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## INTEGRATED BOOK REVIEW SET

THEY CALLED ME UNCIVILIZED: THE MEMOIR OF AN EVERYDAY LAKOTA MAN FROM WOUNDED KNEE

WALTER LITTLEMOON WITH JANE RIDGWAY,  
FORWARD BY JAYNE SHORIN

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA AND  
NEW YORK: IUNIVERSE INC., 2009, 107 PAGES.  
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INTRODUCTION, ORGANIZATION, AND REVIEW

LAWRENCE F. VAN HORN

Publishing more than one review of the same book by different reviewers, accompanied in the same issue by a counterpoint by the book's author(s), has been a hallmark of *The Applied Anthropologist*. It is my privilege to be the organizer of this integrated set of reviews with fellow anthropologists Kathleen Sherman and Kreg Ettenger, who respectively bring out the autobiographical and historical aspects of *They Called Me Uncivilized*. And it is my privilege to work with the authors, Walter Littlemoon and Jane Ridgway. In the interest of full disclosure, both Kathleen and I know each of the authors personally.

This book is a clearly written personal history that is well organized chronologically with a message painful to realize. Walter Littlemoon relates how he suffered physical and psychological brutality as well as cultural and social confusion from the age of five into adulthood. The primary culprit is identified as the now defunct program of the United States government to put American Indian children into boarding schools away from home. Littlemoon's telling of his experiences during this time is intended to encourage others with similar experiences to think through such past conflicts to create a more whole, less fragmented future.

What I find especially interesting in this book is cultural continuity in the face of change and intentional disruption. Littlemoon grew up in the United States to be an American Indian Lakota man with ethnic pride, integrity of character, and everyday straightforwardness. He did so while carrying the baggage, so to speak, of psychological trauma and socio-cultural contradiction. This story is well told and will benefit American Indian and non-Indian readers alike who have ever grappled with huge problems affecting personal identity and resolved them on an individual level.

As a memoir, *They Called Me Uncivilized* would be worthy of inclusion in such a book as Ben Yagoda's *Memoir: A History* (2009). Littlemoon's work exhibits several

traits of memoirs most admired by Yagoda: (1) outstanding description of "difficult times in childhood," (2) emphasis on the "particularity of that childhood," and (3) recounting it "with great insight, perceptiveness, humor, humility, and storytelling skill" (Yagoda 2010: 61). Albeit in varying degrees, *They Called Me Uncivilized* meets all of these criteria. While a *memoir* and an *autobiography* are both historical personal accounts, there is a nuanced difference between the two terms: a memoir presumably covers fewer events than an autobiography. The implication is that Walter Littlemoon has more to share than he has so far revealed. Perhaps a revised edition or sequel might be possible.

It would have been interesting, for example, for Littlemoon to mention his involvement in the National Park Service's special resource study pertinent to the site of the December 29, 1890, massacre of Lakotas by units of the U.S. Seventh Cavalry at Wounded Knee, South Dakota (Hagood, Van Horn, and Sorensen 1992). The study considered possibilities of the site becoming a formal tribal park, a state park, a national park, or remaining as it was. As a member of the Lakota-National Park Service planning team, Littlemoon felt strongly that it should remain unchanged. His view prevailed and fits in very nicely with his values of Lakota personal and community integrity that one discerns in *They Called Me Uncivilized*. The National Register of Historic Places listed the site as the "1890 Wounded Knee Massacre Site National Historic Landmark" on December 21, 1965 (with documentation updated on March 31, 2001). It draws visitors from all over the world. Littlemoon and his wife, Jane Ridgway, live relatively close to the Wounded Knee site; the proximity, however, is not emphasized in the book.

More information about Littlemoon's dealings with the government of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs could also be illuminating. A hint of his views can be found in a

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pungent comment (not included in the book) about the tribe not snow plowing the two-mile road to the Littlemoon home after a blizzard, but doing so to provide access to the Wounded Knee Site prior to anniversary ceremonies on December 29th. According to his wife, Jane, Walter commented to various government agencies that they “plow for the dead but not the living” (Ridgway 2009).

