

Smoke Signals Radio Archive Episode 1994-01-08
Segment 2
Episode Air Date: 1994-01-08

Dan and Mary Lou Smoke share a teaching with listeners about the White Buffalo Calf Woman bringing the sacred pipe to the people from the Creator. After, they discuss updates on the Leonard Peltier case: Peltier was denied parole, and Mary Lou reads an excerpt about the case from Peter Matthiessen's "In the Spirit of Crazy Horse".

Host(s): Dan Smoke, Mary Lou Smoke

DAN SMOKE: Yes, and greetings to all our listeners of Smoke Signals. Earlier, when we were talking about **Lame Deer**, he was talking about the circle standing for togetherness, of people who sit with one another around a fire, relatives and friends united in peace while the pipe passes from hand to hand. I just received a call off the air from [redacted], who would like to thank all of their friends in the Native community, brothers and sisters, who sent cards and letters and flowers of sympathy for the recent assault that took place upon his son [redacted]. He was assaulted outside of the **T&C** down in the east end of **Dundas Street** here in **London** a couple of weeks ago. He's recuperating, he is, his spirit, there's been a jolt, I guess you could say to his spirit. But he is now on the mending path, he is on the healing path. His family would like to thank all those people who did remember and send get well cards, send cards of sympathy for that recent injury taking place. So, in the same way that the circle stands for the togetherness of people who sit with one another round a fire, relatives and friends united in peace, we wish to make acknowledgement of all these people whose tributes did go out, whose prayers did go out to our brother [redacted] and that he is now healing.

Right now, we would like to share a teaching with our listeners about the **sacred pipe**. The sacred pipe which came to us from **White Buffalo Calf Woman**, who brought the pipe to the **Sioux Nation**, and the Sioux Nation in turn shared the pipe with all the various linguistic affiliated nations that came into contact directly with the Sioux, of which there are very many. And today, all throughout Indian country, all throughout **Turtle Island**, you see many pipe carriers from various backgrounds, various nations. And it all comes from this teaching of where, of how this pipe came to the people. And today, this pipe is still a revered, sacred object, sacred item that Native people are picking up today. And as one of the sacred items, it has to be taken care of in a responsible, respectful, traditional fashion. It has to be looked after as a sacred object, as something that is passed on from many generations to the present. And in so doing, we as people who are responsible for these sacred items must cleanse ourselves on a regular basis. We must always be on that healing journey. And we are always at the beck and call. We have a responsibility to ourselves, to our families, to our communities, as well as to our nations, and as well as to the connection that we have with the natural world in maintaining the healing and maintaining the positive journeys of all creation. So, this is a teaching on the Buffalo Calf Woman and the sacred pipe coming to the people.

MARY LOU SMOKE: Long ago, there was a summer when no **buffalo** came to the **Plains** and the **Lakota** were very hungry. Every day, the hunters went in search of game and came back without success. One day, when the peoples' hunger and distress was unbearable, two of the tribe's best hunters set out on foot, not to return without food. The braves roamed far and wide across the prairie but could find no buffalo or other game. After many days, they had begun to despair of ever finding food. Then one morning, they saw a figure approaching from the distant horizon. A woman who seemed to float on air across the ground. The woman was beautiful, more beautiful than any woman either of the braves had ever seen. She was dressed in a white

buckskin dress and her long black hair sparkled in the bright sun. In her hands, she carried a bundle of buffalo hides. When she approached the men, one brave shrank back in respect in honour of the holy woman. The other reached out to touch her. Suddenly, a cloud covered the disrespectful brave and when it lifted, he was dead. The respectful brave was terrified, but the woman told him not to be afraid. "I have a gift for the people," she said. "Return to your village and prepare the people for my arrival." A few days later, the woman walked into the camp, still carrying her strange bundle. When the people gathered around her, she opened the bundle and held out a pipe decorated with eagle feathers. She showed them how to pray with this pipe, lifting it to the sky, lowering it to the ground, and pointing it in the **four directions** of the winds. "The smoke that rises out of the sacred pipe is the breath of the **Great Spirit**," she told them. "With this pipe, the people will walk like a prayer. When your feet touch the ground and the pipe reaches towards the sky, your body forms a bridge between heaven and **Earth**."

