

The Way I See It

by Dr. Dean Chavez, President
Native American Scholarship Fund
Albuquerque, NM



Indian Crabs

There is one joke I tell which is understood by Indians all over the U.S. At the same time, non-Indians don't laugh at it, except nervously. They don't get it.

It goes like this. One day, a white man was sitting on the dock fishing in San Francisco. He was using live crabs, and had them in a bucket. He could not enjoy the fishing because he was continually having to push the crabs back down in the bucket. They kept climbing out.

He looked down the way and saw an Indian man fishing, enjoying himself. The Indian man would put on a bait, throw it out, take a drink of his 7-Up, and relax.

Finally the white man could take it no longer, and went over to where the Indian man was sitting. "What are you using for bait?" he asked. "Crabs," the Indian man said.

"Are they live crabs of dead crabs?" the white man asked. "They're live crabs," the Indian man said.

"Well, how do you keep them down in the bucket," the white man asked. "I can't keep mine down in the bucket; they keep climbing out of the bucket."

"I have Indian crabs in my bucket," the Indian man said.

"I never heard of such a thing," the white man said.

"Yes, there are Indian crabs and white crabs," the Indian man said.

"What's the difference?" the white man asked.

The Indian man said, "Well, with Indian crabs, every time one of them gets close to the top of the bucket, the other ones pull him back down."

That is the way we act many times in Indian Country. It seems that we cannot stand to see someone get ahead. When they do get ahead, we find some way to talk bad about them.

The reverse of the Indian crab story is one Miss Pheele Lowery told us in the third grade at Pembroke Graded. There was an old dog that roamed around the neighborhood. Some people didn't like him and some people did. He didn't do anything really bad like killing chickens. But he would bark at the people he didn't like.

One day that dog got hit by a car and killed. Everybody in the neighborhood gathered around to look at the dead dog in the road ditch, and they all had something

bad to say about him.

"That dog chased my chickens," one lady said. "He made my cow's milk dry up," another lady said. "HE scared the devil out of my younguns every time he came around," one man said.

But one lady would not stop to this low gossip. "That dog had the prettiest white teeth," she said.

I think the moral of this story is that we can all choose to look at something from the positive or the negative perspective. As Indian people, I think we sometimes take the negative when we should take the positive.

Maybe we are like the Black man who said he had been down so long he didn't know which way was up.

Maybe this attitude is the result of being the defeated, the oppressed. Maybe it is part of the social control which small communities the world over use through gossip to keep their members in line.

I don't know what it is, quite frankly. But I know we are set up with it. It doesn't matter if it is Mohawks from New York, Navajos from Arizona, or Crows from Montana. We have it bad. And we need to get rid of it.

Genealogical Glimpses

by Elaine Locklear



The Spirit World in Mourning

The custom in many lands is to bury the dead, to cleanse the earth. But custom appears to have not been followed at all in the case of our mother. Reports have come in from far areas of the land, denouncing our care of her. Many tell of finding items that belonged to her in far away places. Where they have been abandoned and left to decay.

Mother died because of shame. Though not many people have died from this affliction, it was cruel to her. She had so many things that she hoped would be passed on to her next generations. The shock of seeing her children's blatant disrespect caused her heart to break. She just lay down and surrendered her spirit to the creator. She did not want to live among such people. Though they bore her name and her blood, yet they were strangers to her.

As she was met by her ancestors coming into the spirit world, she told each one what had happened. As if they did not already know. She felt the need to accuse her children before the Elders. But they were already dressed, as if they were in mourning. Many were crying openly, while some were merely weeping. The children with them could sense the pain they all felt as mother came among them. Quietly they gathered into council at the Great Lodge. Each elder was allowed free voice. But for many days no one spoke. There was only the stares from hollow eyes. After many day of silence around the Spirit Fire, it was decided that one member from each Great House would speak. But each requested that all

would continue to mourn for those left behind by Mother.

Each Great House would be represented on earth by a family name. Quietly, Rhoda, the sister of Lazy Will arose. She spent a long while going from face to face. Some had been her neighbors on earth. They had gotten along good. Everybody had sought good for their neighbor. Everyone helped in time of need. They never forgot the old people. They brought their food, tobacco and would sit by their fires with them when they wanted to talk. Slowly she started to speak. The tear-stained face did not appear natural on such a strong woman.

"You know, I had believed that my family would be strong for a long time. I didn't think that my people would fall so soon. But when I knew that they were willing to give up everything about our people, I was ashamed of them. I did not want them to remember me anymore. When these same children can cause the death of our child, and throw away all those things that we left her, then maybe we should let them go. How could they be so cruel to their own and still want to be called Earth people."

Quietly Rhoda walked to the fire, drew out a burning ember and lit her pipe. "No, I don't want the chullun. It's the truth. I don't."

John Oxendine began to stir as Rhoda moved to her place. He had not been a man of much talk. He had been a good provider for his children. He had been proud of his people. He was glad he had been trusted to carry on

his heritage and to train his children in it. When he was on earth, he believed that he had done well. His sons, James, Charles and Little John, appeared to treasure the way of life that he had given them. But then, how come this thing had happened so soon? Was it not good enough for them? Almost whispering as he spoke, yet his words were strong. "It hid things from the whites, just so I could give it to my sons. The talk of old people, ways to hunt, ways to fix the ground. All these and many more, and yet they spit on it. Why?"

