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Segment 1
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Dan Smoke educates listeners about the significance of his spirit name, given to him at the Onondaga Longhouse on the Six Nations reserve. Dan explains that there is a lot of pride in having a name that ties one to their relatives, to nature, and to the Creator, and how one is responsible for walking in a good way that honours that spirit name.

Host(s): Dan Smoke

DAN SMOKE: Aanii! Boozhoo! Koolamalsi! Waciye. Tunngasugitsi. Shekoli! And greetings, you're listening to Smoke Signals First Nations Radio, here at CHRW 94.7, radio with relevance just west of the dial, and that's on your FM dial. My name is Dan Smoke, Asayenes, of the **Seneca Nation**. And I come from the **Killdeer Clan**, that is my family unit. I always acknowledge that because I was asked an interesting question from our commentary that we do for the new PL. They wanted to know why I always sign off with Dan Smoke, Asayenes. And I'd just like to offer a little explanation about that. Asayenes is my spirit name. It's a name that was given to me in the **Onondaga Longhouse** on the **Six Nations** reserve, which is our place of worship, our place of faith, where we conduct our ceremonies and where we also make our...that's where our political governance takes place. And the two look after each other; the governance looks after the ceremonies and the ceremonies look after the governance. So, when the newborns come into being to begin their Earth journey, we give them a name. It's usually a name that comes from one of their ancestors, one of their ancestral relatives. And it's a name that is one of a person who has walked in a good way, and we usually honour the newborn by bequeathing to him a name that is very honourable. And so, in this regard, we want to honour this newborn because we recognize them as being gifts of creation, gifts from the spirit world.

Gifts that come to us as a miracle, the miracle of life. So, we want to acknowledge that, and we give them this name in our naming ceremony, which usually takes place at the middle of winter, the Midwinter Ceremony, and during the Green Corn Festival. So it is at this time that the names are given out, and it is at this time that we announce their name to the Four Directions, to all the families that are assembled there, to all the community members and this name, this person will carry this name in a good way. And it's up to the community, it's up to their family members to make sure this person is walking in a good way and looks after that name in a good way. So, my name came from a great-great-uncle who was a member of the Seneca Nation, and he was a leader in our community. He was one of the, what we call [to be transcribed]. [To be transcribed] is like a Chief. Sachem. And this [to be transcribed] was a man who walked in a good way, helped many people, and he also was very much educated in the knowledge of the Indigenous knowledge systems. And he was the one who could help people with various herbal medicines, as well. So, he had a great gift that the Creator blessed him with. And so, when I was given that name, I didn't know anything about how important the names are, and I didn't know anything about how important it is to walk in the footsteps of our ancestors.

I mean, to me, when I was growing up, I grew up in a largely non-Native agricultural community outside of the Six Nations reserve in a place called Onondaga, outside of Brantford, Ontario. And there, I always felt like I never fit in, I had always felt like I did not belong, and yet, even though I made friends, I still tried to be like my non-Native neighbours. I tried to be like a white man. And so, I did not appreciate some of my cultural understandings and teachings that I was being given by my grandparents, by my mother, my father, and so, as a result I never had any

relationship with my name. It did not mean anything to me. To me, it was just like a stage pseudonym or something. But growing up, I started to realize that my cultural background was a lot of greatness associated with it, and I soon began to learn some of the teachings of our faith, some of the teachings of our longhouse traditions really were something to behold when they were practiced in a good way. And I began this journey of learning, and understanding, and gathering the knowledge and wisdom from my Elders about our culture. And as I began this journey, I started to soon realize, you know, just how much pride there was to having a name.

Just how much pride there was to having a relationship with a name and your relatives, with nature, with the Creator, and all that really began to show me a new way of looking at this world, and I began to enter into this realm of reality with a greater understanding of our culture, of the teachings of our culture, and some of the wisdom that I learned, I soon absorbed from my Elders. And so, the name started to take on an important significance in my life because I started to find out a little more information about who this person was, what his role in the community was, how he walked, how he was as a family member. I started to be very proud of this name. And I remember one of my teachers just outside of London here, the **Oneida Onyota'a:ka** Oneida settlement, just outside of London, about 25 minutes, his name is **Bruce Elijah**. He was telling me that the names are very important to our people, and the name that you're given, you have a responsibility to that name. And that name is a gift to you so that you will walk, your footsteps will take you and guide you to the greatness of that name. And so, if you have been given a great person, a great leader's name, a person who has served his community well, served his people well, dedicated his interests to his people, then you will aspire to that. You will not even know that you're going in that direction.

This soon became apparent to me as I began to understand more and more about our cultural teachings, and I began to realize that yes, my great-great-uncle's name meant that in the Seneca Nation, meant like *shooting star in flight*. And so, it's like the shooting star is in flight. And the shooting star is a great event. It's a beautiful event to witness, and usually people associate it with asking for a wish and hopefully getting their wish when they see a shooting star. But to me, it just meant that he was named after a colossal event that takes place in the sky world amongst our relatives up there in the star nation who tell us when it is time for us to do our ceremonies. And so, I realized how important that name was. And so, I started to use it. I guess I started using it about 11 years ago, and I started to be proud of it. And I always acknowledge my name when I speak in public, or when I'm asked to share, because I found out that the world of spirit around me, the relatives all around me, the rocks, the trees, the flowers, the plants, the medicines, they all have spirit, and I'm related to that spirit. They know me as Asayenes. They don't know me as Dan Smoke.

So, I always acknowledge who I am to them, so that they know who I am, they know who is talking, because they understand language. They understand our language, as I try to understand theirs. And so, now, I'm very proud of that fact that when people ask, I have the opportunity to educate them about the importance of our names. And I'm sure that this is not just something that the **Haudenosaunee** people do, that's the people of the longhouse, of which I am a member. I'm sure that all the cultures of the world all have that same understanding and that same belief, that same association with their name. Their name means something. Often, when someone tells me, introduces me, introduces themselves to me, I ask them, "what does that name mean?" Because, you know, in their language it means something, and it means something to them. And that's important, that's important for me to know so that I know who they are when they tell me their name. And that doesn't matter what culture they come from, what cultural background they come from. So, when I give them my name, they know who I am,

they understand where I'm coming from. So, I just wanted to explain that. That's a little bit of education.

DS: And right now, we're going to play some music. We're going to listen to **Robert Mirabal**, who has a new CD out that's just a fantastic CD. And we're going to listen to **Pura Fé**. Pura Fé is a **Tuscarora** songstress, who is very, very gifted. She has a very beautiful voice. Okay, first we're going to listen to **Robert Mirabal** from his ***Music from a Painted Cave*** CD. This is going to be "**Skinwalker's Moon**." And then, we're going to listen to **Pura Fé**, from her ***Caution to the Wind*** CD. This is "**Progress**," here on Smoke Signals.