

MANITOU API

WHERE THE SUN RISES

By **CONNIE STRONG**
Sunset Photo By **TONY F. SIMONS**

A Message of Hope

"The New Life has arrived. There is going to be a major shift; there's going to be a rebirth of life. There is going to be a cleansing of the earth, and Nature is going to be the determining factor in supporting the new life."

— Dave Courchene, "MANITOU API: Where the Sun Rises."

"Everything I do is a leap of faith; it's destiny." Perhaps it was this belief that ultimately led Editor/Director/Producer Cindy Pickard to "MANITOU API: Where the Sun Rises," a documentary that brings a message of hope for not only the New Year, but for the dawning of a new age.

Through the Seven Sacred Teachings, represented by animals, Native Americans believe that we can reconnect with nature and embark on a new tomorrow. Pickard believes, "In order for us to survive as a civilization, we must renew our connection ... there is no other choice. We have to come back to life, to what is real, and nature and the animals who have never lost their connection will lead us back."

The film presents the hypothesis that, hidden in the elaborate architecture of what is known as the "legislative building" in the province of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, strong symbolism is recognized that bears an uncanny resemblance to that of King Solomon's Temple, housing the Ark of the Covenant. It is in this setting that Architectural Historian Frank Albo (Cambridge University) forms an unusual bond with Anishnabe Elder Dave Courchene, and the two set out to bring a message of peace to the world through the ancient teachings of the Indigenous People.

Although the film provides an intriguing possibility about the correlation between the two structures, the underlying, paramount message of the documentary is found in the Seven Sacred Teachings. These Teachings are those that

are prophesized to hold the Truth, a Truth that would reconnect man to one another and to the land.

The Seven Sacred Teachings

According to Courchene's belief, the Eagle brought a message of Love to the Tribe; not only a Love for each other, but a Love for the land and for all things living. "MANITOU API" shares the belief that each time a child sees the Eagle, or any of the seven animals of the Teachings, they will be reminded of the principles they represent, and hope for a new, better tomorrow can be realized.

The Buffalo represents Respect. Courchene explains in the documentary that he believes that mankind is in need of a shift in perception, and that poverty, homelessness and hunger could be eliminated through this shift. The Buffalo is, to the Native People, a visual reminder that if we adopt the value of Respect, we will be able to give freely and lovingly to our fellow man and alleviate many of these hardships.

Courage is represented by the Bear. In the film, Courchene states, "It doesn't take Courage to hate your fellow man or to live a materialistic life." Instead, the Teachings suggest that it is much more difficult to "listen to your heart" and to do what is right. Some believe that the Bear does not "hibernate," but, rather, only "fasts for Mother Earth." It is through this belief that "vision quests" became a part of life for the Indigenous People.

Bigfoot (Sa-Be) plays a major role in

the Teachings. Because Bigfoot is elusive, belief holds that this mystical creature represents Honesty. Courchene explains that it is their belief that Sa-Be transforms from the Spirit to the flesh for fleeting moments—exemplifying the difficulty man has with Honesty. The lesson learned according to the Teachings is that true Honesty comes when you speak from the heart, listening to your inner voice.

In a colorful, metaphorical example, the Beaver's Teaching of Wisdom is offered: The Beaver has two very sharp teeth that he uses to cut wood in order to build dams or "lodges." If, instead, the Beaver chose to lay on the banks and not use his ability (his "gifts"), the teeth would continue to grow and, ultimately, the Beaver would die. Seeing the Beaver is symbolic; we are to use our gifts to benefit the land and mankind.

By bowing his head when a human is seen, the Wolf exhibits Humility. Courchene believes that this should serve as a reminder that all men are created equal. In the film, he states, "The Sun does not choose to shine on one race or people."

The Turtle represents a combination of all Seven Laws, and is the messenger of the Great Spirit. Regardless of your belief system, the Indigenous People are connected to the Earth by their beliefs in these Seven Teachings.

Where the film began

Pickard met Courchene in Winnipeg in 2005, and she says she felt an immediate

connection with him. Since that time, the two have collaborated on three films about the Indigenous People. "MANITOU API: Where the Sun Rises" is the third documentary in a critically acclaimed series, following "The 8th Fire" and "Starblanket: A Spirit Journey."

Grammy-winner Tom Bee, founder of the Native American rock band XIT and owner of SOAR records, provided the music scores for all three of Pickard's documentaries. In addition to Bee's music and Courchene's prophecy, legendary spiritual leader Chief Arvol Lookinghorse likewise contributes to "MANITOU API" through his words of Wisdom.

Pickard continues, "When you are around authentic Native American people, there is a peace, a mysticism and a connection to a Higher Power that is real. It's not just something they talk about or teach—it's real. They accept all seasons, all ages; they accept death as they accept life. They're unconditional."

Regarding Courchene, Pickard states, "Dave's feeling is that we (Earth) are at the eleventh hour and he is in a real hurry to get the message out. I know Dave to be someone who has devoted most of his life to bringing a message of peace to the world."

Once a superintendent of education, "Leading Earth Man," as his traditional name

suggests, left his job to dedicate his life to spreading the message of peace to the world. He has spoken in Japan, Israel, Korea, Brazil and the Philippines, in addition to having brought his Wisdom to the World Peace Summit hosted by the United Nations. In Manitoba, Courchene has developed The Turtle Lodge, a healing center dedicated to renewing the spirit of all people, through the traditional teaching of his people, the Anishnabe Nation, Eagle Clan.

What's in a name

According to Pickard, "MANITOU API" means "where the Creator sat." It is the sacred site where the petroforms are (you can see them in the film) and is the most sacred site of the Indigenous People of that area. We used the name for the film because Courchene was guided by the Spirit to title it that way; and though it's in the Ojibwa language, he wanted everyone to become familiar to the words and what they meant."

She continues, "Where the Sun Rises" was my idea for a title. I wanted at least part of the title to be in English and easy to read. Because Dave and I are working together as partners in a way, we both contributed to the title and so this seemed like a perfect balance. The Sun is such a significant symbol to the Native People and the East is their direction, where they

come from, symbolically speaking."

A word about the producers

In addition to being a producer, a director and an editor, Pickard is also known for her association with the works of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. Because of the inspiration gained from Kubler-Ross, Pickard founded Rites of Passage, ACA – a non-profit organization that offers education, service and support for those dealing with the issue of death and dying.

She learned a very important lesson during that time: "Always follow your intuition, no matter where it takes you, always follow it." And from Courchene, Pickard learned to appreciate what he believes: "Our time is so very short here on this little planet. We all have a gift, and we must use our gifts."

Pickard's son, Andy Pickard, is the director and senior editor of the film. Andy is also known as the producer of "Nostradamus 2012," a History Channel documentary.

Together with Frank Albo and Dave Courchene, Cindy Pickard followed her intuition, shared her gifts and presented to the open-minded an offering by the First Nations People that, according to their beliefs, could hold the key to a fruitful, peaceful tomorrow.

Matequesan. "We are all related." ●

The Seven Sacred Teachings

Art by Jonathan Warm Day and more information about MANITOU API can be found at www.the8thfire.org/main.htm.

