

August 30, 2012
She Sang and She Danced, Everything Changed

There was a posting from 2008 on Thomas Sullivan's: Remarks Presented at the Closing Plenary of the 11th National Indian Nations Conference: Strengthening the Heartbeat of All Our Relations This was a 2008 Conference.

I was impressed with his clear grasp of the issues in Indian Country and with the issue of Child Abuse in general. I am posting the writings that I find on the Social Services Page so that everyone can go and see for himself or herself.

The part that I found the most inspiring was the event that he heard about that inspired him and upon which he predicated his work in ACF.

A Story

I would like to conclude with a story about a young Lakota lady that I believe is quite relevant to the issues we all deal with – inadequate resources to do the work we need to do.

In the Fall of 1984 Sue Anne Big Crow was a freshman member of the Pine Ridge girls basketball team which traveled to Lead, SD, in the middle of the Black Hills, for one of their first games of the year.

The Lead gym is small with little room for fans from visiting teams and so few traveled to Lead to support their teams. This night the Lead fans were especially obnoxious with war whoops, drumming, chanting “commodity bods” and other insulting comments.

Some in those stands probably remembered the response of the Lakota Nation to the 1980 Supreme Court decision about the taking of the Black Hills in which Justice Blackmun wrote that this was the most egregious treaty violation by this nation. This decision awarded \$100 million to the plaintiffs who have, to this day, refused to take any of this money demanding the only decision that will be satisfactory – the return of their sacred Black Hills to them. Such an attitude was the cause, I am confident, of some of the hostility from the Lead fans.

Typically the visiting team is first on the basketball court lead by their seniors. This night the Pine Ridge seniors, intimidated by all the noise and hostility from the Lead fans, told their coach they could not lead their team onto the floor.

Freshman Sue Anne Big Crow volunteered to lead her team onto the floor

and she did.

When Sue Anne got to half-court she stopped, passed the ball to the senior behind her, turned to the Lead bleachers and began to dance and to sing a song, both taught to her by her grandmother. It was a traditional shawl dance, using her warm-up jacket as a shawl.

As she sang and danced, the Lead fans began to go quiet until there was total silence in the gym when Sue Anne finished her dance and song.

As she took the basketball from her team-mate the Lead fans broke into loud applause and clapping. That was the immediate effect of Sue Anne's efforts. Years afterward the results of her efforts were still manifest: Lead and Pine Ridge team members and their parents visit back and forth, sharing holidays with each other, traveling throughout the state and this nation as well as internationally together.

This was all accomplished by a 14 year old freshman wearing only her basketball uniform. As I recall there isn't much that's less respected than a freshman in high school. I often think back to this story when I am trying to sort through what I have accomplished in a particular day or week. I have to admit that I have not yet measured up to the accomplishments of this 14 year old freshman basketball player.

After all I have the benefit of age, education and position. How is it that a 14 year old girl, demonstrating courage far beyond her age, a freshman, in nothing more than a basketball uniform has accomplished so much with a dance and song taught by her grandmother?

That young lady would be a 30-year Old woman today. What she accomplished that one day, exceeds in and of itself, anything accomplished by the entirety of several Tribal Councils.

Another thing you will see in this report is that the problems we are talking about today, the child abuse, the rapes and worse; the living conditions and the fact that none of the government agencies charged with oversight of these agencies, were willing to do anything about it. They were aware of the problems and they ignored them.

You can go back 20, 30 or more years and find the exact same things and the exact same inaction on the part of those who were in positions of authority and power. We have multi-generational traumatic abuse ongoing to this very day-- and we are shocked and horrified by what we found at Penn State? The scale of

these horrific, monstrous issues in Indian Country, and indeed, on Spirit Lake Nation, are hundreds if not thousands of times greater.

And still, government fights tooth and nail to do nothing about it. In fact, they move swiftly to remove anyone who brings these dire issues into the light, and even more swiftly to protect those who protect and abet the offenders.

The Tribe continues to say that Children are Sacred and Children are their Priority--- and continue to be no shows for meetings, and take road trip after road trip to casinos and spas, resorts and more.

If these families and children were my responsibility, and I dare say if they were any of my readers responsibility, we would not rest, much less go on serial junkets, until each child was made safe and received help.

The word "Priority" and "Sacred" apparently have very different meanings to the Tribal Council.

Timid Purdon's Office seems to be relatively unconcerned with any of these events. More than happy to have everyone filtered through FBI Agent Derrick "Destroy the Evidence" Trout.

There is clearly something about Spirit Lake Nation that prevents Purdon from even half way doing his job. Gee, any guesses?

Read Also, Childhood Sexual Abuse Paper written by Thomas Sullivan

You know where to find me.

~Cat