



Title: The Genocide of Native Americans: Denial, Shadow and Recovery

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The Genocide of Native Americans: Denial, Shadow, and Recovery

A Conversation with
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Jack Norton,
Jana Rivers-Norton,
Patricia Vickers

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[P13] ***Betty Bastien** is a Blackfoot Indian from Alberta, Canada. She teaches at Red Crow Community College on the Blood Reserve in Alberta. **Jack Norton** is of Hupa (Northern California), Cherokee, and Dutch descent. He is a retired professor of Native American Studies from Humboldt State University, and is a recent appointee to the Rupert Costo Chair in American Indian History at the University of California, Riverside, and an Indian Education Consultant. **Jana Rivers-Norton** is an American of Swiss, German, and Celtic descent. She holds a Masters degree in English, has taught courses in literature and creativity at Humboldt State University, and is currently an adjunct faculty member at National University. She is also pursuing a Ph.D. in Psychology at Saybrook Graduate School. Jack and Jana live in Southern California. **Patricia Vickers** is of Tsimshian (British Columbia) and English descent, and lives in British Columbia. She is a Ph.D. student at the University of Victoria and practices as clinical counsellor and mental health consultant in British Columbia. **Jürgen W. Kremer** has been a settler in the US since 1982; his known ancestors are Germanic and Celtic from the Rhine Valley and the Baltic. He co-directed a graduate program for Traditional Knowledge, dedicated to the continuance and recovery of indigenous knowledge. He edited or co-edited ReVision issues on indigenous science, narrative explorations of culture, roots, and ancestry, healing and transformation, trance and healing, and culture and ways of knowing.*

JÜRGEN: As an immigrant to this country I feel complicit with the continuing genocide and destruction of Native American tribes. My choice to be in this country makes me complicit even though I have no known ancestors from this continent -- but I am participating in its ongoing history of genocide. This is what motivates me to facilitate a discussion on this important topic.

PATRICIA: One of the first things we need to address is our understanding of the word “shadow.” The term “negative energy” has also been used colloquially, although “energy” is more specific than “shadow.” A shadow is something that is cast when light shines on something. When I walk in the sunshine, my shadow is cast onto the ground. When I walk in the darkness, there is no shadow.

JACK AND JANA: For us the shadow is psychic energy that may take on negative qualities which manifest outward as acts of violence and fear when inner knowing and responsibility fail. Acts of genocide and oppression can be seen in this light. As psychic energy the shadow is a part of the human condition and exists in each of us as a potential psychic force.

PATRICIA: The reason that we are joined together as victim and victimizer is because we are human beings; "bad or evil energy," or whatever one calls it, is separate from the one who is victimized and the one who victimizes. In Tsimshian belief, as I understand it, the negative energy is likened to an evil spirit that approaches us. We give it space or refuse it. We may know we are giving the negative energy space, or more often than not, we unconsciously choose to give it space. This unites both parties involved in the loss of an option that would facilitate goodness and life. Life involves this struggle with the "destructive energy." Many aboriginal cultures share the belief that this energy exists here in the world and is separate from us as human beings. We have a responsibility to cleanse our hearts and spirits through dance, song, and ceremony that keep us "in the light"; keeping this responsibility of cleansing ourselves helps us to honor others. We are all struggling against negative energy and working toward balance and connection with our past, present, and future.

JANA: *The American Holocaust* (1992) by David E. Stannard provides an excellent analysis of the historical roots of the genocide of Native Americans from 1490 to 1890. At the heart of Stannard's thesis is the claim that European cultures were obsessed with the annihilation of those individuals [P14] categorized as life-unworthy. An illustration of this type of thinking is the Christian concept of "*Contemptus Mundi*" or "contempt for the world" that gained prominence in Europe during the Middle Ages. It means that earthly existence, and hence the earth itself, is impure, suspect, and devoid of divine grace. Thus the flesh must be denied to rid the soul of earthly contamination in order to earn eternal bliss. Individuals associated with the earth (such as non-Christians, women, and the native populace of the Americas) needed to be subdued and converted, if not eliminated.

