



FOR THE NEXT 7 GENERATIONS

13 INDIGENOUS GRANDMOTHERS
WEAVING A WORLD THAT WORKS.



A PRODUCTION OF THE LAUGHING WILLOW COMPANY, INC.
A PROJECT OF THE CENTER FOR SACRED STUDIES
AND THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF 13 INDIGENOUS GRANDMOTHERS

NARRATED BY ASHLEY JUDD

**“An inspiring and moving work that reveals the importance of
indigenous knowledge for our own time.”**

–Daniel Pinchbeck (Author of Breaking Open the Head and 2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl.)

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INTRODUCTION:

Thirteen cycles of the moon. Each calendar year, as our small planet revolves around the sun, the moon has waxed and waned thirteen times since its creation. Now Mother Earth is in grave danger and thirteen indigenous grandmothers have come together to help heal our planet. Powerful healers in forces across the globe, spanning geographic and cultural boundaries, the grandmothers celebrate ancient traditions that are ties to the health of the planet and all its inhabitants. With the knowledge that has been passed down to them, an awareness of acute need to act and the kindness, patience, humor and perseverance that accrue with age, these powerful and remarkable thirteen grandmothers will pull you into their orbit as they work to renew the Earth. Now, for yourself, your children and the generations to follow, share in their life-changing journey. Because it's that important. And because when grandmothers talk, you should listen.



The Laughing Willow Company



FOR THE NEXT 7
GENERATIONS



HOUSE OF FILM

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13 Indigenous Grandmothers, shamans and medicine women from around the world have been called together to share their sacred wisdom and practices. Can they light the way for us to a peaceful and sustainable planet?

SHORT SYNOPSIS:

For the Next 7 Generations documents the momentous journey of thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers as they travel around the globe to promote world peace and share their indigenous ways of healing. Originating from all four corners, these wise elders, shamans and medicine women first came together in 2004 at an historic gathering in upstate New York. Moved by their concern for our planet, they decided to form an alliance: The International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers. Facing a world in crisis, they share with us their visions of healing and a call for change now before it's too late. Through their teachings, they are lighting a way to a peaceful, sustainable planet.

LONG SYNOPSIS:

In October 2004, thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers from around the world –the Amazon, Asia, Africa, Mexico, the Artic Circle, and U.S., gathered at Tibet House's Menla Mountain Retreat in upstate New York. They did not know one another, but each of them had heard a prophecy that called them forth. The prophecy told them that they must come together at this critical time in history and speak out to the world in one united voice to share their sacred wisdom. The Grandmothers all agreed that without finding a new way of seeing and being that echoes the ancient and time-proven earth-based traditions and practices of our indigenous peoples, we will not be able to break away from our destructive habits and create the changes necessary for our survival.

From this common vision, these thirteen Grandmothers decided to form an alliance to share their indigenous ways of peacemaking and healing with the world. As the International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers, they reunite twice a year at each other's home lands. In the film, *For the Next 7 Generations*, we accompany the Grandmothers' early travels to the Pojoaque Pueblo in New Mexico, to the Brazilian Amazon, and to the mountain-top village of Huautla de Jimenez in Mexico. In October 2006, they went to Dharamsala, India, the second home of our Tibetan Grandmother Tsering Dolma Gyaltong, for a private meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. During their time there, they also interacted with speakers and attendees at the annual Bioneers Conference in California via satellite. Spanning the planet, this spacebridge united the powerful prayers of the Grandmothers with the visionary activism of the Bioneers.

Produced and Directed by Peabody and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Carole Hart, For the Next 7 Generations shows the journey around the world of 13 original and irresistible characters. As they visit each of their indigenous homelands, we see grandmothers being canoed down the Amazon, or being driven in a super-sized tourist bus up narrow mountain roads. When the Grandmothers arrive at their destination, they take us inside their villages or pueblos or reservations, so we can witness and experience the living earth-based traditions and ceremonies that animate the Grandmother's sacred wisdom.

As they've come together, the Grandmothers' prayers and their message have become more powerful, opening up more hearts. The Grandmothers are living examples and strong transmitters of their message of peace, unity and harmony. Their spirit is contagious. Their deep love and understanding of their Mother Earth is inspiring.