Overall, *They Called Me Uncivilized* is a significant first person contribution to North American Indian ethnography and ethnohistory of the mid- to late-twentieth century. Walter Littlemoon is truly an engaging storyteller as befits the honored Lakota elder he has become.

*Lawrence F. Van Horn, Ph.D., is retired as a cultural resource specialist for the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. He is also a Past Editor of The Applied Anthropologist, as well as its Immediate Past Book Review Editor. He can be reached at 303-978-0784 or at [julava-ho2@q.com](mailto:julava-ho2@q.com).*

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## REVIEW



### KATHLEEN A. SHERMAN

Autobiography has been a robust genre in the literature on Native American life and culture over the past 300 years (Brumble 1988). Among the many remarkable aspects of *They Called Me Uncivilized* (Littlemoon 2009) is the original purpose and perspective that this autobiography represents. Rather than presenting Native American life for the casual consumption of curious non-Indians, Littlemoon’s autobiography presents a journey of trauma and discovery explicitly intended for Native American audiences. Nevertheless, the lessons and understandings drawn from Littlemoon’s life experiences have tremendous power for any reader, regardless of their ethnicity.

Walter Littlemoon was born in Wounded Knee, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, in 1942. Littlemoon traces a series of multigenerational traumas that

he and his ancestors survived over the last century and a half. The slaughter and forced relocation of the Cheyenne, the abusive treatment of Native American children in boarding schools, the violent and unpredictable separation of children from their parents and grandparents, and the thoughtless destruction and isolation of the Wounded Knee community during the American Indian Movement (AIM) takeover of 1973 are among the experiences shaping Littlemoon’s life. His autobiography, however, is not simply a recitation of personal and familial recollections around historically significant incidents.

Autobiographies aimed at non-Indian audiences tend to emphasize what it is like to be Indian, revealing exotic customs and cultural practices while reliving quaint realizations of major differences between Indian and non-Indian life and society (see Barrett and Markowitz 2005; Pearce 1988). With respect to forced assimilation, when it is even addressed, these autobiographies are often framed as narratives of personal triumph, with the authors taking on new challenges and ending up successful in both the Indian and dominant European-American worlds. These happy endings are intended to remove guilt feelings from the non-Indian audience and reinforce the subliminal message that Manifest Destiny really was better for everyone. Messy emotional issues are sidelined to protect the Protestant aversion to getting too personal.

The thread that runs through Littlemoon’s life is his personal struggle to understand a nest of isolating and often self-destructive emotional patterns that he ultimately identifies as Complex Post Traumatic Stress.<sup>1</sup> These emotional patterns are evident across the population of Pine Ridge, as well as other reservations in the United States and indigenous communities around the globe. Because the focus of this autobiography is on understanding Native American experience from a Native American perspective, Littlemoon does not shy away from the painful and negative behaviors that accompanied his efforts to cope with Complex Post Traumatic Stress. He does not sugarcoat the shame he felt in longing for his Lakota life while he was forced to survive in the European-American world. He does not let the reader off the hook with a happy ending of having overcome all obstacles. Instead, he provides a grounded account of how the act of remembering his ancestors, his Lakota upbringing, and his Lakota values ultimately let him bring his two disjointed worlds together. While this journey to health of more than 30 years is not complete, elements of nature, comfort, and pleasure are starting to return to his life.

While the main purpose of this book is to help other Native American people understand and cope with their experiences of Complex Post Traumatic Stress, it accomplishes other objectives as well. By giving an honest account of reservation life, Littlemoon’s text provides cultural insights



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into what it really means to be Lakota. Rather than attempting to glamorize quaint and curious practices attributed to being from a different culture, this book gives you the fundamental feeling of Lakota life from an everyday perspective. The book also conveys in real terms the emotional impact of living between two worlds.

