

**Minutes for Red Cloud Truth and Healing Community Advisory Gathering
Monday May 2, 2022 - Eben Hall**

Present: Cecelia Fire Thunder, Mary Irving, Rudy Reddog, Reuben Weston, Laree Pourier, Maka Black Elk, Tashina Banks Rama, Billy Critchley-Menor, Gabrielle Guillerm

Introductions were made by all in attendance. Discussion was had on appropriate protocols and communal values the group would like to name and follow together. This included a discussion on recording Community Advisory Gatherings or not. The agreement was made that the meetings should be recorded and that notes should be taken from the recording to be shared with the public.

Other protocols, perspectives or values shared included:

- There is no collective healing. The healing is individual.
- Accountability
- The acknowledgement that history happened. It is not irrelevant to the present.
- The violence of the boarding school history is not up for debate.
- We can and should use a historical perspective.

Maka Black Elk gave an update on Red Cloud's plan for ground penetrating radar (GPR):

- Marsha Small (Northern Cheyenne) is coming to demonstrate the GPR technology on May 18-21st. She will spend the first half of the day on May 18th in ceremony and demonstration of the technology and then will be carrying out a scan of the land where Red Cloud's new Heritage Center will be located.
- Maka shared: In preparation for GPR in our historic cemetery, a lot of things will need to be removed from the cemetery. This will require a lot of communication with families of ancestors buried there. How do we communicate with as many people as possible about this? We want to honor the people who are buried in the historic cemetery. We know that there are some unmarked graves up there, due to crosses rotting away and other reasons. We want to connect with people to get permission to bring this technology to the cemetery where their ancestors are buried so we can identify these graves and hopefully re-mark them and identify who is buried there.

Community Advisory Discussion on GPR:

- Reach out via KILI, the newspaper, PSA, etc. to ask people to reach out to Red Cloud if they have family members buried in the historic cemetery.
- People can be put off to hear it third hand: Red Cloud could put up their own community flyers and try to reach people directly.
- Conversation was had on the various places GPR will be done. Maka shared that the plan is to scan in the cemetery and wherever there has been eyewitness testimony. Currently there is one eyewitness testimony site where Red Cloud is planning to scan aside from the historic cemetery. It

was brought up that it is important to also pair GPR with a full archaeological survey of the campus.

- It was brought up that a third reporting party (aside from Red Cloud) would be important to have for people to share their eyewitness accounts of burials with.
- Tashina Rama spoke on Red Cloud's ongoing search for a Third Party to collect testimony. Red Cloud has been searching for a Third Party for over a year to find a group to carry out this testimony collection.
- Maka shared that, in Canada, the GPR scanning was based on eyewitness accounts and that is why it was successful.
- Cecelia Fire Thunder shared that the best way to receive accounts would be to do a KILI show and ask the community. Cecelia Fire Thunder and Mary Irving went to Holy Rosary in the 1950s and said that the historic cemetery has been there for as long as they can remember and they don't recall anyone dying while they were at Holy Rosary. People in the Catholic community are buried in the historic cemetery.
- Cecelia Fire Thunder shared that when they went to school here, "we were here 24/7" and all the burials took place up in the cemetery. "I've been up in Canada and they weren't as mindful of the culture as this place was. I can say that truthfully." Fr. John Bride used to give a sermon once a month in Lakota. "I personally believe that regardless of everything else, there was probably not as much as what happened up north as what happened here. But the only way to find out is to ask, ask the community."

Maka Black Elk gave an update on Red Cloud's Research plan:

- Introduction of Gabrielle Guillerm, the full-time researcher for Red Cloud's Truth and Healing initiative. Gabrielle's job will be to be full-time in the archives at Marquette. Maka reviewed the job description and current list of research questions.
- Maka, Tashina, and Billy will be making a trip to the archives at Marquette University and have money put aside to bring three members of the Community Advisory Council with in June.

