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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Traditional teacher in University setting.
- Proposal for friendship ceremony between Iroquois and Ojibway.
- Iroquois confederacy.
- Kootenay plains initiative in return to traditional lifestyle.
- Reflections on past and future wars.
- Importance of elders in recovery of traditional values.

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Ted Wheatley: (Ojibway) I'm an Indian, but can you tell me what the hell an Indian is? Gee, that's going to take a long time. If you have the patience, I think, in one year I will be able to tell you what an Indian is. So, I proceeded to do just that and I think I've learned by making all the mistakes that any teacher makes, to be able to impress upon the people the things they need to know because the language is our clothing of character. When we lose our language, if we do not have it, there is always something that's missing in us, and this is what happened to this particular student that said he was very angry - but he soon lost his anger. He found out the value of the language, what it meant to him. And I have done that and I thought that I would only be doing it for a couple of years, because I've been sort of a lazy person at heart anyway. I thought I'd get out of as much work as I can. But the deeper I got into language - I was an absolute greenhorn and I had to learn more of the language.

Most of the students that I was teaching were going out to Alberta. Well, when the people moved from the Mississauga Reserve in the 15th century out west, the language changed considerably. I had to follow them out there and most of these people, (tape interruptions) and a lot of them, when I spoke Ojibway to them, would smile at me and speak in Cree, but there was nothing I could do because I couldn't understand that much Cree. Finally, I met a man; he said to me, "I've been watching you and you've been speaking to a number of Saulteaux people. And they always answer you in Cree. How is it that you can speak? You look like a white man yet you can speak Indian. And I think that's what's wrong," he said. "You give a biography of yourself to people that you wish to speak to and they will accept you." So I started my biography and it was quite effective but I won't go into my biography. I've been as foolish as any young man that was growing up.

I had a grandfather that lived to be 112 and my grandmother also. She was born in Sucker Creek. She could speak Ojibway, she could turn around and speak Odawa beautifully. And I have much to learn from them because having not been able to get around like the rest of the boys, I was around them a great

deal and I guess a great deal of the wisdom that they taught me began to bear fruit as I grew older I suppose. It seemed I had to live a lifetime to find out the wisdom that was implanted in my memory. And I've put that to good use in telling the students. Some of the students are very bitter. They are very impatient and they don't want to take the time to do the things that are proper. And that is my main duty at the University. I may teach language and I may give lectures in native related courses about different reservations to whom I have gone but I

think the greatest problem is to reorient the native students that they can turn around. Instead of saying, "He's crazy!" - students running from one course to another and they say, "This is not for me," - I say to them, "You have patience. If you have patience for three months, you will stay the year because I think your grandparents and your parents are praying that you stay in the University so that you'll be better equipped to carry on the administrative duties of you're communities."

A long time it has been that the white man has taken over the many things on our reservations. It doesn't have to be because we eat three meals a day ourselves and I think it should be up to the young people to do the administrative duties. So, my main duty is to convince them to stay in the University and to find the people that they can communicate with because the one thing I was told - I learned early in life - my grandfather, if I wanted to know something, if I wanted to learn something - if I was playing on the ground, it would take him maybe, sometimes ten minutes to get down on the ground because he was about 90 years old then and his bones were a little stiff. But he would get down and he would say, (Ojibway). "We'll do this together." And the white man always has the habit of saying, "I will show you." And that's a big difference and I think this is why a lot of the native students would not accept the academic classes for that reason. If the person shows enough humanism, I think they could easily say, "Let us do it together," and I'm sure this is what I say to my students - "We'll learn together," - because it's more heartening to me to see them learn.

I don't like to go to the convocations when they graduate because I can't stop the tears running down my face. I'm so happy for them, that they may be someday our leaders or their children may be leaders because something has been instilled in them that has laid dormant for so many years. (Ojibway)

(applause)

Speaker: That was very good. I hope we have a chance to hear you again later this week. Is Jim Dumont here? Well, while we wait for him, I am very happy to see Ernest Benedict sitting there and we've been looking forward to hearing from an Iroquois.

