

## Beyond Boundaries ~ The Dreaming Continues

Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers, July 2012

Report by Siri Gunnarson

...  
*I begin in gratitude for the Grandmothers, for the Northern Cheyenne people,  
For all those who made this work possible.*  
...

**The Grandmothers** represent a global alliance of prayer, education and healing for the Earth, her inhabitants, the children, and the next seven generations to come. They first came together in 2004, called together through vision and prophecy, responding to a call to bring the teachings of their ancestors to a global council, to serve during this time of great change. They are diverse, from the Brazilian jungle to the Katmandu Valley, and carry different messages and prayers. And when they are together the ceremony is powerful and the shared vision is huge: healing for all our people, for our water, for our earth.



Since the first meeting, the Grandmothers have gathered in the homelands of the different Grandmothers to pray together and hold council, to listen to the people of the land and those who come, and to respond to the requests from the greater world. This summer it was Grandmother Margaret's turn, drawing the council and the eyes of the world to her community, the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana. Grandmother Margaret reached out to Gigi Coyle, visionary of Beyond Boundaries, asking for support. Gigi first helped initiate and host a spacebridge council with the Grandmothers at Bioneers in 2007, and has continued to spread their message of hope.

**The Beyond Boundaries (BB)** vision of service, co-creative learning, bearing witness to and supporting positive work in the world is another iteration of the same prayer. More than two years after the BB pilgrimage a growing, intergenerational group continues to listen and respond to the larger global community working towards a regenerative future. Gigi felt the call for support from Grandmother Margaret was an opportunity for a BB response. Although Gigi was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict she felt that other members of the BB team could support Grandmother Margaret. She also assisted in the raising of funds for the construction of tipis for the gathering. BB timing and funding made it possible for one pilgrim, yours truly, to travel to Montana in service of the gathering. I spent three weeks camping at Grandmother Margaret's, working and witnessing a great gathering.

## Supporting the Council

I went to Grandmother Margaret's in early July, to offer support in anyway I could. A Beyond Boundarian, I came to serve and to learn through the work. There was a lot of work to do! Arriving just two and a half weeks before the gathering began, I quickly jumped in, helping to prepare the house for visitors, feed the volunteers, move tipi poles – anything that was needed. Within a few days it became clear that organizational help was needed, and Grandmother Margaret asked me to be the liaison between her local core team of support from the reservation, the volunteers gathering around her home, and the Center for Sacred Studies (a California non-profit instrumental in initiating the Council and coordinating subsequent events).



As a witness and a participant, I saw first hand the bridge-building work of this gathering. The world came to Lame Deer Montana, and Lame Deer did not know what was coming. It was a dance of prayer and manifestation, trust and coordination, communication and flexibility, and constant change. I became the list keeper, the go-to-gal (or as one person introduced me: 'mobile mission control center'). I worked closely with Grandmother Margaret's assistant, helping to track the many details and keep communication smooth. I became the bridge Grandmother asked me to become. I was able to be a peacemaker and a witness. I learned how to listen, to slow down and put down my to-do list long enough to remember that listening to an elder's story is part of the prayer and healing.

The gathering itself was powerful. With the theme 'Gratitude Brings Freedom' and two keynote speakers on the issue of historical trauma, there was a focus and opportunity for the story of the place and the Cheyenne people to come into the center. One of the most touching parts for me was when the Cheyenne did show up, on mic, during the second day. They said thank you. They said there may be mixed response from the community but we see the power of your prayer and the importance of the work you are doing for the world. Thank you for doing this work here.

*I bring my heart of love and peace and that mission of prayer and alliance. I come here with much respect for the ancestors of this land. I come with my sisters on this mission of prayer."*

*~Maria Alice Campos-Freire, from Brazil, during the opening of the Council.*

*"I'm here to apologize formally to the Northern Cheyenne."  
~Alisha Custer, participant,  
descendent of General Custer*

Reconciliation, apology and forgiveness rippled through the field, shaking people in their prayers, bringing forth tears, stories of pain and heartfelt apologies. Eduardo Duran, keynote speaker, said "In any human interaction, if there's been a violation, in order to heal the complete system, the perpetrator and the victim, ideally there should be an apology." He spoke of the power of intent, the power of giving something back, the power of returning to wounded places. These acts can transform the energy of trauma.