The genocide of Native Americans is especially marked by silence regarding the suffering endured by native peoples. Unlike the Jewish Holocaust, the genocide committed against the native peoples has not been acknowledged even though the historical facts clearly point to the genocidal intent enacted by the United States government and the private citizenry. Instead, native cultural groups are often denigrated or romanticized. Their demise is depicted and commemorated during many of America's celebrations marking its success at colonization. This demise is linked to the collective American mythos of western dominance, and exalted under the principle of Manifest Destiny. In these facile assertions of national pride, which hide the price in native lives, Americans do not seem to comprehend their own complicity in the legacy of death and destruction.

For instance, the death of thousands of innocent native people is often depicted as "inevitable" or "necessary" for Western expansion (Rawls 1984) -- an all too familiar

concept of spatial superiority echoed in the Nazi doctrine of *Lebensraumpolitik* (Costo and Costo 1995). The native people, it is argued, were heathens, incapable of utilizing the vast stretches of fertile soil that beckoned to various European interests (Castillo 1978).

The contemporary impact of this genocide on native cultures remains horrific. Patterns of intergenerational dysfunction within native family systems have damaged the resolve of many to adhere to traditional values and religious practices. In addition, re-traumatization occurs when native people witness the disrespect and misguided perceptions exhibited by an insensitive and ignorant mainstream society regarding its own history.

JACK: Genocide is an assault on spirit. It is a disease of the human psyche, whether it is called an expression of the “collective shadow” or labeled otherwise. Yet even such a negative force can be transformed. If we recognize the shadow through our own commitments to change and transform, and through a sense of responsibility, we may become better human beings. It is important to take responsibility for one's destiny.

For example, as America was celebrating its Bicentennial, I became energized as a Native American person to reflect upon thoughts that had accumulated all my life. My parents were products of Indian boarding schools. They were taken away from their parents, their loved ones, from family support systems and cultures, and put in Haskell Indian School in Lawrence, Kansas. My father was away from Hoopa, located in Northern California, his place of being and tradition, for eighteen long years before he came home. My mother who was Cherokee had come up from Oklahoma, and they met at Haskell. My family history was one of the factors which motivated me to look at California Indian history more deeply. I was amazed and outraged at what had happened and continues to happen in California. In 1976 I was galvanized to write a book entitled *Genocide in Northwestern California* (Norton 1979).

Since that time, I have tried to educate people about what happened in California. It is important to get the information out for all to see. The information has always been in the records of state and national legislatures as well as in the federal reports that were sent from California agencies to Washington. The information on the California genocide was also reported in the local newspapers.

For me personally, learning of the attacks upon the children was the most devastating aspect of facing the genocidal shadow. While testifying, for instance, on early California history in Siskiyou County, I related detailed information about the many massacres that took place. As I stood on the witness stand and began to cry, I could relate to the pain of the native people of those times. What, for example, would I do as a husband or father living in 1850 as my wife was raped or my child was sold into slavery? Worse yet: What would I do as an infant was picked up by the heels and its skull smashed against rocks? I was able to personalize the pain despite 150 years of elapsed history. I felt the sorrow and the attack upon innocence. California, for example, passed what was euphemistically called “The Act for the Governance and Protection of California Indians” in 1850, but most historians call it the Indian Slave Law (Heizer 1974). By that law Indian people could be sold into slavery for varying periods, usually from 20 to 25 years. Then in 1860,

the California legislature made it easier for slave hunters, and by 1860 4,000 Indian children had been sold into slavery. Indians were also denied protection by the law. They could not bring any charges against a white person until the 1890s. In addition, thousands of Indian people were killed outright. Professional killing squads formed by citizen groups were funded by the state for the sole purpose of murdering Indian people. In fact, two of California's governors, Peter Burnett and John McDougal, called for a war of extermination against the California Indians (Carranco and Beard 1963).

