

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
General Assembly Report: Protected Areas and Indigenous Peoples' Rights: Indigenous Women
and the Development, Application, Preservation and Transmission of Knowledge

Anpetu wast'e yuha pi, Stephanie Ohitika Win Cetan Cinkala, ni Kangi tanka tiyospaye.
Mi'tawa'ke Oglala Lakota winyan hemachelo. (Greetings, my English name is Stephanie, my
name in my indigenous language is Brave woman and/or woman who shows no fear), I am born
female to the band Oglala, people of the plains, first peoples).

Throughout history the social roles, afflictions, affirmations, political observations made
by many non-indigenous anthropologists, to which intent, misguided acuity of gender roles, sex,
and social dynamics of indigenous women within indigenous populations. Since establishment of
reservation life, the distinguishable question persists through European terms to examine to
which degree of ingenuity have indigenous women sustained traditional characteristics in
modern times. More so, to which degree do indigenous women contribute to preservation,
transmission, and sustainability of cultural knowledge intergenerationally. Historically,
misconceptions of indigenous women were seen as antithetical, savages, squaws, unequivocally
described as useless primitive objective to be owned or traded as property under the rule of men.

The integration of the Indian Reorganization Act infused non-indigenous social
dynamics, colonial ideals of gender-based roles, political entitlements, creating social discord
amongst many indigenous peoples. As a Winyan (wi-sun/all life begins, female) born to the
Teton, for the Oglala band (scatters their own) one of seven subdivisions under the Teton within
the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires/Fire pits of where people convened). Throughout my
upbringing on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, aka Prisoner of War Camp #344, encampment
of what history prefigures as the Great Sioux Nation there existed a space in time where social
elements of imposed European standards did not overpower the innate traditional aspects that
were interwoven through verbal, non-verbal, facial expressions, and/or body language. It was
evident of the biases between people, districts of differing geographic areas, to kinship systems
that still exist within the reservation I grew up on and bear witness to within these modern times.

For example, distinguishing genders terms, sexual orientation, cultural ethos are all
colonial terms that are used to enforce and uphold ethnocentrism not cultural relativism over
genetically and linguistically diverse human populations. These terms used to distinguish gender
roles through ethnographic studies comprised of ridge structural and functional approaches, often
lacked biographical, transcendent, or celestial approaches to best define the intent, purpose, and
for lack of English terms, societal roles of Indigenous women in pre-colonial and modern times.
In the Lakota culture maternal and managerial social elements were defined and ascribed through
a celestial view of oneself in relation to the universe. The societal aspects amongst the Oyate (the
people/first peoples) included biological, kinship, and elements of universal law (natural law) in
natural human evolution.

Understanding through a Lakota universal often referred to as natural law or what is to
be, defined an individual's characteristics, behaviors, or social standards amongst their own kin
and social standards defining egalitarian relationships traditionally maintained pre-contact of
which exist today. The roles of women in pre-colonial times and modern times have drastically
changed due to historical, external, social, and biological indicators that have created a pivotal
shift of how indigenous women are recognized, regarded, and revered through a comparative
view from my former youth to social elements of these modern times. Albeit, the complementary
relations between male and female within the traditional Oglala society have shifted
dramatically, the roles of Lakota women have continued to manifest under a hidden hypocrisy of

ethnocentric monoculturalism.

Whereas, traditional dynamics exemplified amongst the Lakota women are taught intergenerationally under the concept of Yanayeya 'share what one obtained, to pass on what one has received' through transmission of physical actions, reciprocated social behaviors, or oral transmission of what is considered to be necessary conduct of Lakota lifeways. Parallel to oral teaching passed down from primarily female elders who are the mothers, grandmothers, aunts, all female relatives who hold the innate responsibility to nurture and guide our youth until they reach the age of maturity (to become a woman), when a young girl reaches puberty, for males it is when they reach the age of maturity and transition into manhood. Each male and females are nurtured and instructed by the females until they reach these points of biological matter.

