



Roots Awakening



A Publication of the Pittsburgh Federal Executive Board Native American Heritage Committee

August 2007

OUR LAND IS OUR LIFE

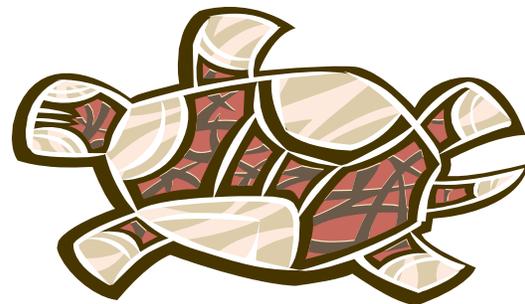
Celebrating the Environment and The Earth Our Mother

2007 Annual Arts Program:

Native Americans know and understand human existence to be an existence in relation to other life, including; especially the land our earth. Each one of us have a special relationship with the land. We see the planet Earth herself as a live spirit being, and the very land upon which we all walk (and to which our bones are returned to) as a living breathing spiritual entity. All creatures, creations, land, water, all that fly, walk, or crawl; all have intrinsic value to us. We all must come to learn respect and reciprocity as related to the land and "All Our Relations". We can not separate ourselves from our earth and all that exists upon her. We are the land and the land is us. This years program will be held at Carnegie Mellon University Center Art Gallery, 5000 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania.



For an entry form, more details and/or a copy of the prospectus call: 412-885-5097, 412-260-8582, 412-310-7243 or email: aliyo@bellatlantic.net



2006 Art Program Winners

- 2-D:** Edward Maier, 1st Place
Judith Gentile Committee's
Choice
Judith Gentile, Honorable Mention
Ellesa Clay High &
Art Tequacshe, Dedication
To the Theme Award
- 3-D/Sculpture:** Edward Maier 1st Place

The November 2006 Art Exhibition was held at The Benedum Gallery at The Monongalia Art Center, Morgantown, West Virginia in conjunction with West Virginia University Native American Studies Program

This annual program is an educational project to accomplish a greater understanding and awareness of the American Indian culture through the sensual and visual interpretation of the arts. This program is further designed to celebrate November as Native American Month.

The Myth of the Generic Indian as the Great Environmentalist:

Cultural Stereotypes and the Environmental Movement

"Ironeyes" Cody. You may not remember the name, but you most likely remember his face. His face is unforgettable: wrinkles around the eyes that denote wisdom, the long black hair in braids, a look of sadness and near-disgust, and a single tear trailing down his cheek. "Ironeyes" was the Native American on horseback in the pro-environment commercial which immortalized him in the 1970s. He seemed to share concern for what was happening to the earth due to the ignorance of others. Not to mention, he was the first Native person in a commercial that I can think of that was not portrayed as a grunting savage.

While I still have respect for "Ironeyes", I can't say that he is a "hero" of mine. I say that, because I see that commercial a bit differently now than I did 35 years ago. Since that commercial, I have heard the phrase, "the Indian's love of nature" more times than I would care to count. Native American's have become stereotyped as the "great environmentalists" of this country. It is true that Native peoples have a different relationship with the earth than do the immigrants to this land; the earth is our mother, not property to be exploited. But that is not what I am hearing from non-Indians. I hear all the time I want to learn more about Native spirituality and "their great love of nature." Environmental groups want Native people involved to "exemplify" the movement's "great love of nature."

Native American's find this stereotypical thinking, both implicit and explicit. Most objectionable is the underlying assumptions about Native American contributions to the environmental movement, when Native American people are not being asked our opinions. In many ways Native Americans are serving as mascots to the environmental movement. There are three illustrations which I feel best demonstrate this point:

1. the myth of the generic Indian
2. the myth of "a once noble people"
3. the absence of Native Americans in leadership in the environmental movement

A prevailing myth about Native Americans in this country is the myth of the generic Indian. This myth portrays all Native Americans as if we belonged to one tribe. This view assumes that all tribes have the same traditions, customs, language, lifestyle and government. This is far from the truth. In fact, Native Americans represent a single digit percent of the US population, but represent 1/2 of its language diversity. 50% of the languages spoken in the US are Native languages. There are 100's of tribes with differing traditions, governments. It is absolutely naive to think that all Native Americans could be represented by one image of what non-Natives think we are.

