's my take on that, and like I said, maybe by now Richard has established a church and has a following of people who come in and have hymns and then sing songs. I think this is one of those areas where, Joey, you just shouldn't take my word for it, because there are other men, my oldest brother in particular, he is a great, great follower of Christ and he can probably say things better than I can.

This is one of those areas where I have to bow out humbly and say there are more knowledgeable men than me who can talk about this, specifically Gerry Yellowhawk. If you had the means to sit and talk with him, I think he would give you more knowledge about this. It's just enough for me to tell you that however my brother feels about his life as a Christian and as a Lakota, however Gerry feels about his life as a Christian and as a Lakota, that I have learned from them and support their views 100%, because my own heart carries those things too.

If they would just give Lakota people a chance, those who have turned their lives over to Christ or who have turned their life completely over to the Sacred Pipe, then you're dealing with people who have a faith so strong that nothing can sway it— nothing. These are the people who are equipped to be spiritual leaders. When all the crap hits the fan, we'll see who runs and who stands. I'm one of those followers of Jesus who says, "I'm ready to go do whatever you want me to do." Remember there's gonna be a war; there's gonna be a spiritual war—Armageddon they call it. The Bible speaks of these things. Who's gonna cut and run on the Lord, or who's gonna stand and go with the Lord all the way.

So there are those things to be considered. Everything else is just water under the bridge, petty stuff, stuff that school girls argue about on the playground. That's how I put that stuff. I'm too darn old to be messing around with anything else, man.

Prompt 9: *Well, I've talked to Gerry before and I've interviewed him, and I haven't talked to Richard but I've read his things, or some of them anyway, and people of like mind. I don't know how fully or completely I agree with their particular view. I've heard people criticize them and I've heard people who were somewhere in the middle. There are people who are all over on the spectrum.*

I do know one thing. I brought two books, and they're on the table. One's a hymnal and one's a Bible. This book is not part of that. It goes around as baggage. When I say, "This book..." this hymnal is not part of the gospel message. It's what people in a particular culture had to say using their particular style of music. There's nothing that makes this music any more appropriate in church than any other style of music that there is. There is nothing. In fact, I hardly identify with this particular style; this is a kind of older hymnal and I struggle to learn the songs in here because people know these songs and I have a more contemporary background, and I struggle with these songs because I have to learn them and they're in this style that's in a way foreign to me. So I have to learn them.

But what I envision here, and when I asked you to come here and teach guitar, and teach Lakota music on top of it, what I envisioned here was children who could learn in both styles of music and express themselves both ways. What I've seen is flawed is that what we both had to agree on, was pretty much religious music on the guitar and secular music if we were gonna have any Lakota music at all, and it seemed flawed to me, but that was the best we [could do]. And that attempt of mine kinda failed, because it just didn't get off the ground. The kids weren't coming in the numbers that I had hoped and they weren't putting in the effort that I hoped, so it didn't work out as well as I wish.

What I see, in talking with Gerry when I did, we envision a church or churches here where people can express themselves in more of a Lakota way in the music itself. That's happening in other places in this world. It's not just something that's completely foreign. For instance, there's Kiowa music; I've got a whole CD of Kiowa hymns. It doesn't sound anything like this. It doesn't sound anything like the hymns that are in this hymnal. It sounds Native, and they're talking about God. I've even heard you've written music like that. So I'd like you to talk a little bit more on this issue.

Well, my attempts at writing songs from a Christian viewpoint as a Lakota will probably never be heard because they would look at them and they would judge them harshly. But, just like you said, that book has nothing to do with this book. There're parts of this book that don't have anything to do with this book either.

There're parts of a lot of things in life that don't have anything to do with this book. Manifest Destiny has nothing to do with this book, eminent domain, the Constitution of the United States, the Papal Bulls from the Catholic Church, this need for us to be patriotic to a degree of stupidity; all of that has nothing to do with this book. You could

stack up piles of history books around this book and this book would tower over them, because even these history books are filled with lies, glamorized lies.

The most valuable part of this book, *Wowapi Wakan*, this holy book, is when Jesus himself speaks; it's when the Lord Himself speaks. That's the very meat and value of this book. Racial hatred, racial judgments, none of that are a part of this book. The solutions and the reasons why things are the way they are can be found in this book. That's why the attempts I've made are just my own personal gospel songs per say, because regardless of all the junk in the world, regardless of all the pettiness and shallowness, religious and political shallowness and pettiness, I still believe in the Lord. Regardless of whether I myself get persecuted, if hate mongers beat me down, if they beat me to death, the last thing I'm gonna say is Jesus is Lord, even if it's my own people that are doing it, because I see Jesus as a Lakota—that's how He lets me see Him.

There's a lot of stuff that is not part of this book, but if we wanna get right with this book, then we have to be spiritually correct and have the spiritual mind before going into this book. There should be a ceremony before going into reading the book rather than just as a human being opening it up. There should be a prayer, man, "I'm going into this book here." If it was me from a Lakota way, if I was at home and I wanted to get something from this book, something to help me to be strong or help me to help other people in a better way, I would probably smudge this book with sage smoke. I would probably sing a song, crying out for *Tunkasila* to *o'makiyayo*, to help me. "I'm gonna go into your words here and my prayer is that you'll find me within your words, that you'll help me within your words." And then I would open this book, because like you say, that was a really powerful insight that you said there and that's why I have trust in you because I see the potential in you.

That was really profound to put these two books together and say that one has nothing to do with this one. That's a book, that's a component over there. This is the meat. This is the book. Every other book, even though you can stack them higher than this book, they'll never be higher than this book.