Further, it is within indigenous languages that encompasses generations of oral traditions that pre-date any illusion of colonial idealism and have upheld the communal, metaphysical, and spiritual beliefs of indigenous peoples since time immemorial. In the Lakota language there is a wealth of indigenous knowledge that influences an individual's mental model, providing a secular worldview acknowledging all the elements that make up life, mass, and matter. In the Wo'Lakota way of believing it is the women who bare life, nurture life, and sustain life from the Wakanyeja (sacred spirit) first breath of life, guiding, instructing, teaching them the core elements of the sacredness of our human life journey as sacred beings on Unci Maka (Mother Earth). For example, the birth of a life is sacred. Through western ideals this is recognized and celebrated in accordance with the Gregorian calendar year. Thus, birth date. Indigenous peoples view physical life through an intrinsic natural view.

This way of viewing our human existence is guided through universal elements which are intuitive. These natural laws are reflected in the circle of life comprising all living beings each coexistent in this state of mass and matter. These universal laws are fundamentally intertwined with mother nature, each ascribed by astronomical energy that provides an influx of elements known in western sciences as metaphysical energies, or telluric energies. These astronomical laws of the universe are intrinsically viewed and innately intuit to all living beings as defined in physics, through tunneling used in the advancement of genetic sequencing to rock energy found in megaliths found throughout the globe. Each science of western ideals is divided into fractionated sets of knowledge, each representing advancements in life sciences from gut health made up of diverse microbes from root veggies, fermented turmeric, each apart of a keystone system high in fibers each nutritionally health for a person's gut health.

This form of knowledge is known to the Oceti Sakowin in our indigenous language as Taniga (intestines-stomach lining of the bison) which absorbed the nutrients ingested by the bison which were absorbed into the small and large intestines. Once consumed, the taniga (guts) were of high nutritional value replenishing vital nutrients, known today in western sciences as gut health. From the gut eaters of two centuries before to the mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), powerhouse DNA embedded into the bloodlines of the females of the Lakota oyate. The interesting background of the mtDNA, which is referred to as the 'powerhouse' DNA in genomics aligns with the creation stories of our people, the creation of life through Unci Maka (Mother Earth), life and evolution are deemed only as strong as their women (psychologically, physically). Each area of western science that describe the natural elements of biodiversity, influencing the potency of a plant relative, to DNA methylation process, all western-based sciences that are interwoven into our indigenous language that is transcribing actions of energy of mass and matter over space, in a multidimensional state.

More recently, Dr. Alexandra Shields, former director of the Harvard/MGH Center on Genomics, Vulnerable Populations, and Health Disparities was aligning indigenous spiritual beliefs with modern advancements in biotechnology. The rationale behind such research incorporated detailed religion and spirituality in five national longitudinal health studies in which a set of nearly 90 religious and spiritual metrics were gathered from over 5,000 participants. This added contextual data was used to provide researchers relevant matter of spiritual beliefs would be associated with lower stress levels, overall health indicators, and in indemnifying other existing correlations between spiritual practices and health outcomes of indigenous peoples. This was one of over 3000 studies conducted using spirituality as a prime indicator to physical health status, which in large would contribute to the psychological state and overall health and wellness of an individual. Dr. Shields quotes, "For those of us interested in reducing health disparities, religion and spirituality may be a particularly important" (www.mbi.org, n.d.).

If we look at the state of mind of an individual, heightened stress levels are associated with an individual's physical, mental, and socioeconomic state. State of mind is important during stressful or poor living conditions, where this type of conductivity was viewed through multiple studies on the effects of stress on gene expressions in immune system development (www.mbi.org, n.d.). Biological measurements proposed spirituality as a valid means to measure (if any) metabiological response in gene expression. This form of research is defined as another form of epigenetics, epigenetics is the study of how gene expressions are affected through various intervals of inorganic external variants. Often times, tribal nations are underserved in the level of access to adequate healthcare, therefore, researchers using western research methodologies that don't consider the cultural ethos of the participant are able to unlawfully exploit indigenous peoples through the misconception that the research will be mutually beneficial and/or be favorable on behalf of the individuals respective nation(s). The study on DNA methylation is one of the epigenetic mechanisms that impacts the process development of cytosine, which is one of the four main nucleoids found in deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA).

