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- **COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTOR**

# **World Peace & Prayer Day hopes to help heal the earth**

**By Jane Ayers**

Posted Jun. 23, 2015 at 2:00 AM

The 20th anniversary World Peace and Prayer Day/Honoring Sacred Sites ceremonies led by Chief Arvol Looking Horse, spiritual leader of the Sioux Nations, drew approximately 1,000 participants Thursday through Sunday to Howard Prairie Lake to pray for world peace and healing of the earth.

Maori elders traveled from Australia to bless the sacred grounds while bald eagles soared overhead. International travelers from Egypt, Canada and Japan united with local residents and renowned tribal elders, including Agnes Baker-Pilgrim from the Siletz tribe, Eddie Benton Banai from the Grand Medicine Lodge (Ojibwe), Rabbi David Zaslow and Professor David West, to pray with people from all nations during the solstice ceremony to bring about an "energy shift" of healing.

Lookinghorse led prayer ceremonies that included a "sacred fire" that burned for the four days as elders discussed what the world is facing. He stated, "Twenty years ago, the Dalai Lama gave us his blessing for the first World Peace and Prayer Day. Many world leaders have blessed this prayer, including Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. This is about the empowerment of nations to walk in beauty because life is beautiful and sacred, and we are living with Spirit."

Though focusing on healing, Looking Horse voiced concern "because Mother Earth is dying, is sick, and has a fever. ... Man has gone too far by not watching where he is going, and brought us to this prayer, which is the only thing that will bring healing to Mother Earth. If we don't do this, Mother Earth will shake herself and volcanos will erupt. The signs of the white buffalo and other white animals being born, are all part of prophecy of these times. From the heart of Mother Earth, we have a message for the world: We must unite as all nations and one prayer."

Voicing his increasing realization that "Mother Earth is a spirit, and Source of Life, not a resource," he also shared that, "I am the 19th Generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Pipe, and yet my grandma on her deathbed said, 'If people don't straighten up, he'll be the last bundle keeper for the Lakota.'"

Ojibwe elder Eddie Benton Banai said, "The elders have been saying for generations that either people protect the Earth and water, or else there will be no life. As we look around

today, there is consciousness raising, an awareness of this, but we are fast running out of time."

Takilma/Siletz elder Agnes Baker-Pilgrim provided a salmon-bake for the gathering, a smaller version of her family's annual salmon ceremony on the Applegate and Rogue Rivers, saying, "I've been with the Salmon Nation all my life ... When I cooked salmon for Martha Stewart years ago at one of my salmon gatherings, as she was helping me thread the salmon onto our redwood sticks, I told her, 'after eating salmon cooked traditionally, you'll throw away your frying pan.'"

She stated, "All this global environmental destruction is damaging the seventh generation and the unborn yet to come. We have to do better so they can grow up with clean water and air. If I can be a voice for the voiceless at age 91, what's your excuse? ... We are all in this leaky canoe together. "

Rabbi Zaslow of Ashland's Havurah Synagogue said, "It's all nations, not just one nation. It's all religions, not just one religion. It's All, not One. "

Former SOU Professor David West said, "In over 300 tribes, there is no word in their languages for 'failure.' Yes, there are words for 'mistakes or learning from mistakes,' but no words for 'failure', so there is hope for us all."

Looking Horse's wife, Paula Horne, pointed out that even though NASA scientists have stated mankind is at "a point of no return," that "we are here to prove it differently, to be a ripple effect worldwide, that we could heal the earth."

Looking Horse envisions June 21 becoming an international holiday in the future, and plans to visit the White House and the United Nations to work for global healing. On the last day of this Rogue Valley gathering, he received word that a declaration was taken on Sunday, June 21, to the Secretary General of the U.N. to call for the establishment of an Indigenous United Nations, and it included the proclamation of World Peace & Prayer Day "to exhibit concern for all life and to pray for global healing."

Monday the closing ceremony by Ashland nonprofit group Red Earth Descendants included the re-placing of the International Peace Pole, now including all nations after being blessed during the World Peace & Prayer Day, to stand at the U.S. Cellular Park in Medford.

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