PATRICIA: You have mentioned that Native American genocide has arisen out of a long history of Eurocentered cultural processes. I believe that one of the main problems here is the departure from authentic spiritual belief, which has been and continues to be important amongst Tsimshian people. I was raised with the Christian teaching that the condition of the heart is vital to our well-being. **[P15]** And through my Tsimshian culture I have learned that it is crucial to keep my heart clean. The shadow needs to be confronted within my “self” first. I need to identify ways in which I am disrespectful or abusive to myself and others around me. When I speak rudely to my children or my partner, I need to make amends. When I am dealing with my negative energy in the moment, then I can face the shadow with “power” in society. I think it is important to acknowledge that the shadow already existed before European contact, and yet it certainly has increased in our communities through cultural oppression by those of European descent.

JANA: The impact of shadow material on American society is a complicated topic. Our sense of alienation and bewilderment regarding the condition of the American psyche is clearly visible in an obsessive need for possessions, material wealth, sexual gratification, and escapism. It seems as if American society is unable to integrate the personal aspects of the collective shadow due to delusional practices which are passed on to our children through family systems that in many ways train us to ignore inner authentic voices. In response, many of us strike out at our children, at the world, and one another, and therefore deny our own inner beauty and worth. Various forms of collective disease are masked, yet they materialize through various forms of acting out (racism, scapegoating, national chauvinism), and intrapsychically as shadow material, revealing itself in projection, avoidance, and refusal to face our own personal and planetary decline. Personal traumas lead to collective traumatization, and in turn, collective traumatization (oppression, repression, etc.) impacts personal trauma.

JACK: A crucial beginning in transforming the shadow is examining how children are treated, and how this treatment affects the way in which we feel about ourselves and others. Professor Sam Oliner, who is a survivor of the Jewish Holocaust and author of numerous sociological accounts of the Holocaust (S. Oliner 1991, S. Oliner and P. Oliner 1992, S. Oliner and Lee 1996) has often reiterated that the primary factor which determines whether individuals will become perpetrators, bystanders, or rescuers is their upbringing. If one is raised to respect life, choices concerning others are often guided by compassion. Those who are abused and neglected, however, are often ruled by hatred.

JANA: My heritage, for example, is German and Swiss. I remember visiting my

grandfather who came directly from Germany shortly before the outbreak of World War II. He was a religious man and I always felt a certain spiritual affinity with him. However, he hated the Jews and would speak badly about them. I was puzzled and hurt by the contradiction that my grandfather represented and was determined to resolve any familial responsibility for the Holocaust. From what information I can gather, my family members were guilty of being bystanders, letting the atrocities occur, lacking the moral courage to stand against Nazi tyranny. I wrote a collection of short stories for my Masters thesis (Rivers-Norton 1991) on the genocide of native peoples in California, from the perspectives of perpetrator, bystander, rescuer, and survivor, in an attempt to understand the human condition through narrative. What motivates a people to attack another in such a cruel and inhumane way? What role did self-hatred play, as well as our own alienation from the planet? At that time I felt that by taking responsibility for genocidal acts, I was somehow transforming my own family system by disallowing the energy of the bystander to continue.

JÜRGEN: When I came to the US people usually responded to my feelings of shame and guilt about the Shoah by pointing out that I was born after the Second World War and therefore should not feel guilty. On the surface this made logical sense, but it was not what I was feeling in my body. It took me a long time to realize how the everyday complicity of “ordinary Germans” during the Nazi period had been communicated down to me, the way in which I “socially inherited” it, so to speak. It was during a fasting ceremony that I suddenly saw all the unspoken historical “stuff” that had been there as I was growing up, literally sitting with me every day at the dinner table while bombs were being fished out of the river in front of the house. It was this silence that made it impossible to discuss the Nazi paraphernalia that I found in the attics of the houses of my playmates as a child.