When the methylation process of cytosine goes amiss, it creates a domino effect in the methylation process reversing the natural 'good' growth process into a reverse state of demethylation. One this occurs, demethylation starts to impact the growth of other nuclides, thus impacting the growth of an individual's nervous system, triggering vulnerability in the immune response system and development. Such vulnerability is believed to lead to behavioral implications caused by neurological development, and or considered to be implications of an underdeveloped nervous systems. Often, indigenous peoples are prevented from participating in vital research as DNA methylation which could contribute to the underlying health disparities impacting indigenous peoples quality of life and longevity.

As we know, extensive research entailing the inhumane atrocities committed on indigenous peoples through forced assimilation throughout the boarding school era has led to research involving epigenetic studies of how trauma is biologically transferred from one generation to the subsequent generations through genetic transference of nuclei. The aftermath of intergenerational trauma on indigenous peoples has been a pivotal influence for indigenous peoples to understand the physical and spiritual state of their own state of being to that of their nations spanning generations. In the Lakota language we are taught through our female elders that this change of state is defined as an imbalance to our Nagli (gut intuition, spiritual being). Any trauma that occurs from conception to young adolescence, triggers a biological response known as a spiritual reaction causing our spirits to leave the body (human body), this is considered to be a protective mechanism to protect ones spiritual being (i.e., metaphysical state).

Therefore, when our ancestors were forcefully removed from their spiritually nurturing and socially oriented kinship systems and taken to boarding schools where organized religion was forced upon the immature mental state, fracturing, and causing neurological imbalance impacting the overall mental health, growth, and methylation state of subsequent generations who inherent the transmission of trauma. Dr. Archie B. Beauvais, Sicangu elder provides a written correspondence in the Lakota Country Times regarding Lakota elder, Archie Little, and Rosalie Little Thunder, both fluent Lakota speakers, each emphasizing on the translation gap between English and Lakota. Each stating to speak English can often be risky, particularly if you do not fully understand the translation in full context. Both elders explained that in traditional Lakota societies, was in evidence way before the arrival of Columbus to our Native shores.

The establishments of various societies were considered too be a great honor to serve in such capacity, to do so meant that one was strong in tradition and in their hearts. The life of a specific societies was that of sacrifice and watching over the people and their lodges. *Ti eyasna wawanciyapi.*" Additionally, there were societies representative of both male and female societies, where members would monitor the needs of others, they might for example, be consider taking charge of the young children while younger generations collect and gather traditional plants and herbs, for males, one would take the time to check on elders wood supply. *"Wanji can nicap cansna icupi yuha pi."* Various societies exist amongst the Lakota, today, many remain hidden in the realms of the aftermath of genocidal warfare in fear of cultural genocide of entire nations. Little explained, *"Oyate ki tokeya ewicayaglekte"* which means putting the people before oneself is a virtue of cultural ethos of the Oceti Sakowin. In today's world, the image of the 'tokala' or 'katela' as warriors has dramatically changed as the demands and needs of the oyate are different.

It appears that the men of traditional times did not adapt to post-colonial times, whereas, the psychological impact have place many of our men in never seen before 'dormant state' of reservation life. Whereas, the women were known to adjust to reservation life, some having said to go 'underground' withholding knowledge, songs, ceremony, and protocols before the white man in fear of retaliation or termination. In today's society, there are more women speakers of the Lakota language then there are male speakers. The need for assistance in approaching bureaucracy or translating something into English is common amongst the Lakota today.