Another important contribution is the context provided for the 1973 AIM takeover of Wounded Knee. Out of more than 50 books on the American Indian Movement, this is the first to give an account of Wounded Knee from the perspective of the local residents. Other treatments of the "Second Wounded Knee" glamorize AIM members for their political resistance to the U.S. Government and hold them up as examples of modern Indian warriors (Reinhardt 2007; Means 1995). From Littlemoon's perspective, AIM was yet another traumatic intrusion into the lives of Wounded Knee residents. The arrogance, violence, and cultural inexperience of AIM members made them nearly as foreign to Littlemoon as boarding school teachers and administrators.

*They Called Me Uncivilized* is successful in putting words to an experience that many American Indians and indigenous peoples have shared but not fully understood. The power and healing from this book will undoubtedly ripple through thousands of lives, Native American and non-Native alike.

Kathleen Sherman, Ph.D., J.D., is Professor and Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Colorado State University. She is also President of the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology. She can be reached at 970-491-5962 or at [kathleen.sherman@colostate.edu](mailto:kathleen.sherman@colostate.edu).

## NOTE

<sup>1</sup>The term "Complex Post Traumatic Stress" is explained in the book's Foreword by social worker Jayme Shorin as resulting "from growing up in an environment where you are exposed to repeated trauma that affects who you are as a person" (p. viii). It is contrasted with the more familiar term Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which can occur after a single traumatic event. See the response essay by Littlemoon and Ridgway for the origins of and citation for this term.

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## REVIEW

### KREG T. ETTENGER

*They Called Me Uncivilized* (Littlemoon 2009) gives a glimpse into how the events of history work their way into the lives of "everyday" people, and how those people in turn react to sometimes monumental events while retaining their cultural and personal values. It provides a history of Indian Country through the eyes of one individual, somewhat like a real-life *Little Big Man* (Berger 1964) with the captivity narrative reversed. Littlemoon's own forced assimilation was into the dominant European-American society's world of boarding schools, boot camps, imposed politics, and alcohol. His account of this violent process, and the way it wrought havoc on him, his family, his community and his culture, helps us understand the very real implications of American policies geared toward cultural assimilation and "civilizing the Indian."

The text begins with a foreword by Jayme Shorin, a clinical social worker who treats victims of violence, including child abuse. Shorin names the psychological condition formed by years of abuse in government-run residential schools as "Complex Post Traumatic Stress," described as an ingrained response to "prolonged abuse, trauma and torture," especially when experienced as a child (p. viii). This unfortunately describes the experiences of hundreds of thousands of Native Americans and First Nation Canadians. It is this experience that has formed Littlemoon's personality and responses to his life experiences, and which he has tried to resolve in part by writing this book.

The first third of *They Called Me Uncivilized* reminds one a bit of *Forrest Gump* (Gloom 1994). Not that the book is full of humor; Littlemoon explains early on that he is a "somber man" who does not "talk in a joking way." And it never becomes maudlin, despite dealing with personal and collective stories of deep heartache and loss. Most importantly, it is a work of historical truth as experienced and remembered by one "everyday Lakota man." The parallel with the film is how this one person's life has been directly touched by so many key events in Native American history, from the so-called Indian Wars of the 1800s to Vietnam, and from residential schools to the author's own struggle with alcohol and other demons.

While Gump was a passive and naive witness to monumental historic events, Littlemoon is fully aware of the history around him, of the significance of events like Wounded Knee (both tragic episodes), and of the roles of individuals within that history. His responses to what goes on around him, however, are muted by the defense mechanisms that he admits prevent him from being fully engaged with the

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world. Like others who survived the residential school system, and many children who suffer abuse or neglect in their own families, he learned to survive by becoming invisible. In all his stories there is one thing missing—his own interactions with other people, especially any sort of confrontation or conflict. Instead, he is an observer of the events that rock his own world and those of his people, and which form the important background for this book.

