

**American Indian Institute**

# Report 2016



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## Above All, Respect

The American Indian Institute and Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth continue along a wisdom guided journey into mutual respect; following the Elders' counsel that above all else, respect for self, respect for others and respect for Mother Earth must guide our lives.

## Mission

The mission of the American Indian Institute is to perpetuate the ancient wisdom and cultural heritage of North America's Native peoples, and to promote a greater understanding of that wisdom among all people. The Institute achieves its mission by serving as the administrative agency and support source for the Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth, a coalition of grassroots spiritual leaders from Indian nations throughout North America.

## Vision

The American Indian Institute recognizes traditional Indian wisdom as an endangered human resource that is relevant to today's world and that holds keys to our common survival. Looking seven generations into the future, we see a world in which the values and traditions of indigenous peoples are respected for the wisdom they hold for the Earth and all its peoples. We pursue this vision by supporting the Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth as it teaches, motivates and celebrates traditional Indian peoples today.

We act as facilitators of gatherings of traditional peoples, promoters of healing of Indian communities, and supporters of efforts to educate non-Indians about the wisdom and harmony inherent in the traditional indigenous worldview.

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# Trustees Report

Thanks to the generosity of many individuals and organizations that contributed time and resources to the Institute, 2016 was a successful year.

This report includes images from and descriptions of programming events that took place during the year. The 39th annual International Elders & Youth Council in August was hosted by traditional leaders of the Nooksack and Tulalip Tribes of Washington State. Another successful *Ohero:kon* Rites of Passage program took place at Akwesasne Mohawk Territory, New York. The traditional Rites of Passage program is one of the Institute's many Traditional Youth Leadership Initiatives planned and facilitated by the Institute with the guidance of Circle Elders. The seventh in the series of *Ancient Voices - Contemporary Contexts Forums* was held at Six Nations Grand River Territory, Ontario, Canada. Elders and traditional leaders from the Circle came together with non-Native delegates from across North America to "Re-polish the Silver Covenant Chain" (an explanation is included on page 6 of this report).

Robert Staffanson, Founder and President Emeritus of the American Indian Institute, pays tribute to three Traditional Circle Elders who walked on last year. Two of those Elders attended the first Elders Council at Three Forks, Montana in 1977, and were instrumental in forming the Circle.

The staff and directors of the Institute remain dedicated to bringing the wisdom, knowledge and experience of the spiritual Elders to their youth, and across the cultural divide to the larger society.

The Institute board and staff thank all of those who helped make the important work of the Institute possible. Your comments and questions about this report are always welcome.

Executive Committee Members

Lisa Smith, Paul Fees, and Stan Moser

# The 39th Annual Elders & Youth Council

## Nooksack Territory, WA

### August 8-13, 2016

The annual Elders & Youth Council is one of the core programs of the American Indian Institute and Traditional Circle of Indian Elders & Youth, and the most important annual event for the spiritual leaders who comprise the Traditional Circle. This five-day, Indian-only event has been held in a different location in Indian country each year for the past 39 years. The program is critical to the survival of traditional knowledge, the person-to-person communication of that knowledge and wisdom to Native Americans of all ages, and the consequent reinforcement of identity, self-confidence, moral values and motivational incentives - all bedrock prerequisites for success in walking in two worlds.

The 39th annual Elders & Youth Council was hosted August 8-13, 2016 by traditional leadership of the Nooksack and Tulalip Indian Tribes of Washington State. The camp was located in the heart of Nooksack Territory in the northwest corner of the state near the Nooksack River on the Tenaska Grounds.

Elders from the Four Directions in Indian Country attended as well as delegations from Canada and Central America. In addition, many delegates from local Northwest area nations were in attendance. A total of 300-350 delegates representing 42 nations outside the Northwest were in attendance.

Morning sessions under the arbor dealt with the spiritual side - the prayers, the prophecies, the fundamental teachings of ancient values and worldviews as spoken by Elders from the Four Directions. Afternoon sessions dealt with issues facing the grass-roots people in the communities, largely centered on youth. One afternoon the delegates divided into men's, women's, and youth groups to facilitate interaction. Another afternoon the delegates divided into groups according to stages of life as represented using Sun Dance poles as an analogy: the stages of life are represented in the spaces between the poles; one interacts with the age group from the opposite side of the circle.



*“Once again at this year’s Council the Elders shared their common knowledge with the people, providing each with a stronger sense of self, and a re-identification of being Native. The involvement of the youth this year was beautiful to see, and is so important. The local community was strengthened by having the people there, and with the great arbor that was built for them.”*

TP'izishzhini (Diné)



# Traditional Youth Leadership Initiative

The goal of the Traditional Youth Leadership Initiative is to promote the work that the Traditional Circle of Indian Elders & Youth wishes to do with youth to ensure the survival and revitalization of the spiritual and ceremonial knowledge indigenous to this hemisphere. By transmitting to their youth the knowledge still preserved in their ancestral memory, the Elders are passing on the wisdom that defines Indian people, and that may hold keys to our common survival.

