

# THE RED PATH

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by

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After possessions accumulate, they are shared with love and respect. You give away things that you really cherish; things of value. You give away something you feel is part of yourself so you are giving a part of yourself.

Our spiritual way of life cannot exist within the capitalist system, which is built upon materialism and injustice. Under capitalism the land is not shared by the community, but owned by a few people who will sell our fathers' and mothers' bones to accumulate even more wealth. The leaders are not the servants of the people, but the servants of those who own big businesses.

Capitalism always has been and always will be an enemy of Native people. I feel that some of the people in the ruling class understand this, and that this is one of the true reasons they attack us. It is in their interests to keep Native people oppressed.

What is going to make the red man survive with pride and dignity is the spiritualism that has always been a part of him. Now, in 1978, many Native people are starting once again to learn from their elders and to respect them. We must always be grateful to our elders because they have preserved our language and the ways of our ancestors; they have saved our spiritual way of life from the onslaught of capitalism and colonial exploitation. Even if the white man were to kill all of our elders tomorrow he would find that genocide would not work, for we have children among us who will become elders tomorrow; we even have elders among the unborn.

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upon us. He has used the Indian Act to divide Native people among themselves and to separate Native people from their traditional way of life, by saying that one person is an Indian and another person isn't.

What has made us survive as a race is the spiritual life of our people. Against great odds and great pressures, we have been able to survive four hundred years of colonial oppression and capitalism at its worst. Capitalism often disguises itself as a friend, but Native people understand its true role. Many Native people don't know the terms I am using, but they know the effects of all these things that are happening to them. Because of the conditions of a corrupt society, many Native people have been caught in the vicious circle of alcoholism, drug addiction and out-and-out greed which capitalism promotes. Alcohol has no place in the Native way of life, but it has been used as an effective weapon to destroy us. Many Native people have allowed themselves to be brainwashed into underestimating their own potential and their own capabilities as spiritual beings. But today more and more Native people are beginning to understand spiritualism and their spiritual needs.

The return to our spiritual way of life leads only one way, and that is towards self-determination for Native people. I strongly believe that Native spiritualism and hard work will eventually lead to an independent Red Nation in north america. Of course, I don't believe that it will come under the capitalist system. Many of our traditions and many of our customs—such as give-aways and feasts (sharing with members of the community) take anti-capitalist positions.

At the time of the Caravan I was a strong supporter of Maoism and the CPC(ML). I had just come out of the Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association, where I had been Vice-President, and I was really disenchanted with government-funded Native organizations. I was into using some very heavy jargon—rhetoric from the left—and some people were worried about me because they were scared of where I was moving them to. I wasn't sure of where I was moving myself, but I was very bitter towards the system and I wanted to fight. I felt, and I still believe, that socialism is the tool. But now I understand that it must be a type of socialism developed by Native people. Self-determination will not come under the CPC(ML) or any other political party like it.

Spiritualism had always been a very important part of my life, but like many other Native people I had been conditioned to neglect this legacy. On the Caravan I began to develop a deeper understanding of what spiritualism really means. I was just getting myself together, and the Caravan helped me do that. And I started to understand that Native people practice more socialism than many people in the left. We were treating each other like brothers and sisters.

Spiritualism is not capitalism; it is not communism either. It is a way of life that has been with Native people for thousands of years. But I don't see white people's socialism as a contradiction to Native spiritualism. Spiritualism means that no one owns the land; no industry exploits the people. Our elders and medicine people are servants in every shape and form.

Spiritualism is the land, the people, and the sharing of this—not a class separation. Our elders teach us that we are all part of the circle of life, which contains the four races, the four seasons, and everything in nature—the rivers, trees, mountains, fish and animals. Every man, woman and child is part of this circle and we communicate with the Creator, who is outside it, through our elders.

The circle of life is a continuous cycle of all seasons and all generations, and we live in it today as part of yesterday and tomorrow. Our way of life, and all of our activities, are based on the spiritual understanding that we are a part of nature and must function as part of the whole. This spiritual awareness has been given to us by the Creator and taught to us by our elders, who communicate with the Creator through the pipe.

We are taught that red men and red women came from the salt waters and were created here, in the Western hemisphere, for a special task. The Great Spirit has given us this land to look after and care for so that we can pass it on to our children and our children's children for their use. We are the caretakers of the land, living in tune with nature and the environment. In turn, the land will look after us.

As part of the circle of life we must share the resources of the land and plan its use for the benefit of all. The land is our life; we depend on all natural things for our existence. We must live at peace with the land, for the destruction of our environment is the destruction of ourselves. And in all our decisions, we must think about the unborn.

Of all the races, the white man has gone against this more than any other. He has not just harmed himself, but all races, because he is destroying the environment. This is because he does not understand the circle of life, with its seasons, times to rest and times to grow. The white man is not in tune with himself or with nature; therefore he is very dangerous. Each segment of his life is separate from the others. As an observer of the white man, I have seen him become a split personality. One side is a churchgoer, a man with concern for his community; the other is a competitor, and so greedy for power and material gain that he does not care how he accomplishes his goals. These two sides are separate and destructive, yet he puts them together and makes them seem as one.

If we make a decision today, we must always ask ourselves, "How will it affect the unborn?" But capitalists don't ask themselves this question; they don't care what happens tomorrow. We understand that we are the custodians of the land, and not the owners. This is why we can never sell it, or sign it away. This land was loaned to us by the Great Spirit and we have always shared it with the white man, but the white man has always misunderstood our actions.

The greatest crime the white man has inflicted on Native people in north america is trying to de-Spirit our people, to destroy our integrated way of life. He has used the church and government to do this—by trying to condition us into imitations of europeans with european values, by ramming Christianity down our throats, by taking our education out of our own hands and forcing destructive educational processes