



Mario Gonzalez

SPEAKING TRUTH

Watershed Moments
in Global Leadership

High School Curriculum for Young Leaders



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Mario Gonzalez has served as counsel to the Oglala Sioux Tribe and has worked tirelessly on Indian legal issues for decades. He has been instrumental in advocating for the Oglala Sioux (Lakota) people and their claim to the Black Hills of South Dakota.

In 1995, Mario Gonzalez was named the first recipient of the Distinguished Aboriginal Lawyer Achievement Award, given by the Native Law Centre of Canada, University of Saskatchewan at Saskatoon. This is an international award given to leading attorneys around the world that support aboriginal rights.

A centerpiece of his life has been his fight to protect and reclaim the Black Hills – the sacred heart of the life of the Sioux (Lakota) nation. That story is preserved in a book entitled *The Politics of Hallowed Ground*.

His life and the sacred values symbolized by the Lakota love for the Black Hills have become so intertwined as to be a tapestry. Gonzalez, like the Black Hills, represents a great nurturing spirit that cares not about the short term, but the protection of the long-term survival of the Lakota. “Gonzalez, to the people who know him well, represents the kind of lawyer who will go the last mile to resolve differences and do the right thing for the sake of the people.”¹

The Sioux Nation and the Black Hills

At its core, Native American spiritual wisdom treated native lands as sacred. Native Americans understood that the land was vital to their survival. It nurtured them and gave them their food, clothing and shelter. The land and nature were also a sanctuary for them. Through their deep relationship with nature, they connected to an invisible primordial world that gave them moral strength as symbolized by the forests, streams and sky.

Leaders of the Sioux Nation hold a deep spiritual wisdom that governs their decisions. The Lakota philosophy is simple: each generation of Sioux Nation has a responsibility to protect the next seven generations. Imagine making all decisions today based on what effect it will have on Americans seven generations from now!

In 1868, the undefeated Sioux Nation entered a peace treaty with the United States government. Among other things, it reserved unfettered control of the millions of acres of the Black Hills for the “absolute and undisturbed use and occupation” of the Sioux nation. The purpose was clear: the Black Hills provided hunting, fishing, water and materials for building shelter and livelihood for the future generations of the Sioux Nation.

The Black Hills were also the center of traditional Sioux spirituality—fulfilling the goal of the Lakota of protecting the Seventh Generation on that sacred land.

Yet, in less than a decade, businessmen, including General George Custer and William Randolph Hurst, illegally invaded the Black Hills land to find gold. Once they found it, there was an immediate push to take the Black Hills from the Sioux Nation.

The U.S. government first tried to obtain the land legally – by asking the Sioux to sell the Black Hills in a new treaty. This proposal violated the Lakota wisdom of protecting the next seven generations, especially in regards to such traditionally and spiritually significant land. Leaders of the Sioux Nation like Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull refused to sell. The Sioux feared that relinquishing

A dark teal rectangular graphic containing the name "Mario Gonzalez" in white, bold, sans-serif font. The name is arranged in two lines: "Mario" on the top line and "Gonzalez" on the bottom line.

**Mario
Gonzalez**

¹ *The Politics of Hallowed Ground*, p. 228

the Black Hills could destroy all hope for future generations to have a livelihood and the way of life that had been built around that spiritual home.

The U.S. government then tried to starve the Sioux into agreeing to a sale. When that did not work, Congress simply confiscated the land in 1877, without giving the Sioux any kind of compensation.

It took the Sioux one hundred years to get any redress for this wrongdoing in the U.S. courts. In 1980, the Supreme Court finally held that the confiscation of the Black Hills was a violation of the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution. However, it also upheld a lower court's ruling that the U.S. government need only pay what amounted to a few dollars per acre for the sacred Native American land.

In 1980, Mario Gonzalez stepped into the fight over the Black Hills at a crucial historical point with just the right combination of skills and understanding. He was one of the first Native American lawyers ever trained and a person who knew, both from role models and his own struggles growing up, the significance of the long-term spiritual values of the Sioux Nation.

Background of Mario Gonzalez

Excerpts from Interview with Mario Gonzalez conducted by Leila Kassiri:

I was born in San Antonio Texas on December 11th 1944. My father was serving in the U.S. Army Air Force during WWII, and while stationed in Alliance, Nebraska, he met and married my mother. After my father got discharged from the Army Air Force in 1946, our family moved to Wanblee, South Dakota, my mother's home village on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.