No one would attempt to answer him.

Quietly Duncan Locklear stood to speak. His dark face, black hair and brown eyes even in his old age was strong. He stood to accuse, his eyes flashing fire as he did. Next to him was his father, Alamander, and is grandfather, Isam. "When our people was made fun of for sounding like Hoot Owls, when we talked, we still talked. We saved what we could and gave it to our children. It looked like our heritage would be safe with them. But you know, they have come down fast. I don't believe we could find all that they've lost if we hunted forever. Maybe we could go back as spirits and show them some of the things that they throw away. I feel like there must be some of them that care. How could they lose so much and not care? Perhaps if we spoke to the Creator he would allow some of us to go back. How I would love to hear the sound of our words among the trees again. But it is so sad to think that these, our children, don't care."

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On The Pow Wow Circuit

The following list of upcoming powwows is not intended to be a complete list. Anyone having information about upcoming powwows not listed is encouraged to send them to: Wild Turkey, P.O. Box 1075, Pembroke, NC 28372 or fax to (919) 521-1975.

*March 25-26, Edistos Indian Cultural Festival. American Indian artisans, traders, authentic traditional and fancy dancers. Field Gym adjacent to Football Stadium, South Magnolia Street, Summerville, South Carolina. Contact: (803) 871-3453 or 871-2126.

*March 25-26, 1994-Annual Festival of the Four Holes Indian Organization (The Natchez Kusso Tribe). Call (803) 871-2126.

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Your Bible And You

By Daniel Davis

as you pondered the question of the first Thanksgiving this past week, what did you find? What story in your Bible did you feel was the first Thanksgiving?

Did you stop, as some did, at the first rainbow? What a precious time of joy and thanksgiving that was, as Noah and his family stepped on dry land again. They both heard and saw the promise from a loving God that said the earth would never again be destroyed with a flood.

Perhaps you agreed with those who felt that the first Thanksgiving was recorded in Genesis 21, when Sarah conceived and bore the son of promise. What a celebration of thanksgiving that must have been. What praise and adoration must have ascended heavenward as Abraham and Sarah remembered God's promise. After all they were not in the prime of life anymore. Still, that's not where I see the first Thanksgiving in my Bible.

Did you find it in the thankful heart of Abraham as he untied his son, Isaac, and offered the ram in his place? Or when Joseph met his father again after so many years of separation? So many times in your Bible when God's

people had great cause for celebration! But as wonderful as all of these times might be, still they are not the first.

By now you might be saying, "When was the first Thanksgiving?" So turn with me, in your Bible, to the second chapter in the first book-Genesis 2:1-3. Here we will find the very first Thanksgiving.

At the end of the creation week God set aside a special time. A day of thanksgiving. A day of worship, praise and blessing. God blessed this day. He sanctified it. That means He set it apart for a special purpose. God never does anything without a reason, and this is no exception. God desired that His new creation have the best of everything in world He'd created just for them. So he instituted the Sabbath, a day of praise to our God for His mighty blessings.

Each week, on the seventh day, we are to join fellow believers in raising thankful hearts toward heaven for God's bountiful blessings. Yes, the very first Thanksgiving occurred at the birth of our world and was instituted by God himself. What a wonderful gift of love to humanity. A special, holy, sanctified day of rest and thanksgiving, the Sabbath!

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Pediatric Pointers

By JOSEPH T. BELL, MD

I returned today from a trip out West to the "Land of the One-Armed bandits" Las Vegas. No, I was not there to play the slot machines! I was there as a speaker at the annual National Indian Health Board Conference. There were nearly 1,000 Native people from across the U.S. discussing health issues that are affecting our Indian communities. It was a great conference!

Several weeks ago Robert Chavis, our Lumbee Physician assistant out in Phoenix, wrote a very good article in the Indian Voice about nutrition. This topic was one of the main issues being discussed at the NIHB conference and I thought it would be good to touch on a few key points.

Of course nutrition plays a vital part in our health, both high blood pressure and many other diseases are directly affected by what we eat and drink! One disease that we sometimes forget is affected by our diet is cancer. Some cancers, such as colon and stomach cancers, have been associated with diet for sometime, while others, such as breast and cervical cancer, are just now being linked to nutrition. Medical studies, now show that a diet high in fat and calories and low in fiber increases our risk for these types of cancers. The National Cancer Institute says that if we ate at least 5 servings of a fruit or vegetable everyday, our cancer risk would drop by 30%!

I was also reminded at the conference that the why we prepare our food can predispose to an increase risk for cancer. While grilling food over wood, or coal, decreases the cholesterol used in frying, it also increases the carcinogens cancer causing in the food especially if the grill is at a very high heat!

The bottom line is that the habits we pick up as children concerning our diets carries on into adulthood. We should teach good eating habits to our young ones. Increase the amount of fruits and vegetables we eat and try not to grill your food too fast at very high heats. And we can cut down our rates of cancer. I am reminded that many years ago in Indian country that our people very seldom had cancer. I am sure it is because we had a better diet and exercised more. Let's try to get back to those practices.

Congratulations to Mr. H.B. Bullard on finding a match for a bone marrow transplant. I understand the procedure is scheduled for the middle of December. Our prayers go with you! Let's all keep up the good work in getting more Native Americans on the National Marrow Registry!

See you next week!

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