



ANNUAL REPORT

2017

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Words *that* Come Before All Else

The Ohen:ton Karihwatékwen, "The Words That Come Before All Else," is a Haudenosaunee expression of acknowledgement and appreciation for every part of the Natural World. It is recited to bring the minds of the people together in connection to each other and the rest of Creation.

greetings and thanks to each other as People.

Now our minds are one

We give thanks to Mother Earth Fish Plant Life Food Plants Animals Trees The Four Winds The Thunderers The Sun Grandmother Moon The Stars The Four Being The Creato

Now our minds are one.

ow our minds are one.

We bring our minds, hearts and bodies together as one as we give

Of all the things we have named, it was not our intention to leave anything out. If something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to send such greetings and thanks in their own way.

Greetings *from* Our Director



This has never been done before.

This new work to treasure up the lives, voices and dreams of North American Indigenous women elders formalizes an appreciation of their knowledge and wisdom as they orient their work of cultural renewal necessary for the continuity of Indigenous communities.

As Spirit Aliqued Leadership program works to sustain a pathway for Indigenous women's empowerment, we acknowledge beloved foremothers who were guided by the

common cause of revitalization of our Indigenous communities. We remember their powerful energies and spiritual inspiration with images of the sculpture *Madre* del Mundo (Mother of the World), conceived and created by the heart and hands of the late Choctaw artist and activist Marsha Gómez. Her clay pieces, in the artist's own words, are "a unique expression of respect and reverence for women, the earth, and Indigenous way of life."

Grounding our work in Indigenous ceremony, 2017 marked an active pilot year to operationalize Spirit Aliqned under the fiscal sponsorship of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. Program Coordinator Alexandra David and I established our main offices in Akwesasne Mohawk Territory. Through a careful process, thought leaders and well-known activists Gail Small and Gabrielle Tayac were invited mid-year to serve as program director and director of legacy collections, respectively. They set up remote offices in Lame Deer, Montana and Takoma Park, Maryland. Our dream team was complete.

We spent 2017 "building the bike as we're riding it," implementing a **C** As our organization grows, so too will our circles of Legacy Leaders 🥤 🥤

Planning > Action > Observation > Reflection development model to meet strategic markers for programming. For example, we learned from results of a survey of over 400 Indigenous women respondents that while there are many leadership circles in the landscape of North American Indigenous women and girls, they are not deeply connected. We therefore aim to develop broad geographic diversity in North America for fair and open attraction, selection, active engagement, and legacy development processes that appeal to a broad range of Indigenous woman elder candidates.

I am excited to celebrate with you the eight women who were invited in as our standardbearing circle of Legacy Leaders. Spirit Aligned supports these extraordinary wisdom keepers as they focus on their experiences, dreams, and stories that contain themes, characters, symbols, and expressions which reflect their

ancestral values, practices, and meaning of the worlds they hold up.

The inaugural gathering of Legacy Leaders took place in Lake Placid, New York. Together we established a co-creative field of story, surfacing the distinctiveness of each voice, each language, each sacred homeland. A foundation of sisterhood was constructed. igniting a conversation about strengthening Indigenous women elders from the inside out while elevating their voices, their collective power networks, and our shared healing journey.

As our organization grows, so too will our circles of Legacy Leaders. The work that emerged from the pilot year continues to inform our invitation process to bring in candidates who are ready to engage rigorous legacy development work.

The accomplishments over the past year and the work ahead depends on the support and contributions of friends, advisors, design partners, dedicated staff. and our inimitable



elders. I am immensely grateful to those individuals and partners whose loving energies and crucial support sustain us.

The iconic tribute of Gómez to Indigenous women, ways and Earth reminds me of the "blue marble" photograph taken in 1972 when the Apollo 17 space mission reached for Grandmother Moon. It was something that had never been done before. Perhaps the most awesome result of reaching for the moon was a renewed perspective described by astronaut Michael Collins:

"I remember so vividly what I saw when I looked back at my fragile home – a glistening, inviting beacon, delicate blue and white, a tiny outpost suspended in the black infinity. Earth is to be treasured and nurtured, something precious that must endure."