Mario Gonzales with a photo of his ancestor Dewey Beard at the Crazy Horse Memorial

Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, home to the Oglala (Lakota) Sioux, is a community plagued with social ailments: 67% high school dropout rate, a life expectancy of 48-52 years (lower than that of Haiti), per capita income of \$6,286 (the US average in 2013 \$51,3710) and the highest suicide rate in the country.²

I grew up on and off the reservation. My parents moved to a small off-reservation town called Kadoka, South Dakota, where my father found work at a garage. Its located six or seven miles from the northeast boundary of the reservation.

My family eventually relocated to Box Elder, South Dakota in 1962, a community a few miles east of Rapid City. Being Mexican and Native American life was easier in the city, our family was not confronted with the prejudices we experienced living in smaller towns. I began high school in Kadoka and I was really into athletics: basketball, football, and track. In my sophomore year I got to play football every game, both offense and defense. But in my junior year things changed. I started sitting on the bench so I decided to leave Kadoka. I purchased a car by working on the federal minuteman missile site in the summer of 1962 and told my father I was going to register for

² Aaron Huey, a National Geographic photographer captures the story of Pine Ridge in a Ted Talk http://www.ted.com/talks/aaron_huey.

school in Rapid City. When I went to register school officials told me that I couldn't go to school there, because my family lived in the Douglas school district.

Douglas High School was a brand new school at Ellsworth Air Force base. I went to school there for two years. It was an integrated school; many Air Force dependents attended school there. Douglas High School had all kinds of students that accepted me so I didn't face any type of racial prejudice. I joined the football team, became captain of the basketball team. My life was quite different than it had been in Kadoka.

My life changed attending that school. I was judged on my skills not on my biracial heritage. My self-confidence greatly improved. By the time I was graduating in 1964, all my friends were going to college, and so I thought that, perhaps I should also go to college. I had never thought of it before. At Kadoka, it was quite an achievement for someone to graduate from high school; very few students went off to college.

I attended Black Hills State College. That's where I met my wife, got married, and had my first child. It wasn't very long before I was graduating and decided to go to law school and ended up at the University of North Dakota School of Law. I graduated from there in 1972 with a Juris Doctorate Degree. Well actually I never had plans to go to law school, it just occurred.

When I graduated from Black Hills State College I wanted to get a master's degree in the social sciences. I was looking for scholarships and grants but I couldn't find anything. Most of my undergraduate tuition was paid from Bureau of Indian Affairs Higher Education grants; it wasn't much but it was enough to barely survive.

My full-blooded Lakota grandmother heard that I was trying to go on to a higher education. She showed me an article she had read in a Native paper about a special law program at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. The US government was recruiting Native Americans for law school because there were very few Native lawyers that could be identified nationwide. The Indian Desk of OEO, the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington agreed to do the initial funding for the special pre-law summer program in 1968. I was in the second class in '69.

Towards the end of the summer, one of the law professors asked me where I was going to law school. I told him that I never applied to a law school, I just applied to the summer program and I would probably have to apply for admission to a law school next year. So he said "How would you like to go to the University of North Dakota?" He was the former dean of the University of North Dakota School of Law. He called the current dean and said "I'm sending someone up, do you have room?" and he said "Yes, send him up." Though I still had to take the LSAT, I was on my way to becoming an attorney; something I had not imagined for myself.

When Gonzalez moved to North Dakota to begin law school, he started focusing on federal Indian law and attending traditional Native American ceremonies. In the process, he learned of a long history of suppression of Native American religion and its modern-day resurgence on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Fighting for His People

When I graduated from law school, I decided to return to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to practice law, primarily federal Indian law. I was the first tribal member to become a licensed attorney and that placed me in a position to file a law suit (1980) on behalf the Oglala Sioux tribe claiming the tribe was not appropriately represented in the US vs. Sioux Nation of Indians Supreme Court case that awarded the Oglala Sioux Tribe \$102 million compensation for the Black Hills under a 1978 special jurisdictional act. When the claims attorney filed the Black Hills Claim under the 1978 Act, he didn't have a federally approved attorney's contract with the tribe, and never got a tribal resolution allowing him to include the tribe in the lawsuit.