The same can be said about that Sacred Pipe. There's one Pipe that came that's still being kept. There're a lot of other pipes, but they don't measure up to that one Pipe. Even without all these things and without those things, without these pews and that pulpit, these are just components. This is not God here; this is not Jesus, that cross, this building, that Sundance tree, that Pipe. None of those things are Him. Those are just components that he left us with to help us enhance our worship. So you take away all that, all you have in this world is what you came in with and that's nothing—just your heart and your spirit. If you're reduced to that, all you have to do is put a rock in front of you or a stick, or even a piece of red cloth or something, and that will be your altar; that will be that point where you're gonna worship; even if it's a song.

My songs, well, one song in particular, the song “I Believe” is about stuff like that. It kinda talks about the negative things that go on in church. But in spite of all that, I still believe. There’s that encouragement in there, there’s a line in the song where it says,

“He walks with all the races;
all of us He graces;
Raise your hand with me,
Say, “I believe.”

That’s to let everybody know that we acknowledge all of you in this church, you’re all a part of this family, you’re all unique in your own self.

What I’ve learned is once you’ve hit your knees in despair or because you want something else and you say to the Lord, “Come into my heart because I’m just blowing it here. I need you, Lord.” Once you say that, it’s a done deal; He’s in your heart. He accepts you. You have to decide whether or not you accepted him. You have to decide whether or not you’re gonna work on this relationship with Him.

It’s not up to human beings to say, “You know, you say you’ve accepted the Lord, but you don’t act like you’ve accepted the Lord.” Man, you’re infringing on somebody’s relationship there. You’re stepping on somebody’s toes. You need to get your toes out of there. Don’t you worry about someone else’s relationship with the Lord, because that person and the Lord are doing just fine; they’re moving at a pace and a speed that the Lord is dictating.

So when you come in there with your funkiness you’re just meddling. And that’s just me, because I had to cut out the middleman. I had to cut out the preacher man and the medicine man to get closer to the Lord. I had to cut out all human beings. I had to cut out the ceremonial aspects of it, the spiritual components of it, the physical component, put all that away and stand naked in front of the Lord and that’s how I know my Lord.

I hope that will suffice.

Prompt 10: *The only thing I’ll ask is if you have anything to add about music. We’ve come to the end.*

Music. If you’re blessed with voice, use that blessing, use your gift. If you’re blessed with dance, any kind of ability to have people gravitate towards you, use that. Use that music to enrich other people’s lives, to empower them. If they want to learn then share it with them. Music, this book (*the Bible*) talks about music, dance, things like that, in a way that I understand that just enriches me. So in everything in life, the Lord has got us covered here.

So music is, like they say, it can be used to calm the beast's soul, and while you've got that beast calmed down you can enrich that beast and empower that beast and turn that beast around so that beast becomes something else that's not to be feared and something you can depend on.

Music is so many things to so many people. It enhances our worshiping. Some of us can make a livelihood from it and if we respect it and we honor it and we keep it pure, we've got a strong ally that can help us bring other people to understanding and to save souls. Music can save a life, man. There're stories of people who were just gonna commit suicide but this one song came on that just touched them some kind of way and it saved their life. There are people who were in the bowels of loneliness and they heard a song and they recalled a good time they had with somebody they lost and that helped them to live and to honor this person that they lost.

Music is so important in the very fabric of mankind. All I can say is rock on, or reggae on, or gospel on, whatever it is that you do, and it's good, and you know it's good, and it's pure. Keep going, man, keep the music alive, honor the music, and give it to somebody else so they can walk with it long after you're gone too.

At this point, all I can say is *hecetulo*, what I've said is true.

Interview XI

June 19, 2007 (12:19 PM)

Researcher Interviewed by the Subject (1hr 5min)

Prompt 1: *The first question I want to ask, Joey, is before you came here, and later when you knew that you were going to come here, did you come with any preconceived notions about how things were going to be? And by saying that, is there anything that you thought that you would find here in Lakota country, and actually coming here, did it change any of those preconceived notions or were your initial thoughts pretty right on about what you would find when you came here?*

I had no idea what I'd find here. I grew up in a place where a lot of people at my school were both black and white, but then it came down to "Well, what are you really? What's your nationality?" a lot of them would have Native American in them, and I didn't have that. I knew very few people, in fact I don't know if I knew anybody, that looked the part of [a] Native American that identified themselves as such. There was one girl that went to college [with me], she always filled out "Native American" when she filled out things, but most everyone I know filled out something else, black or white or what have you whenever it came to identifying their race.

But I felt left out; I always did. Where I came from, because of this, there was very little racism towards Native Americans. In fact, I didn't really know that kind of thing really existed as far as racism towards Native Americans until I came out here. To me, you were a people that were more of a legend than something that was real to me. I knew you guys existed... but at the same time you guys were more mythical than real.

Coming out here—what changed—things change every day since I've been out here. I'm about to complete my third year here. I get something new every day—almost. But as far as what has changed, it was just having an awareness of this place. This place just wasn't something that was real to me.

I remember looking this place up, and all I got on the internet first was Whiteclay, Nebraska. That was not a very good first impression of this place, what was on the internet. It was talking about prostitution and alcoholism and just what an awful place that was. So when I first typed in Pine Ridge on the internet, that was what came up, and I don't know if I even did much research beyond that.

So, I was coming out here completely blank almost—not knowing what would be here and so I wasn't really surprised at all. In fact, I think in my imagination, when I thought about going into Pine Ridge, I thought there would be a little more economic development. That's one thing that surprised me—that there wasn't. I don't know if that answers your question.