JANA: We seem to share a common need to resolve our own relationship to genocidal trauma, perhaps due to our shared Germanic heritage. Others, such as Dan Bar-On (1993), attempt to address the need to heal of descendants of those who experienced the Holocaust. His work involves both the descendants of Holocaust survivors and of Nazi perpetrators. It centers on the importance of reconciliation through addressing one's own familial link to the Holocaust. The process Bar-On describes is arduous and at moments almost unbearable for those whose family members either survived or perished under Hitler 's rule; descendants met over a several month period to share the pain, anger, and outrage at the past through dialogue. For the descendants of the survivors, this process of retrieving banished memories which had been held psychically captive for years, became an overwhelming experience. At the same time, however, descendants of Nazi perpetrators had to face the truth about their own fathers, grandfathers, and countrymen, and had to be with often overwhelming shame and disbelief. Through the sharing of stories, one [P16] common thread surfaced: a pattern of silence between the generations was experienced by both survivors and perpetrators within their respective family systems. The survivors' ancestors either refused to or could not speak about the atrocities because of the pain involved, and they did not want to burden children and grandchildren with their agony. For the descendants of perpetrators, the silence was of a different nature; their ancestors refused to speak either out of a deep sense of regret and guilt or

because the original perpetrators felt that they had been falsely accused and denied any wrongdoing whatsoever. Bar-On's work, utilizing what some psychologists refer to as narrative forms of healing, represents baby steps but healing steps nonetheless (Pennebaker, Glaser, and Kiecolt-Glaser 1988; Caruth 1995).

JÜRGEN: One of the things which has always struck me about the ways in which we address issues of genocide is that cultures are generally very inept at doing so. We don't know how to promote social learning or grieving on a collective level. I grew up in Germany with the book *The Inability to Grieve* by Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich (1967). This title seems an apt phrase to describe the ongoing denial of Native American genocide in the U.S. and Canada. Areas such as personal wounding, family history, community history, politics, economics of land, racial ideologies, and the legal system are rarely brought together to develop a powerful and effective process for integrating something as overwhelming as the history of genocide of Native Americans. Of course, to raise the issue of how history is written and taught on this continent, is also to question the very construction of American, Canadian, and Mexican selves.

For me it seems crucial to connect the historical memory of genocide, striving for accuracy and completeness, with the personal wounds as they are carried by the survivors and those who are in one form or another complicit in the ongoing perpetration of genocide. I believe that Goldhagen's (1996) book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, had such a dramatic effect in Germany because responsibility-taking and grieving had been insufficient. I remember reading the book when it first came out. Despite misgivings about some of his overgeneralizations, I had an immediate sense of recognition -- he was describing an aspect of Nazi Germany that I had grown up with after the war, that had been passed on to me unconsciously. A split had been made in public consciousness between the "common citizen" who "happened" to live during the Third Reich, and the perpetrators who served as projective screens for all Nazi evils. In this way the complicity of the "common citizen" was never addressed and grieving was avoided. With the publication of Goldhagen's book, such projection of "ordinary" citizens' shadows was made so much more difficult, and continuing complicity in shadow maintenance had to be confronted. I believe that the denial of the current continuation of the genocide of Native Americans allows for an analogous split: whatever minute acknowledgment of the horrifying past is given furthers the denial of contemporary complicity.

In my view, all the theories, predictions, and fantasies about global consciousness, as well as the popular revival of shamanic approaches outside of their original contexts, require awareness of the cultural and physical genocide of indigenous peoples as a consequence of Indo-European history, and European history in particular. For me any of these ideologies or movements are not authentic if their awareness does not include what is currently going on with native peoples all over the world. Global consciousness, however we understand it, needs to make collective shadow work part of its process.