Payment of the \$102 million award to the Sioux Nation would extinguish Sioux title to the Black Hills under the 1868 Treaty. The Oglala Sioux Tribe had to file a lawsuit before the claims award was paid to the tribe. The Supreme Court made its decision on June 30, 1980. I filed a civil law suit for the Oglala Sioux tribe in US District Court at Rapid City on July 18, 1980, just two days before the award was paid to the Sioux Nation. I filed the lawsuit for only the Oglala Sioux Tribe; the other Sioux tribe constituting the Sioux Nation did not join in the suit.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe's lawsuit asked the court to quiet title to the entire 7.3 million acres of Black Hills land confiscated by Congress in 1877 on the basis that the confiscation was unconstitutional because it violated the public purpose and due process clauses of the Fifth Amendment, and that the court had a duty to declare the 1877 Act unconstitutional under Marbury v. Madison.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe's lawsuit blocked the payment of compensation to the tribe, and countered by asking for the return of 7.3 million acres of land and 11 billion dollars in compensation for the denial of the exclusive use and occupation of the Black Hills since 1877. I think that was a defining moment in my legal career. We made a lot of national and international headlines. We took a stand, as a people, that the United States could not pay us for sacred lands that they stole from us in violation of the 1868 Treaty and US Constitution.



The Black Hills issue became the beginning of Mario Gonzalez's ongoing fight for the vital inter-ests of the Sioux Nation, from water rights to land use rights. He also stopped the distribution of a \$45 million land claims award to the Oglala Sioux tribe in another land claims case in 1986-1988, which along with the \$102 million Black Hills Claim award, has grown to over \$1 billion in US Treasury accounts. He has drafted federal legislation called the 1988 Mni Wiconi Act, which created the largest rural water pipeline in North America. The system now provides Missouri River water to three Indian tribes and one non-Indian rural water systems in western South Dakota. An bringing the Black Hills issue to the national and international stage contrib-



uted to the passage of the powerful United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Peoples, which seeks to protect aboriginal people around the world.

Now 70 years of age, Mario Gonzalez is more active than ever. From his single-attorney law office in downtown Rapid City, South Dakota, Mr. Gonzalez continues to work. This is where he grew up in poverty, played basketball and ultimately decided to become a lawyer. Despite his international reputation, Mr. Gonzalez still has his door open to the poorest of Native Americans who may need legal advice. He has increased his focus on Indian water rights, an issue crucial for the future survival of the Sioux reservations. He speaks at gatherings and conferences across the United States on cutting-edge Indian law issues

For more information on the Black Hills dispute and Mario Gonzalez's life-long struggle to defend Native American rights, see the following websites:

1. <http://mtwytlc.org/component/content/article/99-news/1260-the-buffalo-post-the-black-hills-qits-not-settled-until-we-say-its-settledq.html>
2. Maria Streshinsky (Managing Editor of *The Atlantic*), February, 9 2011, ***Saying No to \$1 Billion: Why the impoverished Sioux Nation won't take federal money***, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/03/saying-no-to-1-billion/308380/>

Content Objectives

Students will develop a list of qualities that depict positive role models.

Students will identify positive role models relevant to their life experience.

Students will examine the role of mentors/role models in the experiences of Attorney Mario Gonzalez

Lesson Synopsis

Role Model Overview

Positive role models are important because they set examples for people to observe and pattern positive behaviors from. As people increase positive behaviors they also increase their feelings of self-worth. Patterning behaviors from positive role models can also help people build morals and positive values, teach them to set attainable goals, and provide direction in achieving those goals. Most importantly, positive role models provide a sense of hope and examples to prove that dreams and goals can be fulfilled.³

Begin class by explaining to students that today's topic is role models. Ask if anyone has a role model and why he/she is someone they look to for inspiration. What are the characteristics of a role model?

Have the class brainstorm a list of qualities after several students have shared their examples. Be sure to have an example in case students are reluctant to share.

Divide students into groups of 3-4 have the group decide on someone that meets the class's criteria for being a role model. Have each group write a series of 7 statements about the person without revealing who that person is. Access to the Internet will assist students in creating interesting bio sketches of the people their group's select. Have each group share their profiles, one statement at a time. The other groups will have a chance to guess who the group is describing after each statement is read. The statements should begin with more obscure facts and build up to an obvious conclusion.

Example:

Nelson Mandela

1. His birth name meant troublemaker.
2. His favorite sport was boxing.
3. He was on the US terror watch list until 2008.
4. "I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul," is a line from one of his favorite poems "Invictus".
5. He was in jail longer than most of us have been alive.
6. Stood up against unjust government policies.
7. He was the first leader of color this nation ever had, with the initials NM.

Role Models

³ <http://www.siue.edu/SIPDC/Library/lesson%20plan/global6.pdf>

After completing this activity students should have a list of characteristics and a list of individuals who embody those characteristics. Ask the class to reflect on why these people are important to us and how they serve as role models.