Our intention is that the Indigenous women elders presented to you in these pages are treasured and nurtured as well, held precious and enduring through their generations.

Watkonnonhwerá:ton. We welcome you to Spirit Aliqned.

Tekatsi:tsia'kwa Katsi Cook Akwesasne



Durpos

ABOUT SPIRIT ALIGNED LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Spirit Aligned exists to elevate the lives, voices and dreams of Indigenous women elders who are working to heal, strengthen and restore the balance of Indigenous communities. We consider them Legacy Leaders. They are connected knowers, cocreators empowered to identify their values, inherent purpose, and experiences in self-determined ways for the sake of their people and communities, and for the sustainability of the worlds they hold up. Our team has created a self-determined leadership program that builds on the strengths of the Legacy Leader in relation to herself and others. Each Legacy Leader is supported for three years by a fellowship award, with access to specialized resources to increase her personal sustainability and to impact a larger public audience across interrelated focus areas: violence against women and girls, women and Earth, leadership of Indigenous women and girls, Indigenous cultural expression, healing from historical trauma and oppression, and Indigenous education. Each group of Legacy Leaders becomes a circle, inside of which they engage each other to make connections and deepen relationships.

INTENTION

The intention to create a program centered around the legacies of North American Indigenous women elders resonates in the words of NoVo Foundation Co-President Jennifer Buffet, who supports Spirit Aligned "so that what lives deep within our Indigenous girls and women and Mother Earth can connect and come forth now in these extremely critical times."

Each Legacy Leader receives resources and support to re-imagine her relationship to herself and a circle of her peers. Discoveries and novel outcomes arise in gathering sequential circles of creativity embodied in our Indigenous women elders. Their diversity and intimate interconnection creates a new whole that sustains them, their families and communities, and the humanity in all of us.

nt SACRED STANDING OVER

Conceiving an aesthetic overview of this innovative work among North American Indigenous women elders, we are inspired by the architecture of the standing cornstalk, the spine of the maize and its culturally established structures of meaning and relationship. Celebrated as a life sustainer in the resurgence and renewal of the heart of life, maize is both medicine and metaphor for reproduction, abundance and integrity. Standing strong over the fields, maize continues to transform cultural realities all over the earth in ongoing reciprocity with human beings.

In the same way, the culture-bearing women presented in these pages exemplify extraordinary work begun by sowing seeds throughout their life cycle as they propagate knowledge and practice in the many fields they cultivate. They are supported programmatically to deeply examine and align elements of their life's work and unique expressive culture.

The beautiful representation on the painted and beaded white deerskin is the image of standing, sacred maize that lifts up the lives, voices, and dreams of Indigenous women elders.



Director Katsi Cook MOHAWK

Serving as an ambassador to the landscape of Indigenous women and girls leadership circles, Director Katsi Cook holds the values, vision and purpose of the Spirit Aliqned Leadership program over its entire arc, imparting her knowledge of Indigenous communities and decades of culture-based program design, direction and implementation expertise.

Katsi is an advocate of Indigenous women's health across the lifecycle, drawing from a Haudenosaunee traditionalist perspective the principle of Woman as the First Environment. She has worked for the past three decades at the intersection of environmental health and justice and reproductive health and justice research and policy.

Katsi is a founding member of Canada's National Aboriginal Council of Midwives, and an expert on Indigenous environmental reproductive health. She is a grandmother-advisor for Oherò:kon Rites of Passage in her Kanienkehá:ka home community of Akwesasne. As director, Katsi has made it her own legacy to identify and appreciate the women elders of



the Native world.