HOW THE COUNCIL CAME TO BE :

The story of how the 13 Grandmothers first came together can be traced back to one Grandmother and spiritual teacher named Jyoti. For many years, Jyoti had been making relations with indigenous peoples. She found herself holding a vision of a circle of elder women. Carrying this vision, she traveled to Africa to meet an African shaman and medicine women named Bernadette Rebienot. While there, Jyoti mentioned her vision to Bernadette and was surprised to hear that Bernadette was having the same vision. Bernadette told her that they needed to make this a reality. After returning to her home in California, Jyoti and her associate Ann Rosencranz sent out invitations to 16 Indigenous women from all around the world to join them in a Gathering. The 13 Grandmothers who responded had all received visions or heard in ancestral prophecies that they would be called together at a critical time in history when their ancient knowledge was needed for the survival of the next generations.

Aama Bombo - Nepalese,
Margaret Behan - Cheyenne-Arapaho,
Rita Pitka Blumenstein - Yupik,
Julieta Casimiro - Mazatec,
Flordemayo - Mayan,
Maria Alice Campos Freire - Brazil,
Tsering Dolma Gyalthong - Tibetan,
Beatrice Holy Dance Long-Visitor - Lakota,
Rita Holy Dance Long-Visitor - Lakota,
Agnes Baker Pilgrim - Takelma Siletz,
Mona Polocca - Hopi/Havasupai,
Clara Shinobu Iura - Brazil.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It seems like I was ordained to make the Grandmothers' movie, *For the Next 7 Generations*.

In 1994, I was diagnosed with lung cancer that had metastasized to my brain. There were multiple lesions in my brain. They were not operable. Many of the 13 oncologists we consulted gave me 3 to 4 months to live and only one recommended treatment which might prolong my life but wouldn't save me.

Miraculously a woman, named Jyoti came into my life. She was looking for a filmmaker (which I am) to tell a film story about children and their dreams. It turned out that she was a spiritual teacher who had many relations with indigenous people. I met up with her in Lake Tahoe, Nevada. It was obvious that I was a cancer patient. Among other things, I was bald. She asked if she could sponsor a Native American church meeting for me, a healing ceremony in a teepee that lasts for 13 hours. I agreed immediately. I didn't have many other options.

The ceremony was extremely powerful. When I emerged from it, I felt like every cell in my body had shifted. The roadman, who runs the ceremony, told me that I was healed but it would take a while for my body to catch up with the healing. Over five years, through many cat scans, I watched the cancer go away, and finally I was certified to be cancer-free.

Years later, I met the Grandmothers for the first time in upstate New York where they were called together through a vision shared by Jyoti and Grandmother Bernadette Rebienot from Gabon, Africa. It's not traditional among native people to be filmed, but I felt like there was a really deep calling to help them create a filmed record of this historical meeting and what it might lead to. I told the Grandmothers where I was coming from and the gratitude and karmic debt that I felt to them, and that this would be a way to give something back for the fact that my life was saved with their miraculous ways of healing. They agreed to be filmed. And thus we have *For the Next 7 Generations*.

I've learned a lot from them about how to live in a more conscious, balanced and fulfilling way. I've tried to make a movie that provides its viewers with a similar experience. As Grandmother Rita Blumenstein says, "Mother Nature is angry. Nothing will change, unless we change. All of us." I hope the film shows us how we can go about changing.

O Mitakuie Oyasin. ("We are all related")
Carole Hart

DISTRIBUTION

U.S. & CANADA

We are using a hybrid self-distribution strategy that includes screenings in art house theaters, with grass-roots organizations, at house parties with fans and supporters, and affinity screenings co-sponsored with organizations and institutions that share the mission and passions of the Grandmothers. The film was released in August 2009, and since then over 400 screenings of all sizes and shapes were set up across the U.S. and Canada. We have also been accepted into over 20 film festivals. Please visit our website www.forthenext7generations.com for an updated list of screenings.

INTERNATIONAL

FOR THE NEXT 7 GENERATIONS is being distributed internationally by the Los Angeles based company House of Film, alongside the film SUNRISE/SUNSET; about a day in the life of the Dalai Lama. We are also in conversation with several cable channels for world-wide broadcast.

DVDs are currently available for sale (US and Canada Only) on our website, and we can't seem to keep them in stock!

RT 01:24:41

Exhibition Format: DigiBeta, DVD. Aspect Ratio 1:1:85

USA 2009



THE FILMMAKERS

PRODUCER / DIRECTOR

Carole Hart is an award-winning television and film producer/writer. She began her career in television working with her partner and husband, Bruce Hart, as one of the original writers of *Sesame Street*, for which she won her first Emmy. She also produced, with Marlo Thomas, *Free to Be ...You and Me*, the now classic children's album, best-selling book and Peabody Award-winning television special. She and Bruce created and produced *Hot Hero Sandwich*, an innovative Emmy-winning NBC series for adolescents. Her credits also include a number of movies and docudramas made for television: *Sooner or Later*, a movie musical that generated a top ten song and a Platinum soundtrack album: *Leap of Faith*, a groundbreaking docudrama about a woman who brought her cancer into remission through alternative means; and again teamed with Marlo Thomas, a multi-award winning mixed-media documentary for Lifetime Television, *Our Heroes, Ourselves*.