Some of the characteristics that should come from this activity and others that can be discussed with students. Role models are people who:

- Feel a sense of duty to better "society" or work for the common good of the community
- Are compassionate
- Have developed powerful and effective habits of the mind and soul
- Can work through challenges
- Are committed to what he or she does regardless of consequences
- Have the capacity to achieve goals and obtain self-fulfillment
- Possess high standards and values
- Are admired for courage and strength
- Serve as models forgiveness
- Are trustworthy
- Demonstrate humility, admit when they are wrong
- Are wise
- Understand the whole situation⁴

Students will now take a look at the impact role models had on the life of Attorney Mario Gonzalez. Provide them with the following reading and, either independently or in groups, students should apply their understanding of role models to the role Mr. Gonzalez's grandfather, Fred Wilcox and Chief Crazy Horse on his life.

⁴ www.siue.edu/SIPDC/Library/lesson%20plan/global6.pdf

Mario Gonzalez's Role Models

My maternal grandfather, Fred Wilcox, was an important influence in my life. He was a descendent of pioneers, who ended up marrying my full-blooded Lakota grandmother. My grandfather influenced the development of my values because I would spend summers living with him on his ranch throughout the 1950s. I loved the country – this was a passion I shared with him. I learned the virtue of generosity from my grandfather, which is also a Native American value.

Back in the 950s, my grandfather didn't have a lot of money, he raised cattle and paid his bills every year. During this time a family with small children was traveling to their home in Iowa and their truck broke down at Kadoka. Their engine blew out and they were stranded with no money to repair their vehicle. My grandfather started taking food over to them at the city part where they were camped by their broken down vehicle. My grandfather had an old Buick that ran good, so he eventually decided to give the Buick and gas money to that family so that they could get home. He traded the family for their broken down panel truck and the family headed down the road to their home to Iowa. And so my grandfather would do things like that, things that no one else would ever do. My grandfather helped that family because they needed help, he was motivated by their need not his own.

The following quote from Mr. Gonzalez's book, *The Politics of Hallowed Ground* (p. 4), reflects the influence of his grandfather on the work he does today. "He informed the society that he would not accept compensation for any work he did on the Black Hills Claims because of his dedication to the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Sioux Nation. He said, "The fight for the Black Hills is a fight for the survival of the Sioux people, it is the same fight that our grandfathers fought in the 1800s. Our leaders didn't get compensated for their efforts to defend our homeland then, so I can't accept compensation to carry on the same fight today."

In terms of a tribal role model, rather than family role model, I think Chief Crazy Horse was probably a role model for me, because of what he stood for: fighting for the survival of the Sioux people. I read the book Crazy Horse by Mari Sandoz when I was in college and I believe that really influenced the path I took in life, coming back to the reservation and trying to work towards bettering the lives of the Sioux people, and other Indian people. His determination, to fight for the rights of his people is an inspiration.

Excerpt of interview with Mario Gonzalez conducted by Leila Kassiri

Crazy Horse was a very different person than Mario Gonzalez (Nantan Hinapan or Comes Out Charging) and each lived one hundred years apart. But there are two strong parallels in their lives: the extremely disruptive plights the Sioux Nation faced during each of their lives and the core moral values obtained from the deep spiritual tradition of the Sioux Nation which both men applied when responding to this plight.

Both Mario Gonzalez, as lawyer, and Crazy Horse, as warrior, and later a War Chief, faced extreme situation of disruption for their people, in which the Sioux Nation has been heavily outnumbered. Both felt a great need to protect the Black Hills as a Sacred place of nurture for the Sioux Nation.

Both held to the values of making decisions “for the Seventh Generation” as opposed to the get-rich-quick values of those interested only in the gold in those hills. In addition, their deep spiritual nature gave them the core values of protecting the poor and weak among their people.

An outstanding biography of the life of Crazy Horse, written by the famous American writer Larry McMurtry, documents this with great clarity. Part of the Penguin Lives Biographies series, the book is called *Crazy Horse: A Life*. It seeks to separate the real life of Crazy Horse from such false and manufactured legends in movies like “They Died With Their Boots On” (1941) with Errol Flynn depicting General George A. Custer.



Statue of Crazy Horse with Crazy Horse Memorial in background, Black Hills, South Dakota

Let’s look first at the extreme situation of disruption that Crazy Horse faced.

As described by McMurtry in his book, the U.S. government policy toward Indians was schizophrenic by 1865. Some politicians wanted to give them money and some good land (although never a lot of land), if they would behave. Others in the military wanted to punish the Native Americans for their temerity in not immediately accepting the White Man’s way. Unable to decide between peace and war, the U.S. Government tried both at once (McMurtry, *Crazy Horse*, p. 55).