It is worth a brief look at some of the events that thread through his short narrative and how they touched his family and community. (Much of the following, by the way, was recorded in a 1926 interview by a doctor named Thomas Bailey Marquis [1957] that was reprinted in the 1970s, setting in motion Littlemoon's interest in his family's history.) Littlemoon's great-grandmother, a Northern Cheyenne woman named Iron Teeth, lived with Dull Knife and his band in the mid-nineteenth century. They were given land under the Fort Laramie Treaty, only to see that land taken away during the Black Hills gold rush. She heard first-hand of the victory at Little Bighorn, but soon after watched her own husband and many of her people killed in a massacre led by Colonel (later General) Ranald Slidell Mackenzie, a key figure in the Indian Wars (Greene 2003). After a long, bitter midwinter march, her people took refuge with Crazy Horse, but eventually surrendered and were sent to Oklahoma Indian Territory. What followed were years of deprivation, attempts to return to their homeland, and forced confinement on reservations.

Other stories of note include one about Littlemoon's great grandfather on his father's side, who was shot by settlers while out hunting and left for dead. As the story goes, a family of coyotes came along and rescued him, dragging him to their den and nursing him back to health. He returned to his people later with a promise by the coyotes that one child in each generation of his family would be born with "coyote eyes," a trait Littlemoon says continues to this day.

In one of the most compelling yet understated stories in the book, Littlemoon's father was killed by lightning on a clear blue day when a single cloud formed over the small church building where his family was resting near the site of the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre. According to Littlemoon, his father James was a shaman with special powers and connection with the Thunder Beings. Risking severe punishment from the government and the church, James continued to drum and hold sweat lodges out of sight of the European-American community. For whatever reason, on a clear July day the "Thunder Beings came and took my father home," sending a bolt of lightning down a chimney and through a wood stove, knocking over James and killing him instantly (p. 17). This is one of several powerful and myster-

ious stories that Littlemoon relates with little commentary or explanation; it is up to the reader to decipher the meaning and importance of such events.

*They Called Me Uncivilized* might in fact be disappointing to seekers of "Native American wisdom" because it contains no clear guidance or lessons for the reader, no pronouncements of the deep and abiding spirituality of modern-day Indians. Its few references to the mysterious are offered in a matter-of-fact, reportorial way. Littlemoon remembers clearly, for example, watching a flock of pheasants perform an intricate circle dance on a fine summer day. He and his friend Harold, boys at the time, watched in amazement as the pheasants marched in a tight circle, with individuals taking turns running in straight lines across the circle. When the boys ran back breathless to tell Harold's father, he just smiled and said, "You've seen pheasant dancing," explaining that they do this in good years to celebrate their fortune. "We Lakota do the same," he added (p. 33). Such stories are not followed by pages of sermonizing or lecturing; they are simply offered as some of the many fascinating things that Littlemoon has witnessed or heard about in his life.

Littlemoon's residential school experiences, while not described in as much detail as the Foreword suggests, form the center of his historical narrative. We learn about the abuse suffered at the hands of teachers, who seemed to punish children arbitrarily and with pleasure. "Beatings were frequent and rarely made sense," writes Littlemoon. "If we got an 'A' we were beaten for cheating, if we got an 'F' we were beaten for being stupid. So we learned to stay in the middle" (p. 44). He gives a few examples of the specific tortures applied to the children, from severe beatings to being forced to kneel for hours on a pencil, or being deprived of food and other needs.

Most heartbreaking was how this treatment eventually broke the spirit of the children, separating them from their culture, their language, their feelings, and their own families. Despite having older siblings at the school, Littlemoon could not interact with them in any meaningful way as they could be punished for talking or displays of emotion. When Littlemoon's mother comes to briefly visit the school during his first year there, he hardly recognizes her. Several times over the next few years he escapes from the school and makes the 16-mile journey on foot back to his home, until one last time in midwinter when he was badly frostbitten and his mother refused to let him be taken back. Eventually he went to a Catholic school, finishing at the local public school and quitting after the eighth grade.