DIRECTOR

Bruce Hart is an award-winning producer, director, screenwriter, and writer of songs, including the title songs for *Sesame Street*, *Free To Be...You and Me*, and *Bang the Drum Slowly*. With his wife and partner, Carole Hart, he has created groundbreaking and culture-shaping multimedia productions, including the *Psychology Today* film series, *Sesame Street*, *Free To Be...You and Me*, and the Emmy-winning NBC series, *Hot Hero Sandwich*. He directed and wrote the book and lyrics for *Sooner or Later*, an original musical and NBC-TV Movie of the Week that introduced the hit song, *You Take My Breath Away*. His teleplay for *Leap of Faith*, a CBS Movie of the Week, starring Sam Neill and Anne Archer, received a nomination for best long-form drama from the Writers Guild of America.

Bruce Hart passed away on February 21, 2006. *For the Next 7 Generations* is dedicated to him, with the blessings of the Grandmothers.

CO-PRODUCER

Roberta Morris Purdee began her career working with actress/director Lee Grant. Notable projects include Academy Award winning documentary *Down and Out In America*, Emmy winners, *Nobody's Child* for which Marlo Thomas won an Emmy, *Wanted: The Perfect Guy* for Madeline Kahn, and *Cindy Eller; A Modern Fairy Tale* for Pearl Bailey. Morris Purdee's recent work includes *Baghdad ER* winner of multiple Emmy's and the DuPont Award for HBO, and *Talk, Listen, Connect* for PBS. Other documentaries include the critically acclaimed independent film, *Wallowitch & Ross: This Moment*, and festival favorite *Praying with Lior*.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Slawomir Grunberg has been a contributing director of photography and editor for the PBS series: *Frontline*, *American Masters*, *NOVA*, *AIDS Quarterly* and *Health Quarterly*. He has also shot for ABC, NBC, HBO, Lifetime and Discovery networks. In 2000 Slawomir won the Emmy Award for *School Prayer: A Community at War*. Other credits include *Legacy*, which received an Academy Award Nomination for the best documentary feature in 2001 and *Sister Rose's Passion* which won Best Documentary Short - Tribeca Film Festival and an Academy Award Nomination for the best documentary short in 2005.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Geoffrey O'Connor is filmmaker and writer whose 1993 film *At The Edge of Conquest* was nominated for an Academy Award. He works regularly for the BBC shooting, producing and directing documentaries about subcultures in America and he has collaborated extensively with Michael Moore as both producer and cameraman. His 1997 nonfiction book *Amazon Journal: Dispatches from a Vanishing Frontier* was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Douglas Crawford is a Peabody and Emmy award winning Director of Photography, especially known for his work on the PBS film, *Surviving Columbus: The Story of the Pueblo People*, which has been recognized nationally and internationally for its significant contribution to the history of the American West, and the six hour TBS series *The Native Americans*. As a freelance cinematographer since 1996 his list of clients ranges from --Animal Planet, ABC, and A&E to the White House, WETA, Washington D.C. and the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian.

COMPOSER

Peter Buffett is an Emmy-Award winning musician, producer, and composer for film and television. Most notably, Peter scored the song "Fire Dance" for the Oscar-winning film *Dances with Wolves*, and contributed to the score for *The Scarlet Letter*. He composed the full score for the Emmy-awarded CBS miniseries *500 Nations*, which Kevin Costner produced. Additionally, Peter won two Best Soundtrack Emmy Awards for the albums *An American Portrait* and *Ojibwe*. Beyond music, social action and philanthropy are very important to Buffett. His tireless work with numerous non-profit organizations and charities has made him a well-known activist for social concerns and these messages play out through his music. Currently, Peter is collaborating both musically and professionally with international recording artist Akon.

EDITOR

For the past seven years, Editor **Susan Ades** has been editing films, trailers, shorts and promos for award winning directors Douglas Keeve: *Unzipped*, Mirra Bank; *The Last Dance*, Lisa Ades; *Miss America* and Carole Hart; *Free to Be... You and Me*, *Hot Hero Sandwich*. She has recently finished editing a short romantic comedy *BLIND FATE* by Jeffrey Gottlieb, and has contributed additional editing on the newly released political documentary *SWING STATE* and ensemble comedy/drama *FAST COMPANY*. *FOR THE NEXT 7 GENERATIONS* is her first feature documentary.