Prompt 2: *I guess what I'm talking about is the stereotypes that are in place for the Lakota people, for example, is that the men are shiftless and lazy, the women are good for no more than just having babies, and that we're all drunks, we don't have any established work ethics. I guess I'm just very interested in how you feel about those stereotypes, and do you see those stereotypes being the majority or the minority—based on your views.*

Like I said, those stereotypes weren't already in me, so I didn't have them. I think that people who grew up out here outside of the reservation—the whites that grow-up in the border towns—I think they have those stereotypes engrained already in them. Sometimes when I talk to them, I get blown-away by it.

I know the issues, in part anyway, behind what's going on here as far as the lack of jobs. I know that there's Tribal politics that stand in the way; I know there are other things that stand in the way. I know that outsiders stand in the way; I've experienced that myself. So I know that there are things that stand in the way of jobs being produced here.

I also know the value of the family here, and I know why people stick-around here even though there are no jobs, because without their families they have nothing; I know that. This is where their family is, this is where they're from, so they're gonna be here. And if there are no jobs, then how can they be working, if there really are no jobs here?

As far as the stereotypes, no, I've not found them to be true. As far as myself, I'm a person who's what I would call a lazy person. I see people here a lot more hard working than I could ever imagine being. As far as the women being good for nothing but making babies, I never even heard that one before, until just now. I don't see that one being true either. If I told you otherwise, I'd expect you to run me out of here!

Prompt 3: *I hear you. Well, you mentioned Tribal politics, so let's turn it up a notch and talk about national politics, the concept of America the Great and whatnot. If we look at the proven track record in regards to the governmental relationships between the United States of America and, again, I'll use the Oglala Lakota people as the example.*

We look at the many agreements made, we look at the many obligations that one or another entity has given their word to fulfill, specifically the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. This was the treaty to end all treaties as far as armed conflicts between our two nations. The 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty says that for as long as the water flows and the grass grows that as long as the Lakota people lived in peace, that the government will assist them by terms of the treaty, not with the proverbial handouts, but with adequate health care, quality education, shelter, and the means in which to see that the Lakota people live a productive life.

We now know that only one side is living up to their bargains. But when we look at this treaty as being a legal, binding contract between these two nations, do you feel that there is still, even in this time, for reparations to be made either to the Lakota Nation or are you of a mindset that that's history, and history is better left in the past?

The mindset that I have is that these treaties should be honored. My struggle is that I know that it's not gonna happen. It's frustrating to me because this is where I'm at. I live here and the struggles here, in a lot of ways but not all the ways but in some ways for sure, have become my struggles too—it's become my frustration too.

There is no quality health care. My friends and people I consider family here, I go to the hospital with them and the hospital, just because I'm there, if I'm in the emergency room, I have to almost take an active role in the emergency room. I've never seen anything like that in my life. Because I'm there, I'm almost part of the hospital staff because they're just under-manned or whatever. If you're there with a family member or a friend, then you'd better be taking care of those needs until someone can get to you, because there are other people there too.

Not only was I taken aback by the lack of manpower—people to work there—but [also,] the lack of what I would say quality. There are some good doctors that don't have bedside manners – this guy took the cake. He was yelling around, and these are people that are in the emergency room, these are patients in the emergency room that he's yelling around at. (I think I mentioned this in another interview.) It was just frustrating that probably what I saw was a good day, because I've heard a lot worse.

I know about the schools inside. I'm in what's considered one of the worst or the worst school here. I know the fact that what we get at that school, and this is not in any way to put down my colleagues—I mean this for myself too—is that we get some of the people that nobody else wants. That includes me. I was not trained to be a teacher, and I'm having to go through that now. And it opened up an opportunity for me, and I'm thankful to the Lord for that because of the way it is I have this opportunity. But, am I the most qualified for the job? Is there a lot better? I'm not the most qualified, and there is a lot better.

I'm going through what I would say “on the job training.” There are a lot of people who are doing that at my school—I can see that. In the teaching profession that's true a lot of times, but most of the school, I think, is going through that—people are learning right there how to deal with certain things.

This year we didn't have the money to pay a lot of the workers. I teach music. I don't have the things I need to teach music. I'm already frustrated for next year, because I don't know what I'm going to do. I don't have the things I need.

So, education and health are two things you mentioned, and those are two things that the government's not providing at its best; I can say that.

Prompt 4: *I guess, then, it's safe to ascertain that the government, in regards to the treaty, has not kept their end of the bargain, and in fact, have compounded this interest in Native America with more or less spreading their special brand of joy and whatever (I say this facetiously) with the institution of the No Child Left Behind Act, which places just outrageous benchmarks on the educational institutions across the land, but does not give them the resources with which to fulfill the accomplishments they would need to do to achieve these benchmarks.*

In looking at a government to government relationship on an international level, do you feel that other countries should take a cautionary approach when entering into agreements with America based on their actions, their past history with Native America, or is that history with Native America kind of a moot point; do you feel that nobody should base their decisions on that kind of history?

I know it's kind of a loaded question, but...

I do a lot of thinking on this because I feel that the government to government relationship between the United States government and the Tribal governments—and particularly this one—should be that of a state to state. They should be looked at as an international relationship, while at the same time allowing the citizens here to remain citizens of the United States, but the governments should see each other as international. That way the people here would receive all the rights that belong to United States citizens, as they should because they were the original people here.

But also they should have... this word sovereignty gets thrown around and I don't think it's real. I don't think it's real. I've seen [that] it's only real when it works in the U.S. government's favor. Anything, any other way, and it's not real. So I can see it's not real.

