

Comments from 2007 Forum Participants

"Haida Gwaii has not left my thoughts since we left the island, and the Forum will remain a touchstone forever."

"Somewhere deep in the inner worlds something new was able to be born. A very real healing was able to take place. Somehow the combination of all the previous work of your organization with the Circle of Elders leading up to this gathering combined with the energy of the beautiful people of Haida Gwaii and their homeland and that of all the other participants, created a safe container for this healing to happen."

"I find that I am speechless. Words cannot express my thankfulness for my time at Haida Gwaii. My life has change. I have changed. My soul is full. I am eager to continue on this journey of spiritual growth and atonement."

"There was a feeling of being "home" that I couldn't really grasp at the time. The warmth of the people who were there was so familiar, something that all cultures share."

"The open-hearted embrace of the Haida and all the Indians I have known (or known of) who have welcomed non-Natives is continually humbling and inspiring. The extension of respect to us at Haida was so great I can barely touch it even in thought."

The principal objective of the 2008 Forum is to fulfill the mandate of the Traditional Circle: help the larger society hear the voice of wisdom of the Elders.

The essential messages emanating from that wisdom include:

- ☀ The current environmental crisis is, in fact, a spiritual crisis, stemming from our forgetfulness of who we are, and from our disconnection from the sacred quality of the earth.*
- ☀ The uncertainties brought by global climate change reinforce the reality that a spiritual connection is the path to survival of humankind.*
- ☀ Times are urgent. The earth is hungry for our prayers. More runners and messengers for the earth are needed in order for us to live up to our responsibilities to creation, each other, and generations yet to come.*

Participants are encouraged to think about these messages in advance, be ready to explore them at the Forum, and be willing to be proactive about them in their own lives post-Forum.



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Ancient Voices Contemporary Contexts

A People's Cross-Cultural Forum at Flathead

September 19-21, 2008 at the
Flathead Reservation, Flathead Lake, Montana

Flathead Ancient Voices Forum Keynote Speakers



Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper, Turtle Clan of the Onondaga Nation, is a clear, persistent, and respected voice for the Haudeno-saunee (Iroquois Confederacy), and for Indigenous peoples throughout the world.

He is equally well known among the world's most respected spiritual leaders, environmentalists, and academics as he is among traditional indigenous communities from throughout Indian country. His message of peace is that human beings can no longer afford to act irresponsibly toward Creation; nor can people of the Modern World continue to disregard the messages coming from Indigenous people.



Photo by Danny Beaton

Tom Porter (Sakokwenionkwas "The One Who Wins") is the Spokesman and Chief Spiritual Leader of the Mohawk Community of Kanatsiohareke in Fonda, New York. A member of the Bear Clan, he was raised as part of the *Akwesasne Mohawk Nation* in upstate New York. Mr. Porter raised his six children in the traditional Native American fashion and was acting Bear Clan Chief in the traditional longhouse movement, opposite the state-sanctioned Tribal Council. He has served numerous positions on the Mohawk Nation of Chiefs Council for over 30 years



Photo by Gail Fisher

Pauline Whitesinger is a Diné (Navajo) Elder from Big Mountain, Navajo Nation. She is a traditional matriarch and

grassroots leader of the Hopi/Navajo Joint-use Area relocation resistance effort. Whitesinger and her family are among the last Diné to resist efforts by the federal government to relocate from their remote ancestral lands.

Whitesinger's keynote will be delivered via video with interpretation on-site by her nephew, Danny Blackgoat.

Forum Host



Johnny Arlee is a spiritual and cultural advisor for the Salish/Pend d'Oreille people. He was raised in the traditional way by his grandparents

and great grandparents on the Flathead Reservation, where Salish was the first language. He was the founder in 1975 of the Flathead Culture Committee that over the years interviewed many Salish Elders, carefully preserving their knowledge and stories.