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF 13 INDIGENOUS GRANDMOTHERS

ARCTIC CIRCLE

RITA PITKA BLUMENSTEIN



“The past is not a burden; it is a scaffold which brought us to this day. We are free to be who we are—to create our own life out of our past and out of the present. We are our ancestors. When we can heal ourselves, we also heal our ancestors, our grandmothers, our grandfathers and our children. When we heal ourselves, we heal Mother Earth”.

Yupik mother, grandmother, great grandmother, wife, aunt, sister, friend, tribal elder. Born on a fishing boat and raised in Tununak, Alaska, Rita attended a Montessori school in Seattle for four years. She raised two children and worked at many hospitals delivering babies as a doctor's aide in Bethel and Nome. She has traveled and taught basket weaving, song, dance and cultural issue classes worldwide, earning money for Native American Colleges. Rita has participated in many healing conferences where her teachings of the “Talking Circle” were recorded and published. Rita is currently employed with South Central Foundation as a tribal doctor using plant and energy medicine.

NORTH AMERICA

MONA POLACCA



"Indigenous people have come through a time of great struggle, a time of darkness. The way I look at it is like the nature of a butterfly. In the cocoon, a place of darkness, the creature breaks down into a fluid and then a change, a transformation, takes place. When it is ready and in its own time, it begins to move and develop a form that stretches and breaks away from this cocoon and emerges into this world, into life, as a beautiful creature.

We grandmothers, we have emerged from that darkness, see this beauty, see each other and reach out to the world with open arms, with love, hope, compassion, faith and charity."

Mona, a Hopi/Havasupai /Tewa elder, has a Master of Social Work degree and is employed with the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona as an advocate for Native American health issues. She serves on several United Nations committees on indigenous people's issues and is a featured author, speaker, and educator on indigenous people's human rights, aging, mental health, addiction and violence. She is also the President/CEO and faculty of the Turtle Island Project, a non-profit program that promotes a vision of wellness by providing trans-cultural training to individuals, families, and healthcare professionals.

AGNES BAKER-PILGRIM



“We grandmothers have come from far and wide to speak the knowledge we hold inside. In many languages we have been told it is time to make the right changes for our families, for the lands we love. We can be the voice for the voiceless.”

We are at the threshold. We are going to see change. If we can create the vision in our heart, it will spread. As bringers of light, we have no choice but to join together. As women of wisdom we cannot be divided. When the condor meets the eagle — thunderbirds come home”.

Oldest living female member of the Rogue River Indians, Takelma Band, originally from Southern Oregon, Agnes was chosen by her tribe as a “Living Legend.” Agnes is an ambassador for our Mother Earth. She is a spiritual elder of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz and granddaughter of Chief George Harney, the first elected chief of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz. She is a world renowned spiritual leader, elder mentor to the Native American Student Union of Southern Oregon University, and keeper of the Sacred Salmon Ceremony.



BEATRICE LONG-VISITOR HOLY DANCE

Beatrice Long Visitor Holy Dance and her sister Rita, live on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. They are members of the Crazy Horse band, named after the great warrior, Crazy Horse. Grandmother Beatrice is a Lakota keeper of the traditional ways, a great grandmother, a Native American Church elder, a sundancer, and a health worker for people with diabetes.



RITA LONG-VISITOR HOLY DANCE

Lakota keeper of the traditional ways, great grandmother, Native American Church elder, bead worker.

“We are here with a prayer for our generations, for our grandchildren who are suffering, for our children’s grandchildren. How are we going to survive? Our government is taking everything from us. Our people want our Black Hills back. The only way to survive is through prayer”.

MARGARET BEHAN – RED SPIDER WOMAN



“If we want to see changes first of all we need to be in peace inside ourselves, and then we need to be patient with the ones that have not yet arrived in that place of peace”.

Margaret is Arapahoe-Cheyenne, fifth generation of the Sand Creek Massacre. As a child, Margaret attended the Catholic Mission and Government Boarding Schools. Margaret is a Cheyenne traditional war dancer. She has served as a dance leader in Oklahoma and in powwows across the U.S. A sculptress for 24 years, she creates clay figurines that have won her many honors, including shows at Eastern New Mexico University, University of Wisconsin, Santa Fe Indian Market and the Gallup Inter-Tribal Ceremonial. Margaret is an accomplished and published author, poet and playwright, and licensed Substance Abuse Counselor. She has presented workshops and retreats for women, adult children of alcoholics and co-dependents. Currently researching generational trauma, her interest is in cross-cultural Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome—trauma of loss and grief, danger and fear, hatred and chaos.