JACK: Today we have the opportunity to face the collective shadow by first acknowledging the truth about our history as Americans. Once that history has been

acknowledged, once accountability is demonstrated, then it is necessary to take steps toward reconciliation. Americans can demonstrate a will for reconciliation and responsibility by demanding the return of Indian cultural artefacts, such as bones and regalia, which still belong to Indian people. A re-evaluation of the museum mentality is an opportunity for them to demonstrate their commitment to healing the consequences of genocide. (Even Hitler had plans to build a Jewish museum after the war.) Yet, the Indian people did not perish. Therefore we must be given the opportunity to determine what will be done with the remains of our ancestors, and what the proper use of other cultural items will be. A commitment to return Indian cultural items would greatly enhance healing and the setting aside of generations of bitterness and distrust. Most Indian people recognize when actions are taken that affirm decency and respect for Indian cultures. We cannot categorically blame all non-Indian people for the histories of the past. Yet, where in American history and where in California's history has a process of collective accountability been evident? Who shall take the first step toward reconciliation?

BETTY: I believe that tribal people must begin to make sense of the recent past of colonialism and genocide based on their own tribal cultural paradigms. Power and strength can only come from one's heart. Remaining within the framework of the dominant Eurocentered interpretations and Eurocentered educational systems means fostering an identity that is in final analysis dedicated to a world view aimed at the control of the natural and human world, rather than to an understanding of interconnection and living in relatedness. Accepting this framework means remaining dependent. So where do we go for solutions and interpretations?

My answer is: spirituality, ceremony, and traditional values, which lead us back to who we are concretely as indigenous people, who I am as a Nistiapi woman. "Nistiapi" can be translated as "Real People." We are made real by the interconnections with all our relations. However, genocide, for those of us living in this world, will continue to affect the cosmic world balance. The difference [P17] between the abstracting, dissociating world of genocide and the concrete world of interrelationship of indigenous peoples is revealed when we acknowledge that every single participatory activity can counteract the effects of genocide. Indigenous people are finding balance through their traditional life based in relationship to each other, place, and the surrounding world.

JACK: When the miracle and beauty of life that comes from the spiritual realm is denied, then processes by which we perceive the world are limited or even distorted. A loss of innocence and wonder results. Any loss of respect for life is a tragic occurrence because it divides human beings into victims and victimizers. Victims have been brutalized. They have suffered injustices and betrayals. But a day comes when victims must find their own relationship to that betrayal and victimization. They have the choice between placing themselves within their own patterns of life, despite the things that have happened to them, and continuing to hate. This is a choice that can be made once conscious awareness of suffering surfaces. But humans need to be loved and cared for in order to gain such awareness (Miller 1988).

As a survivor of genocide, I have been fortunate for many reasons. I have come to realize

that participation in the sacred ceremonies of my people is essential for maintaining a balance between the sacred and the profane. We Hupas of northwestern California, for example, still reside within our ancestral lands.

I am a spiritual dancer. I have purposefully sought responsibility and relationship to place. During our sacred ceremonies, the movement from profane to sacred is a time in which we re-create ourselves and our communities as the cosmos itself is re-created. In essence the Hupa are participating in the renewal and affirmation of the patterns of life by coming together as a community to stand upon sacred ground and ritualize our ancient connections to the earth. Living a profane existence tends to allow for the loss of the sacred -- or our universal and essential relationship to creation. Once we lose sight of the sacredness of creation, we lose ourselves and may fall prey to evil.

JANA: When I first began to recover an embodied memory of the sacred potential of the earth, natural environments began to penetrate my personal awareness through a shift in energies that awakened in me a sense of inner knowing and connection to the land. As a displaced Indo-European, actively seeking my sacred roots to the earth, these realizations and revelations about the nature of reality and its interconnection were at first startling. But these experiences have demonstrated that the recovery of ancestral memory (e.g., cultural roots, indigenous teachings about land) is not impossible. In fact, it may be vital in the healing transformation of the shadow. This process, however, is not an easy task.