Honored Guest Joe Medicine Crow



Joe Medicine Crow, born in 1914, is a traditional Elder of the Crow Nation and resides in Lodge Grass, Montana, in the heart of Crow country. He is the Crow Nation Tribal Historian and the Grandson of General Custer's last scout, Whiteman Runs Him, and Medicine Crow, one of the last of the great Crow war chiefs.

Medicine Crow, who represents the last of the oldest living generation of Indian people, was raised by his grandparents who were pre-reservation and pre-literate. There are few Native Americans alive today that can provide a compelling and authentic window into a way of life that ended more than a century ago.

Medicine Crow served in Europe during World War II, earning the status at home of Crow War Chief. In recognition of his war record he was awarded the French Legion of Honor in 2008, the highest decoration in France. He has authored or co-authored several books dealing largely with Crow history and culture.

An Unprecedented Gathering

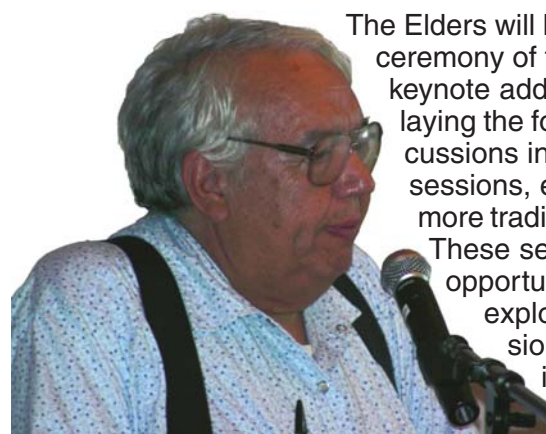
Seldom have so many traditional grassroots spiritual leaders of Indigenous nations of North America come together to share their cultural and spiritual wisdom with non-Native people. Contemporary social and environmental problems are in desperate need of alternative approaches. The traditional Native perspective offers new ground from which to address these issues.

The voice of Elders is an ancient voice with deep spiritual roots.

Participants at the Ancient Voices Forum will have an opportunity to share in the perspective of traditional Native American leaders and together will:

- ☀ Explore our common concerns about the human condition in modern times.
- ☀ Seek ways of living within the natural capacities of the earth.
- ☀ Recognize what the future holds for our children, and explore alternatives.

The ancient indigenous voice is relevant to today's world, and *may hold keys to our common survival*. This three-day Forum offers participants a unique opportunity to sit with the most revered traditional voices from Indian country – to hear first-hand their perspectives and concerns, and to explore these ideas in close dialogue.



John Mohawk, Seneca Elder, keynote speaker at the Bemidji Ancient Voices Forum

The Elders will begin each day in ceremony of thanksgiving. A keynote address will follow, laying the foundation for discussions in small group sessions, each led by one or more traditional leaders. These sessions provide the opportunity for close exploration and discussion of traditional indigenous wisdom and its modern relevance and implications.

Afternoons will be devoted to small group activities out on the land at special places on the reservation, and in the community where cultural elements will be shared.

As a way for Forum participants to honor local Elders and members of the community, there will be a community dinner held on Saturday night hosted by the American Indian Institute and Forum participants.

General Forum Schedule

September 19 - Friday

Forum Registration
Opening Ceremony & Plenary Welcome
Flathead Historical Contexts & Keynote Address
Discussion Circles
Community Cross-Cultural Activities
Dinner, Salish and Kootenai Culture

September 20 - Saturday

Morning Ceremony
Keynote Address
Discussion Circles
Community Cross-Cultural Activities
Community Dinner, Salish and Kootenai Culture

September 21 - Sunday

Morning Ceremony
Keynote Address
Discussion Circles & Plenary Roundtable
Community Cross-Cultural Activities
Dinner, Storytelling, Singing, & Closing Ceremony



Ancient Voices Forums are programs of the Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth, and the American Indian Institute, Post Office Box 1388, Bozeman, Montana 59771-1388

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