Another false assumption is that Native American peoples and our cultures are frozen in the past, specifically in the 19th century. The "Ironeyes" commercial does this: a Native person riding on horseback, in the woods, in breechcloth and feathers, and keeping his distance from the highway. Most people subconsciously, and many blatantly, assume that Indians no longer exist and that our cultures are dead. It is true that the 1800's *John Wayne Indians no longer exist; they never did*. The movie *Dances With Wolves* has some commendable aspects, but even it leaves this assumption inviolate. I would say this is changing with casinos; more non-Indians are being exposed to contemporary Native American peoples and culture. Even so, the view persists. Donald Trump, himself, went before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian Affairs and testified that his competitors, the Mashantucket Pequot, "*don't look like Indians to me.*" This myth is dangerous because it places Native peoples outside the consciousness of everyday life in this country. It is one thing for a German American to lose their language and culture in this country; it only takes a trip to Germany to remedy it. But if the languages of Native Americans are lost in this country, they are lost forever. This is one of the real consequences of such a stereotypical view.

Finally, with respect to the sensitivities of well-meaning people, if indeed Native Americans

have a lot to teach this dominant society about care of the earth, and if we could be so helpful to the environmental movement, why are there so few of us in leadership roles? This is more than an issue of representation or tokenism; it is a challenge to bring people of differing world views and viewpoints to work together on a crisis that affects us all.

If the environmental movement is serious about its stated commitments to being concerned for all peoples, the movement will need to be more open to divergent opinions, more willing to settle these differences in honest dialogue. One place to start is for the environmental organizations to become more familiar with the current issues and struggles of tribes and tribal people, not just the ones that fall into their agenda. Environmental groups must recognize and affirm tribal sovereignty, the inherent right for tribes to govern ourselves and our people. A suggestion to environmental groups is that they cannot continue to choose individual Native Americans and portray their opinions as normative for all Native Americans. Native Americans too, must get past our own stereotypes of environmental groups, gained through past experience. Tribes will most likely not "buy into" everything environmental groups wish, neither will the reverse be true. What is important, however, is to find out what can be done together and respect each other as equals even when there is disagreement.

I do acknowledge that Native Americans are not the only peoples to suffer under stereotypes in this country or within the environmental movement. I cannot adequately address examples of stereotypes due to space limitations. However, stereotypes will hurt the larger agenda, because it will prevent people from treating each other with respect. Not all Hispanics, for instance, are migrant workers; not all Asians are high-tech moguls or gurus, meditating under a tree; not all African Americans are inner-city dwellers and more interested in dealing drugs than in saving our environment; not all White environmentalists are vegetarians or animal rights activists.

The real irony of cultural stereotypes in the environmental movement is that the **environmental crisis and racism come from the same root**: injustice and the abuse of power. In 1992, I spent a great deal of my time talking

to groups about the 1992 Columbus Quincentenary. The significance of this quincentenary is *not in the person* Columbus; it is in the systems of oppression and exploitation that were set in place and which have been operating for the past 500 years in the Americas. It is no surprise to any Native person that a country that chased them onto reservations is the same country that is dealing with environmental degradation and injustice, with racism and sexism, and an increasing rift between rich and poor.