Today Littlemoon's memories of boarding school often leave him physically ill, which he also becomes when he smells fresh-cut grass, associated with the first day of school



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in the fall. The term *residential school syndrome* refers to the combination of physical, psychological, substance abuse and other problems suffered by those who lived through residential schools, often known as *survivors* rather than alumni or graduates. Littlemoon describes clearly how residential school has affected him and other survivors as adults:

Those of us who have tried to carry on have found little on the reservation to give meaning to our lives. We have developed unique behaviors to survive. Our conversations tend to be guarded, and we frequently withdraw and fade into the background in a crowd, rarely stepping forward to participate. We cut conversations short just to get away from others; we tend to be suspicious of people, meetings and group activities. For many of us there are no feelings of freedom, or pleasure. There is nothing. We are just there, silent observers of our own lives. (Pp. 52-53)

In Canada, where the residential school system affected many thousands of First Nations peoples, a recent agreement with the federal government and several churches has given compensation to survivors. There are now a host of programs and healing circles designed to help them recover from their experiences, work through their problems, and aid them in not passing along the dysfunctions they learned in school to their families and communities. It is a long road, and the repercussions of the residential school system may last for generations to come.

*They Called Me Uncivilized* is not all gloom and despair, to be sure, but the hope offered by Littlemoon does not come in the form of government programs, church or school apologies, or the efforts of tribal leaders or outside groups. It does not even come in the form of Native healing circles, sweat lodges, prayer ceremonies or cultural and language programs. Instead, it comes in the form of small gestures by everyday people done in the spirit of helping and common need. Near the end of the book, Littlemoon describes the funeral of his brother Ben, with friends, family and neighbors coming from miles around to hold a wake, help with the proceedings, and pay respects. Food is donated, prepared and shared; chores are done without complaint; spare rooms and floors are offered for out-of-town visitors; and emotional support is given through kind words and simple gestures like handshakes and hugs. In short, the meaningful ceremonies of life are shown as being heartfelt and pure, not overly grand or full of affectation.

On the other hand, Littlemoon scorns those who pride themselves on their good intentions; he writes scathingly of outsiders in the American Indian Movement (AIM) who took over Wounded Knee in 1973, leaving buildings and homes shot up and burned down, and the community scarred and shaken. These radical, urban Indians, he writes, who

“dressed with feathers and a little beadwork here and there,” had no idea of the damage they were doing in their misguided attempt to raise awareness about Native American rights. The elected leaders of Pine Ridge and neighboring communities are depicted in an even more unflattering way; they are responsible for protecting their own people, yet are accused of stealing funds, threatening and harassing their enemies, and creating an environment of fear, hostility and suspicion. These individuals, the powerful and oppressive, whether Native or non-Native, remain nameless and faceless in the book.

Meanwhile, residents of the community like Good Lance, Left-Handed Jimmy, Lincoln Looking Horse, and Tall Jenny, are described with love and respect, from their idiosyncratic clothing and hairstyles to their kind and simple words of wisdom. There is a clear desire to honor individuals who did not earn reputations as Lakota political leaders or wield power through the European-American institutions that controlled reservation life for many years. These are the folks who made food for funerals, helped their neighbors, and waited silently at the trading post for the bus carrying children to return to the reservation every summer. The heroes of *They Called Me Uncivilized* are not powerful leaders or well-known figures, but “everyday Lakota.” These people inspired Littlemoon, through his memories of them, to write down his stories, and they remain at the center of Lakota culture and society.

If there is a shortcoming to the book, it may be its modest length. Many of the sections could have been expanded, including the brief descriptions of working in San Francisco and fighting in Vietnam, both important aspects of the Native American experience. Perhaps Littlemoon feels that these subjects have already been well covered by other authors, or perhaps he assumes that his main audience knows these stories already. Littlemoon makes it clear that his words and ideas are mainly meant for others from his own community, those who experienced residential school abuse, and other Native Americans. But the book still has much to offer non-Native people who wish to understand this part of our history and better appreciate how these experiences have affected so many. It would be especially helpful to those outsiders who work with Native Americans who have suffered abuse within the residential school system, or within their homes and communities. It would also be useful for undergraduate students in history, anthropology or Native American Studies, and the slim size and low cost make the book an easy addition to any related course syllabi.