For example, the U.S. Government entered the Treaty of 1868 with the Sioux Nation, agreeing that it could retain 7.3 million acres of the Black Hills as

part of a homeland to live on “forever” – unencumbered by white men’s encroachment. Within just a few years, General Custer led prospectors into the Black Hills looking for gold. Once gold was found, miners began their massive illegal trespass into the Black Hills to get the gold. One of the persons who made a fortune off the gold in the Black Hills was the great magnate William Randolph Hearst, who later became legendary as a newspaperman as well.

As this happened, the U.S. Government began to renege on the treaty and tried to get the Sioux Nation to give up a great deal of their rights to the Black Hills that it rightly had under the Treaty of 1868. When the Sioux Nation refused, Congress took the land anyway in 1877. Looking back

Who was Crazy Horse?

on that land grab a hundred years later, the U.S. Supreme court in 1980 labelled this taking one of the most “despicable acts” of the U. S. government in American history.

Crazy Horse, like other members of the Sioux Nation wanted to avoid fighting with the U.S. military. Instead, they preferred living a traditional Sioux life, which included roaming the range of the Great Plains and hunting. But the "white people" were not satisfied with their limited incursions which made it difficult for the Sioux to avoid fights. This was a disruption that the Sioux Nation had not encountered in many generations. The Sioux Nation never lost a battle to the U.S. military.

How did Crazy Horse react? Much of it can be explained by his formative years. Like all Sioux males, as a teenager, he went on a fast alone on the plains to seek a “vision” of what his life should be. During this quest, he had a vision in which he was involved in a great battle. But he was instructed in this vision by a man on a horse to never keep anything for himself from any battle, but to always do his best to feed the poor and helpless members of his tribe.

That vision and his other life experiences left him somewhat of a recluse. Often ,few people other than his closest friends knew where he was. He did engage in various limited engagements with the U.S. military. But much of it appears to be legend.

However, Crazy Horse embedded his name in American history during the Battle of the Little Bighorn on June 25, 1876, when General Custer tried to lead a large number of troops into an attack on a large number of Sioux Indians camped on the Little Bighorn River in Montana. It became known as one of the great battles in history, sometimes called “Custer’s Last Stand.” This battle was the culmination of an ill-advised attack by General Custer who symbolized the extreme push for gold and real estate for white settlers despite existing treaties. It was used later to justify more oppression of Native Americans including the Sioux Nation.

Crazy Horse is given credit for using a brilliant flanking move in the Battle of the Little Bighorn to defeat Custer that has become legendary in military history, but even that credit to Crazy Horse is not clearly documented. Indeed, subsequent historians have pointed out the absolute folly of Custer’s attack in the first place, which defied the reconnaissance Custer was getting. He should have never fought such an out-numbered battle in the first place.

But what does appear documented is that Crazy Horse did try to live up to his vision of always taking care of the poor and helpless in his community and he tried to protect what he thought was the land that would be so important to protect the livelihood of his people for “seven generations.”

Mario Gonzalez has also faced the extreme plight of the Sioux Nation in the Twentieth Century and into the Twenty-first Century. Poverty is at an extreme, the Sioux reservations have limited resources, and the U.S. Government bureaucracy continues to paralyze the reservations in red tape and control.

He has carried on his struggle in the courts, rather than on the battlefield. But his patience and perseverance against overwhelming odds in defense of the Black Hills and the needs of the poor and weak in the Sioux Nation come from a deep commitment to the “Seventh Generation” -- not the short-term quest for gold or money – a core value that defines both lives.

Content Objectives

Students will explore the role of images in their lives. Students will discover the impact images have on their perceptions of themselves and the world.

Students will articulate how photography can provide insight and reveal truth about a situation.

Students will examine the role photography plays in activism.

Photography and Activism

Synopsis of Lesson

Begin class with a discussion on the power of images.

The following may be used as conversation starters: Where are images used? Why are images used? What images have meaning in your life? How can images manipulate how you feel about something? Do you think images affect your perception of the world? Why or why not?

Use the following Ted Talk on popular portrayals of American Indians to continue the dialogue and provide insight on the impact of images as they relate to the portrayal of Native Americans.

Americana Indian – thinking twice about images that matter: Nancy Marie Mithlo at TEDx-ABQWomen

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdhWdgJI_ck

The following “We’re a Culture Not a Costume” Campaign photos and quotes may be used to further the discussion about the impact of images on people’s lives.