According to cultural ethos, there are four junctures in life at which time a person would be given a talk by a leader. At each point there would be talk about expectations, conduct, hunting (*wakuliye*) family life and mentoring, in turn, exchanging and transmission of knowledge onto the younger generations. One of the most significant teachings of cultural beliefs by indigenous women is the virtue of *Woksape*, knowledge sharing, it is believed that one should not value material things because when you die you will not take them with you," (Lakota Country Times, A. Beauvais, 2006). In today's modern realms of physics, the transference of energies through photosynthesis is similar to the polarity of indigenous beliefs of the Oyate (people) of the plains, respectfully, the Oglala. In this relevant state of being and believing of our physical existence as human beings, each inalienable to our spiritual essence, our entirety as indigenous women. Dr. Little Bear references these metaphysical elements as an influx of mass and matter that make up our human life. Emphasizing the vitality of such elements that define our human virtues, each relevant to our existence, each ascribed under astronomical decree. Thus, reflecting our human life journey on earth. These virtues if you will, define a simple way of being, each fundamental practices or ways of believing ascribing our celestial beings and human purpose throughout our life journey on *Unci Maka* (Mother Earth).

An indigenous life view is felt throughout the natural elements of metaphysical energies that influences our secular view of life. Each intrinsic energies of mass and matter beautifully designed and made up of the most joyous essence of life, such unknown elements that syncretize, bonded in whole is a sacred way of existentialism to life. When you entered into Unci Maka through the womb of your human mother your spirit (essence of life) came with you, overtime through each cycle around the sun your subconscious matter begins to shift in various spheres. This transition state of being is considered to apart of western sciences of earth's magnetic field that corresponds simultaneously with the magma deeply entrenched into the womb of Unci Maka (Mother Earth). Coincidentally, magma also known as lava is the primary element of which indigenous peoples commonly use in their purification practices, known to the Lakota as Iyan Wakan. Similarities between the ancient peoples and today's multicultural societies include ethos as ascribed through the conception of religion as organized functions for practical use and design under the guise of colonialism cannot began to preclude the ancient knowledge of indigenous peoples.

Indigenous teachings by female members began from various sets of knowledge describing the essence of life, comprised of 84 various minerals, 23 elements, and 8 gallons of Mni waconi (water) spread across 38 trillion cells. Whereas, philosophers as Marcus, and Jung eloquently state in English what was taught to me by my indigenous female elders. Such teaching conveys to the spirit of their origins, to have been birthed by the elements of Earth, consumed according to biotechnologies as a set of instructions hidden in within the double helix, yet small enough to be carried by a sperm. You are recycled butterflies, plants, rocks, streams, firewood, wolf fur, and shark teeth, broken down to their smallest parts and rebuilt into our planet's most complex living thing. You are not living on Earth. You are Earth (A. Marcus & C. Jung, n.d.). Contrary to modern beliefs that Lakota woman have been historically unable or incapable of possessing headdresses comprised of Eagle feathers.

Unfortunately, this mindset and skewed interpretation is based on a colonial view under patriarchy aiding to extreme misconceptions of traditional beliefs of the Oceti Sakowin. Additionally, the skewed mindset has inadvertently changed and or adapted to modern post-colonialism as a result of a spiritual imbalance occurring throughout generations of acts of cultural-genocide against humanity. Historically, pre-contact, women of the Oceti Sakowin we're and still very much are a part of a greater society comprised of both men and woman, referred to as the Oyate Omniciye (Gathering circle of old men and old women). In the early 1900's, through genocidal acts of "Reorganizing" the Indian populations through the Indian Reorganization Act our social systems were dismantled to uphold genocide by dominate society. Thus, the old ways of the Oceti Sakowin have been overwhelmingly forgotten by younger generations and replaced with the current influence of the western social systems which are based on hierarchical structure.

This form of social systems has created a disconnect between our interpretation of leadership and social constructs replaced, interpreted, and sustained through acculturated western minds. Indefinitely, the women of the Oceti Sakowin held high social positions within their tiyospayes (family units). Historically, our social systems by way of our kinship systems were and are today remain strong matrilineal societies. In the traditional matrilineal Lakota society, women were the heads and owners of their Tipi's and camp belongings. The women understood the needs of the family and determined when and who and how often we went to war. The women possess powers beyond men, understanding the physical strength necessary to bring life into the physical world.