Program Director Gail Small CHEYENNE

Gail Small, Head Chief Woman, is a Northern Cheyenne, the Tsitsistas So'taeo'o. As Spirit Aliqned's program director, Gail advances a unique leadership program that supports cultural worldviews and streng thens Indigenous identity, values, and spirituality.

Gail was raised on her mother's Spotted Elk homeland along Lame Deer Creek. where she and her husband of 32 years built their home. She graduated from the University of Oregon School of Law and the University of Montana. She credits growing up amongst a family of matriarchs as her greatest education.

Head Chief Woman's expansive leadership over many decades has helped her people to protect their ancestral homeland and cultural way of life, while becoming surrounded by this country's largest coal strip-mine.

She is a former elected member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council and Board Chair of Chief Dull Knife College. Her tenure as Executive Director of the non-profit Native Action achieved national precedents in policy and law. Gail is also a teacher in the reservation schools, tribal colleges, and at various universities. She has testified before congressional committees and international tribunals.

Gail was a leadership fellow with the WK Kellogg Foundation,

Rockefeller, Reginald Heber Smith Legal Aid, and the Leopold International Leadership Program.



Director of Legacy Collections Gabrielle Tayac PISCATAWAY

Dr. Gabrielle Tayac, a member of the Piscataway Indian Nation, is an activist-scholar committed to empowering Indigenous perspectives. As director of legacy collections for the Spirit Aliqued Leadership program, Gabi has developed a culturally grounded process to assist Legacy Leaders in curating their life teachings.

Gabi's personal and professional path began within the embrace of her family, whose resilience was forged through attempted identity erasure in the lands now forming the nation's capital. As a representative of the Washington, D.C.'s host tribe, Gabi is intensively involved in supporting

Indigenous diasporic communities through political, ceremonial, and cultural efforts.

Gabi has drawn together elder wisdom, active encounter and

rigorous academic training at Cornell, Harvard, Amnesty International, National Geographic, on burial grounds, in kindergartens and swamps. She served as a historian and curator at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian for 18 years, helping to innovate the international acceptance of Indigenous knowledge keepers as experts on their own experience. Her children, Sebastian and Jansikwe, are independently taking on the charge as fourthgeneration activists.

Gabi's work co-creates the next phase of ways to expand, protect, and share indigenous knowledge. She is honored and delighted to be part of Spirit Aligned.



Alexandra David MOHAWK AND CREE

Alexandra David, Mohawk/ Cree, is an enrolled member of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe and the Mohawks of Akwesasne. She proudly serves as program coordinator for Spirit Aligned Leadership program, overseeing

Program Coordinator

the daily interweaving of complex elements of operations and activities. She serves as a thought partner to the director on matters of program design, outreach and logistics.

Alexandra maintains relationships between various partners within networks of Indigenous women and girls, SAL program staff and Legacy Leaders, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and NoVo Foundation.

Alexandra is a high-capacity entrepreneur with a background in business and non-profit operations, as well as an education in accounting and employment relations. She has over two decades of experience in project management and organizational support. Prior to launching an interior design consultancy, Alexandra served an administration role with International Funders for Indigenous Peoples, a global donor affinity organization.

Alexandra lives in Akwesasne, a Mohawk border territory along the shores of the St. Lawrence River near Cornwall, Ontario. She and husband Jason have raised children Nolan, Mitchell and Hadley together.

The lowship Awara

To honor the gifts of ancestral Indigenous knowledge they have so courageously nurtured, Spirit Aligned Leadership program invites selected North American Indigenous women elders into an intimate circle of Legacy Leaders.

Through a three-year fellowship, each Legacy Leader receives a personal annual monetary award to support them as they develop unique legacy collections. Creating enduring sisterhood across diverse geographic and cultural domains, accessing specialized resources, and honing their original personal and public narratives are the lasting

assets. The women commit to sharing and receiving wisdom from one another, gathering together twice annually, and visiting one another in smaller groups.

