

Statement From Leonard on Oglala Commemoration

June 26, 2013

My Family and Friends. I hope you are comfortable and that you are all healthy and happy. For those of you who walked today, I imagine the sun gave you a little more color and I am proud of all of you. You know if I were out, I would have been walking with you, leading the charge, of course.

In my mind, I am right there with you. I can smell the burning sage and sweetgrass intermingled with the smells from the boxes of frybread and the big pans of potato salad. The “unci’s” are sitting on chairs in the shade, probably teasing each other and laughing, like only you can. I see all of you sitting on the blankets under the shade on the hard dry ground, trying to find a way to be comfortable. I can look over to where the old campsite was and spot the place where the guys would cut the wood, and the place where the gardens were.

A sadness comes over me as I see the foundation, where the homestead of Grama and grandpa Jumping Bull once stood. I remember the kids running around and playing, carefree and happy. At times it seems like it was a long time ago and other times, it feels like it was yesterday. Sometimes when I’m alone, I wonder why life has to be so hard for our people. It’s puzzling that some of our own people will turn against us. Is it money? Power? Greed? We were here because we were asked to be here, to stand as protection to the traditional families who continue to follow the original instructions as handed down to us from generation to generation in the form of our Creation stories. I am told there is now an investigation being implemented for the murder of the sixty some people killed during that reign of terror. It’s an outrage that it took over 40 years to discover that a bullet hole in the back doesn’t sound like death by natural cause. We were there also, to protect the land from being raped by the government for uranium. We have evidence of the chemical dumps placed on our land without the knowledge or consent of our members and the leaking of radiation 5 times the safe level, polluting the veins of our mother earth and turning our sacred water into a poison that would cause our child bearing women to abort their unborn babies and cancer replacing natural cause on the death certificates of many of our people. I am not trying to make this a gloom and doom message. I am only trying to give an understanding to some of our young people that we need to continue to protect all that is sacred to us, our Elders, our women and our children, our culture and way of life and each other.

I am always asked about an update on what is going on with me and I will try to explain. As my team can tell you, my blood pressure is high, my diabetes is out of control to the point of causing problems to my sight and I have a lot of pain in walking. My medication has been withheld for several months and doctor appointments are a rare occurrence. I have been tested for prostate cancer and although I was never given any clear answer of whether or not cancer exists, the symptoms indicate there is definitely something wrong. The recent problems with shortness of breath and chest pains are causing me

additional stress. I assure you, this is not the place to be sick or to have health problems because in prison, we are just another number. It's just a good thing I don't need to take medication to keep a sense of humor or I would definitely be screwed! Additionally, I was approved by my counselors inside, for a transfer to a medium security prison closer to home but the transfer was denied from the office in Texas, without a reason. Although the denial was appealed, who knows how long that will take to be reviewed.

In closing, I want to say "pilamiyeya" to all of you for your hard work. I know this is a great undertaking to organize an event. It humbles me to know that you are taking the time to remember not only me, but all of the warriors who are attempting to take the HIS STORY out of history, by standing up and telling OUR story. I stand with you in support of recognizing our inherent rights, our truth seekers and our sacred way of life. To those of you preparing to Sundance, I hope you will feel me dancing next to you, in the Inipi, I am there taking in the steam and singing with you. But as you can guess, I am getting tired. I just want to be home with my people. I want to wake up to the sound of the birds singing outside my window and the smell of "cowboy coffee" coming from the kitchen instead of hearing the clanging of cell doors and jingling of rings of keys. Please! Continue to fight for what is right. That is all I can ask.

Mitakuya oyasin!

Doksha,

Leonard