Littlemoon’s memoir is guided by the philosophy that “Remembering is a basic ingredient for living” (p. 80). These were the words given to him by his elders and by the





great cottonwood tree that stands besides his family's old homestead on Mouse Creek. According to Littlemoon, one day the tree seemed to tell him, "All things that ever happened in this place, Mouse Creek of Wounded Knee, are a part of today. They are not just history, over and done with, as some now think" (p. 2). This book is a small testimony to that fact. It breathes life into the history of Native American people, especially those of the northern Great Plains, and helps the reader understand how that history—good and bad, tragic and beautiful—continues to inform the present.

Kreg Ettenger, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Southern Maine. He is a Past President of the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology. He can be reached at 207-780-5322 or at [ettenger@usm.maine.edu](mailto:ettenger@usm.maine.edu).

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## RESPONSE



### JANE RIDGWAY AND WALTER LITTLEMOON

It is with pleasure that we write this response to the three reviews of *They Called Me Uncivilized* by Lawrence Van Horn, Kathleen Sherman, and Kreg Ettenger. We are honored to be included in this scholarly journal and humbled by the thoughtful comments of the reviewers. Your words have led us to reflect on the journey we have taken in putting Walter's words on paper.

When something horrendous has happened to thousands of people we believe there is a moral obligation to bear witness. Whether this book is one of many or the only one, whether it is read by a thousand or a hundred, *They Called Me Uncivilized* bears witness. Ten years ago we set out simply to record Walter's memories and his family's history for his adult children. However, we were confronted time and again by intrusive, dark emotions for which we

had no name and little understanding. They would seemingly come out of the blue: anger, sorrow, frustration and hopelessness. The darkness that rose to the surface challenged both of us—the speaker and the listener. That darkness lived within Walter but it was not a part of us.

Walter and I have known each other now for twenty-five years and have lived together in his home two miles from the Wounded Knee Massacre site for the last twelve. When I first came to Wounded Knee at his invitation in 1985, I noticed a familiar look on the faces of many of the older residents that niggled at me. At some point, as we struggled to get his memories down, I saw in him the faces of holocaust survivors I had known from years gone by. They had been beckoning to me throughout all those years. I remembered being told of their struggles to overcome the negative impacts on their families—the second and third generations. Although his doctor at the Veterans Administration (VA) had told Walter he was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress and to "talk it out," we wondered if the Jews might have a more specific understanding of what he was experiencing. We were beginning to realize that we were facing the eruption of long buried demons from Walter's childhood spent in a U.S. government boarding school for Indians.

We began looking for understanding and help for Walter and others as we now saw a bigger picture evolving than the original family story. Unfortunately, we learned along the way that twenty-eight Canadian residential school survivors had filed a class action suit against their government around 1991 and because there was no psychological safety net, twenty-one of them had committed suicide. The memories that action dredged up were too painful. That knowledge was so frightening to us. Over the years we have constantly sought further understanding, wisdom and knowledge. We have never forgotten those who took their lives because the pain of remembering was too much for them to bear. Fear that our words might drive more to suicide was never far from our consciousness. A huge old cottonwood tree outside our kitchen window became a symbol of strength, determination and perseverance to which we turned.

The internet has brought the world into our remote home. A painstaking search uncovered reams of information. In particular the name Judith Herman, a Boston psychiatrist affiliated with Harvard, stood out. We sent for her book *Trauma and Recovery*. Through it, we learned the term Complex Post Traumatic Stress that she had coined. Another search and we had her business phone number. We called and left a message, essentially asking if she knew of anyone helping American Indians recover from the trauma



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stemming from Federal Indian boarding schools. That evening she called back from her home and talked with us both at length.

Judith didn't know anyone working in particular with boarding school survivors, but she did have one counselor who might have enough experience to be aware of cultural differences, Jayme Shorin. She offered to put us in touch with her. Judith cautioned us not to build up too much hope in finding a counselor, even in our area, who would have skills specific to Native Americans. She said that often people start out with good ideas to set up helpful programs for those who suffer, but end up doing more research and writing more papers. At the same time, she encouraged us by saying that many people around the world who live in isolated areas have been very creative in setting up healing methods of their own that are indigenous and satisfy their cultural expressions.