JÜRGEN: I use the term “recovery of indigenous mind” to label a process of coming to reality as late-coming settlers on these lands. Inherent is the memory that all peoples had at some point in history, a connected or participatory way of knowing and being. The process of remembrance has to include the painful process of confronting the horrifying aspects of American history as well as our disconnection from ancestral traditions and sacred places as the positive aspects of ancestry are recovered. Any aspect of this work is difficult to carry out, as is obvious from our discussion.

The confrontation with the reality and concreteness of genocide is particularly difficult. I find so often that the specific suffering of actual people is lost in discussions of genocide. Recently, I went to an exhibit of Pomo baskets from the turn of the century and earlier in Ukiah, California. I was appalled by the way the exhibition texts were obviously trying to be sensitive to the individuals whose pieces were on show, but included nothing about the destruction, killing, and suffering of the tribe. Only one small part of each basketmaker was permitted to be seen. The genocidal historical context in which these extraordinary baskets were created had been abstracted as if it had happened removed from actual people, and was not part of the relationship of basketmakers and the traders purchasing their baskets. Each of the Pomo basketmakers included in the exhibition had become decontextualized, thus facilitating idealization and romanticization in the spectators.

JANA: Jack and I recently went to the Museum of Tolerance, at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, which is dedicated to the remembrance and the lived significance of the Jewish Holocaust as well as more current forms of social prejudice in the United States. It was terribly hard for me to be there and watch historical footage of innocent

women and children being murdered during the Holocaust. Before me was the glaring testimony of my ancestors, whose eyes were filled with such coldness as they killed and maimed others. It affected me deeply. The tears seemed to flow involuntarily at the catastrophic loss. I also realized that we have an opportunity to reach out to each other no matter how wounded we are.

JACK: Being a California Indian and knowing that genocide against Indian people resulted in a death toll of 94% due to the consequences of violent contact and diseases, knowing that these diseases were at times introduced on purpose in order to decimate the native populace, knowing the entire history of California genocide, I was disappointed that the museum had no material addressing these issues. Building a Museum of Tolerance in downtown L.A. [P18] on native ancestral lands, without including the voice of the suffering that had occurred on this continent and within the state of California, is from my perspective a huge oversight.

A California mission, for example, could be constructed so that visitors could walk through a series of interactive displays and encounters with Native American victims, thus bringing historical data to life. Visitors could bear witness to the harshness of the Padres, the rape and brutality perpetrated against the Indian women and children, the shackled feet and hands, and a steadfast refusal to allow Indian ceremonials. For example, in 1771, when the mission San Gabriel was being built, a soldier molested an Indian woman. Her husband protested by firing an arrow at the soldier. The husband was shot and killed. His head was cut off and was placed on a pike outside of the mission walls (Phillips 1975). This information is all well-documented and attests to the brutality of the mission system, and yet most of us do not know this history or perhaps refuse to acknowledge it.

I was impressed, however, at the Museum of Tolerance when each visitor was given a card with a picture of a Jewish child, together with a brief personal history. At the end of the display the card was inserted into a computer and a printout was generated telling the visitor whether or not the child had survived the Holocaust. The horror of the experience from the survivor's perspective was a vital teaching tool that diluted any attempt to be rational or distant about what one was witnessing.

JANA: The work of Henry Krystal on massive psychological trauma (1968, 1988) immediately comes to mind. According to his research, as well as other more recent researchers such as Van Der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth (1997) and Herman (1997), genocide is often viewed within the psychological literature as the most devastating and debilitating form of traumatization, because it causes enormous physiological and psychic overload, shock, numbing, and grief. It involves the severe devastation caused by cultural destruction, enslavement, relocation, and massive loss of life.

