

## ON BEING NATIVE AMERICAN

### INDIAN PRIDE

" You can never be part Indian. You are or you are not. It is, not the quantity of Indian blood that runs through your veins that is important, but the quality of it..... your pride in being. I have seen full-bloods who care very little for their people and their ancestors, yet I have seen people with as little as 1/50th. blood quantum who inspire nations. They are truly proud of their people and ancestors. Embrace these brothers and sisters who care so much. They are our life and future." James Branham -- A Monacan Indian

### DEFINE YOURSELF AND YOUR ROOTS

I remember my grandmother telling me of my Indian roots many years ago, and telling me, "shhh" with her finger to her lips, "we don't tell anyone else, we have to keep it to ourselves." I promptly forgot about it...its easier to forget a secret than to keep it. But throughout my life, my grandmother taught me the things I would later learn are the basis of what she learned from her Grandmother, a Shawnee woman, who married a Swiss farmer. These concepts were pride in oneself "you're just as good as anyone else." Gossip "its conceited for you to believe people are talking about you", Gossip and Kindness, "Its wrong to talk about other people". And many other concepts, including "you're a very lucky child to be born in the United States of America."

Many people don't understand the enormous pride Native American Indians take in the United States of America. We proudly place the American flag at our campsites, and in front of our homes. It is our country, and we love it. Of course, there are those among us who believe "they" should give us our land back. But those people among us who believe that don't understand the concept our Grandfathers had about the land itself. Nobody owned the land that was taken by the white settlers. The U.S. Government who "purchased" it from the Indians didn't understand the Indians didn't have the right to "sell" it! They also don't understand the concept that our forefathers were responsible for their actions, but our contemporaries of every race and religion have no responsibility for the actions taken hundreds of years ago. Thus, present day Indians have no right to be compensated for the wrongs perpetrated against their ancestors, any more than African-Americans should be compensated for the slavery of their ancestors. Life

is now. Each individual is responsible for where he finds himself, and should blame no one, particularly the Creator for his present situation.

Before the 2000 census, I told all of my friends who were even a fractional part Native American Indian to mark the census to proclaim their heritage. For many years our families have kept to themselves the information that their blood contained that of our Indian grandfathers. We are of the People. We must embrace our heritage, no matter the percentage of blood we contain that is of the People.

## NATIVE AMERICANS GUARDING OUR BORDERS

I, jokingly, say, "now they think of guarding the borders...just several hundred years too late!!" I'll be the first to admit that hiring Indians to guard our borders from terrorists is a terrific idea. Not only does it give our unemployed Warriors a proud occupation, but it is the beginning of the solution of a problem on the reservations. The Indian women on reservations always have an occupation, besides their hunting and gathering or whatever method they use to keep their families fed, they have the job of keeping the family together. For this reason, guarding the boarders is a good occupation for our men.

The culture tends to be matriarchal in that the woman is the head of the family, although the Chief, and all of the other Warriors had the job of protecting the tribes and the families. The culture tends to look to the wisdom of their elders, including the wisdom of the elder women of the tribe for guidance in their lives.

"So live your life that the fear of death can never enter your heart. Trouble no one about their religion; respect others in their view, and demand that they respect yours. Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life. Seek to make your life long and its purpose in the service of your people. Prepare a noble death song for the day when you go over the great divide. Always give a word or a sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, even a stranger, when in a lonely place. Show respect to all people and grovel to none. When you arise in the morning give thanks for the food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself. Abuse no one and no thing, for abuse turns the wise ones to fools and robs the spirit of its vision. When it comes your time to die, be not like those whose hearts are filled with the fear of death, so that when

their time comes they weep and pray for a little more time to live their lives over again in a different way. Sing your death song and die like a hero going home."  
Chief Tecumseh, Shawnee Nation

That's pretty much the way I was brought up. Those were the values that were instilled in me by my parents and my grandparents. I'd like to believe they came down through my Shawnee great-great grandmother, and that those values will continue in my family, and in this country, forever.