In accordance with sacred ceremony ways, we offer these blessings in gratitude for their lifetime teachings and care. Our aim is to provide Legacy Leaders with space and time to create new resources that will benefit their own communities and impact a much broader audience, now and for generations to come.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

a call throughout Native North America for applicants to our firstmore than 100 applications over a

Aligned Leadership program as our inaugural circle of Legacy Leaders.

A Call to Spirit

GATHERING LEGACY COLLECTIONS **OUR PROCESS** YEAR ONE: FOUNDATION

The call to spirit moves through Legacy Leaders, in accord with cultural sovereignty and Indigenous intellectual property rights, like a thread from one generation to those coming.

Our director of legacy collections works together with Legacy Leaders to collect their wisdom in their own self-determined ways. Curating ancestral knowledge and life teachings through the Spirit Aligned Leadership program is different from any other type of indigenized archival work that is known. It truly puts the Legacy Leader at the center. She decides the levels of access that will be available to various recipients.

WORKING TOGETHER

Over the three years of their fellowship, we support Legacy Leaders in planning and realizing their wisdom succession. They decide what matters. We move at their pace. Our team assists them by holding space and identifying resources to bring their ideas, stories, objects and archives together.

> We feel that the life experiences and knowledge of traditional Native women, particularly those who ave stepped out courageously to create healthful paths for their generations, deserve to be recognized and celebrated.'

> > Katsi Cook

- Introductions and relationship building
- Personal visit to a formative place
- Monthly focused conversations
- Ideas for resources

YEAR TWO: DEPTH

- Gather materials using self-determined, sovereign methodology
- Identify partners within organizations, traditional societies, families, etc.
- Identify safe and appropriate storage space
- Prepare content for possible shared media

YEAR THREE: SHARING

- Bundle content in a culturally relevant and personally determined space
- Produce presentations
- Finalize terms of access and Indigenous intellectual property protection
- Create plan for future use



Indugural

COLLECTIVE POWER

Our inaugural circle of of diverse Indigenous specifically those of the salmon, bison, corn and the spiritual energy that resonates from these ancient cultures -- this this healing power moves

We're honored to hold

As part of the ongoing creation of Spirit Aligned Leadership program, we invited the eight women elders selected to be our first Legacy Leaders to an October gathering in Lake Placid, the jewel of the Adirondacks and the heart of Haudenosaunee ancestral territory. We chose this destination to celebrate and honor the great beauty of Creation all around and within them.

As the gathering centered around the sharing of Indigenous knowledge, we felt guided to introduce our efforts to the universal forces through sacred ceremony. With the special assistance of respected wisdom keepers, we gained valuable insights about the medicine of time as it corresponded to the days of our gathering. We received our beloved quests through traditional protocol, during which good intentions were announced and welcomed with traditional songs of friendship.

Over the next few days together, we purposely moved at the speed of trust. Through collective storytelling and engaged listening,

we created a strong foundation of Indigenous sisterhood that acts like a basket to hold the hopes and deepening connection between the Legacy Leaders. In those intense sessions we listened for themes of leadership and empowerment, intergenerational knowledge transfer, courage to make change, working across boundaries, and healthful ways of working. Through stories, we gave and received healing, strength and recognition. We began to truly see and treasure one another.

The Legacy Leaders were later honored at an awards dinner, attended by Jennifer and Peter Buffet, NoVo co-presidents and ardent supporters of the Spirit Aliqned purpose. Each honoree received a token handcrafted in the likeness of the painted deer hide that inspired the Spirit Aliqned program design. It was quite a blessing to share an evening of celebration with these esteemed leaders.

Our final night together concluded with a full moon ceremony that deepened our relationships with each other, and oriented our inaugural circle of Legacy Leaders as connected knowers, conscious co-creators and carriers of sacred wisdom.



