Ernest Benedict: I've learned that from an Odawa. (chuckles) I think one of the nicest things that have happened to me and to the whole Indian movement has been this willingness on the

part of our people to share with one another and to listen to one another and to encourage one another in our search for truth and for a direction and a purpose for our people. And so I give great compliments to the people who have convened, or

brought all of us here together, to listen to one another and to try to learn from one another. And one of the rather uncertain moments I had was when reading in the history of the Bell Rocks, and knowing that the Iroquois people were the enemies at the time that the Bell Rocks were most important to the people of the Anishnabe nation.

And so I find that perhaps this message of the Bell Rocks should be brought again to the councils of the Iroquois and that there be a recognition and perhaps there should be a formal meeting and a formal ceremony performed to make some things right that at one time, were found to be not right. And so, perhaps in a year's time when we convene again, we will be able to make a ceremony of friendship to show that there is now a unity between the Iroquois and the Anishnabe nations. And so, we will see, with this next year we will be able to perform a full ceremony of that nature. You will find that there will be a gathering which is called, 'the fire at the edge of the woods,' and there will be chanting and a formal recitation there, at a little small fire at the edge of the clearing where those Bell Rocks will be. And then hopefully if you, the Anishnabe nation, are agreed to be friendly, then a certain delegation will be sent over to the fire of the Iroquois. And then there will be a formal exchange of speeches. And then if, as a result of the speeches, the Anishnabe nation will invite the Iroquois, the Iroquois will come to the Bell Rocks as a meeting of nations and this will be formal. And I hope that the Iroquois will see fit to send a formal delegation next year to make that ceremony of friendship with the Anishnabe nation.

In the history of the Iroquois people, there has been much conflict. Very great, very regrettable scenes of bloodshed, and when the Europeans came, those instances of conflict and bloodshed spread throughout the Indian nations and not only from the Iroquois, but involves almost all the Indian nations across the country as they were pushed one against another and then there were tempers flaring which were helped along by two things, the political agitators among the Europeans and the use of hard drink. And so those two agencies are still with us and we must constantly guard ourselves against the evils that come, both from the suggestions that come from outside our nations, and the booze, the hard liquor, and the drugs that have come to despoil the minds of our young people; and also, of course, of the older people, too. And so we have this great problem in our own survival and our identity as Indian people. We have seen, we have discussed the great problems that are all around us among our people and we are sometimes discouraged that perhaps we will not be able to survive as we were intended or created. And so we have great concerns. And those concerns have reached way back in the past. I have, I think yesterday,

discussed a little bit about one of our historical heroes, Tecumseh, one of the great ones of the Anishnabe people, who was forced to become a violent person, but then was kept, and kept to the end of his life, a little bit of reserve. He knew he was Indian, and he behaved as Indian, and put aside his army uniform at the last, and put on his Indian....

(break in tape)

Ernest Benedict: ...by his own people and because of that, and he even thought of living among the whites. But there was a Colonel that wanted to make a name for himself in the colonial armies and attacked Logan's family, his wife, his children, grandchildren. And in those days, an extended family could reach in all directions around that central fireside. They would have adopted people coming in. And so, all of these had been killed, and Logan went on his trail of revenge and killed every white that he could find, until finally he grew tired and found that there was no purpose in this campaign of revenge that he was on. And his last statement was, "Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one." And so, the white man did not mourn for Logan and he had no family left to mourn for him among his own people. There was such a tragic speech that he gave to the last and that impressed one of the leaders of the United States, well, the United States cabinet, who wrote that there were no writers and no speechmakers in European history that had made a speech as strong or as significant as the one that Logan had made so simply, so honestly put. And yet Logan was from among the Iroquois people; he was of a splinter tribe; he was related to those of the Five Nations.