As far as other countries being cautious with relationships with the United States, I don't know. I think you guys are a separate issue. I think those agreements were not made in good faith. The people who were making them—I don't know this for sure—but I feel the people who were making those agreements never had in mind to keep those agreements. Their idea was to find any way to trick the Indigenous people of this continent into just being extinct. If they couldn't wipe you out militarily, then [they would] just trick you. But it backfired on them because throwing you on a reservation, I feel, in a lot of ways only makes you stronger.

Now I think they're trying to get rid of that, I didn't realize that was still going on, but I have a friend of mine who teaches with me. She's part of the Yankton Sioux Tribe. They don't have a reservation. That was just wiped out within the last ten years or so. She's very loud about trying to tell people around here that it's coming. "They're moving

west.” That’s how she talks. “They’re moving west.” They’re trying to get rid of this and then... it’s just a way of assimilating. I think now that they realize that they can’t wipe out this race unless they assimilate completely, let’s just try to... I don’t know if that’s everyone’s thinking, but I believe that behind it all this is the thinking. I don’t know the individuals behind these kinds of things. I feel kind of stupid even saying these things.

Yes, but you’re on the right track because a lot of it is either government policy driven or there are things to gain, both through the natural resources of what lies under the grounds of the reservations, so there’s kind of like a capitalist motivation that’s also driving these moves to terminate the status of the reservation.

I agree with you that sovereignty doesn’t exist in full here. It’s just a word that is tossed around. I think it’s more or less to appease Native Americans so they feel that they have a foundation to build on.

Prompt 5: *Let’s change directions a little bit. I want to talk about... what do you think is more prevalent, not only in Native American societies today but even on a national scale, if it was a multiple choice (which it is), which is more prevalent today; is spirituality or the concept of God more prevalent in the nation today? Is it politics and the policies that they institute? Or is it pure, hard-core capitalism? Those are the three answers which [you are] to pick from. I would also ask you to kind of expound a little bit on your answer as to why you chose that particular answer.*

I wouldn’t say it was politics for sure, because I think most people don’t really care about politics. I think it’s kind of that politics has just become entertainment. I’m entertained by it. That election in 2000, I was entertained by it. It was entertaining. I had a side I was pulling for, but then I always usually do, and sometimes I don’t. I feel like lately, and I think a lot of Americans feel this way, we don’t even know who’s the best any more, because we feel they’re all liars and cheats and just saying whatever they think we want to hear and that once they’re in there, they’re gonna do whatever they want anyway. It’s all about money.

That leads me to my real answer that capitalism is where it’s at. We fight most of our wars, and I’m wouldn’t pretend to be a learned man on these issues, but we fight most of our wars, from what I see, because of capitalism—because of our need for more and more and more. You know, so much of everything is about money, and that’s where the value is placed.

Outside of the reservation, in just the heartland of America and the urban areas in America, people place their value on how much money they can make. And it’s not even anymore about how much money we can make now and how much we need now, it’s for later and even after we’re dead and what we can leave behind for our kids. It’s never enough. There’s never enough.

Spirituality, that certainly wouldn't be it either. That word can mean a lot of things. It can mean a true relationship with God or it can mean just exploration of religion and New Age kinds of things, so it can mean a lot of different things. So there are a lot of people doing this kind of stuff because it's... well, they need something to do with their time. That's what I think. It's all about capitalism and entertainment. We want to be entertained, so we make money so we can be entertained some more.

There are people out there who are true Christians, but a lot of them are there to increase their lot. "How does this person see me? I'd better go to church." A lot of people go to church or have religion in their life just because that's what people do and that's what looks right, and if you're looking right then you have more opportunity to make money.

So, it's definitely capitalism.

Prompt 6: *Thank you. I guess looking at your answer here, we're definitely saying here is God, or the spirit of God, or the seeking of spirituality is definitely not prevalent in this country. There are other things that top the list. I am, too, not a learned man when it comes to why wars are fought and all this, but I certainly didn't just crawl out of the cradleboard yesterday. But taking a look at the country on a national level, it almost appears hopeless that we would ever see true reconciliation or justified reparations to those who are—for lack of a better word— [fallen] victims to governmental terrorist tactics.*

But knowing the world in which you live in today, and knowing the country that you live in today, and knowing the Bible, the whole history of—'cause that's basically a history of the times of the Lord and the times of God, and all this—and we look at the incidents of the Tower of Babel, why did that incident occur? We look at also the circumstances that led to what transpired in Sodom and Gomorrah, and looking at our country's overall moral values, our work ethics, do you think we are leaning towards being more of the modern day Tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah all over again? Or, do you think we're headed in a more positive direction as a country?

This is a pretty simple answer, to me. We're headed more toward the Tower of Babel type thing where the language is becoming less confused between peoples. It's becoming more of a worldwide culture per say than it is an individual people's. And as far as the morality, I don't know any time in human history where there was this high morality. My view of it is that people hid things more; they're more open about it now. But I don't really know. I don't know about our morality, if it's any worse or better than any other point in our history. I'm not always a moral person, so it's hard for me to speculate on morality and judge anyone or judge an entire nation or nations. I don't know. I really don't have anything to go on other than my own life and as long as I've known, it's been about the same, but people are more open, and it seems as years go

on, [people are] more open and willing to talk about those things that were more taboo in the past.