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Sarah Agnes James

We are Caribou People since time immemorial. Creator put us here to take care of this part of the world and we're here to stay. We're never going away, this is our responsibility. **9**9

SARAH AGNES JAMES is a proud Neetsa'ii Gwich'in truth-teller who travels the world, singing a caribou welcome song to educate about the effects of climate change She was raised in the traditional Gwich'in way of life, living off the land hunting, fishing, gathering and trapping with her family. For Sarah, "school" was learning the meaning of this way of life among her close-knit family and speaking only Gwich'in until her teens.

Sarah's life purpose is to protect Izhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit, the "Sacred Place Where Life Beqins," from oil development. It is where the Porcupine Caribou give birth and raise their young. The herd is one of the largest in North America and has the longest annual land migration of any animal in the world. A spokesperson for her Alaskan Arctic Village home, the fragile coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Sarah's message is of the spiritual connection between her people, land and caribou. "We have a piece of the caribou heart in us as wich'in people, and the caribou have a piece of our heart in them. When we see the caribou hair floating down the river, they are telling us that they are on the move and we move with them."

Sarah strongly believes that future generations will appreciate this special place, often referred to as the American Serengeti. Facing environmental and political challenges is a way of life for the

Gwich'in. Over the course of just a few years, Sarah has celebrated increased protections of ANWR under one administration and now faces new challenges from the current regime that would open the refuge to development. Despite the ups and downs, she'll continue to be a voice for human rights.

Sarah celebrates her opportunity as a Legacy Leader to pass on her ancestral teaching to younger generations. "We must all help one another because our way of life is at stake," she says. "Learn from each other and go forward for the earth, so we can live."

Lenora Naranjo-Morse

IN MOTOR MUSIC

Creating has defined the way I learn and navigate through the world. Art is my passion, my meditation, and reward.

LENORA NARANJO-MORSE.

Kha Po Tewa (Santa Clara Pueblo) is a creator, making art everyday since childhood. She's transformed "trash" into totems and crafts designs from discard. Nora is a contemporary artist who energizes an ancestral sensibility into her art. She uses the organic supplies around her, like glittering micaceous clay and adobe, to connect to the land, her mother's teachings and the clay spirit embodied in those materials.

She was deeply influenced by her mother, Rose, in the Tewa view of life that brings a sense of wholeness. Rose gathered food with the seasons, saw everything as a resource, and turned clay into vessels, every act modeling survival and independence for her nine children. No wonder that today, Nora is literally a hands-on learner and educator, using her art as a platform to bring attention to the intersection of Pueblo culture and environment. She shares her experiences as an artist to help prepare Pueblo youth for the issues their generation will face in their lifetime.

Nora's public art piece at the National Museum of the American Indian, Always Becoming, in many ways exemplifies her leadership. Always Becoming is intergenerational, interactive, collaborative, and needs yearly, collective tending. She involves the public and brings in other artists to work with her. She widens the circle, sending her art into other hands for caretaking and renewal. She creates space for dialogue around Indigenous issues and collegial exchange of worldviews. Her art and life process, contemporary but with deep grounding in her Tewa homeland, exemplifies Spirit Alignment and the standard bearing of a Legacy Leader.

"I know my life's work can be used toward creating healthier communities," says Nora. "For the past 20 years I have been taking steps toward including other communities as well. Indigenous women have the opportunity to create change at home and include other communities as we share knowledge and support each other moving forward."

Louise Wakerakats:te Herne



66 So much of the mystery and secret of life, I humbly believe, is to determine what our gift is, recognize it, improve it, refine it and continue to develop it. **77**

LOUISE WAKERAKATS:TE HERNE illuminates the journey for many to regenerate love for themselves, their children, and their people. She grew up beside her skilled mother's hip, helping with farm, garden and home chores. She was surrounded by the expressive Mohawk language, and learned to speak it fluently. Every kind word was a reflection of the close connection between the people and the land. Louise's childhood, full of women-led duty under her mother's leadership, prepared her for the responsibilities that lay ahead on her journey.

