

I AM TIRED OF BEING INVISIBLE TO YOU ALL

WINONA LADUKE

When Minnesota Women's Press managing editor and long-time photographer Sarah Whiting drove up to Winona LaDuke's new horse and hemp farm in northern Minnesota, the intent was to simply take a portrait to go along with an adaptation of LaDuke's essay "I Am Tired of Being Invisible to You All." The two of them had a two-hour conversation that evolved into this stream of consciousness from LaDuke about Being Invisible.

This farm is just north of the Amish – that's the description of my life right now. If I were going to say where I was philosophically right now, I would say I'm just north of the Amish.

I raised \$130,000 for Winona's Hemp and Heritage Farm on Kickstarter. There are a lot of people interested in hemp. What I am interested in is the post-petroleum economy, because I'm really sick of the petroleum economy. This is my launch. The next economy is starting here. We have to have a new plan, because this one isn't working. So here we are. It's 2018, and I'm getting ready to roll.

I've got to get the curtains made [for the house on the farm]. I sew. Super excited about the farm. We just took possession in September.

Our Honor the Earth organization is working mostly on the pipelines. The Enbridge Line 3 is coming in to the United States at 915,000 barrels a day. They are going to fight for it and we're going to fight them. They already have six pipelines in northern Minnesota and my position is that six pipelines is enough.

They had a meeting in Bemidji announcing Line 3. About 100 Indians showed up. They had a room with no chairs, nothing. They wanted us to go eat cookies. Everybody was upset because they want some answers. I see one of my elders and she's leaning up against the wall with her oxygen tank. This young guy from Red Lake, he says 'Winona, if I get people to quiet down, do think you could ask Enbridge what's going on here?' He starts quieting people down, and I used my

big voice. These two cops are coming for me. Two big Indian ladies grab my arm and say "She's not going anywhere."

I don't feel like I am an activist. I feel like I am a responsible person. This is good land. You can still drink the water. So what are

to tell you the history of my reservation.

But I go on these conservative talk shows. Someone's got to talk to them.

I have a relative who ended up in the Mississippi. Everyone in this community has someone who has been murdered. And that

case in Fargo, the Savanna Greywind case. An Indian woman who was eight months pregnant. They murdered her and took her baby and threw her body in the river. It makes me cry. We rode our horses, and we carried her body on that wagon out there. That's how freaked out we all were. And those cops were not right out, not that they could have saved her. But when Dru Sjodin disappeared, that beautiful little blonde girl who was murdered? They had an all-points bulletin out for her.

I do feel like we're becoming more conscious. The privilege and entitlement is really true, and people really get that. But unfortunately, the bar is low if your president is a groper. I think we are waking up. I think that impeachment is really important, but I think that in addition to that we need to be making sure that Minnesota is great. I will fight that national battle. I'm not afraid and I definitely can be part of that work nationally. But let's do it here too.

People are in shock at the number of battlefronts that there are, but that's like 99% of the people. Even with the tax cut there were about 300 billionaires and millionaires that said 'we don't even want the tax cut, you don't need to do this.' If everybody just takes their part we've got this. But you've got to step up in history.



you going to do? How are you going to act? We can be decent people to each other. I wrote "I Am Tired of Being Invisible to You All" because I just get sick of it.

People know so little. People ask me questions and they know nothing. People with Ph.D.s, and I'm like, wow. I require people who interview me to do some research. Don't waste my time. I'm not going

WINONA LADUKE ASKS: WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Can you name 10 indigenous nations? Often, no one can name us. This is the problem with history. If you make the victim disappear, there is no crime. And we just [were made to] disappear. Here's what I want people to know today about Native Americans:

- There are over 700 indigenous nations in North America. In Guatemala and Bolivia, we are the majority population. Two indigenous presidents have been elected—Evo Morales in Bolivia and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. We are doctors, lawyers, writers, educators, and we are here.
- We are land-based, and intend to stay that way. I hear Minnesotans talk about how the Americans gave us land. America was stolen or purchased for a pittance. President Andrew Jackson forced the removal of thousands of our people, and then sold our land. Historians point out that Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase knocked U.S. debt from \$58 million in 1828 to \$38,000 in 1834. Good deal, except for us.
- Of the 4 percent of our land base that remains, we intend to keep it. Of our treaties, which were signed between our ancestors and yours, we intend to stand by them. We are not you.
- There are said to be more than 7,000 languages in the world today, and those are primarily indigenous. Some are very close to disappearing. At least 52 North American indigenous languages have disappeared. Forty-six are known to have just one Native speaker, and 357 have fewer than 50 speakers.
- The United Nations has declared 2019 the year of languages, and Lakota and Ojibwe are two of the strongest living languages in North America. We intend to keep our words.
- And we intend to keep our spiritual and religious practices. I am not a Christian, and it was not until 1978, with the passage of the American Indian Freedom of Religion Act, that Native people could freely practice our religions.
- Native women are here, and we birthed this nation. We created the agro biodiversity of 8,000 varieties of corn, and a multitude of beans, squash and melon varieties, which are now touted by big agriculture and the foundation for most crops.

I am tired of being invisible to you all. I am tired of the lack of compassion from a president who slashes health care. I'm tired of the state of Minnesota, which seeks to contaminate the remaining wild rice with sulfide to keep a dying mining industry afloat. And I am tired of North Dakota pretending that Standing Rock does not exist, and balking at a forum on Standing Rock at the University of North Dakota.

What I want to say is that we are beautiful, amazing, tough-as-can-be people. It would be nice if we thought of each other kindly and with compassion. I am certainly not too tired to battle, but I would really like us all to do our part.

Resources

Reprinted with permission from author, as excerpted from an essay that originally appeared in InForum, a Fargo-based news forum. Find original essay here: inforum.com/opinion/columns/4356763-laduke-i-am-tired-being-invisible-you-all



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MEETING OF THE MiNDS
DEMENTIA CONFERENCE

Registration is now open for the Alzheimer's Association Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter and Mayo Clinic's Meeting of the Minds Dementia Conference. Join us for a day of education and support. The 2018 conference explore what happens when we look BEYOND DEMENTIA and will feature 33 presenters, up to 70 exhibits and a Learning Lab for Eldercare Technologies.

Saturday, March 3, 2018
7:45 a.m. - 4:10 p.m.


Saint Paul RiverCentre

Register at alz.org/minds

Who Should Attend?

- People with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or early dementia
- Caregivers, families and friends
- Professionals and students

(Certificates of Attendance available)



alzheimer's association

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