DS: Nya:weh, miigwetch Mary Lou. That was a teaching on Buffalo Calf Woman's gift of the sacred pipe to the people, from the **Creator**. And right now, we have an update on the **Leonard Peltier Defence Committee**. They have had an ongoing 17-year uphill struggle in trying to keep the memory of our brother, **Leonard Peltier**, his trials and tribulations that he's been having with the **United States Parole Board**, trying to keep a positive perspective. But December the 14th marks the sad day for Native American history. Again, justice was ignored as internationally known political prisoner, Leonard Peltier, was given a negative parole recommendation by members of the United States Parole Board. The testimony took four hours and included statements by former **Attorney General** and Peltier's lead attorney, **Ramsey Clark**; resolutions, proclamations, and declarations passed by **Tribal Councils**, community and church organizations; messages of support from senators, congressmen, and celebrities that included **Richard Gere, Harry Belafonte, Princess Marie-Christine of Belgium**; corporate papers explaining Leonard's ability to support himself and his family financially; and a lease proving he has a place to reside upon release.

Although the testimony took hours, the deliberation period was less than thirty minutes. The consensus of all involved is that the parole board members' decision was made long before they entered the hearing. Not at all surprising was the interference of an **FBI agent** sent to the hearing. Upon questioning, the agent admitted to being sent by **Minneapolis FBI Agent Nicholas O'Hara** who took on this responsibility himself. Prior to the testimony, Ramsey had the agent removed. Unfortunately, the parole board members were unable to fairly consider parole for Leonard Peltier. The recommendation from the parole board to the parole commission will consist of their perception of the, quote, "nature of the offence," unquote, regarding the deaths of the two FBI agents coupled with the previous offence for which the parole board members blatantly ignored the fact that Leonard was acquitted. They decided parole could not be granted at this time and suggested that he return after an additional 15 years before a possible parole recommendation could be considered. Leonard Peltier has served 18 years already for crime evidence proves he did not commit. Such injustice is frightening and action is necessary. So, 1993 is the **Year of the Indigenous Peoples**. 1994 is the **International Year of the Multicultural Family**.

Now, if you'd like to help us out in regards to calling, faxing, letters, petitions, to the president, and support letters to the Leonard Peltier Defence Committee, you can contact us here at Smoke Signals by leaving a message at the main university number [redacted], and our extension is [redacted]. Okay, that's [redacted]. And just leave a message and we'll get back to you, we'll provide you with any information that you may require, as we will do if you have any other questions or comments regarding any other aspects of our show.

Okay, so, right now, Mary Lou's going to read a transcript, or a feature from the book "**In the Spirit of Crazy Horse**," by **Peter Matthiessen**, and it's dealing with Leonard Peltier. Okay, so, this is Mary Lou.

MLS: "In the spring of 1983, two months after the publication of my book 'In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,' the publisher **Viking Press** and I, and also some **South Dakota** booksellers, were sued for libel by a **Former Governor, William Janklow**, for \$24 million dollars. In January 1984, the publisher attorney **Bruce Ellison** and I were sued by **Special Agent David Price** of the FBI for \$25 million, or \$49 million in all. Since Price had assured me in our lengthy interview for the book that he never made a move without the approval of his supervisors, and since an FBI agent's salary could never pay for the very expensive attorneys he retained, it was assumed that the FBI itself had sponsored his suit in order to lend some sort of credibility to the suit by Janklow, who was already suing **Newsweek** on related grounds, and that both suits were intended mainly as chastisement and harassment, as well as a means of keeping the book out of circulation. Eight years of litigation and eight court decisions, all the way to the **United States Supreme Court**, have borne out the original opinion of Viking's attorneys that the book was free of libel. The main victim of these intimidation suits has been Leonard Peltier, an **American Indian Movement** leader and the subject of the book, who has been deprived of his main organization tool in his fight for justice."