Acknowledging this history can also be our hope for the future. If we continue to ignore or sweep this history of oppression and exploitation under the rug, we will be doomed to repeat it. We can choose to acknowledge this history and learn from it. Or we can choose to be part of the new vision for the next 500 years. We can choose to be part of a history that emphasizes mutual understanding and respect, encourages diversity and healing, and which cares for the earth as much as the individual citizens of the earth. Let us join together and choose life for the whole earth

Available for Purchase:

Our *NAHC Cookbook* is now available. This unique, one-of-a-kind cookbook includes not only Native American recipes from all over the country, but is also a great tool for the outdoor person, with lots of ways to use the meat from their most recent hunting excursion. The book also serves as coffee table art book, with original artwork from over a dozen local artists. Also, included are historical notations and special information articles. In addition our exclusive Cherokee Flute Music Tape or CD "We Get Our Music from Nature." Visit:

WWW.ECHOES4.COM,

Call: (412) 885-5097, or

email: aliyo@bellatlantic.net

Roots Awakening Editor:

Earl Dingus (Yun-wi-yv)

Indian, Native American, American Indian, First People, Indigenous People?

So what is it? We all hear these different terms but no one can seem to agree on what to call us.

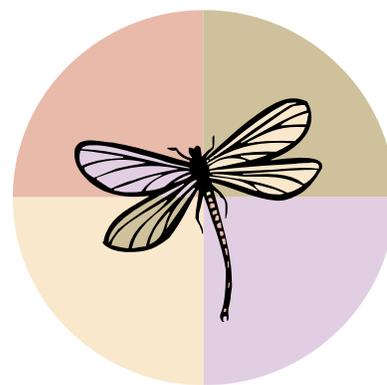
How many times have you heard someone say "Indian" and then correct themselves Oh, I mean Native American. Some of us prefer Native American, some of us prefer Indian, but most of us would prefer you to ask us our tribal affiliation and call us by that.

Columbus landed in the Caribbean and thought he was in India. Unfortunately he was wrong. However, the name Indian stuck. Many people considered this wrong. After all, Columbus labeled the Natives as Indians based on an incorrect assumption. The term can create confusion because it may be difficult in conversation to know if you talking about the Indians of America or the Indians of India. Then there are those who angrily point out to me, say; "I was born in America, so I am a Native American.

The term American Indian became popular because it helped with this confusion. However, to some this is still not the best term. The reasons are diverse and personal, but there are two reasons that stand out. The first reason is habit. Many Indians have been Indians all their lives. The Native people of this continent have been called Indian throughout history. Why change now? The second reason is political. Politically correct terms were intended to help ethnic groups by giving them a name that did not carry the scars of history; it also enabled America to ease its conscience. The term Native American is so recent that it does not have all the negative history attached. Native Americans did not suffer through countless trails of tears, disease, wars, and cultural annihilation -- Indians did. The Native people today are Native Americans not Indians; therefore we do not need to feel guilty for the horrors of the past. Many Indians feel that this is what the term Native American essentially does -- it white-washes history. It cleans the slate.

It is a personal choice. I recommend you call a person by their tribe, if you know it. Native peoples of North America are diverse with over 500 cultures today. It would be like referring both a Polish and a German as European. They are both from Europe but their people have very different histories, cultures, and languages. The same is true of us. The Seneca are vastly different from the Apache, the Seminole, the Sax & Fox, or the Lakota, but we are all labeled Native American. So whenever possible refer to us by Seneca or Cherokee or whichever tribe we belong to. This shows respect because not only are you sensitive to the fact that the terms Indian, American Indian, and Native American are an over simplification of a diverse ethnicity, but you also shows that you listened when we mentioned our Nation.

If you don't know someone's Nation use what you feel comfortable with. The worst that can happen is that you might be corrected. That should give you an opportunity to have a candid conversation on political correctness. What matters in the long run is not which term is used but the intention with which it is used. Terms like "redskin" and "injun" are obviously offensive because of the historical meaning behind them; however, the term "Indian" is increasingly falling back into use. But when used in the wrong context any label can be offensive.



**Pittsburgh Federal Executive Board
Native American Heritage Committee
406 Federal Building
1000 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15222**