

For SOME Indian Chiefs - Your claims violate Your Traditions



By Anna Von Reitz

I grew up in Black River Falls, Wisconsin, where a large Winnebago Reservation is located, across the Black River from my great-grandfather's homestead.

He was a good man and saw no reason that the Natives should not continue to come and go and enjoy the land as they always had, and as it happened, his Homestead claim included the Winnebago Summer Hunting Grounds.

So, every summer, they came from their Winter Camps and they continued to share the land with him and his children. He gave them store goods and they gave him wild game and other presents in exchange. It was a good life and peaceful and everyone loved each other. They gave him a Winnebago name. He gave them English names.

And then the Government got involved and said that the Winnebago People had to stay on the Reservation land--- basically turned it into an internment camp. They also said that no Winnebago could buy land outside the reservation, so they were stuck living in this little insular community, cordoned off from the rest of the populace, rendered unable to continue their traditional lifestyle and economy, left destitute and forced to conform to all manner of government regulation.

When I showed up on the scene a hundred years later, the infamous era of the BIA Indian Schools was just ending. As I grew up my Mother told me the whole sordid tale of what the government had done to the Indians. We maintained our links to family friends in the tribe despite all that. I was adopted into the tribe, like my great-grandfather and grandfather and mother and aunts and uncles before me.

Just in the course of sharing life with people, you get to know them--- their strengths and weaknesses, their gifts, their sense of humor, their beliefs, their traditions. It becomes part of you, too, part of your own world view.

Part of what we learned in our long association with the Winnebago was their view of land ownership.

The Winnebago, like all the other tribes I have ever known, say that "Nobody owns the land, the land owns us."

This is a simple matter of fact and observation and it is also clearly stated in the Christian Bible from the direct words of God, no less: "Dust thou art and to dust returneth."

We come from the land and go back to the land, so it is no great feat of logic to conclude the limits of our tenancy of this little plot of land we call "me"--- much less the limits of any dominion we establish on the Earth.

Just recently Pope Francis admitted and declared that the whole "Doctrine of Discovery" that was used to justify colonialism and conquest was bunk-- which it was, and he did away with it. After 500 years of arguing the facts, the Powers That Be are finally yielding to reality.

This has to be regarded as an important and good step forward.

I fully expected that every indigenous nation would be celebrating and that elders from Patagonia to Point Barrow would be nodding and thinking, "Well! Finally! It only took them 500 years, but they got to the truth at last...."

What I haven't expected is the total breakdown in logic that SOME Native leaders are experiencing. They obviously know the truth. They obviously know their own traditions. Yet now that the odious lie at the heart of the "Doctrine of Discovery" has been overturned, what are they doing? Lining up to make claims that they own the land instead!

Hello? Someone taught you a Big Lie, and everyone suffered the consequences, so now you are parroting the same Big Lie and perpetuating it? The Doctrine of Discovery was wrong when it was applied to this land and your people, but it is somehow right when you turn around and apply it to everyone else?

There is no difference between a European planting a flag on the beach in 1492 and claiming the land for King Ferdinand versus an Eskimo coming across the Bering Land Bridge in 10,000 BC and his descendants claiming that the land is theirs because of that.

The plain truth is what the Native People have always said. Nobody owns the land. The land owns us. We are all tenants of the Land and beneficiaries of the Great Spirit that calls us forth to be and to live. We should be grateful for this and admit it, because it is the truth and it is the same for all men and for all times.

The notion that somebody has to own the land is a European notion founded on greed and self-interest and lies told to justify that greed and self-interest. As you have suffered the results of this yourselves, you should be the last ones on Earth to inflict it on others or allow it to continue.

I have heard some of you say among yourselves, "Well, we will just charge the white men rent...." and I wanted to scream and say---- listen to yourselves! Listen to what you are saying and notice how you are thinking!

It took 500 years for these same white men to agree with you, but only a 100 years for you to be mentally conquered by their ways of thinking? Your people suffer and die for 25 generations to bring forward the truth and now that you have the chance to end the Big Lie about land ownership once and for all, for everyone, you are backsliding?

For what? Thirty pieces of silver? Charging "rent" for the use of something you don't own any more than they did?

For the sake of my Bear Mother, listen.

What we contribute to the land is all that we can logically own, good or bad.

We need ways to show our tenancy to others and establish our boundaries for building homes and farms and factories. We may need to pledge ourselves to not harm the land by polluting it or ruining it in other ways, but the land itself should remain free---- for that is the nature of land.

It is a blessing given to us all and we owe it back to be a blessing in return.

Again, I have heard some of you saying, "But, we have to tax the people to provide the services--- the roads and bridges and everything else."

No, you do not. There is already enough money cashiered away as CAFR funds in every state to pay for all these public services without taxing anyone. Beyond that, our ancestors left gold and silver and platinum enough to pay for these services and for good living stipends and for investment funds for everyone and the land itself is endlessly bountiful.

We can turn our backs on the Bad Old Days. We can bequeath to our children a world based on truth and abundance, or we can tell the same old lies and make the same mistakes.

I say the Old World can keep the Old World. This is the New World and we can make of it what we want it to be for ourselves and for the next Seven Generations.

Once I was adopted I became a Winnebago. I am a White Indian. In the same way, my husband was adopted by the Tlingits. He is a White Indian, too. All this happened long ago, before any of the tribes were rich or powerful.

Let us all sit down together and speak earnestly about the things that matter. Let's talk about what is true. We have the chance to overcome the things that lead to misery and conflict and all it really requires is to remember who we are and what we are in the great scheme of things, what we value and what is truly valuable.

Then we can stand up among all Mankind and all those who know the truth will admit it and it won't be necessary to fight about it anymore.

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