“We’re a Culture Not a Costume” campaign created by Ohio University’s STARS (Students Teaching about Racism in Society)

http://www.ohio.edu/orgs/stars/Poster_Campaign.html

“Of Warrior Chiefs and Indian Princesses: The Psychological Consequences of American Indian Mascots” a 2008 study by Dr. Stephanie Fryburg, published in the Journal of Basic and Applied Psychology

“A social representational approach suggests that, whether particular representations are positive, negative, or neutral, defining one’s self outside of these prevalent social representations and the shared social reality they generate will be a challenging task. For example, if an American Indian university student wants to be recognized as a strong and able student, but others within the university context think about American Indians primarily in terms of images from sports rituals and Hollywood films, then the student may well experience difficulty constructing and maintaining a “good student” identity. The difficulty ensues because “good student” simply does not come to mind when thinking about American Indians.” (210)

“American Indian students also reported lower personal and community worth when they are exposed to other common characterizations of American Indians (i.e., Disney’s Pocahontas and negative stereotypes such as high alcoholism, school dropout, and suicide rates)” (216)

“Although these studies cannot address the process by which these undermining effects occur, the studies do suggest that the effects are not due to negative associations with mascots. We

suggest that the negative effects of exposure to these images may, in part be due to the relative absence of more contemporary positive images of American Indians in American society.”

Students will then be tasked with bringing in a powerful image. Have each student explain why the image “speaks” to them. The following may serve as examples:

La Jeune Fille a la Fleur, 1967 by Marc Riboud, photo taken at Vietnam protest at Pentagon March



<http://artplasselesse.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/la-fille-c3a0-la-fleur.jpg>

“Pele and British captain Bobby Moore trade jerseys in 1970 as a sign of mutual respect during a World Cup that had been marred by racism.”



Syrian Refugee Crisis, 2015



<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/03/refugee-crisis-syrian-boy-washed-up-on-beach-turkey-trying-to-reach-canada#img-1> (Image by Reuters)

Additional Materials

Surviving Disappearance, Re-Imagining & Humanizing Native Peoples: Matika Wilbur at TEDx-Seattle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2bs1TTc4gk>

Project 562

http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/19/rejecting-stereotypes-photographing-real-indians/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0

Matika Wilbur is a photographer. Her Project 562 is an attempt to document citizens of each of the more than 560 federally recognized Native American tribes in the United States.

“People often ask me why I don’t photograph real Indians,” said Ms. Wilbur, who marked documenting her 180th tribe in Phoenix last week. “But the people that I photograph are real Indians. These are my people.”

Content Objectives

Students will explore the role of faith in accomplishing a goal.

Students will examine the strength derived from a person's connection to the spiritual.

Students will connect the values derived from beliefs to action.

Synopsis of Lesson

Ask the class to brainstorm what motivated Attorney Mario Gonzalez to take action on behalf of his people in 1980. List ideas on the board. Have students number these motives from most influential to least influential. Follow up by asking them to explain their lists.

“The connection one has to one’s relatives and to others in the world is a religious matter to Indian. It is not a pragmatic idea about how to live together.” – Mario Gonzalez

“The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells the Great Spirit, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us.” – Black Elk

How might this idea complicate actions?

Have students read the following excerpt from Leila Kassiri’s interview with Attorney Mario Gonzalez, this can be done individually or as a class, out loud.

When I litigated the Black Hills case in the 1980s, spirituality was a very important part of it. There are a lot of things that occur that most people don’t see, they only see the lawsuit as reported in newspapers. People don’t see the internal politics that occur, the jealousies, and all the traditional ceremonies you have to go through to ensure success.

So when I brought the Black Hills case in 1980 I participated in a lot of traditional ceremonies. In those days we didn’t have computers so my secretary would have to type drafts of court pleadings and documents that needed to be filed, make corrections, and retype the whole draft sometimes three or four times before we finally got a final draft that we could file. We would burn sage or sweet grass and smudge all the court papers, recite prayers, and then we’d file them. And then when I would go brief and argue motions that I filed.

Attorney Gonzalez then shared this example with Ms. Kassiri. Begin this part of Mr. Gonzalez’s narrative by asking students to share any rituals they have to “insure success” with the things that they attempt. Some examples: wearing the same socks for every baseball game, saying a prayer before you take a test, growing a beard during hockey season.