Programs involve hundreds of youth in many different Native communities across the country. In each case it is the traditional, spiritual Elders who are putting their visions into play by structuring activities for youth outside of school where they are free to follow the spiritual teachings of their ancestors that form the framework for the youth to be able to think indigenously, walk successfully in both cultures, and know their place in Creation.

Current programs are under way in the Four Directions in the following Native communities.

- Bitterroot Salish, Upper Qlipse, and Kootenai (Flathead Reservation, Montana)
- Haudenosaunee Territory, the Six Nations of New York & Canada
- Teton Lakota, Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota
- Diné Navajo Nation, Arizona



*“There’s a difference between shaming a young girl into her physical transformation versus celebrating her...I like to think of it as an ancestral calling, and it’s calling our kids home.”*

Louise “Mama Bear” McDonald, Akwesasne Mohawk Clan Mother



# 2016 Ancient Voices-Contemporary Contexts Forum

With the theme of “Re-Polishing the Silver Covenant Chain: Building Relationships for the Good of the Earth”, the 2016 *Ancient Voices - Contemporary Contexts Forum* – a three-day gathering held at the Six Nations Grand River Indian Territory, Ontario, Canada – brought Elders and traditional leaders from the Traditional Circle together with 50 non-Native delegates from across North America.

The Forum was held in response to the request from Traditional Circle of Elders and Youth to:

1. “Help us get the message of the Elders out to the larger society and get dialogue started across cultures”
2. Recruit “runners who can speak for the Earth”
3. “Council with those from the larger society willing to risk what we consider comfortable for the sake of the future.”

Elder speakers for the Six Nations Forum were:

- Richard Hill, Beaver Clan of the Tuscarora Nation
- Norma Jacobs, Wolf Clan of the Cayuga Nation
- Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper, Turtle Clan, Onondaga Nation
- Tom Porter, Bear Clan, Akwesasne Mohawk Nation
- Louise McDonald, Bear Clan, Akwesasne Mohawk
- Clayton Logan, Wolf Clan, Seneca Nation

- Danny Blackgoat, Bitterwater Clan, Diné
- Ruchatneet Printup, Tuscarora Nation
- Freida Jacques, Turtle Clan, Onondaga Nation
- Arleen Adams, Bitterroot Salish, Flathead Nation

*Ancient Voices Forums* are held in the belief that change is possible. The authentic voice of the traditional Elders, with its holistic view of environmental and social responsibility, offers a way back to understanding our responsibilities to Earth, each other, and the generations yet to come. We believe the ancient voice of the only wisdom indigenous to this hemisphere will add a new set of possible answers to the burning social, cultural, economic and environmental issues we all face.

A major theme of the 2016 Forum was Reaching Consensus on Commitments to Action. Participants were introduced to and mentored in Haudenosaunee traditional protocols for consensus-based decision making to create action plans designed to foment change.

The sunrise ceremony, cultural experiences, and beauty of the area complemented daily Elder addresses and small group discussions in communicating the traditional ethos of indigenous people, and offered pathways of intellectual and spiritual connection between the two races.



*“This experience has touched my heart and soul deeply. I want to know more, meet more people, share and understand differences so that truths may be heard. And in that hearing, I pray partnering for action will happen to work towards real justice and reconciliation by following the wisdom of Indigenous leaders such as those who attended this gathering.”*

L.N., Cambridge, Ontario



*"I would like to say thank you to the elders for allowing me to be part of this. I'm enriched by your teachings, awed by your spirit, and humbled by your continued willingness to reach out in friendship. I will do my best to stand with you, in good mind, as long as I live.*

*"In addition to learning about the historical contexts of the Two Row and the Covenant Chain, the teachings prompted me to think in a new way about colonization, and of the many ways in which it has damaged us both."*

K.K., New York, New York



*"I came back from Ancient Voices Forum with a renewed inspiration and passion to work for the continuance of traditional knowledge and for creating awareness of the values and perspective that Indigenous Peoples hold in the hopes that we will all learn from them as to how to relate to the world and each other in a more balanced, just and sacred way."*

S.A., Mexico City, Mexico



### Re-Polishing the Covenant Chain

The Silver Covenant Chain is a time-tested conflict resolution protocol that has existed since 1664 between the Haudenosaunee and Great Britain. The concept of the Covenant Chain has its origins in the first treaty between the People of the Ship (European Colonists) and People of the Canoe (North American Indigenous Nations). That agreement was codified in a wampum belt that is known as the Two Row Wampum. The two paths represent the distinctiveness of the two cultures, and their agreement to respect each other's sovereignty. Today, we have become increasingly alarmed about what lies ahead for both vessels.