"Peltier is still in prison, convicted of murdering two FBI agents in a shootout near **Wounded Knee**, South Dakota in 1975. He has yet to be granted a new trial, despite court findings that the government withheld evidence favourable to him that kept us in strong doubt of the government's case. In the past year, my own belief that Peltier is innocent has been strengthened by different evidence altogether. On February 17th, 1990, in a small house in the **Pacific Northwest**, I was talking with Peltier's cousin, **Bob Robideau**, when he lifted his gaze to acknowledge someone behind me who had quietly entered the room. A small, husky figure passed us without a word and slipped into a chair against the wall. The man was faceless in a dark blue woolen hood, pulled all the way down to the collar of a black windbreaker. Opaque black glasses covered his eyes, and black gloves hid his hands. Excepting a long strand of raven hair that fell from beneath the hood, the only parts of him that were exposed were his nose and a small line of brown-olive skin bared at the wrist. It was this man who, on June 26, 1975, killed FBI agents **Ron Williams** and **Jack Coler** on the **Pine Ridge Reservation**."

"In the summer of 1988, disturbed that Leonard Peltier had already spent 13 years in prison for the agents' killing with no end in sight, X had come to Robideau and offered the latter permission to name him as the killer to the FBI. However, he said, he felt no guilt and did not believe he deserved to go to prison, and if subpoenaed, would deny that he had done it. Robideau might have agreed to this proposal if he'd thought it would help Peltier, but he knew that Leonard's conviction for aiding and abetting would not be overturned even if the authorities could be convinced that another man had pulled the trigger. I asked Bob how he could be so sure that this man was not lying and Bob said simply, "I saw him do it." Robideau, Peltier, and **Darrelle "Dino" Butler** had known for 15 years who killed the agents, but because X had been on a mission for the AIM group on that hot June day, and because the FBI agents had provoked the fatal shootout, they agreed with X that no crime had been committed. Robideau and Butler were acquitted in a separate trial. In a deep, whispery voice, the hood looked bulked by something wrapped around his mouth. X told me how Peltier and Butler had requested that he bring explosives from **Rapid City** to their camp, for use in making hand grenades and other weapons."

“We learned at Wounded Knee,’ he said, referring to the armed standoff between AIM and the government two years earlier, ‘that explosives keep them at respectful distance.’ On the morning of June 26th, when the explosives loaded into a friend’s pickup truck, he headed south, then east across the reservation. As they passed the large water tank at **Oglala** housing, they noticed two late-model cars that had turned on to the country road and followed them eastward toward the **Jumping Bull Farm**. X and his partner turned off into the westernmost of the several long dirt roads onto the property, and as they neared June’s little cabins, they saw the two strange cars turn off and follow them onto the farm—no longer a working farm, but a group of shacks and cabins strung out along a bluff that overlooks a lower pasture and corral, and thick woods leading down to **White Clay Creek**. Seeing the cars, X and his partner waved to **June Little** and kept going, following a grassy trek over the bluff and down the hill into the pasture, and uphill again to a wide fork in the farm road. There they stopped, not wishing to lead the unknown cars down to the AIM camp and the river woods, or back uphill into the Jumping Bull community off the east of the little cabin.”

“We were naturally apprehensive because we could’ve received a ten-year sentence for illegal possession, and/or transport of explosives. ‘I usually made these deliveries at night, and we couldn’t be certain who these people were.’ Since Indian autos are rarely new, they already supposed that these were white men, whether law men or rancher vigilantes, they did not know. The pursuing cars came down the long and muddy farm road from the highway and paused at the little cabin, where one driver was seen to speak briefly to June Little. After which, a little faster now, they came lurching down the hill and across the pasture. We decided to stop and confront the situation. We had to deal with them. X and the driver got out of the red pickup holding semi-automatic rifles. ‘There were AR-15s all over the res after Wounded Knee,’ he said. ‘We never raised those guns, been around enough to know that pointing a gun is considered to be assault, but we wanted them to see the weapons as a warning, because we were on Indian property now and we weren’t going to let them chase us around. Anyway, when they saw those guns, they stopped immediately. The two cars halted in the middle of the lower pasture, one behind the other, and two men got out and took weapons from their trunks. Then one of them raised his weapon to his shoulder and we jumped behind the truck, and when he fired, we responded with a burst over their heads.’”