CENTRAL AMERICA

FLORDEMAYO



“In this time of movement, where celestial doors have opened, we must do what we have been asked to do. We are standing in the movement and the vibration of a sacred prophecy. The prophecy tells us that consciousness is preparing the spirit of the feminine, the spirit of the grandmothers. It is in the prophecy that we shall walk into the light united from the four directions”.

Mayan elder born in a small village on the Nicaragua/ Honduras border. Flordemayo’s father was a local shaman and Flordemayo’s mother was a midwife and a healer. As her children grew, Flordemayo began to work as a healer/curandera. Flordemayo is a sundancer who considers her Mayan heritage a keystone of her work. She studies under Don Alejandro Oxlaj, a head of the Mayan Council of Elders, who convened the first Gathering of Indigenous Priests and Elders of America in 1994. She is currently on the board of directors of the Institute of Natural and Traditional Knowledge in San Juan, New Mexico. (www.inkt.org)

SOUTH AMERICA

MARIA ALICE CAMPOS FREIRE



Maria Alice tells the story of an old man, an old shaman in the last year of his life...

“In the last year of his life, he did not eat anything, not even drink water, only divine medicine. All the time he was listening to sounds, divine sounds. He called one of our sisters who was older than us and asked her to write down messages he received for the women. He said the women would transmute first and then the men. So women be courageous. Never doubt this task, but take it in your hands”.

Madrinha of the Santo Daime Church, Mapiá. Healer with Amazonian plant medicine. Founder of Centro Medicina da Floresta. Madrinha of the Umbanda ceremonies. Principal advocate for the preservation of the indigenous rain forest heritage.

CLARA SHINOBU IURA



“In these latest times we live in, when killing seems almost natural, we are here in these days of prayer so that we can illuminate a consciousness for this planet that is in agony. Inside our hearts, I believe each of us present at this gathering feels great hope. This is a seed being planted”.

Born in the state of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Clara studied philosophy at the University of Sao Paulo. Through her experiences of clairvoyance and mediumship, she was initiated through many teachings, from macrobiotics to Umbanda. After helping with the curing of Padrinho Sebastiao, spiritual leader of one of the Santo Daime's largest churches, she was invited to live and work in Céu do Mapiá, his community located in the heart of the Amazon forest. Since 1999, she has directed the Santa Casa de Saúde (Holy House of Health) Padrinho Manoel Corrente, Céu do Mapiá's holistic healing center

AFRICA

BERNADETTE REBIENOT



“Nothing happens in my country without consulting the women. Our wise people, our elders, they are like libraries. We consult them whenever we need to make large decisions.

Every five years, in my country, it is the women who make a peace march. It is the grandmothers who for one month go into the forest to prepare for this peace march. They fast, they pray and invoke the ancestors.

When the grandmothers speak, the president listens”.

Born in Libreville, Gabon of the Omyene linguistic community, widow and mother of ten, grandmother of twenty-three. Before retiring, Bernadette worked as an educator and school administrator. Bernadette has participated in numerous national and international conferences on Traditional Medicine. She is a healer, master of the Iboga Bwiti Rite and master of Women’s Initiations. Bernadette has offered initiations and consultations for the past thirty years. She has been President of the Association of Traditional Medicine Practitioners for Gabonese Health (U.T.S.G.) since 1994.

ASIA

AAMA BOMBO



Buddhi Maya Lama, who is also known as Aama Bombo (Mother Shaman), was born in the remote village of Melong in the Eastern part of the Bagmati Zone, Nepal, 65 years ago. Her father was a renowned shaman in the Nepalese Tamang tradition. In the early days, her father restricted her in every way from practicing shamanism. However, when her father died at the age of eighty, his spirits and other gods and spirits started visiting and teaching her to be a shaman, against the prevailing cultural values of Tamang society, since women are not traditionally supposed to practice shamanism. Today, Aama has achieved prominence in Nepal. She treats (heals) around 100 patients every morning at her house in Boudhnath, near Kathmandu. Patients come to visit her from around the country, as well as from India and Tibet. She does not discriminate against those she heals, treating the poorest of the poor as well as the Royal Family of Nepal with equal dedication and respect.

TSERING DOLMA GYALTHONG



“I’d like to talk about problems in the world and what the sources of these problems are. I am Tibetan, so I will speak about the situation in Tibet, which affects all of us. Tibetans took very good care of the land, but now it is becoming a place where radioactive waste from products all over the world are being buried. It is a danger for everyone”.