Over time, Walter has come across a few classmates and shared his newly found knowledge on the psychological impacts of boarding schools with them. He'd also add that he was writing a book. Time and again the response has been, "You tell them, Walter. You always find the right words to say." Some of them shared their memories with us and, to survive the horror of what we were listening to, we would withdraw psychologically as best we could. One boy had his head submerged in a bucket of ammonia for speaking his native tongue. Another had his eyes glued shut after he was discovered practicing a small ceremony. Still another had his back peppered with buckshot as he attempted to run away. Counselors, unaware of the mandatory nature of the boarding schools, have told some survivors that their parents abandoned them. It has been hard to find the positive and hold onto it. The glimpses of Good Lance and the others, the fragments of comments made by the older men to a little boy, are so precious, as Kreg Ettenger perceives in his review.

As noted by the reviewers, we have kept the book's wording simple in order to share it with the people here on the Pine Ridge Reservation. This is a remote, impoverished area. There is much confusion, and misinformation runs rampant. The average person has less than an eighth grade education. We have learned over the years that most people carry on conversations at that level too, so we figured that must be the understandable language level for all people.

We have learned through our experience that healing does not come easy, and it may never be complete. With that said, people need the big picture and through that view, more than anything, they need to see the good in each other and themselves. Those are some of the reasons why we didn't include more aspects of Walter's life. As

Larry Van Horn points out, Walter did take a strong stand against the massacre site becoming a national park because he learned that it meant some of the residents would be relocated. He also has been a certified drug and alcohol counselor (through the state of Colorado) and started a Hazelden program on this reservation with Basil Braveheart, as well as an alcohol-counseling program in the reservation border town of Gordon, Nebraska. He founded a non-profit organization, the Tiyospaye Crisis Center, when he lived in Denver, assisting Indians there and bringing aid in various forms to Wounded Knee and other communities on the Pine Ridge Reservation. He was elected Wounded Knee District President for two terms but stopped after completing one because he can't stand politics. Had we listed those accomplishments we would have made others feel diminished and that would have defeated the purpose of his message.

Of particular interest to us is the number of men, including non-Natives, who are responding to Walter's memoir. One message that seems to sum up what they are saying came from our friend, Manus Pauwels, in the Netherlands. He wrote, "Although his story is unique ... for his people in this time, it talks about pains and fears and hope that [are] recognized all over the world, which makes Walter's story also a universal story, not only helpful and useful for Lakota people but for all human beings. So thank you, Walter, for sharing" (Pauwels n.d.).

The Lakota don't usually talk in chronological order. Walter's story didn't initially unfold that way either. However, an editor suggested that revision and we found it actually was another healing element. Chronological order put things in perspective. The trauma became a *part* of life, not *all* of life, and thus happier memories began to rise to the surface and bring comfort. One hope is that this narrative style will set an example others can follow in putting their lives in perspective as they attempt to find some peace.

Recently, Walter's story has taken on a life of its own. Numerous speaking engagements (including to anthropology students) have been complemented by the development of a documentary, *The Thick Dark Fog*. Award-winning filmmakers, including some connected with the Sundance Film Festival, have added their expertise. Thanks in part to generous funding from Native American Public Telecommunications, this perspective on Walter's story is being produced by Randy Vasquez and is scheduled to be broadcast on PBS during the 2012/2013 season. (For a preview, readers are invited to watch the trailer: [www.thickdarkfog.com](http://www.thickdarkfog.com).)

*Walter Littlemoon (Oglala Lakota) and his wife and collaborator Jane Ridgway are resident activists and cultural facilitators from the Wounded Knee*



# The Applied Anthropologist



LITTLEMOON AND RIDGWAY



They Called Me Uncivilized...

community of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota. They are authors, counselors, and senior consultants on issues concerning community residents, including *Complex Post Traumatic Stress and the impact of boarding schools on indigenous populations*. They can be reached at 605-867-2092 or at [janedane@gwtc.net](mailto:janedane@gwtc.net).

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