A condoled Mohawk Bear Clan Mother, Louise embodies the blood memory of original head Corn mothers who kept a finger on the pulse of their families and maintained an ancient responsibility to the land. Her love for her language, land and people is the foundation of her leadership, the rich soil in which she plants her seeds.

Louise activates ceremony as a way of being and knowing over the life course – symbolically and literally cutting a path away from violence and abuse toward spiritual reclamation. Pulling the continous, connective thread of ancient matrilineal knowledge from Sky Woman through to the present, she applies traditional Haudenosaunee values in a contemporary context. She quides adolescents through a ceremonial rite of passage that fortifies the individual and empowers the loving community

around them. Louise opens sacred space for girls and women linked to celestial cycles in the Moon Lodge, a welcoming place where songs, laughter and prophetic dreams are shared. As part of Konon:kwe, a circle of women relatives, she champions the principle of Kahnistensera, "Mother Law," a natural law that binds Onkwehon:we kinship society.

Louise has co-created a renewed Haudenosaunee narrative for resilience and resistance rooted in the practice of perpetual gratitude. "As Indigenous women," she says, "I find the practice of giving

thanks to all that sustains us also sustains our fortitude to keep pushing forward. Through the good, bad and the ugly I have learned to embrace and accept without judgment all that falls upon my path."

Dr. Henrietta Mann

66 I have fasted upon our sacred mountain. This place has strengthened my spirit many times, and it is my spiritual home. Other Sun Dance Women before me have gone there to pray, and I know that many generations of others will go there after me. Our prayers are one long unbroken braid of sweet grass.

DR. HENRIETTA MANN "Woman Who Comes to Offer Prayer" is Cheyenne, "The People Alike." Her great-grandmother, White Buffalo Woman, was the last of the buffalo and horse people. She lovingly taught Henri the ways of the Spirit Powers. To know Henri, we must know her teacher. White Buffalo Woman was an eleven-year-old girl when she was attacked in the 1864 Massacre at Sand Creek, where hundreds of U.S. soldiers, led by a Methodist minister, mutilated women, elders and children. White Buffalo Woman survived this atrocity but was taken as a prisoner of war in her own Indigenous homeland.

Having lived through the wars that forcefully took their Indigenous homeland, White Buffalo Woman taught Henri to always love this land that Creator gave them. "It is Ho'e, Earth, where we were planted and given life," she taught Henri. "She gives us a home and an identity. She provides for us and we renew her in reciprocity through our ceremonies."

Living her sacred teachings, Henri continues to renew this world as a Cheyenne Sun Dance Grandmother. She has energetically forged new paths for younger generations by bridging Western educational settings with traditional, spiritual ways of being. Henri has great concern for the lack of educational opportunities and the racism that challenge this country's first children. She believes

education should reinforce their beautiful cultural identities and, that history must be truthful for reconciliation to occur.

Henri devoted her life to being a teacher at various universities and tribal colleges and has received numerous recognition awards. She also served as the spiritual compass during the formation of the National Museum of the American Indian. She views her legacy as a giveaway to the next generation, noting that as Indigenous woman Elders, "we still possess our abilities

to lead, to love humankind, to yet carry out our peoples' wealth of traditional knowledge, to have a respect for all life, to maintain a compassionate view of the world, and to be concerned about the desecration of Mother Earth."

Jan Kahehti:io Longboat

6 My dream is to see the women take their rightful places again as lifegivers, teachers, singers, gardeners, and most of all as the centerposts of the home. **77**

JAN KAHEHTI:IO LONGBOAT,

Turtle Clan of the Mohawk Nation, draws in the love of Mother Earth to heal trauma and foster hope. She grew up in a large matrilineal family on the Six Nations of the Grand River reserve and inherited a deep sense of service and gratitude from her grandmother, who expressed thanks in her language every day to all the life in the Natural World. From their close relationship, Jan learned cultural careqiving practices around birth and death. Today Jan lives and works on the very ground where she was born and raised, carrying on the work she learned under her

grandma's wing.