Discussion on Research and Archives:

- It was shared that it will be important to ground this in the Civilization Act of 1891; to find burial records, rosters of Jesuits and nuns who worked at Holy Rosary during the boarding school era; and journals of the Jesuits who worked at Red Cloud.
- The photographs are important and can tell stories, they can show the change over time.
- The policy on the Pine Ridge Reservation was that education was compulsory and there were not schools out in the districts. Boarding schools were the only option.
- Research should be done on the various boarding schools that Lakota children went to, not just Holy Rosary. Many of these boarding schools were similar to Holy Rosary and there were some differences. Look for patterns.
- Attention should be given to find evidence of how ancestors in the boarding schools resisted assimilation and colonization. Research on survival and caregiving is important.

- Mary Irving and Cecelia Fire Thunder will join Maka, Tashina, and Billy on a trip to the Archives in June.
- Mary Irving returned to the GPR discussion to share that her family used to live on the property behind Red Cloud, near potato cave. The family used to bury trash all over that part of the property and there were times when dead chickens and pigs were also buried on the property. If GPR scanned these areas, it would find disturbed soil but it wouldn't be human graves.

Laree Pourier gave an update on Red Cloud's Boarding School curriculum:

- Laree presented the draft for the high school level curriculum on boarding schools. Laree and 5 other Lakota educators have been working over the last year to develop a k-12 curriculum to help students at Red Cloud understand the history and legacy of the boarding schools and Holy Rosary Missions' role in that legacy. The team did not want to focus only on the boarding schools in isolation; this is not separate from the whole context of U.S. settler colonialism. This should be integrated in stories of resistance and ongoing efforts of self-determination. Attention was given not to get stuck in questions such as "Is it acceptable to be Lakota and Catholic?" This is a deeply personal question. Other questions that can stall progress were "Is Catholicism good or bad? Is Holy Rosary Mission good or bad?" These questions were presented as limiting and not able to move people forward. The curriculum seeks instead to address how educators can truthfully help young people and their own selves identify Catholicism's role in settler colonialism.

Discussion on boarding school curriculum:

- This curriculum has an opportunity to share a lot of Lakota history. This cannot be taught by a Jesuit, it needs to be led by a Lakota educator.
- It was mentioned that "We want this to show that we aren't just victims of colonialism. We are agents."
- The curriculum should include lessons on the Doctrine of Discovery and the Civilization Act.
- It is good to talk about how Catholicism has colluded in colonial violence all over the globe.
- Cecelia Fire Thunder and Mary Irving then shared stories of their time at Holy Rosary Mission boarding school. Fr. Tainter, Fr. Bride, Fr. Daglan, and a few other Jesuit teachers were good to the kids; they allowed and at times encouraged the speaking of Lakota.
- This curriculum needs to tell the truth about these schools and that they were set up to follow the law. The law for all boarding schools was to "civilize" the Indian children. By focusing on the policy, we get away from blame. That all institutions on tribal land were to follow the US Government's directive.

Maka Black Elk gave an update on Red Cloud's search for a Third Party to collect testimony from survivors and boarders.

- The first step of any Truth and Reconciliation process is the collection of stories and accounts. Red Cloud has been engaged in this, but is aware that many people won't feel comfortable

sharing their testimony with Red Cloud directly. So, Red Cloud is looking for a Third Party to engage in this collection more systematically. Red Cloud has shared an invitation to collaboration with NDN Collective, Rudy Reddog, and Return to the Heart Foundation. Maka asked: Should Red Cloud continue to seek testimony from people, what should Red Cloud's role be, with what format should we do so?

Discussion on testimony collection:

- Regardless of what format, there needs to be specific questions asked.
- Suggested questions for boarder gatherings were:
 - What are your good memories?
 - What are your bad memories?
 - What are your ugly/traumatic memories?
- We should be mindful of why we are collecting this information from boarders and how it is being shared.
 - One reason is that it can provide individual healing for people to share their stories with others.

Cecelia Fire Thunder talked about the importance of healing. "I don't want to blame anything on Holy Rosary Mission. Bad things happened here for a lot of people. We were all hurt in some matter, shape or form, mind, heart, body, and spirit. Everybody was hurt in a different way. It is up to us to heal from that hurt. That is what we have as human beings. You can fix yourself if we want to."

Suggestions were made to have more gatherings of boarders and survivors to come together and share their stories together.

Members of the Community Advisory Council were offered their honorariums for participation on this advisory board.