The Five Nations was a confederacy which was formed in the ages long ago as a government whose purpose was peace, not just peace for the Iroquois, not just peace for Indians, but peace, universal peace. And here was a government that had been formed for that purpose and still, its entire, almost its entire history, has been one of conflict from one war to another, and then battles right down through its history. But still, that ideal of peace still stands, and it is still an ideal that is carried on by the old people of our nations, of the Iroquois nations. And it is an ideal that has been accepted in principle by all of the native nations. It is also an ideal that has been accepted by the nations of the world, and those ideas have been put into the United Nations convention. And so, a great thought and great ideals and great purposes do not die simply because people can't catch up. They are purposes that are a heritage. It is something that is part of the duties and the burdens that one generation gives to another. This is what we are aiming for. And this is what we expect the future generations to work for. And so, we,

as elders, would be very wise to know what our people have thought from long time before our time. During our lifetime, we have only begun to learn the purposes and the great gifts that have been handed to us from the past, and so we need more than one lifetime, and so we need to talk as elders to those who are still older, to those who would understand, of the

coming generation, so that they would have conversation with us and through that conversation, we will be reminded of some of those things that we have put aside and we have thought perhaps we had forgotten them. But they could become again a part of the life of our children and our children's children.

A few years ago I went to an encampment of people - I think there was a mention of it even this morning - on the Kootenay plains west of Edmonton, Alberta. And there was this encampment, people living in tents, having given up the soft ways of civilization that was on their home reserves. They found that, along with their soft ways on those prosperous reserves, there was also corruption, and they did not want that corruption, so they decided that it would be better to go where life was harder, where people actually had to work and suffer, but where they could bring up their children in the ways that the parents could decide. And they would then be able to cope better with those really strong agencies that the white man has sent in, the advertisers, the commercials on television and all.

These people moved out and went back into the tents, and they've started their spiritual life. And I heard from those people, from one of their leaders, that, by the time they had gone and set up their camp there, they discovered that they had already forgotten much of the old, of their own teachings and their own heritage. Even a bit of their language had been lost. And so they had to start over, they had to dig deep in their memories. And so, they went to the sweat lodge and there received spiritual messages that replaced much of what they had lost. And so the people there had a much greater awareness of how a good life should be lived. And their influence has gone far beyond their own nation; their influence has gone to all of the nations within Canada. And even the one that I am replacing here at this microphone, also has felt their influence, and perhaps he will tell about it in his address. And so a great spiritual revival has been centered among those people that gave us their easy ways and selected for themselves a harder way, a much more difficult way, one way where there was much suffering. But, in the midst of that suffering also, this elder that I talked to, said, "Within, even in that first year, our people were strong enough so that there was no sickness during that entire winter in that whole encampment of about 150 people."

Yes, there is suffering but there is also strength. And if we, who are going to be instructing the coming generations, will

select for them not the easy ways, not the easy, comfortable road, but a difficult one, where they will need to suffer, to work hard and to think straight thoughts, and to think in harmony with nature, to remember our Creator in all their doings, then our next generations will be strong enough to cope with the trials and the conflicts that are sure to come to them. And so that brings me to the last topic.

It seems as though all of the nations around us are bent on one thing, and even some of our own people are getting affected too. Those nations of the world are going and picking up speed toward a final conflict. And almost every day, it looks as though that final great conflict is coming very fast. And they do not seem to be able to stop themselves. They are denying - saying the only way to peace is through our great big muscles and building up our arms. Well, it has not ever worked in the past and it looks as though the leaders of the world haven't learned very much from the past, and it would be the people, our own people, who have a long heritage of peace, and an ideal of peace and cooperation that need to speak up now and tell the leaders of the world that they are on a foolish and dangerous path.

We have had, in our history, lots of tales of conflict. But, if you look at those stories of how various groups fought with one another, or against one another, you will find that much of that was almost a game and there were rules, very definite rules, that each side followed. And the end result was not necessarily a great war, or where whole nations of armies were brought up against another on a great battlefield. The struggles, usually, were small. It remained for our European visitors to come and actually teach what war was all about, in a great mass of human beings pitted up against another mass of human beings, and shooting it out to the death. And that has only been in recent years when people had all the benefit of all that long history behind them, where they should have learned to do away with wars. And so much of what has been happening, has been actually unnecessary - only because, perhaps of greed, and, as the Bible says, because of the hardness of your hearts.