But as I see it, we're definitely going away from what God did at Babel as far as confusing the languages and having everyone go their separate ways. Everyone's coming together. I'm not saying that's a good thing. It sounds like a positive thing, but I don't know if that's good. As far as I know, the Bible teaches that at the end time there's gonna be that kind of one-world unified government, and that's not a good thing. That's what we're headed towards. I'm not one of these guys that's really studied that too much, I'm just trying to get by and live my life and deal with my own morality and my own things I'm dealing with. But, yes, I'm mindful of that.

What you said earlier about getting anything back—these guys want you just to go away. You guys' voice is not nearly as loud as the African American voice and those guys aren't getting anything back. And you guys certainly deserve it more because we're talking about individual slave owners that they're wanting to hold accountable and those guys are dead—they're gone. But what you guys are talking about, what the U.S. government did, that's totally a different matter. They are more than responsible for what's going on here on the reservation, and they certainly do owe, and continue to owe—not one big lump sum—the Oglala Sioux Tribe a lot; it probably can't be paid back. But, they're never gonna try. That's what I believe.

We're headed towards the end of the world. That's what I believe, and you're not gonna see... any positive change you're gonna see here are gonna be made by the people here. If we wait around for the U.S. Government, and it'd be nice, it'd be really nice, but what I've seen in the past, even in history, the U.S. government "tries" to do something positive, but they don't really have an understanding of the way things are here. Say if they just hand a big lump sum to the Tribal government, is that really gonna trickle down to the people? I have a lot of questions of what the government even can do now.

Prompt 7: *I hear you. I hear you when you talk about politics and this and that and it sure makes for a very perplexing picture. There're just so many levels of it, especially when money enters into the picture. Money just changes people. It's truly a very intoxicating piece of material that we've got out there.*

When we talked about reparations, reconciliation, all this stuff, I tend to agree with you that it's probably not gonna happen, not in my lifetime, nor my children's or my grandchildren's lifetime. But, I still think it's equally important to, nonetheless, keep that voice going to give people the chance. Because when we start with the premise that when you accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior, well you know the deal if you've read the book—He died to save mankind from their sins. If you trust in Him, and all this, you will see salvation.

I guess I just keep talking about this in terms of that. Trying to do the best we can in this life that we're gifted with, because I know once we enter the courtroom of the Lord that it's gonna be a totally different story. It's gonna be no if, ands, or buts, no kinds of excuses. We're going to see pure, raw justice—justice, in the most real sense of the word.

I guess if you agree with that statement, do you feel that how America came to be and how it is now, do you think that all of that will stand up in the Lord's courtroom?

No, it wouldn't stand up there. I don't know how He's gonna go about judging that, as a people, I mean, I don't know if that's gonna be something that's gonna even... I mean, I see this as sins of individuals. There're a lot of individuals involved and a lot of them doing the bad things, and there were some of them there that took part and probably didn't have, you know, they were just soldiers or they were just government workers or they were just this and that, or they just were settlers. I think there were individuals involved, and I think that's how the Lord's gonna judge, but I'm not sure.

I don't know how He's gonna go about judging. But is it gonna hold up? No. No, it won't hold up. The United States—and I'm not one to badmouth my country—but in all due respect, has been involved in a lot of atrocities since its inception, and to think otherwise, you're fooling yourself.

Prompt 8: *Right. Well, I don't think it... I've really got to encourage the people, and I know I'm supposed to be asking you the questions, but I'd like to interject with just statements about, I don't feel like we as human beings or as followers of Jesus, no less, should have any qualms about voicing our opinions, because in that sense, we are practicing the real essence of what a true democracy is. There is such a thing as constructive criticism. If we don't feel our country is moving in the right direction, then we certainly are free to voice our opinions and all that.*

But, do you feel that there's more to what we're going to be judged about as individuals? Do you think that the Ten Commandments cover it all, or do you think that there are other natural and spiritual laws that we need to pay heed to while we live this life?

I believe there are laws that are not covered, there are sins definitely that are not covered in the Ten Commandments. There are things, it's hard to explain, but I believe there's evil and good. There's a line in one of Paul's letters where he mentions all the different kinds of sins there are and he even mentions the "inventors of evil." Sometimes what I see around here, and I joke around... is these guys I see around here, they don't do any of the ones that you can clearly name, but they just invent ways to rip you off and they just invent evil. That's how I feel sometimes. I don't think it's all covered in the Ten Commandments. It might be, but it's just that I can't see it [in] what's clearly written there—there're definitely things that people do and they go against God.

You know, there's a Spirit within me that when I accepted Jesus Christ, and there're a lot of times that I don't listen to it. I don't know what you call that, but when I do that, I'm wrong. When I don't listen to God and what He's telling me to do, then I'm wrong. It goes beyond the laws He's set in the book. It goes beyond His dealings with us on a personal level daily. There are people who haven't accepted Christ and they know what's right and wrong, and the reason they know what's right or wrong is because God, when He made them, instilled it in them. People know right and wrong. So yes, I think it goes beyond the Ten Commandments.

Prompt 9: *Exactly, so even though we know there are certain behaviors and certain things done, either at a governmental... level, or even in the realms of organized religion, or when it comes down to individuals, when we feel that there is something going wrong in our hearts and in our spirits we feel that there's something going wrong. But people have become very adept at being manipulators of words and actions, so even though we know and try to point some of the wrongs of the world and the wrongs of our community, even though we're quickly dismissed, I would assume—and I just wanted to see if you would agree or not—that at some point we just have to let it go and turn it over completely to God, because I'm of a mind that there's no hiding place from God's eyes and that He will see it and that even though somebody may think that they've gotten one over on somebody down here, God's keeping track of things up there. Do you think that's an accurate statement?*

It's an accurate statement. I'm just not saying it's an easy one to live by, because I see people doing things. Just recently, I became angered by just things people do—in particular, border town whites. And the deal is that when they're getting things over on people here, they're getting them over on me too. That's how I feel about it. When they're cheating people here, they're cheating me too. So I'm pretty angry about that.