One part of the message of the Two Row Wampum Belt has been lost in the modern-internet interpretation of that treaty. It is the idea that our ancestors made a mutual decision to tie the Ship and the Canoe together as we all travel on the River of Life together. At first this was a rope, but it was later replaced with an iron chain. Rather than to see the treaty as an impenetrable wall that separates our people, our ancestors said that our people will become linked together by using the Good Mind, which then will allow peace to exist between the vessels, and that we will come to depend on that mutual support for many generations to come.

After the Dutch were defeated and Great Britain took over administration of the New York colony, the principles of the Two Row Wampum were manifested in a new treaty, which is known as the Silver Covenant Chain, or the Friendship Wampum Belt. By this agreement the iron chain was replaced with a silver chain, representing a sacred covenant, made under the Great Spirit, that peace will prevail between our peoples. The three links in that chain represent that peace is possible, provided we have respect and trust for one another.

The British chose a silver chain because, metaphorically, it could be polished from time to time to strengthen the relationship, remove the "rust" caused by inattention, and smooth the road from any obstacles caused by unethical behaviours. Yet, the chain has become very rusty today.

While our governments have not been faithful to that ancient pledge, it is time that the People from the Ship and the People from the Canoe renew their relationship and come to One Mind on critical matters that affect the River of Life. It is in this spirit that we will gather at the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in order to share the protocols of the Chain, to learn of the form of decision making that has sustained the Haudenosaunee Confederacy for countless generations, and to employ these teachings in fostering a new strategy between us. However, the urgency of the situation on the River of Life calls us to not only talk, but to use Good Minds collectively to determine the next steps we can take to rebuild our relationship with Creation for the sake of the future generations to come.

We will pick up the Chain of Friendship and Love and remove the rust that has inhibited the expression of our common humanity, and seek ways in which we can all live more compatibly with one another, the Earth and all of the forces of nature. We will also seek ways in which our united voices can imprint on mainstream society the need to consider the Seventh generation to come more carefully, as our footprints will have the most significant impact on how well they will be able to enjoy this great gift of Creation.

# We note with sadness the passing of three members of the Traditional Circle who had an important impact on our programs.



**Joe Medicine Crow**, one of three remaining Elders from the first gathering of the Traditional Circle at the Missouri Headwaters in 1977, stepped to the other side on April 6, 2016 at age 102. Along with Susie and Tom Yellowtail, his relatives, he was host to the first gathering.

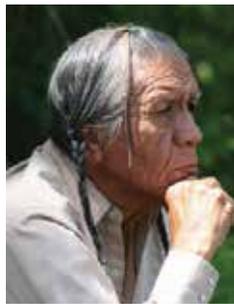
Joe was the first Montana Indian I contacted when our mission was being formed. Early meetings were productive and illuminating, leading to one of the deepest friendships of my life. He was eight years my senior.

His record of accomplishment is well known: his World War II record which fulfilled the Crow criteria for a War Chef, probably the last ever, and his encyclopedic knowledge of Crow history and culture gained from his years spent with pre-reservation Elders. He shared that knowledge with many individuals and groups over a long lifetime. He also received highest honors from both the French government and the United States government.

My deepest recollections are personal, among which were many trips around Crow country during which we talked at length about what happened on that landscape. Joe made all of the incidents come alive in inimitable ways. I learned much from him. He and I shared a love of horses. He talked about his days as a race horse jockey in this youth and about horses he had owned on land inherited from this Grandfather.

I want to note the unique symbolism of a major event in Joe's life, his receiving the highest civilian honor from President Barack Obama. I won't forget the televised scene: an African American President placing a medal around the neck of a Native American. In one sense, it represented a sea-change in cultural awareness. I am a realist, and realize the continuing depth of ethnic and cultural antagonism but that image was like a light at the end of a devastating tunnel.

Joe takes a treasured presence with him. We remember him well.



**Louie Adams** was a prominent member of The Traditional Circle of Indian Elders having been present at its first gathering at the Missouri Headwaters in 1977. He attended with his daughter Arlene, who was then a young girl. Louie was particularly helpful in youth programming, hosting a fine youth encampment in the mountains out of Arlee, among other activities.