So, there is a great purpose yet for our people. And it is time for us to speak out and speak loudly, and say that we must honor the earth, we must honor our Creator. We must bring about the peace and we must provide for future generations. And so if we are faithful to those ends, I believe that our people will survive. They must survive. Thank you.

(applause)

Speaker: Thank you, Ernest. I was very heartened to hear this coming of the Iroquois nation and making some kind of a formal ceremony to make whatever right that needs to be done. I'm sure this will happen out at the Bell Rocks area.

During our sessions here for the next several days, I would like to invite the young people to take advantage of visiting the elders they have heard up to now, and those around us that we haven't heard yet. They will be here. They are here for you to listen to and they will, I'm sure they will, understand your problems or whatever else you wish to discuss. Please take advantage of this time while they're here, together. And up till now we haven't had a chance to have that discussion and questions after our presentations. Perhaps we might start that

now or do we have an elder amongst us here who wishes to say a few words that we do not have on the program? You're welcome now.

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Angus Nogongiig: (Ojibway)

(applause)

Speaker: Thank you, Angus. Angus is from Wikwemikong. He is also a cousin of my father. I would like to just, maybe, say a few words on what he said. He said the Dreamer Rock is a reminder of how our ancestors lived in the past. They fasted, they fasted for ten days. They did not eat and they did not drink. They had a small stone in their mouth to help them against thirst and hunger. They fasted for a reason, for a need or a want or something for the Great Spirit, for God. This was hard to do, just as hard as the time when Christ suffered before he was crucified. He said the rock is for us to remember, for our children to remember the strength that our Anishnabe ancestors had. The Bell Rocks, for the same reason. The Bell Rocks in the area are reminders for us to remember the ways that our ancestors were, their ways of life, their strength, their determination. He wishes that we would do the same thing or remember that. He also mentioned that powwows were meant for people to get together, of all nations, no matter what color or race to be friendly, to share each other's love and happiness. And he said much more but I couldn't write that fast. I am very pleased that Angus was able to speak with us here today. Anyone else?

Unknown: Jim is here.

Speaker: Jim Dumont? Oh, Jim Dumont, we are continuing with our Anishnabe speakers. We wish you would come up at this

time. We hope to have all these speakers again at different times and periods throughout this gathering so be prepared to be called upon at any time of the morning or afternoon.

He is from the University of Sudbury. We are pleased and proud to have him come whenever we have gatherings or get-togethers or meetings or whatever. He's been very helpful with our organization and we wish to do the same, reciprocate, whenever we can.

Jim Dumont: I might surprise everybody and make this short.

Unknown: You better not.  
(laughter)

Jim: I'm still thinking about what my uncle Ernest said when he spoke up here a little while ago. And one of the things, maybe, has something to do with the reason that this question

was asked about the Dreamers Rock up here, and how we should regard that today.

It seems that for so long, in my parents' time and back where I come from, even before that, people began to talk about how these ways, that were at one time our life ways, that they were rapidly disappearing, that there was no point in teaching language and culture and history of our people to our children anymore; that the best thing for them to do was to go the white man's way, go to his school, to his religion, to learn his history and to do his work, to get his kind of jobs; that if we were going to have a successful future, that was really the only hope for us. And so more and more of us, of my generation, were channelled in that way so that we would have a proper education, so that we would be prepared for the kind of society that we were going to move into, the kind of society that people felt, Anishnabe people felt, was the only kind of future that was waiting for us out there.