Research suggests, however, that through a narrative process, through sharing the stories of suffering, individuals may begin to organize, structure, and integrate emotionally charged traumatic experiences and events (Krystal 1988, Pennebaker 1995). In contrast, efforts to suppress or silence thoughts and feelings of these experiences create continual

and long lasting problems, which may in some instances be transmitted intergenerationally (Sigal and Weinfeld 1989). Some individuals, for example, who attempt to put trauma out of their minds only increase self-negating thoughts and gestures. Efforts to distract actually appear to increase the frequency, intensity, and number of external stimuli that will trigger a memory or re-enactment of trauma (Niederland 1968). If an individual's voice of trauma is not heard or is discounted or ridiculed, or if one's pain is not acknowledged, then isolation, fear, anxiety, and psychological disease may dramatically increase. The research, therefore, suggests that by telling the story of trauma and survival, the survivor creates both a relational dialectic with other human beings as well as an internal symbolic encounter between self and other (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1995; Pennebaker 1993; Bucci 1993)

PATRICIA: When I look at our responsibility as aboriginal people, I am simultaneously speaking to non-aboriginal people. However, it is not necessary to have non-aboriginal people's acknowledgment of their ancestors' wrongs in order for us aboriginal people to heal. Because we are raised to remember our responsibility we offer non-aboriginal people our knowledge of life and how we are connected, our knowledge of negative energy, cleansing, balance, and the privilege of life. Our cultures call us to this responsibility of teaching others what we have learned, and I am thankful for people like yourselves, as participants in this discussion, who are working to bring about this reconciliation and restitution.

BETTY: I believe a further question we need to ask ourselves as Native Americans is: How do we participate in our own genocide? And how does this participation show up in our everyday interactions and relationships?

Perhaps we can begin by facing our collective delusions. In every culture there is the idea of what makes a good human being, and it seems to me that the idea of "controlling" both others' lives and nature is what makes a good person according to pervasive assumptions in the Western world of imperialism. With it comes an image of niceness and goodness that provides no easy place for shadow material. The expected social image of niceness and the good person require the suppression of shadow issues. From a native perspective such a person is not nice at all, because the not-so-nice shadow material is apparent and part of our daily experience. Our stories help us to deal with shadow material individually and collectively; they connect the dark and the light sides of life. The predominant Eurocentered idea of goodness implies suppression and control of what is regarded as not good; this seems to be a behavioral pattern that can lead to genocide when taken to the extreme (when an extreme valuation of certain "good" traits is used as a way to scapegoat and then kill people who are seen as not sharing these traits). People of European descent are frequently surprised when their niceness is not experienced as such by Indians.

I feel that this particular collective delusion of what a good human being is in the European sense has become part of our collective Native American delusions leading us to participate in our own genocide. It is an individualistic and profit-centered view of humans. By taking on this image that focuses so strongly on the light side we are led to the denial of genocide, since the Native American genocide is relegated to the shadow

side of the good Western person. Consequently, we do not allow sufficient knowledge that genocide is still occurring, and that perhaps we are participating in it ourselves. This reminds me of our tribal children who have been attending Western schools since contact. There they are taught inferiority, linearity, and the objectification of the universe. They internalize this today, just as I did as a child. Growing up, the racism and the notion of humanity from the perspective of Western imperialism became a part of me. I took on the identity of a victim [P19] and lost my power. This is how I have taken on the collective shadow by identifying with the self-construction of the dominant culture. How can anyone really grieve when there is the delusion that genocide is not really occurring today?

PATRICIA: Just recently here in British Columbia the Nisga'a treaty, the first treaty in British Columbia's history, was initialed. The Nisga'a people have ratified the agreement to give them jurisdiction over their own hereditary lands, something they have been working toward for over 100 years. The agreement is now going to the provincial government for debate by the elected representatives. As this act of meager restitution is being debated amongst the politicians, I am asking myself: What is important about this? Our losses are so great in comparison to what the treaty might offer. For example the Indian Act from the 1870s defined aboriginal people as wards of the government and no longer owners of territories that had belonged to our ancestors for thousands of years. The treaty gives the Nisga'a self-determination, which means they will no longer depend on the government to determine their affairs. But while the Nisga'a have been struggling for freedom, their resources are being depleted with government approval and their social well-being has been tended to by professionals who are not trained to deal with the overwhelming issues that have developed as a result of residential schools, and other attempts at cultural genocide by the provincial and federal governments.