There were special guests at the council: the animals. Wild wolves have been absent from the area since the buffalo left, but since the reintroduction of buffalo, other animals, such as mountain lion and coyote, have returned. Grandmother Margaret invited a pack from Wolf Connection, a wolf rescue and youth educational project: "Reclaiming an ancient bond for future generations".

The other guests of honor, the horses, were part of a two-month pilgrimage of healing and remembrance, “The Ride Home”, retracing the journey of the Cheyenne people who escaped from relocation in Oklahoma, then ‘Indian Territory’, and traveled through harsh conditions in 1878-1879. Fighting along the way and facing starvation and winter cold, many died. It is a devastating war story and an inspiring story of the power of the human spirit. As Suzy Landolphi, one of the riders said, “yes, there is historical trauma, and it is time to reclaim historical greatness.”

During the gathering I offered council the way we practice it as BB, or in the Ojai Foundation lineage. Each day a different group showed up and topics varied with the days. In an event with more than 500 people in attendance daily the smaller circle was a gift for all involved and such a confirmation that the healing that is done ‘center stage’ ripples into all of our lives. One evening I co-created a ‘learning circle’ with Connie Buck, one of the key note speakers, a Human Development professor at Southwestern College in Santa Fe. Experienced in cross-cultural work and a life long student of ‘what it means to be human’, I was drawn to her work in the area of historical trauma, “It’s all of ours,” and to her simple message for healing, “Feel your feelings *now*. Slow down. Consume less.”

The field of healing was palpable. Grandmothers, organizers, volunteers and participants... together we created a field of reconciliation and prayer. As is the nature of council, when gathered around a central prayer, something greater can come through. This is a hopeful picture, a picture of forgiveness and healing.

### **Listening into the Future**

Deeply moved and inspired by the Council, the prayer, the Gathering, the land and the people, I listened for possible future collaborations. Part of the BB vision of cross-cultural collaborative work is ‘The Global Village Council House Initiative’. This project seeks to generate an interconnected global community of peacemakers through the co-creation of sacred shelters, using natural earth-bag technology and group circle processes. Bridging race, culture, age, gender and nationality, this vision is part of a greater movement for diverse, interconnected regenerative world culture. And from this listening this is what emerged....

Part of Grandmother Margaret’s vision for her community’s cultural reawakening is bringing elders and youth together. She has formed Council of Cheyenne Elders, calling on local Grandmothers and Grandfathers to participate in a spiritual education based on the wisdom of their ancestors and ways of their people. During the preparation for the gathering a beautiful arbor was built by volunteers and local youth, and blessed by the Grandmothers. This arbor will serve as the center for the future T’sistsistas’s Sacred School, which was inaugurated during the gathering. Grandmother Margaret’s vision includes permanent natural buildings and cross-cultural collaboration, and when she heard of BB’s earth-bag council huts, she became excited.



We are in the process of creating a proposal for such a project for 2013.

## Financial Report

Our estimated budget for this project was \$1,000. The actual direct costs were \$454 for travel and \$136 for food and contributions to Grandmother Margaret's volunteer household. With the 6% administration fee, the total cost was \$626, remaining funds will go towards the upcoming BB council hut project with International Peace Initiatives in Kenya. In addition, Center for Sacred Studies gave Siri \$500 for her work, which she will pay forward towards future BB projects. **Thank you** again to all those that gifted us to make this journey possible.



## Gratitude

*Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you to the Cheyenne who welcomed me to their land, to the land itself for revealing such beauty, to the ancestors whose stories touched my heart. Thank you to Grandmother Margaret, for seeing me and using me, and for the humor and vision. Thank you to Center for Sacred Studies, for their example of prayer in action and the power of vision manifest. Thank you to those of you reading this, for your part in this prayer. Thank you to all those who support Beyond Boundaries, for the words, the listening, the collaboration, and the financial contributions that make this work possible. Thank you for the possibility to be well used and thank you for collaborative learning - for a regenerative way of living on this planet.*

*I am blessed in connection with this web of light.*

*~Siri*