There are other things too. That's not the only thing that I get angered about. I get angered about things that are on a personal level and sometimes I'm wrong about it, but sometimes I wonder, does God see this and is He gonna help with this later on? Is he gonna judge this, or do I need to do something about it now? I've never been that kind of person that wants to do something about it, but I think just living here it's made me that kind of person now because people here do something about it a lot of times, especially when it's on a personal level or a family level, they take care of it.

I've been involved in some of that and I've had to apologize up and down sometimes, because I made this mistake and I got people pretty mad and they're gonna do something about it. So I've gotten that mindset now; I wanna do something about it, especially when it comes to whites, because I know better. And that's what people on the rez, you know, there's a lot of baggage that comes with that, number one. And I'm not messing with Natives, but then I don't have a family here, and that's a powerful resource that people have here.

If somebody upsets me here I'm more inclined to just deal with it in words or to just let it go, but that anger just kind of stores up, so when a white person messes with me, then I really wanna go at them, that's how it becomes, because I don't have to worry about their family. I'm not afraid at all [of those whites]. So that's how it works.

That's the kind of things I'm dealing with right now, and it's funny you asked me that question because I deal with that quite a bit now. I wanna go do something about it. I don't want people to be mad with me and a lot of times I think God will take care of this; God will deal with them personally with what they're doing; He'll judge them and deal with their sins, and that's between them and God, and it's like, man, I wanna do more than that; I wanna do more than just rely on God to take care of that.

I don't know, sometimes I think we're called to do that, it's just knowing the right times. Everyone wants to talk about Jesus having his whip out and I like that part too, where he took care of the money-changers in his Father's house, but He didn't always have it out and I have to know that and I have to see that.

I agree with you 100% because I'm of the same mind. I believe that, first and foremost, that yes, God will hold people accountable. But to that same extent, when we're living this human life, and we see these things that are counterproductive to the natural and spiritual growth of women or elders or children, or males who are still bonded by the bounds of poverty and all this, I think that is precisely how God moves within us. He sent His Son on a task, and therefore we have a task. I feel that there are His works to be done, His many works to be done, that He is counting on us to do. So I feel complacency will also be dealt with; I believe there will be a spiritual penalty for sitting on your "hinney and twiddling your thumbs."

Prompt 10: *Nonetheless, let's move over and let's look at probably two of the greatest benchmarks introduced into the world; you know, standards that are so high, yet so humble and probably the most difficult to attain. If you look at the words of Jesus Christ, when He says, "Above all else, love one another." When you look at the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who says, "I shall not stoop so low as to hate another human being." I guess I would be remiss if I didn't include somebody from my own culture, Grandpa Frank Foolscrow, the nephew to Ben Black Elk of "Black Elk Speaks" fame who said, "I shall not hate the white people. I will always love them regardless of what my own people say."*

So, if we look at these three awesome benchmarks here, we look at the fact that, yes, racism is alive and well here in the state of South Dakota and in the border towns of Nebraska; a lot of acts of racism perpetrated on Native Americans. And so, the question is, do you feel that Lakota people are racist in return? And if they are, do you think that it's justified?

In answer to your question, do I think that Lakota people are racist, in general, yes. I think that I feel a ton of racism all the time. There're times when I'm living here when I forget I'm white and then, boom, I'm hit over the head with it. And it's hard to see what is racism and what sometimes is joking around. That's a hard thing for me, because I get the humor here, I've learned to understand it, but at the same time, I don't care for the white jokes when they're directed at me; I don't like them at all. When they're directed towards somebody else they're funny, but when they're towards me, I don't like them at all. And that's just human nature.

I know that I say a lot of things about white people, and a lot of times, I don't care to be around white people that much any more—especially when they're from around here. I'm not used to the Northerners so much and their brand of racism and their brand of arrogance. I haven't really learned to understand [it]. My parents were from Chicago, but it's like, I kinda act like the people from down South, so I haven't really learned to adjust to what's up here. It's a different brand of white person—for lack of a better word.

So I say a lot of things myself, and if you were to truly ask me, "What group are you most racist against?" I would have to say it's white people. But at the same time, I hold Natives here accountable if I can, because when a Native person says something about Natives, I just let it go. I don't say anything about it, because I have nothing to say about it. I have no issue with somebody talking about their own kind. Personally, I don't, because I do it myself. You can call it racism or just pointing out what they can see from the insider's view. A lot of times, I say things that I know [are] true because I've got [an] insider's view.

Would I call what I have racism? Yes, I have racism towards my own people a lot of times. But I hold Natives accountable because they're not white. Just like I expect them to hold me accountable because I'm not Native. So when I say something that I shouldn't say, I want somebody to be angry with me or to help me along—or whatever it is. I've had people *not* be angry with me a lot of times. They just say, "That's not the right to say. Don't say that. Don't do that." I learn from that.

Are there times when I myself want to just say things about Native people? Yes, there are times because I feel like I'm on an unfair playing field. I am the minority here when I'm here, when I'm actually on the reservation. I go two miles off and I might not be any more, but when I'm here I am the minority and a lot of times I'm made to feel like that. And that's alright. I mean, it's a good thing, because I've been in the other role for most of my life.