Through teaching and gathering community at health centers, universities and her Earth Healing Herb Gardens and Retreat Centre, Jan quides Indigenous individuals, families, and nations back to sharing in the spirit of unity. Visitors to her healing lodge experience her grandma's influence in her practice today. She works with plant medicine, story, language, and song to encourage women – especially those who carry suffering from generations of residential school abuse – to take their rightful places as the center pole of the home. Opening sacred places where women can heal their spiritual wounds and find joy is Jan's response to her elders, who remind us to connect to the ancestral knowledge and energy of women.

While reconnecting to her Kanien'keha:ka language some two decades ago, Jan grasped onto the root word for tekaneren, circle, meaning "it keeps going round and round, " tying our words, actions, expressions, purposes, and stages of life together. The concept returned her spirit to the beginning of her life's work around Indigenous healing ways and renewed her purpose: seeking truth, transformation and reconciliation for Indigenous women, their communities and nations.

"The Indigenous knowledge passed down from generation to generation has prepared the women to never give up," says Jan. "The perseverance and resilience required will always remind us of our roles and relationships within the community."

Barbara Poley

66 My hope is to create elder resources willing to share with our young ones how living the Hopi Way is not just to be followed in ceremonies but through our everyday lives. **77** BARBARA POLEY, is a Laguna and Hopi educator who has seeded the Hopi way of life over decades of dedication. She instills the ancestral values formed on the mesas through ceremonial cycles, clan relationships, and farming into daily contemporary life so that culture remains vibrant and central. Dry farming corn teaches that living in a traditional way may be difficult, "but with patience, care, and tending to the needs of these plants, we receive the abundance of new life with our corn which can be grown over and over for many years to come." Barbara, along with her husband of 53 years, Orin, and their children have practiced this lifeway

in their daily lives.

Barbara came to understand the impact of her own language loss as she grew up in an era that forced many Native peoples towards assimilation. Her parents stressed education in the dominant society as a way to success, an ideal reinforced by her father's boarding school experience. Barbara's father, a skilled craftsman, died at an early age from alcoholism, and her family's business was lost. Gathering strength with the cultural values that her parents instilled in her, Barbara rose to life's challenges. She earned her B.S. and M.A. degrees from Northern Arizona University. Barbara combined her life experience, Hopi values and skills to help others.

The next generation of leaders is rising throughout Hopi, growing

strong with Barbara's quidance and careful cultivation. Her 18-year-long leadership at the Hopi Foundation brings forward the educational ethics of her ancestor, Chief Loloma. She has developed a leadership curriculum that has empowered dozens of Hopi thinkers, doers, and dreamers to heal and quide their community. "It is my belief that when we have selfidentity and have our values as our shield," says Barbara, "we create resilience for our Hopi way of life, taking into context the present

changes in life we have been dealt. The renewed strength of our people will lead toward our survival for generations to come."

Loretta Afraid of Bear Cook

6 Working together and sharing ceremonial space with women is not luck or coincidence. It is clear to me that it is meant to be. that our power intensifies when we come together in prayer. **77**

LORETTA AFRAID OF BEAR

COOK is a Tetowan Lakota grandmother, medicine woman and culture keeper who strives to live by the sacred instructions of her women teachers: Wahwoptetusni (to be uniquely steadfast), Shakica (to be physically strong and beautiful), and Waqluhtapi (to offer sacred food in ceremony). Born into Oceti Sakowin, the Seven Councils Fires of the Lakota, Loretta was well prepared by her mother and grandfather, both highly regarded spiritual leaders, to carry out the seven sacred rites of her people. She has walked a traditional and ceremonial way of life, helping and inspiring others all along her journey.

