

Concerning the deaths in Sedona

By Arvol Looking Horse

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As Keeper of our Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe Bundle, I am concerned for the two deaths and illnesses of the many people who participated in a sweat lodge in Sedona, Ariz. that brought our sacred rite under fire in the news. I would like to clarify that this lodge, and many others, are not our ceremonial way of life because of the way they are being conducted. My prayers go out to the families and loved ones for their loss.

Our ceremonies are about life and healing. From the time this ancient ceremonial rite was given to our people, never has death been a part of our inikaga (life within) when conducted properly. Today, the rite is interpreted as a sweat lodge. It is much more than that. The term does not fit our real meaning of purification.

Inikaga is the oldest ceremony brought to us by Wakan Tanka (Great Spirit). Nineteen generations ago, the Lakota/Dakota/Nakota oyate (people) were given seven sacred rites of healing by a Spirit Woman, Pte San Win (White Buffalo Calf Woman). She brought these rites along with the sacred Canupa (pipe) to our people, when our ancestors were suffering from a difficult time. It was also brought for the future to help us for much more difficult times to come. They were brought to help us stay connected to who we are as a traditional cultural people.

The values of conduct are very strict in any of these ceremonies, because we work with spirit. The Creator, Wakan Tanka, told us that if we stay humble and sincere, we will keep that connection with the inyan oyate (the stone people), who we call the Grandfathers, to be able to heal ourselves and loved ones. We have a gift of prayer and healing and have to stay humble with our Unci Maka (Grandmother Earth) and with one another. The inikaga is used in all of the seven sacred rites to prepare and finish the ceremonies, along with the sacred eagle feather. The feather represents the sacred knowledge of our ancestors. *What has happened in the news with the makeshift sauna called the 'sweat lodge' is not our ceremonial way of life.*

Our First Nations people have to earn the right to pour the mini wiconi (water of life) upon the inyan oyate in creating Inikaga by going on the vision quest for four years and four years to Sundance. Then you are put through a ceremony to

be painted, to recognize that you have now earned the right to take care of someone's life through purification. They should also be able to understand our sacred language, to be able to understand the messages from the Grandfathers, because they are ancient, they are our spirit ancestors. They walk and teach the values of our culture in being humble, wise, caring and compassionate.

What has happened in the news with the makeshift sauna called the "sweat lodge" is not our ceremonial way of life.

When you do ceremony, you can not have money on your mind. We deal with the pure sincere energy to create healing that comes from everyone in that circle of ceremony. The heart and mind must be connected. When you involve money, it changes the energy of healing. The person wants to get what they paid for. The Spirit Grandfathers will not be there. Our way of life is now being exploited. You do more damage than good. No mention of monetary energy should exist in healing, not even with a can of love donations. When that energy exists, they will not even come. Only after the ceremony, between the person that is being healed and the intercessor who has helped connect with the Great Spirit, can the energy of money be given out of appreciation. That exchange of energy is from the heart; it is private and does not involve the Grandfathers. Whatever gift of appreciation the person who received help can now give is acceptable. They can give the intercessor whatever they feel their healing is worth.

In our prophecy, the White Buffalo Calf Woman told us she would return and stand upon the earth when we are having a hard time. In 1994, this began to happen with the birth of the white buffalo. Not only their nation, but many animal nations began to show their sacred color, which is white. She predicted that at this time there would be many changes upon Grandmother Earth. There would be things that we never experienced or heard of before: Climate changes, earth changes, diseases, disrespect for life and they would be shocking. There would also be many false prophets.

My Grandmother who passed the bundle to me said I would be the last Keeper if the oyate do not straighten up. The assaults upon Grandmother Earth are horrendous, the assaults toward one another was not in our culture, the assaults against our people have been termed as genocide, and now we are experiencing spiritual genocide.

Because of the problems that began to arise with our rebirth and being able to do our ceremonies in the open since the Freedom of Religion Act of 1978, our elders began talking to me about the abuses they have seen in our ceremonial way of life, which was once very strict.

It is forbidden to film or photograph any of our ceremonies.

After many years of witnessing their warnings, we held a meeting to address the lack of protocol in our ceremonies. After reaching an agreement to address the misconduct of our ceremonies and to remind of the proper protocols, a statement was made in March 2003. Every effort was made to ensure our way of life of who we are as traditional cultural people, because these ways are for our future and all life upon Grandmother Earth (Mitakuye Oyasin, all my relations), so that they may have good health. Because these atrocities are being mocked and practiced all over the world, we even made a film called "Spirits for Sale."

The non-Native people have a right to seek help from our First Nation intercessors for good health and well-being. It is up to that intercessor. That is a privilege for all people that we gift for being able to have good health and understand that their protocol is to have respect and appreciate what we have to share. The First Nations intercessor has to earn that right to our ceremonial way of life in the ways I have explained.

At this time, I would like to ask all nations upon Grandmother Earth to please respect our sacred ceremonial way of life and stop the exploitation of our Tunka Oyate (Spiritual Grandfathers).

In a Sacred Hoop of Life, where there is no ending and no beginning, namahu yo (hear my words).

Chief Arvol Looking Horse is the 19th generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe Bundle.