But also, the women possessed such skills alongside their male counterparts in hunting, gathered and preparing food, survival mechanisms that all people sustained. Additionally, Lakota women were trained in preparation for physical battle alongside the men, in the instance our men went to war and did not return. The women would have the ability to sustain the camps, maintain our Kinship systems and carry on without the men for the very existence of future generations. Lakota women were understood and seen as equals to men in the physical endurance but given a higher authority with the acknowledgment of a woman's inherent responsibility to give, nurture and sustain life as we know it. Not only did women raise the children in accordance with the spiritual law (natural law) defined by the virtues of life of generosity, humility, bravery, fortitude, and respect, but the women maintained the tiwahe (immediate family unit), assuring each family member understood their inherent roles and responsibilities to the sacred young being.

The children's roles were to sit quietly and absorb the teachings following the expectation of respect for the teachings and in turn respect for the parents, elders and each extended family member who exemplified his/her inherent roles and responsibilities to nurture the sacred little one, both emotionally and physically. Thus, nurturing their spiritual beings today, tomorrow, for the next generations. Understanding the inherent roles and responsibilities within our tiyospayes (family units) was critical to understanding the physical sustainability and spiritual health of future generations of Lakota that depended on the very implementation and continuity of such kinship systems. Lakota woman's greatest gift for the Tribe is the birth of children, baring sacred life through her physical womb. Understanding her responsibility to take courage for a generation comes from her, a Nation depends on her and the next seven generations rely on her. There are songs today that speak to the physical bravery and spiritual resilience of Lakota women, these songs have been long forgotten as a result of colonialism. Understanding our language, our songs provide an entirely different perspective of our inherent roles and responsibilities as Lakota, a part of the Oceti Sakowin.

Lakota women have always and will always hold the spiritual right to earn and hold such social positions equivalent and greater than that of our men, these fundamental roles are intricately defined through the old language of the Lakota, untainted through the influence of colonialism, and indeed understood by our spiritual laws. The sustaining of our ways of Wo'Lakota has always remained steadfast in the hearts, minds, and spirits of our indigenous women. In today's society, our elders speak about intellectual property rights embedded into our indigenous peoples languages, traditional knowledge, traditional ecological knowledge, cultural ethos, and genetic resources that are considered inalienable are also vulnerable due to western definition of progression that has aided to the increase of climate change creating an imbalance to the natural world.

The intellectual property of Lakota indigenous traditional knowledge including ecological knowledge of Earth's biodiversity should be and is considered under basic human rights, as de facto inalienable assets for Tribal Nations to assert economic sovereignty. By asserting genuine ownership of Tribal Data Sovereignty, Tribal Nations are enacting true bona fide sovereignty in accordance with the execution of Treaty regime as interpreted and executed by the original signatories. Accountability for the embedded relationships that are identifiable intellectual property in traditional knowledge, traditional ecological knowledge, cultural resources, and genetic resources that are economic, cultural, and considered cultural ethos as assets for the legal, ethical, and long-term protections of genetically and linguistically diverse human populations.

This form of accountability embodies careful deliberation of a variety of legal analogies which requires a legal framework familiar with similarly fixed features that don't necessarily fit the social, ethical, economic, and cultural needs of the peoples. Possible frameworks may be drawn from property, intellectual property, tort, property, privacy rights (individual/collective), which are the core of all this information in all its complexity. As it is taught and ascribed to Lakota women, we understand Treaties are within international jurisdiction. Therefore, such regimes of international law of basic human rights, cultural protections, and violence against women need to be consistent in parallel to treaty rights.

The existence of human populations is under the guidance of indigenous women whose basic human rights, cultural virtues, and integral energies are subjugated, disembodied by colonial influence in the minds of our own male counterparts. The aftermath of genocide can be seen today in the inhumane mistreatment, marginalization, dehumanization, and spiritual annihilation of indigenous women. Albeit biased, the existence of Lakota women as myself, my mother, my grandmother, generations before us representing mtDNA should be an indicator of the strong influence and innate spiritual vitality of indigenous women.