Tsering Dolma was born in Tibet in 1929. Because of the Communist invasion of Tibet, she escaped along with her family from Tibet in 1958 to India. In 1972, she and her family (four children) came to Canada as refugees. She returned to India and became one of the founding members who revived the Tibetan Women’s Association (TWA). During the next ten years, she served as an executive member of TWA and established over 30 branch offices worldwide. In 1995, Tsering Dolma attended the Fourth World Women’s Conference held in Beijing, China. She faced many threats and dangers as she along with others openly criticized the Chinese government and its treatment of the Tibetan people and especially Tibetan women. She now resides in Toronto and remains as an advisor to the TWA.

SELECTED PRESS



Just Like Grandma Told You

Heartland
November / December 2007 by Nina Rothschild Utne



Photo by Marisol Villanueva

The U.S. Constitution is said to be based on the principles of the Iroquois Confederacy. But there was one crucial omission: the role of the grandmothers.

In October 2004 a Cherokee woman named Jyoti (Jeneane Prevatt) brought together a group of indigenous grandmothers from around the world in Phoenicia, New York. All spiritual leaders, they told of remarkably similar prophecies, thousands of years old, from their ancestors. All stated that we are now at a critical point in history, and that if we do not change our way of relating to each other and to Mother Earth, we will face cataclysmic consequences. The prophecies also stated that the grandmothers would come together to light the way for us.

When Jyoti set out to organize the gathering, she didn't have any particular number of women in mind. But as Rita Pitka Blumenstein, a Yupik doctor from Alaska, introduced herself, she handed out 13 stones and 13 eagle feathers that had been given to her when she was 9 by her great-grandmother. The old woman had told Rita that she would be part of a council of grandmothers and that she was to distribute the feathers and stones when they met.

In all the traditions these women represent, grandmothers were honored as the final authority on most tribal matters, including decisions of war.

In that first meeting, the women talked about the degradation of the earth and of the human spirit and how to use knowledge from their traditions to remedy these ills. They decided to form the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers so they could speak in a united voice about their core principles: the transforming power of prayer, the healing power of sacred medicines, the creative power of women, and the ultimate power of unity.

Rooted in tradition, the grandmothers bear witness to the worst effects of our shortsightedness. And as they seek to create a different path, they embody both urgency and hope. They are also bridges to other levels of reality. Bernadette Rebienot, an Omyene healer from Gabon, believes that invisible secrets “will soon become precious compasses for humanity,” according to World Pulse magazine (Spring 2005). “We must take into account the visible, invisible, and spiritual dimensions of the world because two plus two doesn’t always equal four. . . . The people of the future will no longer be those who believe exclusively in logic, in the reign of numbers and capital, but rather those who have understood that the net of tomorrow’s society resides in respect and consideration for the other.”

In the forthcoming documentary *For the Next Seven Generations: The Grandmothers Speak*, Rebienot says, “We can’t go backward anymore. We don’t have fear anymore. The time is short. Time is calling us.”

The prophecies state that we are entering the “purification times,” when we will shed all the accumulated negativity caused by a material rather than a spiritual orientation. As the earth goes through upheaval, the grandmothers say, we need to heal ourselves and find peace within. By doing this, we heal Mother Earth herself.

Agnes Baker Pilgrim, the oldest living female member of the Takelma Band of the Rogue River Indians in Oregon, says in *World Pulse* that prayer is our duty and that “we need not for one moment limit ourselves about what we can do. We must give support and encouragement to each other and to whomever we meet on our path. Love people unconditionally and add their voices and prayers to ours. The creator will hear our cries and turn the dark side around.”

The grandmothers believe that only culture derived from nature’s laws will survive. Without a deep connection to nature, our consciousness and our politics will inevitably be flawed. But when we are connected to the natural world, we cannot help but see the beauty within ourselves and everywhere else.

With the deluge of negative information in the world today, it is heartening to consider the possibility that opening ourselves to beauty, hope, and connection may be the most healing action we can take.

For more information on the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, go to www.grandmotherscouncil.com.

INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY



Photo Courtesy: Marisol Villanueva

Indigenous grandmas nearly kicked out of Vatican

By Rob Capriccioso
Story Published: Jul 18, 2008
(Story Updated: Apr 24, 2009)

ROME - They went to pray. They went to see Pope Benedict XVI on his home turf. They went to ask that he rescind historic church doctrine that played a role in the genocidal onslaught of millions of indigenous people worldwide.

For 13 indigenous grandmothers, accomplishing only one of their three goals wouldn't have been so bad - had they also not been harassed by several Vatican policemen who claimed the women were conducting "anti-Catholic" demonstrations.