“I asked X if he was certain the strangers had fired first since the rumour was that the Indians had opened fire with a warning shot. He shook his head. ‘There was no reason for us to fire first. We had a truck full of explosives. The very last thing we wanted was a firefight.’ He acknowledged that the white man might not have fired toward the pickup, but that the shot might’ve been some sort of signal. At the racketing of gunfire, armed Indians appeared out of the cabins. ‘There was others that got into it, I don’t know who. At first it was just covering fire so people in the cabins could get away, just like Wounded Knee. We could’ve killed lawmen at Wounded Knee if we wanted to.’ While this first exchange was taking place, the men at the AIM camp by the White River were grabbing their guns and running uphill, still some distance away. With bullets flying, X and his partner jumped back into the pickup and drove it up behind the cabins where they quickly unloaded the boxes of explosives from the bed. By this time, though they didn’t know it, the men and the young boys from the AIM camp had joined the fight having taken up positions on the bluff, whereas most of the Indians living in the **savens** had fled into the woods and across the fields.”

“X and his partner drove the red pickup back toward June Little’s cabin, planning to head out, but about that time another car came into the farm from the country road, and we fired a few rounds at its tires to stop it where it was. ‘Agent Adams,’ I said, and X just shrugged. ‘We hung around a little while, trying to see what we could do to help. It was us those men had followed in

there, and we thought we ought to help to get them out. At that point, we looked down at their cars and saw that both of them were out of commission.' By now, both agents had been wounded, their fire had subsided, as had the Indians, though sporadic shooting was taking place between the Indians behind the cabins and the lawmen beginning to place between the Indians behind the cabins. X decided that the only hope was to take hostages. 'We wanted to stop the shooting quick, trade our way out of there.' Bob Robideau nodded, still mystified to why the strangers, hopelessly outnumbered, had not retreated, or at least sought cover in the nearby woods that descended from the pasture to the river. The only conclusion seemed to be that they were expecting reinforcements and in fact, these reinforcements gathered swiftly. Within 10 minutes, the lonely country road a half-mile to the north was lined with cars, and soon the farm would be surrounded."

"There was a terrific sense of hurry,' X said, 'the situation had to be resolved quickly.' A few weeks earlier, when he met in **Seattle**, Bob had wondered why the men in the red pickup truck came down the hill to take the agents hostage, since he and his partners were doing the same thing. 'We had left the woods and we were coming up on those cars from behind.' The next thing they knew, the red pickup was coming down the hill. He saw the man in the passenger seat and the AR-15 sticking out of the window. Neither X nor his partner recalled seeing the three men sneaking across the pasture from the woods. They were concentrated by the two men by the cars. 'Both of them looked like they were out of it,' X was saying, 'I sure didn't expect any resistance.' The red pickup drew up almost alongside and X jumped out with his AR-15. One of them was sitting on the ground, leaning back against the car door with his rifle across his lap. He never moved, but he didn't look dead. His eyes were open. The other was kneeling in the pasture grass a few feet away, bent over with both hands between his legs, rocking in pain like he'd been kicked in the groin. I was about to say, 'don't move and you won't get hurt,' something like that, but I never had time because when he seen me, he made some kind of grunt because he cursed, and he raised both hands holding a gun and he fired at kind of an angle down into the ground."