Carrying the belief that women are the thread and the weavers of social transformation of Indigenous communities, Loretta moves the relatives towards regeneration of health and restoration of sacred space. She is a keeper of Lakota ways; her leadership around Sun Dance is revered among her Afraid of Bear/American Horse tiospaye and throughout the world. She has cultivated healthy ways through garden projects in her home community Pine Ridge, nurturing starter plants and the relationships that form between relatives when they work intensely to grow food. Loretta carries on the intergenerational struggle to restore the holy Black Hills to Indigenous care through the He Sapa Black Hills Initiative.

relatives in prayer.

She offers her strong and resilient grandmother's experience to youth whenever asked. She actively contains and infuses peace, walking deep-rooted ceremonial instructions across oceans and continents to lead

Encouraged by the new space created by Spirit Aligned and by the gathering of Indigenous women's wisdom, Loretta is ready to share the knowledge she's earned over a lifetime so it can grow in power. "Generation after generation of my relatives believed in safequarding our traditional

knowledge so its integrity was secure," she says. "However, my understanding from a lifetime of learning from revered wisdom keepers is that I should carry it responsibly, respectfully, and hold it in a sacred manner. When, as my mother explained, it's given from the heart, its full intent will be realized.

Yvonne Annette DuPuis Peterson

You don't teach everyone the same weave because then they won't need each other. **77** **YVONNE ANNETTE DUPUIS**

PETERSON Too Nee Mu Sh in her Chehalis language, is a weaver. She inspires others through her loving acts of recognizing, gathering and processing natural materials and weaving them into cultural art forms. She encourages us all to "sit beside" each other and learn - the way her resourceful mother taught her. Growing up amid 13 siblings, Yvonne quickly learned the precious value of responsibility. It was the key to her social world, her access to cultural activities. The Chehalis people were rich in community, in salmon, berries, water and much natural bounty.

Yvonne was raised to work hard for family, community and self in the prairie and river lands of her people. Her ancestors are woven into her consciousness and actions, she breathes their same breath and walks the paths they created for her generations ago. It is weaving, in fact, that founds the basis of her culture understandings. Weaving baskets connects her to ancestors and the Chehalis' cultured natural world, strands of plants and memories coming together in a beautiful contained wholeness to carry into the next generation.

Expressing her prayers as poems, Yvonne seeks to "transform the past into the future through a prism of caring." She is a political scientist, educator, and intergenerational cultural awakener who weaves traditional and academic methods at home and at Evergreen State University. She is excited to sit

beside her sister Legacy Leaders and learn about their diverse practices and expressions. Yvonne assures those around her to trust their own thinking, persevere, and show their faces to the ancestors.

"I am drawn to the Spirit Aligned Legacy Leader cohort to learn from other women committed to the betterment of our communities," says Yvonne. "One of the teachings in the Puqet Salish area is that you don't teach everyone the same weave because then they won't need each other. I need the teachings of the cohort right now because all of us got to this point from different

teachings. It is the right time to listen, share, and commit to each of us becoming culturally strong."

Closing Prayer

Haah-nah'e Ma'heo'o, Life-giver, maker of Earth and all things on and of the earth, which is sacred and good:

Thank you for the water of life, the breath of life, the fire of life, and for this living Earth, our beloved Spirit Mother.

From each sunrise to each sunset of our lives, let us always remember to protect and honor the Earth.

Give us the loving mind, heart, and spirit to humbly live your ways as long as the sun, moon, stars, and earth shall last.

Thank you for blessing us with spiritual life as xammavoestaneo'o, this land's original peoples.

Thank you for all the peoples of earth, those of the water, and those of the air. Let us always remember our kinship to one another.

Ma'heo'o, watch over our children, grandchildren, and all who are coming from spirit to live on this sacred Mother Earth. Wrap them all in the protective powers of Peace and Love, which is my hope for all time.

Ma'heo'o naa hena'haanehe

Prayer Woman Henrietta Mann Tsitsistas So'taeo'o Cheyenne



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AKWESASNE BUSINESS CENTER 447 Frogtown Road, suite 109. Akwesasne, ny 13655 P: 518-333-0373

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