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A male child born to a Shawnee was given a name within ten days. A female child was named within twelve days. The name was either bestowed by a parent or by some trusted friend of the family, called a "conferrer". An "unsoma", or social classification usually determined by the clan into which one was born, or adopted, was a chief consideration when the child was named. Tecumseh's mother, for instance, was named Methotasa (A-Turtle-Laying-Her-Eggs-in-the-Sand). Many generations later, the late Arthur Rolette, a direct descendant, had the Shawnee name Lay-quay-bea-skuk (A-Turtle-Making-Waves-in-Water). No surname was used among the Shawnees and for convenience they often shortened a given name for common usage (just as we would shorten the name Jeffery to Jeff) so a Shawnee would shorten the name Gay-nwaw-piah-si-ka to Gay-nwaw).

Shawnee mothers carried their young on a backboard, called a "tkithoway". This

practice of carrying the baby on the mother's back was practical for several reasons: It protected the baby from wild animals, it freed the mother's hands for her daily labors and it assisted the child to have a straight back. The baby's head was strapped to the board in order to form a flat surface at the back of the skull where a plate that would mount eagle feathers or other ornamentation could be easily affixed with a headband.

Shawnee children grew up as free as the animals that roamed the forests around them. Young boys were encouraged by elders to engage in sports of running, swimming and jumping in order to strengthen muscles and build stamina, and to practice archery to develop their skill as hunters and warriors.

Shawnee boys never played with girls. The inclination toward such an act subjected the youngster to great ridicule. From the moment they learned to walk, male children developed a sense of superiority, even over their sisters. The girls did not mind. They busied themselves as young girls do today: "playing house", imitating their mothers, making mud pies, and developing their skills in molding vessels of clay.

Training in history, codes of conduct and traditions were carried on by the elders, who memorized the creeds and passed them on from generation to generation. Additionally, every father was a teacher of his sons; every mother taught her daughters. Children were seldom punished, but strict obedience to the laws and customs was unswervingly enforced from their earliest days.

Shawnee men were hunters and warriors. The women of the tribe did the domestic labor. They built the lodges, dressed the game, cooked, planted and cultivated the gardens, scraped and tanned hides, made clothing and blankets, wove baskets and made vessels of clay. It was a great event when a warrior husband returned from a raid with an iron kettle or camp skillet. The women also cared for the ailments within the tribe and were extremely skillful at mixing herbs and setting fractured bones.

The Shawnees had no calendar like the Indians of Central America. Instead they reckoned time with wonderful accuracy by the thirteen moons of the year and by the signs of nature. The various stages of the moon, sunrise and sunset, and the sun at its zenith all contained particular significance for the Shawnees.

The Shawnees believed in Moneto, a supreme being who ruled the entire universe (called "yalakuquakumgigi"). Moneto distributed blessings upon all that earned his favor and desperate sorrow upon those who merited his disfavor. The Great Spirit of the Shawnees was a grandmother who ruled the destinies of her children. She eternally wove a great net (called a 'skemotah') which, when finished, would be dropped over the world. She would then draw the net back up to the heavens. Those who had proven themselves worthy would be caught up in the net and taken to a better life, while those who fell back through the net would suffer an unspeakable fate as the world came to an end. Each Shawnee was judge of his own conduct and was held accountable for it. They lived by their own standards and shrugged off value judgments placed upon them by persons outside of their tribe.

The "Golden Rule" of the Shawnees was preserved for us verbatim by Thomas Wildcat Alford and bears much resemblance to the Christian code: "Do not kill or injure your neighbor, for it is not him that you injure, you injure yourself. But do good to him, therefore add to his days of happiness as you add to your own. Do not wrong or hate your neighbor, for it is not him that you wrong, you wrong yourself. But love him, for Moneto loves him also as he loves you."

The rule applied only to dealings with other Shawnees and what a warrior did to a member of another tribe or race was an entirely different matter. The cunning and deception visited upon the white man was resorted to because the Shawnees felt powerless to cope with the whites on common ground and because they were driven by deep instincts for survival of their race and way of life against those whom they believed would destroy both.

Much has been made of the lack of expression upon the part of the American Indian. Self control was an important factor in their lives. Many a brave stared impassively ahead while his enemies cut the flesh from his body and many a grief-stricken person would walk to the new grave of a loved one without a tear, though their entire body screamed in quiet anguish. But actually they were a happy and sociable race of people. Because there were none of the leisure-time diversions as we know today in the forests of frontier America, and no newspapers or other mass media, the Shawnees were much given to visiting. At times like these the hostess brought out her sweets and delicacies for the occasion, and the visitor normally contributed a piece of game or other food as his answer to the expected hospitality.