The elders, formally known as the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, convened in the morning hours of July 9 at St. Peter's Square. After setting up an altar cloth, candles and sacred objects, including feathers and incense, they began holding a prayer and ceremony circle. Nine-year-old Davian Joell Stand-Gilpin, a direct descendant of Chief Dull Knife of the Lakota Nation, was brought along by one of the grandmothers to participate in traditional regalia.

Soon, however, four Vatican police officials asked the women to stop the prayer ceremony, claiming their prayers were in contradiction to the church's teachings - despite the two crosses on the altar cloth and some of the members being practitioners of the Catholic faith.

The officials told Carole Hart, an Emmy and Peabody award-winning producer and filmmaker traveling with the grandmas, that the group was in violation of Vatican policy. They said a permit Hart had obtained in order to document the prayer gathering was only relevant in terms of filming, but did not allow the women to pray, sing or burn incense.

The police said the actions of the grandmothers were "idolatrous."

Through the course of obtaining the permit, Hart had written to Vatican officials explaining that the grandmothers would be conducting a prayer ceremony at the site.

"We stuck to the fact that we were legitimately there with this permit," Hart said. "The grandmas did not back down."

Still, the police urged the grandmothers to move on; but Hart and the group appealed the decision to a higher authority. Finally, the police brought back a law official who assessed the situation. Upon seeing 13 indigenous elder women and hearing one of their songs, the official concluded there was no problem with the ceremony.

The official also ultimately invited the grandmothers to enter St. Peter's Basilica to rest and pray.

Despite their short-term success, the ultimate goal of the grandmothers - to hand-deliver a statement to Pope Benedict XVI, asking him to rescind several controversial papal bulls that played a part in the colonization of indigenous lands - was thwarted.

Documents from the 15th century, such as the papal bulls, show the papacy played a role in the genocidal onslaught that affected millions of indigenous people on the North American continent. In 1455, for instance, Pope Nicolas authorized Portugal "to invade, search out, capture, vanquish and subdue all Saracens and pagans" along the west coast of Africa, enslave them and confiscate their property - which set the tone for European interaction with the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

Just a short time before the grandmothers left for their long-planned journey to Rome, Pope Benedict XVI announced that he would be leaving the Vatican to rest at his summer home, called Castel Gandolfo, in preparation for a trip to Australia.

The pope had originally been scheduled to be in residence July 9. Laura Jackson, the grandmothers' publicist, described the pope's decision to leave the Vatican as a "sudden cancellation" and noted that the grandmas held tickets to a scheduled public audience he was to have held that day.

While Castel Gandolfo is less than 20 miles away from the Vatican, the grandmothers ultimately decided not to make the journey to the pope's summer getaway despite some in their inner circle encouraging them to pay an unexpected visit.

Hart believes the grandmothers chose to focus on St. Peter's Square because it's part of the Vatican and is a strong symbol of the pope.

"As women of prayer, I think they felt that bringing their prayer there, on the very ground on which the church as an institution stands, as close as they could get to the heart of the church, would have a great effect on what will happen next," Hart said. Additionally, the women had no guarantee that they would even be able to enter the grounds of the pope's summer residence.

Instead, the elders left a package with one of the pope's personal guards at the Vatican. The package contained a written statement the women had sent to the Vatican in 2005 decrying the papal bulls, to which the Vatican never responded. It also contained a new 632-word statement to the pope asking him to repeal three Christian-based doctrines of "discovery" and "conquest" that set a foundation for claiming lands occupied by indigenous people around the world.

"We carry this message for Pope Benedict XVI, traveling with the spirits of our ancestors," the women said in their new message. "While praying at the Vatican for peace, we are praying for all peoples. We are here at the Vatican, humbly, not as representatives of indigenous nations, but as women of prayer."

The package was given to the pope's guard via a traditional Lakota manner, by extending it to him three times with him then accepting it on the fourth attempt. The entire process was captured on film, and is expected to be made into a documentary by Hart in the coming year.

It is unknown whether the pope has yet personally received the package, but legal scholars and Native activists in the U.S. have nonetheless been paying close attention to the grandmothers' journey.

"I think the trip is very significant," said Steven Newcomb, co-director of the Indigenous Law Institute and author of the book, "Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery," and an Indian Country Today columnist.

"These are women who are very much grounded in their own languages and traditions. They're able to raise visibility of the issue in ways that others are perhaps less effective."

The grandmothers from the U.S. who sit on the women's council are Margaret Behan, of the Arapaho/Cheyenne of Montana; Agnes Baker Pilgrim, of the Takelma Siletz; Beatrice Long Visitor Holy Dance and Rita Long Visitor Holy Dance, both Oglala Lakota of Black Hills, S.D.; Mona Polacca, Havasupai/Hopi; and Rita Pitka Blumenstein, Yupik Eskimo.