After I filed the Black Hills case for the Oglala Sioux Tribe, I filed a motion to disqualify all the South Dakota federal judges. The case was then assigned to a federal judge in Omaha, Nebraska and a hearing was scheduled on a motion for a temporary restraining order that I filed to restrain the Federal Government from paying the Black Hills Claim award to the Oglala Sioux Tribe. . I was preparing for the hearing that was scheduled for the next day, but before I could leave for Omaha I participated in a traditional religious ceremony with a medicine man who



Have Faith

said: "Take these tobacco ties, go to a remote area and hang them on a tree." So the day before the hearing I somehow hand the tobacco ties on a tree and then leave for Omaha. I determined that the only way I could complete my work, which required the collection of signatures on affidavits, and hang the tobacco ties, was to drive all night from Pine Ridge to North Platte, Nebraska, then catch a plane to Omaha early the next morning. My wife went with me; we drove all night. We got to the North Platte airport, I jumped on a plane to Omaha, and she rented a room and crashed. I got to Omaha, after being up all night, caught a cab to the courthouse and argued my motion for a temporary restraining order. I was successful in maintain the status quo when the government agreed that any payment for the Black Hills would not apply to the Oglala Sioux Tribe while the case was in the federal courts. After the hearing, I caught a plane to North Platte, went to the motel and fell asleep.

If I didn't file that lawsuit, the Black Hills Claim money would have been distributed to all the Sioux tribes under a distribution plan approved by the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to a 1973 Act. The claims attorneys were awarded 10% of the award. The Oglala share would about 29.88%. Under the 1973 Act, a secretarial distribution plan usually allows 80% of the money to be paid in per capita to tribal members and 20% to tribal government. So 24 million dollars distributed among 45,000 people doesn't amount to much (\$534 per person). So once it is distributed, it will be spent right away, and the Sioux claim to the Black Hills will be gone forever. That is when the Sioux people become a defeated people, walking around with their heads hanging down.

By filing the lawsuit and getting a stipulated agreement to maintain the status quo, we were able to prevent the payment, and ultimately the distribution of any of that money. The money had to be distributed within one year under the 1973 Act and the Oglala Sioux Tribe's lawsuit was in the federal court's for two years. The Bureau of Indian Affairs cannot distribute the claims award without going back to Congress for a new authorization to distribute it. So that's the status of the Black Hills Claim today. The Oglala tribe now has about \$500 million sitting in government accounts, that grows larger each day with interest, which it still continues to reject until a more fair and honorable settlement can be reached with the US Government that includes a return of federally held lands in the Black Hills to the Sioux Nation. The Black Hills are very central and indispensable to Oglala Sioux spirituality. They contain sacred sites and alters that the Sioux people use for traditional religious ceremonies, like vision quests that l practitioners do from May to September of each year. The Black Hills are a part of the Sioux homeland and they are not for sale. A lot of the Eastern tribes were forced out of their traditional homelands by gunpoint and marched to Oklahoma. Although they have made a remarkable adjustment in their adopted home, but like the Sioux people they are still attached to their traditional homelands were their ancestors lie buried.

To understand more deeply the motives of Mario Gonzalez it some time should be spent discussing the connection of land and people. Begin by asking students about their relationship to the land on which they live and their attitudes about it. How does this compare to the relationship the Oglala Sioux have with the Black Hills?

Content Objectives

Students will examine the Native American concept of Seven Generations, the belief that decisions should be made considering the influence they will have on Seven Generations.

Synopsis of Lesson

Begin class by having students reflect on the following question. This can be done in writing or through class discussion.

Do you think that people would make different choices if they believed the decisions that they made would influence the next 7 generations?



Seven Generations

Explain the roots of the idea of Seven Generations:

The “7th generation” principle taught by Native Americans says that in every decision, be it personal, governmental or corporate, decision makers are obligated to consider how that decision will impact descendants seven generations into the future.

In all of your deliberations in the Confederate Council, in your efforts at law making, in all your official acts, self-interest shall be cast into oblivion. Cast not over your shoulder behind you the warnings of the nephews and nieces should they chide you for any error or wrong you may do, but return to the way of the Great Law which is just and right. Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground – the unborn of the future Nation. Great Binding Law of the Iroquois.

Divide students into groups of 4. Give each group a photo of a structure or object that represents 7 generation thinking on the part of the culture that created it. Have students research the object and then present their object to the class explaining how it represents 7 generation thinking.