The men enjoyed communal hunts greatly. These were usually followed by long and friendly talks around the glowing embers of a campfire. The talks covered everything from national history and current events to the lighter wit of bantering about someone's unsoma or a bad shot taken during the hunt. The women and children sat quietly and respectfully nearby, listening intently to the conversation.

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## CLANS

An Indian tribe consisted of the entire body of a nation. A clan represented a group within the tribe. The principal chief of the Shawnees could be compared to the President of the United States, with the clan chiefs as governors.

Of the original twelve clans of the Shawnee tribe, history finds them with only five clans left in existence: the Thawegila, Peckuwe and Kispokotha, who generally stood together on tribal matters; and the Chalahgawtha and Maykujay, who were likewise closely related in their activities. Each clan had its duties to the tribe. The Peckuwes were responsible for religious matters and for the maintenance of order and duty. The Kispokothas were responsible for warfare and the training of warriors for battle. The Maykujays answered for matters pertaining to food, health and medicine. The two most powerful clans, the Thawegilas and Chalahgawthas, were responsible for overall tribal government and politics.

## BEZON SHAWANDOSSEE

I learned from Grandmother several years before she died that she was part Indian. I knew that her Grandmother was a Shawnee woman who married a Swiss farmer. I knew that her grandmother went by the name of Syvilla Wolf prior to her marriage to Alexander Ummel (also spelled Omel). I knew that they were married in or around Canton, Ohio.

After some study of the Shawnee I learned that there was a Shawnee reservation just North of Canton, Ohio. I also learned from reading that the Shawnee chiefs were always of the Wolf clan, and that if someone's "euro" name was Wolf, it was highly likely that they were of the Chief's family. I also learned that the Shawnee chiefs, at the time that the U.S. Government was organizing a massive move of Indian tribes to the states of Oklahoma and Kansas, were advising their people, and in particular their families to inter-marry with the "euros" in order to preserve

their rights to the land in Ohio. At the same time, I learned that the Shawnee women who were being advised to marry European men were usually quite eager to do so, because it meant that they would be living in nice houses, and wearing nice and fashionable European clothing.

The Shawnee are of the Algonquin race, and as such, themselves appeared more like the Europeans. The Shawnee and the Algonquin, as well as the Cherokee, Miami and other tribes were called "Woodland" Indians. The Indians of the far west appeared to have far more "oriental" features, i.e., the skin being darker, and the eyes having the oriental fold. At the same time, the Plains Indians appear somewhat different, some having the appearance of the Pacific tribes, and some having the appearance of the Woodland tribes, and sometimes having features that could have come from the Pacific or the Woodland tribes.

It appears that my grandmother's mother (who was half Shawnee) may have married a man who was at least half Cherokee. And their daughter, my grandmother, in turn married a man, my grandfather, who may have been at least one-quarter Miami and one-quarter Creek Indian. I believe this pattern of marrying other Indians, even when they were not of the same tribe was also encouraged by the elders to quietly preserve the heritage of the Indian.

Years ago I'd tried to do my family tree, and I'd gotten the names of my great grandparents, and my great-great-grandparents. On my father's side of the family I was able to continue in an uninterrupted flight, clear back to France in the Middle Ages. With my mother's side of the family, I kept running into deadends! It was as if I were in a large forest and ran smack into a tree blocking the way. On my grandfather's family, I got back to his father, and could find nothing more! But I did find his name, with a slightly different spelling on the Indian rolls. The same with other branches of the tree. I would run into difficulty tracing back more than two generations, but would then find the names of the ancestors in the Indian rolls. As a result, I found that although I have French, English, and German ancestors, I am also at least 25% Native American.

I imagine that I can hear my great-great-great grandfather telling his children. "The White Man is taking our country from us. Marry with these people, preserve our heritage, and when the time is right, take the country back." This is really what is happening. If your ancestors have been in this country more than 100 years, it is highly likely that you have native american blood running in your veins.

So in a quiet way, we have taken back our lands and our rights.

Not many know that the Constitution of the United States is based upon the Iroquois form of government.

To order a copy of the Shawnee Dictionary go to:  
<http://thewishfactory.com/dictionary.html>

To order a copy of the Native American Synchronicity Cards go to:  
<http://thewishfactory.com/cards.html>

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