



WORLD INDIGENOUS NATIONS HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM



Memorial message from the WINHEC Co-Chairs

Lionel Bordeaux, Dean of Tribal College Presidents in the United States, a key founder of the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium, departed for the spirit world on November 16. Wakinyan Wanbli, or Thundering Eagle, was a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in the state of South Dakota.

Before completing his doctoral dissertation at the University of Minnesota, Stanley Red Bird Sr., the founder of Sinte Gleska University, approached Lionel and told him traditional healers had held spiritual ceremonies and directed him to seek out a graduate student who knew the tribal language and the history of the Sicangu Lakota people. Red Bird requested the Lionel withdraw from his doctoral studies and return to the Rosebud Reservation to serve as President of Sinte Gleska College. He did so and created a record of accomplishment that is at the heart of the tribal college and university movement in the United States.

Years later, at the Stoney Reserve in Canada, he and Wetere, got to their knees, getting the other indigenous leaders present, and kissed Mother Earth in celebration of the founding of the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium. The Canadian Rocky Mountains rose above them with their coverings of trees and granite cliffs and the sun shined out a blue sky. Then voices were raised in songs of celebration.

There are few individuals who have made the difference Lionel made in his life. Always a believer in tribal controlled systems of education, whether they were at home on his beloved Rosebud or in the remotest parts of the world where first people of the land live, he helped create institutions like the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, the American Indian College Fund, and others.

His spirit today in in Sinte Gleska University, the U.S. tribal college movement, and the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium, telling us all to stand proud and change the world for the better, protecting culture and language and spirit the process. As Tom Davis, poet of WINHEC, one of those who helped with its founding, wrote after hearing of Lionel's departure,

I felt the wind blowing, the wind blowing.

I felt a rising, a rising.

I felt Lionel Bordeaux, big man, big spirit, big heart, telling jokes
he'd told about a bird and a barn he'd told a hundred times before
as horses galloped across windswept plains

and the Black Hills shined white with snow in the late fall.
I felt the wind blowing, the wind blowing.

Lionel has risen past the blanket woven of his days.
I have been told that.

Inside his rising were long nights on Rosebud, at Sinte Gleska University, at the tribal council chambers, in Washington DC in a hotel late at night as tribal college people got heated and argued and hit the table where they were sitting with force, with the palms of their hands, in Aotearoa, New Zealand at a marae or ancestral meeting house after a long day of talking with Māori that kept singing the fact that he'd come across the ocean to see who they were.

Inside his rising were words that swept into the future beyond the blanket woven of his days,

"Big brother takes care of little brother,"

"It's all of us or none of us,"

"Land is sacred. The land is part of who we are."

They have told me he is gone, walking the Red Road.

But I can feel him.

I can feel his deep laughter at his long jokes.

I can feel his spirit as he stood up from his chair around a table
and wove bonds between tribes and peoples and tribal colleges and universities
and made them a movement, a force, a song of languages, cultures, and spirituality upon
Mother Earth.

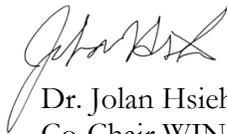
I feel the wind blowing.

I feel a rising, a glory, the blessing of what has been and will be,
the chant of yesterday, the chant of today, the chant of tomorrow,
the blanket woven out of all our lives.

Thank you, Ahéhee', Lionel.



Dr. Elmer J. Guy,
Co-Chair WINHEC



Dr. Jolan Hsieh
Co-Chair WINHEC