The Pnyx is a hill in central Athens. Beginning as early as 507 BC, the Athenians gathered on the Pnyx to host popular assemblies, thus making the hill one of the earliest and most important sites in the creation of democracy.⁵



The Great Wall of China is a series of fortifications made of stone, brick, tamped earth, wood, and other materials, generally built along an east-to-west line across the historical northern borders of China in part to protect the Chinese Empire or its prototypical states against intrusions by various nomadic groups or military incursions by various warlike peoples or forces.⁶

⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pnyx>

⁶ <http://www.wonderslist.com/10-most-famous-cultural-monuments-around-the-world/>



Cyrus Cylinder According to Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum, the Cyrus Cylinder embodies the first state model based on diversity and tolerance of different cultures and religions. According to MacGregor, “What [the Cyrus Cylinder] represents is the first recognition that if you’re going to run a society with different languages [and] different beliefs, you cannot impose by force one system.” This system proved so successful that Cyrus the Great’s dynasty lasted for 200 years, until Alexander the Great invaded the Persian Empire.⁷



Roman Aqueduct, first developed around 312 B.C., these engineering marvels used gravity to transport water along stone, lead and concrete pipelines and into city centers. Aqueducts liberated Roman cities from a reliance on nearby water supplies and proved priceless in promoting public health and sanitation. While the Romans did not invent the aqueduct—canals for irrigation and water transport existed earlier in Egypt, Assyria and Babylon—they used their mastery of civil engineering to perfect the process.⁸

⁷ <http://asiasociety.org/northern-california/10-facts-about-cyrus-cylinder>

⁸ <http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/10-innovations-that-built-ancient-rome>



The Canon of Medicine written by Ibn Sina is a scientific encyclopedia, which became essential reading at several medical schools around the world, including the universities of Leuven (Belgium) and Montpellier (France) up to the middle of the sixteenth century. The Canon of Medicine (The Law of Medicine) consists of a 5-volume encyclopedia. It was originally written in Arabic and later translated into several languages, including English, French and German. It is considered one of the most famous and influential books in the history of medicine.

The Canon of Medicine set the standards for medicine in both the Islamic world and Europe. The book is also the basis for a form of traditional medicine in India, known as Unani medicine. The UCLA and Yale Universities in the USA still teach some of the principles described in this work as part of the history of medicine curriculum.⁹

After students complete their presentations revisit the lesson's opening question. Ask students to brainstorm decisions that have been made that may/may not honor the Seven Generation philosophy and discuss.

Examples: stem cell research, armed conflicts (Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria), oil drilling in the arctic, public education

⁹ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2642865/>

Content Objectives

Students will experience the importance of individuals coming together to accomplish a goal.

Students will connect the collective action of individuals to change.

Synopsis of Lesson

The following activity will introduce students to action and their individual roles in making something happen.

Rainmaker

Have students sit at their desks or on the floor, with their hands free and the feet firmly planted on the floor. Introduce the activity by saying that the group is going to create something greater than each individual could on his/her own.

Split the group into 6 sections and explain that each section will have a task to do. Going around the room, model for each section what they are to do, give them an opportunity to practice, then move on to the next section until all 6 sections have practiced.

Section actions:

1. Say “Shhhh…” like the wind blowing through trees
2. Rub your palms together
3. Snap your fingers
4. Clap your hands
5. Slap the tops of your legs
6. Stomp your feet.

Tell each of the 6 sections to do their action when you point to them and to keep doing it until you point to them a second time. Begin with section 1 and work your way to section 6, then end the “rainstorm” in reverse.

Once the rainstorm has subsided, debrief with students on the importance of each individual in accomplishing the task. Ask them if they have ever cooperated with others to get something done they couldn’t on their own.

Can you name moments in history where people have gotten together to initiate change?

Examples: Anti-Apartheid Movement, Arab Spring, Civil Rights Movement

Have you ever been moved to act because of something you believed? What are the risks with taking action? Are those risks easier to manage if you act as a member of a group?

The following conversation can occur as a whole class or by dividing the class up into smaller groups and then having those groups report out. Have students brainstorm issues that they care about. Why do they care? What can they do to impact that issue? Do they have any role models that can serve as inspiration for their action? Why haven’t they done anything before about this issue?



Take Action

Create a master list of concerns, offer students the opportunity to “make a difference” on 1 or more of the issues. At this point the class may begin working in smaller groups or tackling one concern collectively. Remind students to consider why they have this concern, if there are role models whose actions can help them plan their own courses of action, and what resources they can draw upon for strength as they move forward to make a difference.

Fund for the Future of Our Children (FFC) has supported student activism for the past decade through the awarding of micro-grants. Examples of student-led initiatives, a micro-grant application and inspiration can be found at www.futureofchildren.net.

FFC will award up to 10 matching grants of \$1,000 each, up to \$10,000, where teacher-sponsored student projects have already raised at least \$1,000 on their own. FFC will highlight all matching grant recipients on its website to serve as role models for other youth activists.

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