My rage subsides as I sit in silence. The things that Betty, Jack, Jana, and Jürgen have said come back to me. Our spirit and our heart are what is important. Those are the teachings that my mother encountered when she went to the Tsimshian village of Kitkala which is located on Dolphin Island on the Northwest coast of British Columbia. She encountered family feuds that were generations old, and negative energy, but what she passed on to me were the positive attribute of the Kitkatla people regarding spiritual balance and integrity. As I look to the elders to help us heal in the aboriginal communities on the Northwest coast of British Columbia, I am saddened. I am not without hope, but I feel and see the impact of genocide in the cloak of Indian Affairs attempts to assimilate aboriginal people. I see Indian day schools, residential schools, burning of ceremonial regalia, segregation, isolation, and land appropriation. At the same time, our people are on a slow journey to recover our collective soul. What is our part as individuals in this process of recovering our collective soul?

First, I think that it is important for those who are elected to federally imposed political positions in our villages or reserves to acknowledge ways in which we are now oppressing ourselves. How are we continuing the genocide? As we examine our own hearts as leaders and work toward the high standards our ancestors established, we will be able to ask ourselves questions such as: What are we doing to destroy the trust that we

need in each other, our culture, and ourselves? And those of us who are providing services to our people, what are we doing to create positive change? The genocide of our culture is now being perpetuated by us in actions such as Band and Tribal employees favoring their family members when providing the current housing policies, employment, education benefits, and health needs. Or community members excluding specific families because of jealousy, envy, and even hatred. We have forgotten our traditional healing ways and have taken on the “us versus them” mentality when conflict occurs.

Secondly, we have forgotten that when violence occurs in our communities two mothers are saddened, the mother of the violated and the mother of the one who has violated. We have forgotten that when violence occurs there are two families and a community that need the sacred presence of healing. We must first look at ourselves and admit what we are doing to our brothers and sisters.

Thirdly, but not finally, we need to take responsibility for our actions. When we are wrong we need to admit it. If the wrongful action was in public, then there are traditional ways in which we as Tsimshians can make amends for our mistake. When we are willing to identify our oppressive actions, admit they are wrong, and bring about resolve and restitution in culturally appropriate ways, then we can move away from this place of oppression. When we manage to take responsibility for ourselves we will be able to climb out of, rise out of, walk out of this hell that has entrapped us and our ancestors. Then we have the opportunity to escape this energy that works only to consume all who participate in these acts of oppression. The colonists’ teachings categorized aboriginal people as inferior in their schooling, law, and religious teachings. It is our responsibility to forgive, and seek restitution through the treaty process, compensation, and negotiation with the governments, courts, and churches.

JACK: We must remember that all Indian societies, or more broadly all aboriginal societies, always managed to find the best possible means by which to live healthy and productive lives in a particular time and place. They cultivated the land, built fish dams, and worked out means by which to express the values of society. The challenge is no different today. We must find those same elements, take that same responsibility, and find those means. For this we must first look at ourselves and know who we are. We need to find relationship to ourselves and to those around us -- our families, our tribes, and the world around us. It is always that reciprocity and the interactions of all those elements that matter.

A good illustration of this process is what has happened recently among the Karuk people of Orleans, in northwestern California. There was a period of 100 years in which there were no strong religious ceremonies. Then in 1993 a group of young traditional people got together and said, “We know where the dance ground is.” There were also elders who knew where the dances used to be held. The land was still there, and the ceremonial dance grounds still existed. So the people of Orleans re-created the traditional sacred patterns of the Jump Dance ceremony. This has re-vitalized the culture and spiritual ways of knowing that have been dormant and neglected for years due to genocide, cultural hatred, and fear. One interesting aspect of the Karuk Jump Dance is that the dance

makers have utilized a traditional healing ceremony to heal the pains and wounds of oppression and the consequences of genocide -- making an ancient spiritual process vital for today.

[P20] References

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