Louie represented the Salish/Flathead people and the Traditional Circle with great integrity and commitment to the highest standards of both groups. He will be deeply missed. Fortunately the Circle has the continuation of his knowledge, charisma and commitment through his daughter, Arlene Adams, an outstanding member of the Traditional Circle who was one of the hosts of our 40th Anniversary celebration at Arlee, Montana in July.

Louie was my good friend and was of my generation. I miss him personally and as a colleague.



**Harold Belmont** Handicapped by health issues in recent years, Harold Belmont was the foremost representative of Northwest Coast native people in the Circle for many years. Along with Janet McCloud, the two were central in all Circle activities in that area. While most of the programs

took place in Janet's Sapa Dawn Center in Yelm, Washington, Harold was the spiritual leader.

One of Harold's outstanding qualities was the ability to add a light touch to meetings, making people feel good by his presence. That quality together with his commitment to the traditional heritage of his people gave him a constructive and effective role in the Traditional Circle as well as in the spiritual life of his home area.

We honor his memory with gratitude for his time with us.

Bob Staffanson  
Founder, President Emeritus

# In Gratitude to All Our 2016 Financial Supporters

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Crawford Noyes  
Ian McKibben  
Oliver Noyes  
Tracy Starkey  
Jonathan Sutton

## Statement of Financial Position

As of December 31, 2016

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

##### Checking/Savings

General Account	190,467.30
Checking	4,259.07
Investments	<u>68,975.64</u>

**Total Checking/Savings** **263,702.01**

##### Accounts Receivable

Loan Receivable	3,322.23
Endowment Earnings due from MT	
Community Fdn Agency Endowment (MCF)	<u>48,452.20</u>

**Total Accounts Receivable** **51,774.43**

**Total Current Assets** **315,476.44**

#### Fixed Assets

Furniture & Fixtures	25,605.55
Library	8,988.40
Program Equipment	55,595.73
502 Mendenhall - Real Property	511,101.32
502 Mendenhall - Land	68,827.80
LESS Accumulated Amortization	-60.78
LESS Accumulated Depreciation	-137,396.13
Leasehold Improvements	<u>9,023.83</u>

**Total Fixed Assets** **541,685.72**

#### Other Assets

Plantagon International Share	152.56
MCF Agency Endowment	925,352.39
Restricted Fund	718,588.65
Art Investments	<u>59,640.50</u>

**Total Other Assets** **1,703,734.10**

**TOTAL ASSETS** **2,560,896.26**

### LIABILITIES & EQUITY

#### Liabilities

##### Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable	<u>7,009.24</u>
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**Total Current Liabilities** **7,009.24**

**Total Liabilities** **7,009.24**

#### Equity

##### Temporarily Restricted Funds

Restricted Fund	718,588.65
Temporarily Restricted	
Program Funds	<u>94,129.00</u>

**Total Temporarily Restricted Funds** **812,717.65**

Unrestricted Funds 846,891.31

Permanently Restricted Funds -  
MCF Agency Endowment 980,785.69

Net Income/Loss -86,507.63

**Total Equity** **2,553,887.02**

**TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY** **2,560,896.26**

## Statement of Activities

January through December 2016

### Ordinary Income/Expense

#### Income

##### Corporate & Foundation Grants

Foundation Grants	400,065.05
Corporate Grants/ In-Kind Donations	11,100.00

**Individual Donors** 49,567.15

##### Earned Income

Interest, Dividends, Royalties Income	57,757.82
Registration fees/Publications/Products	<u>22,369.69</u>

**Total Income** **540,859.71**

#### Expenses

##### Direct Program Expenses

**478,305.76**

##### General Operations Expenses

Bank/Financial Advisor Charge	15,880.10
Commercial Building Expenses	4,713.99
Consultants	12,018.08
Fund Development	1,879.69
Insurance	7,372.18
Office Supplies	1,156.26
Postage and Freight	1,325.64
Printing & Publications	4,364.89
Professional Fees	7,939.00
Public Relations/Marketing	200.00
Rent	1,020.00
Taxes & Licenses	4,980.02
Salaries, Wages & Benefits	244,710.34
Telecommunications	3,660.52
Vehicle Expense	<u>1,857.09</u>

**Total General Operations Expenses** **313,077.80**

Expenses before program allocations

313,077.80

Less indirect costs allocated to programs

-125,231.12

##### Total General

**Operations Expenses** **187,846.68**

**Total Expense** **666,152.44**

**Available Funds Less Total Expenses** **-125,292.73**

#### Other Income

Change in Value of Investments 38,684.31

Interest - Loan Receivable 100.79

**Net Income/Loss** **-86,507.63**

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American Indian Institute  
502 West Mendenhall Street  
Bozeman, Montana 59715  
Phone: 406-587-1002  
[www.twocircles.org](http://www.twocircles.org)