"Later, I wondered if he fired prematurely or even by mistake, but there wasn't time to figure things out because after he fired, he kept on coming up with that damn gun and he never said anything. Well, if he did, his voice was drowned out by his gun and anything further was drowned out by mine. I only fired two or three rounds. Him once, and the other fella twice,' X said after a pause. 'I'm not a person who gets rattled easily, just the opposite in fact.' Here I glanced to Robideau, who told me later, 'What he said was true. He's not the kind to lose his head. This man was committed to our Indian struggle a long time before that, and he's still committed. He was really sacrificed for his beliefs.' 'But I have quick reactions,' X was saying, 'and I've always been good with a rifle. And I wasn't going to give that guy a second shot. I never even raised my gun. I fired from the hip. Because he was only a few feet away, it was point-blank range. The other one was armed and might be shooting for all I knew, but I didn't have the time to think. I can't afford to take a chance. I swung around and in the same motion shot him too."

"It was revealed in the trials that the second man, Jack Coler, was already near death from loss of blood, but all X saw was a man sitting up and the man was armed. 'I didn't shoot those men because I was angry or nervous. I wasn't mad at them, I wasn't. If I'd wanted to kill them, I could've done that easily from a safe distance without risking danger in any way.' In his distress, X was breathing heavily behind his hood. 'I fired because I couldn't afford to wait for a second shot from either one of them. If our positions had been reversed, he would've shot me, I know that much.' So the other guy's eyes were open? 'Yes.' Was he looking at you? 'Yes.' But he never made a move of any kind? 'No,' X shifted unhappily. 'I thought the first one incapacitated

too, and he'd just shown he had the capacity to kill me. Shooting them was just fear, quick reaction, all in one motion. Instantaneous. A split-second response. It was self-defence, then. There was no element of anger. I'm absolutely sure it was self-defence, though I understand why others might question that. Sure, I was partly apprehensive, partly calm, the way you are in combat, but I wasn't angry."

"We weren't fighting because we hated white people but because we loved our own. It was only later I felt angry. I thought, you stupid bastards coming in there, where you were warned that there could be trouble, then starting a shootout with women and children in those cabins, and then not getting the hell out while you still could. You got yourselves killed, and got **Joe Stuntz**, an Indian, killed, and you spoiled the lives of so many good people.' X ran back to the red pickup where his partner was freaking. Remembering the man's terror, X shook his head. 'The poor guy just wasn't one of us. He wasn't a long time AIM-er or anything, he was just drawn into helping us by my enthusiasm and here he was, mixed up with two dead bodies.' 'I stayed over there by the green cabin until he went down to take hostages,' Bob reflected, 'I never saw that red pickup at all until it was coming down the hill while we were sneaking up across the pasture.' 'In Seattle, he taught me that they were blocked by the agents' car and couldn't see just what was happening. 'All we knew was a few shots were fired and a red pickup took off back up the hill and went on out of there.' But now he acknowledged that he had recognized X as the man in the passenger seat. The red pickup went out past the little cabin and left the property by the east road, past Jumping Bull Hall. 'There were already roadblocks on the paved road,' X said, 'but they weren't set up right. We were ready to shoot our way out, but nobody tried to stop us, and when we went back to Rapid City, I don't mean it was over for me. It isn't over for me even today. I stayed visible and I stayed active, and I tried to avoid seeming paranoid.' Here you are in a friend's house with another man who is in sympathy with your predicament, having to hide behind a hood like some sort of terrorist. How does that make you feel? He shifted in his chair and barely nodded. He said he had never gone underground. 'I am hiding in the light.' But one way or another, since those few shattering seconds and that hot noontime 16 years ago, he's been condemned for life to wear a mask."

DS: Nya:weh, miigwetch, Mary Lou. Let us not forget our brother, Leonard Peltier. Petitions and letters of support are all welcome. And you can just call us here at extension [redacted] after the main university number, [redacted]. Now we're going to listen to a **Navajo** singer, **Davis Mitchell** from his album entitled **Navajo Singer Sings For You**. This song is "**I'll Be There Unexpectedly**," here on Smoke Signals.