All of the grandmothers are currently in private council in Assisi, Italy, and are expected to be returning home by early August.



by Carol Schaefer | January 21, 2009

13 indigenous grandmothers gather to fulfill an ancient prophecy for the world.



(Marisol Villanueva)

“Prophecy is traditionally revealed and confirmed over time, in bits and pieces and through many different people.”

When she was 9 years old, Rita Blumenstein, a native Yupik from Alaska, began to see visions and prophecies. It was then that her great-grandmother took her aside and gave her 13 stones and 13 eagle feathers. She told her that she would one day pass them out at a Grandmother’s Council.

Over half a century later—in 2004—true to her great-grandmother’s vision, Rita found herself in a circle of 13 grandmothers from five continents who had gathered in rural New York. Many of the grandmothers were living legends among their people—wise women, curanderas, shamans, and healers of their tribes.

Like Rita, each one, in different ways, had been foretold of their participation in a sacred grandmother council that would fulfill a prophecy for the world.

Rita had tears in her eyes when she greeted her fellow grandmothers for the first time and gave each one the special stone and eagle plume that had been given to her by her great-grandmother for this very occasion.

“Thirteen stones in honor of the 13 Grandmothers, the 13 planets in our universe, and the 13 full moons of the year,” she said. “We’re late, but we’re here!”

The return of the Grandmothers has been foretold for hundreds of years by many indigenous traditions. Although each grandmother knew deep within that she was meant to participate, it wasn’t until Rita handed out the feathers and stones at their historic first gathering that the Grandmothers realized there was a specific number in the prophecy.

Each grandmother had been contacted by Jyoti, an American woman who herself had a series of visions, including one in which she saw a circle of grandmothers from different parts of the world. Unaware of the Grandmother Prophecy, she felt that she was being called to give these women a voice. Overwhelmed by the scale of the vision and with a sense of urgency, Jyoti prayed for direction. How was she to find the Grandmothers? And how would she know if she had the right ones? Then, the answer came: "At the seed of all things are relations. Start there and everything else will grow." Jyoti turned to contacts she had gathered through years of visiting and learning from indigenous people around the globe. She sent out letters of inquiry to 16 women elders describing her vision and asking for their presence on the council. Although she had no idea how many there were to be, 13 accepted.

Since their first gathering, the grandmothers have become a living fulfillment of the prophecy and, as they say, "a prayer in action." According to them, prophecy is traditionally revealed and confirmed over time, in bits and pieces and through many different people, with each revelation deepening its meaning.

Each grandmother took her seat in the council for the first time in 2004, and the group met in private for three days. They felt that they were hundreds of years late according to the prophecy, and that the end of the world as we know it is near. Collectively, they knew the Grandmothers from the Spirit World were calling them to action. They knew that now they must reveal their most secret and sacred ways to the very people who have been their oppressors. They also shared the belief that the world is being prepared for the spirit of the feminine and that this energy must awaken in men as well as women.

According to Grandmother Flordemayo of Central America, "Prophecy states that it will be the women who walk with the power. We have an incredible journey and responsibility as women. All of our life we arearetakers, walking with the Mother. For women to have the freedom in the heart to be able to express ourselves spiritually is very, very important. We must learn to stay balanced in the moment and give each moment 100% of our prayer."

During their private council, the Grandmothers decided they would visit one of each of their homelands every six months. Over the past two years, they have raised funds to travel to the Black Hills; Oaxaca, Mexico; the Brazilian Amazon; and New Mexico; and they visited the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India. Most recently, on a global day of Prayer for the Waters of the Earth, they traveled to Spain to spread their prayers through the waters of the Mediterranean to the shores of the River Jordan. They also fulfilled a long-held intention to lay down prayers at the Vatican and delivered a letter to the Pope to request the revocation of edicts that have resulted in the decimation of indigenous people and cultures worldwide for over 500 years.

Said Grandmother Mona Polacca to the public that had gathered to hear them speak in Rome, "This is an historic occasion. Five hundred years ago the ancestors from Spain and Italy came to our lands and planted their flags. Just a few weeks ago, we came to the Vatican. But we did not plant our flags; we planted our prayers. We are here to open the way so that someday our grandchildren might come here and meet with your grandchildren in a peaceful way."

Excerpted in part from Grandmothers Counsel the World: Women Elders Offer Their Vision for Our Planet.

Read more prophecies from the grandmothers in their book, *Grandmothers Counsel the World*.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Visit the Grandmothers's site to read their Statement of Alliance and find out about upcoming events.