I see there're good things about it, but there are days when I just wanna press a button and have brown skin and dark hair and different color eyes, so people don't see me as a white person, because this is where I live, and some days I just don't wanna look different; some days I don't wanna look like a tourist; some days I don't wanna look like somebody that they don't trust. Some days I just don't wanna look like that. Some days I

just wanna be someone different, because this is where I live and I just wanna have a normal day sometimes.

It's never a normal day when you're a white person here. It's rarely a normal day. There're people that trust me and they see me as a member of the family, and then I meet someone new because this tribe is huge and I'm never gonna meet everyone. And I'm never gonna please everyone, and it's like it's a struggle daily. And there's racism, especially this time of year, I see it. People, it's like they don't see me as just somebody who's just... you know, I'm here in the winter and I think people realize that this guy just lives here, you know, we see him around. And in the summer time, there's twenty of me running around—twenty fat, longhaired, blond guys, and they don't know which one I am because we all look alike, so you know...

Anyway, I don't know if that answers your question, but...

That does, that does answer the question. To me, Joey, you all don't look alike, man. I've never seen anybody that looked like... if anything in my life I've seen white people that remind me of Indian people I know, and then I've seen Indian people that remind me of black people I know, and vise versa and all this.

But it answers my question except for one little part, and that is you know some of, or for that matter, a lot of the atrocities committed towards the Lakota people or Native people, either by the government or the "white people" that were their representatives or whatnot. The answer I'm looking to is this, that this is what motivates racism in Lakota people. So it's safe to say that Lakota people are just as racist as the next ethnic group, but is their racism justified?

Yes, I'm sorry, I missed that part.

I got in an argument with that same lady, that Yankton lady, last year about it because she... honestly, if I met her in Nebraska or in Arkansas I would think this is a white lady, but she's not a white lady. She's an Indian lady and she's very outspoken, and it's like, when we got on this subject of racism, she called it "displaced anger," because the root of the racism is these atrocities and these broken agreements, and these real time things that happen daily, not just historical things, but things that happen still now. So she's calling it "displaced anger," and I'm like, you know what, this is racism. And what everyone points out, and like a lot of people will point out, it only can be racism if the majority is the one doing it. But I try to always point out that any time you're on this rez here you are not, if you're a white person, you are not the majority. You just aren't that any more.

People might see it from the outside as you're part of this majority, but it depends on how you look at it. I no longer look in to the rez. Some people might come and they're still looking in. I'm looking out now; I'm looking out from it, and so when I'm already in

here and I'm in it, and I have a hard time adjusting to things outside now, I have a hard adjusting to a lot of things, so I mean off of the reservation it's like I forget, it's like two different worlds. A lot of times it looks the same.

But I'm looking out now, but to answer your question, (I'm sorry I digressed) but yes, it's justified. I'm not saying it's not, but it has to end somewhere. You can't hold me accountable on a daily basis for something I didn't do. You can ask my opinion; you can teach me, "Look, this is wrong." You can have me, you know, enlighten me in ways, you know, about what's been done, but at the same time, I'm like-minded, and for people to harbor this racism towards me is silly because in a lot of ways you're preaching to the choir when you say things about white people to me. It's like, I get it; I already know and I feel the same way. It's justified, but you know, that only goes so far.

Right. Well, let me stop you, because you've went the three times, you know, like that Biblical character who denied Jesus three times. So I'll stop you at your third time there and thank you for all the...

You made some really good, solid points, and I agree with you about, you know... I try to tell non-Native missionaries, teachers and whatnot that, you know, it's good that you came here to be with us and teach us, but when you're here it's prudent that you remember that you are now the minority and we are the majority. And we will dictate what we want our children taught in schools and this and that. Above all else, we want a healthy mix of our cultural ways and everything, because they are very positive lifestyles, you know. Instead of looking at them as cultural ways, I think it might be helpful to the rest of the world to look at these lifestyles that we live.

So, to me, I just want to share my answer to the question, "Is this racism justified given everything that there is?" and the answer is no; never in any circumstances or in any case is racism justified because the love of God and God Himself is prevalent above all that. I know the Bible and I know the teachings of the Sacred Pipe. Nowhere within the boundaries of those teachings, can you decipher anything that points to racial hatred or all this stuff – regardless. You look at the... I think the persecution of Jesus is the greatest lesson for all of us to learn. It's okay to have bitterness and anger and all this, but at the same time, you keep going. You keep going. You do the Lord's work and when you involve yourself in racist attitudes towards other people, you're only picking up learned behavior, man. You're picking up somebody else's sin and walking with it.

So, you didn't really give a wrong answer because you made a lot of really good, strong, solid points. I like your answers because they speak of somebody who came amongst us to be with us, who loves us and who understands, and you have compassion. So, just from a big brother to a little brother thing, I just wanted to say that part about racism is never justified, little brother, it never is, so we have to see how we can overcome that.

Let's say that it's not justifiable, but it is understandable. It is understandable, and that's the key to everything. I understand why these people are like this. I understand why these people are like this, well, and we just take it from there—and it's a work in progress.

So, a couple more questions here.

By the way, I wanted to tell you that your digressions are cool, you know. I live in a world of digression. All the talk that I have, the dialogue that I have with older people, it's all about digressions. How else are you gonna learn, man? So I think you've picked up a lot of positive flow here, man. I mean, there's no asking Joey a direct questions and expecting to get a direct answer, because he'll hit you with extra knowledge that he's known. That's the kind of flow that goes around here. So your digressions were cool and precise.