And so, many of us grew up, as I did, without all these things that we're trying to find out now. And we weren't even taught to look at our ancestors, the old people, who were at one time young people in the past, who did great things for our people, who stood up for our people in times of great difficulty. We weren't even taught in the schools or necessarily, even by our parents, that they were our heroes, they were our elders, they were our ancestors and they were the ones who kept these things alive for us. Otherwise we wouldn't be here today and we wouldn't be able to call ourselves Anishnabe. We weren't even taught that. And so, now we're asked, we're reminded over and over again, and this is the reason that we look to gatherings like this. We must respect our elders because in our elders is the knowledge of the past, in our elders is still held the language and the teachings, the culture, the history. They are

the ones who have never let that go and if we are ever to truly understand our ways, we need still to respect our elders and to look for them wherever they are and to learn from them. We're at a point today where it seems even difficult to find among the old people, those that are referred to as elders, who still carry this, who still hold it for us. And so, we've had to travel all over to find them. We've had to go without sleep. We've had to travel all over the country just to find a few people who still remembered. Usually only to find out that they've been around us all the time and we didn't recognize them right in our own home town, in our own home community.

But now, when we think about our history and our past, we look back and we try to remember people like Tecomseh, people from all over North America who, in the past, have tried not to let their own people down; who have held strong to their ways and have even fought for their ways; who have held their own grandchildren back in order to teach them. We're told about those things now. And we try to look back and try to identify with those ones in the past who have helped to keep this alive so that we can be here today and still talk about these things. But for some reason, we haven't gotten very far beyond that.

We need to have that; we need to have our past and our roots. We need to be rooted in our culture, in our history and with our mother. We need to have that, our past. We need to have knowledge of that because there is no future for us without our past. And although it was almost erased, it is still here and we still can learn it.

But some people think, whether it's in the education system or whether it's in culture programs or various things that are introduced into schools or into Indian communities, that all we have to cling to is our past. And it's almost brought forward as a pipe in a museum that you can go and look at. You can't touch it any more. You can't use it any more, but you can go and look at it and it will remind you of your past. It will remind you of how you were once a great people. And what I would like to say here today is that there are among us old people and young people who are already doing the things that our people did in the past to keep these ways alive and to make them strong again. Those people are right amongst us. They are sitting with us here.

There is an old man who sits here, who still holds the songs of the prophecies. He still has the knowledge of the lodge of life, the great lodge of our people. He still has the stories and the teachings that go with those things. And he sits right among us although in his own community, they hardly recognize him. Although they phone all over to find elders and teachers to come to help them with their ceremonies, he's hardly recognized in his own community - and yet he sits here right among us.

There was a man who was only with us for a very short time. He was only given a very short time on this earth and he comes from the next reserve down the road, Wikwemikong. During that very short time that he was with us, he brought back to our people a pipe that was held in a museum for over 150 years. And that pipe, after he was taken back to the Creator, to the spirit world, when he had done what he had come here to do - a great work, I guess, that's hardly recognized even by the people in his own community and by the people on this island, by the people around this area.... And yet people from Saskatchewan, Alberta, people from James Bay, people from northwestern Ontario, and some people from this part of Ontario, in a ceremony that was held up north last year, recognized that pipe, not only as a thunder pipe but as the headstone pipe of all thunder pipes. And that's what that young man did. And he lived amongst us here and he left that for us. He did that in our time, while he was young. And he's one of the people that we can talk about now as one who has done a great work for our people. And that pipe is alive now, it's not encased in a museum behind glass. That pipe has been smoked. There are people who look after that pipe.

And there is a little boy who runs around amongst us who was dancing at the powwow over there this weekend. He is the one, it's said, who is destined to carry that pipe one day. He is

already living and he is amongst us. He is one of the future great people and we should know who he is. We should know how to recognize him and, in every way that we can, we should put out our hand to him and help him to be raised in the way that he will be able to properly carry that great responsibility that he hardly knows that he's been given. And yet he knows that pipe already, and he's only this high. He already lives among us.

And there is somebody who sits among us today who brought to the western doorway of the Ojibway nation, the Sundance, after it had been sleeping for so many years. The Ojibway Sundance of the western doorway people....

(End of Side B)

(End of Tape)

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