Prompt 11: *But the last couple of questions I have is kinda like, it's one depending on the other thing, is do you see yourself as moving on from this reservation experience or do you see yourself as continuing to find a spot here in Lakota country?*

That's kind of a hard question, because I have, I mean, I don't know how long my life's gonna be, but if it's the regular span, then I have a while to go and my desire is to stay here, because this is where I've grown comfortable. I mean, honestly, I wasn't that comfortable where I was living before; not that, I mean, I was living in my parent's house and I am comfortable there, but outside of that sanctuary, I'm not comfortable with where I came from. I don't know why I never was.

I lived some places before—I lived in Minnesota. I certainly wasn't comfortable there, when I lived in the cities there. I felt I didn't know anybody. I felt like "that person might as well be a light pole" or something and I might as well be one too. And that's a big difference from what I have here, I mean, there are a lot of people I know and love and it's a tough question, because I really don't have a desire to leave here, but I never had a desire at first to come here either.

I sometimes blow around in the wind like, I don't know if you've ever seen that feather in the movie "Forrest Gump."

Yes.

I'm like that because I believe that was meant to make a statement in that movie. But, I'm like that. There's a purpose for everywhere I go, God has a purpose, but then I really just leave it up to Him a lot of times. I'm really big about that. It's really one of my more positive attributes, and I don't think my mom and dad care for it too much. But I just go wherever the Lord blows me.

They'd rather just have me come and live there so I have that kind of stuff going on. My family loves me. If there's one thing that's true—that I identify with here—is the family thing. We have a very close-knit family, and when I go home, that is the family reunion, you know? Most people I consider family—there're a couple of other drifters—are there. I don't have a very big family, so that's not an impressive thing either, but the deal is that my brothers and my mom and dad, those are who I consider to be my family, and it's really tough to be away from them.

When I go home, [some] people judge me here. There are people here who say, "Why are you [doing] that? You're this; you're that." And I've never claimed to be a missionary; I never claimed to be anything. I've never put a statement out there: "I'm here to help the Lakota people." You guys help me so much, I don't know what that statement's about. People wanna throw that on me and that's not... I've never said that. But I will say this, that a lot of times I share in the struggles here, I'll say that. And there might be mutual assistance, but the reason I came here, I came to be a student, and I came back because I liked it—because I'm comfortable.

To say that is true, but at times I feel so much like an outsider, and that's a tremendous statement that I would say that I wanna stay here, because there're times where it's like, "Man, there's nobody here who gets me at all." But for this to be the place where I feel most comfortable is a tremendous thing in light of that.

So, I mean, no, I don't see myself moving on—not right now anyway. I'm always offended when people speak to me like that, you know, "Next year you're going somewhere." People always talk to me like that. I haven't gone anywhere since you've known me really. I go home and I visit, that's it. So I get offended when people call me [a] visitor or they tell me, "Well, you're gonna leave like everybody else leaves." I get offended by it, but actually there's something nice about that too. Almost every time I hear that there's a feeling that they don't want me to go. And that's a nice thing to feel.

I don't know if that answers your question.

Yes, it does. And that's exactly, Joey, how people are. That you've even uncovered that truth is miraculous in itself just on a human level, because a lot of these Lakota people have seen people in their own families come and go, whether through death or just relocating. So sometimes there're people that come around that they really like, but they're never ever gonna tell them that they really like, and then they suffer from some kind of separation anxiety if they thought that this person is gonna leave. So I always caution people who come out here, if you make a connection, especially with the children, try to keep that connection going—become their pen pal or sponsor or something of that nature.

So, your answer was pretty concise and clear once again. So, I get the feeling we'll be seeing a lot of you and to me that's fine, you know. Because ultimately whether you decide to stay or go is gonna be up to you, but I would hope that you would not sell yourself short in what you mean to certain people, because there are people around, including myself who have come to know you, and sure, we'd love to have you stick around and hang out with us and work together and all this, but if God's blowing you somewhere else, then that's God's will and no hard feelings and all that.

Prompt 12: *But in a hypothetical situation, you know, let's look at that. Tomorrow, which is not hypothetical, you're leaving. Whether it be for a short while or permanently remains to be seen. In spite of what you carry in your heart, you're open to what God is going to put into your heart. So the fact is, tomorrow you're leaving. Hypothetically, in the event that I don't see you again and that you don't come back, the final question I have for you, Joey, is what is the best thing that you take from here and that you'll walk with?*

Oh, my goodness, that's a tough question. I've never thought about that one before. It's not one of these I can answer right away.

The only thing that I can say is these relationships that I've made with people here. The people here who are like family to me; there're people here who are like that. And when you have family members, those people remain in your heart whether you see them once every ten years, or even if you never see them again.

I've got family members I'm never gonna see again. I carry both my grandfathers and both my grandmothers everywhere I go. And the things I learned from them and the places where I failed them, those places too. I think those things stand out most, the times when I could have spent more time with them and I didn't or I could have listened to what they had to say and either I didn't understand it so I just kinda blew it off or I just didn't want to listen to it because I wanted to do something else.

So those times that I've known with my family members that have gone. That even goes for the ones that I rarely see. I go through my mind a lot and man, I wish I could have done that better or this better, but there're also good times too, and I take those with me.

And that's the same thing here. I've got family here and if I don't ever see them again, that doesn't mean that those times—both good and bad—aren't gonna be carried with me. That's the best that there is. I don't know if there is anything better than that. I don't know if, like I said, I've lived places where I had very few relationships, and that's no good at all. I mean, you can have all the money in the world and it means nothing if you feel like you don't have anything.

So, I can't say anything more than that. I carry those relationships with me, those family-like relationships that I have with people, the family-type bonds that I have with people here.

With that, Joey, that was my last question. Little brother, you're a good man. Thank you.

Thanks, Will.