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Segment 3
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*Dan Smoke reflects on an episode of **Spirits of the Present** by Tantoo Cardinal, the revival of Native traditions as a form of healing and emphasizes the importance of seventh generation thinking.*

Host(s): Dan Smoke

SPEAKER (unknown): You're listening to CHRW Radio Western 94.7 FM, changing the face of radio.

DAN SMOKE: That was ***Spirits of the Present***, **Tantoo Cardinal**, and in this particular episode, this instalment was on the stereotypes of Native People and the global fascination with that. And I think it touched in there a little bit about how this came to be. We have talked about it on numerous occasions here at Smoke Signals, most recently when we were talking about the search for lessons in Indian country because over the course of the past two or three generations, a lot of our ways, a lot of our traditions have had to go underground as a result of the church, as a result of a policy of assimilation and genocide, as result of the education system. And because all these forces were at work and at play in Indian country, Native people weren't allowed to practice their culture; they weren't allowed to participate in ceremonies. They weren't allowed to speak their language. And because this happened, this low self-esteem that results from this kind of relationship with the dominant society, and with this program of assimilation by the **Department of Indian Affairs** up here in **Canada**, and the **Bureau of Indian Affairs** down in the **United States**, the resulting low self-esteem gets passed on from generation to generation. And because we became institutionalized in the **Residential School System**, we were never really encouraged on how to make decisions for ourselves; how to make decisions for our future generations. And because of all this resulting negative influence, Native people, only in the past, I would say, 20 to 25 years, have started to pick up their sacred items. They've started to pick up their language. They've started to revive the ceremonies.

Today, we can see the **Sun Dance** being performed out in the west. We see it brought out here to this area of **Ontario**, and it's being done right here at **Manitoulin Island**, up in the **Sudbury** area. And we're also seeing a revival of the **potlach ceremony**. So this has all come about as a result of the revival of traditions bringing about healing. And as Native people are healing, they're starting to recognize that we are here because our ancestors prayed for us; they prayed for a world where the earth, the water, the fire, the land, and the air are all going to be life forces that we have to acknowledge gratitude to the creator for. And so, you know, because we are reviving the ceremonies in which we are able to do that, we must in return pray for the next future seven generations so that here there will be a place where there is clean air, there is clean earth, there is clean water, and that the life force of the sun is not cancerous the way that these life-giving forces are harmful to us today, because that's one of the precepts of a lot of the **Confederacy laws** that a lot of the nations on **Turtle Island** subscribe to.

We see it here in **Iroquois Confederacy**; one of the basic laws is that if you poison your air, you poison your water, you're going to poison yourself. Because what you do – in **Christian** thought, they say, what you do to the least of your brothers, you do to me. And in the **Three**

Fires Confederacy, this is also being followed. It's now time for this revival of healing to take place so that we can heal our **Earth Mother**. Our **Elder Art Solomon** says, "if we have the power to kill our **Mother Earth**, to destroy her, then we also have the power to heal her." And so, this cultural genocide that has taken place in the past couple generations has resulted in a revival of renewal for our brothers and sisters who have been, at one time, scattered, and who are now proud again, and who are starting to come to terms with what it is to be Indian. We talked a little bit on the show about this one story that we read, it was entitled ***The Search for Lessons***, and it was written by **José Barreiro**, from **Cornell University**. He talked a little bit about **Carlos Castaneda**, he talked a little bit about **Lynn Andrews**, and you just heard excerpts of what a lot of people, well, what the one reporter was talking in regards to Carlos Castaneda. Like, I myself even read Carlos Castaneda and became fascinated by it. I thought that this **Yaqui Indian Don Juan** would someday appear in my life and I would be magically transformed into a person of power. That was my thinking, that all this stuff, that all these kinds of things were achievable instantly. But now, I have been on this road for some years and I'm realizing that I have the rest of my life to change, and along that walk, I'm going to be meeting up with brothers and sisters who are also involved in the same healing work, involved in righting the injustices of the past, talking and speaking from our hearts in the spirits of our ancestors, so that there is a place for our future generations, so that we educate and teach people who want to learn how to love our Mother Earth back to health so that we do have a place for all of our future generations, not just Native.

I think that this spirit of brotherhood and peace, once that fire becomes lit, when we do go and follow the understanding and the relationship that Native people have with our Earth Mother, then we will see a return to the practices that were strictly and totally in harmony and peace with all creation; acknowledging gratitude in ceremonies; doing everything according to the moon, the stars, the sun, the cycles of all **creation**. We wanted to just share a little bit about this particular instalment of *Spirits of the Present* because I think it's very timely, it needs to be said because we are – I am – continually faced with people who want to know more and want to become educated more about Native people, yet they still think that our ceremonies and the things that we hold very sacred can be commercialized, or that they are like hobbies. We have to change that thinking, we have to tell them that this is our way, this is a way of life that has transcended thousands of years, and we are visitors here, we are only just short-term visitors here on this Earth walk. While we're here, we do the best that we can in trying to live in peace and harmony with all creation. I know when I talked with the **Grand Chief of the Iroquois Confederacy** – his name is **Leon Shenandoah**, he goes by the title of **Tadodaho** – down in **Onondaga Reservation** near **Syracuse**, he said that there will come a time when what the United States and Canada are doing, they're trying to put down the Native people, and they're trying to culturally assimilate Native people, and all this energy that they spend in trying to destroy Native people, they're going to find out that it's Native people who have the answers on how we can live, how we can heal our Earth Mother. By the time they realize that it may be too late.

So, all of our time and energies now are spent in thinking in the spirits of our ancestors on how we can best make sure, and ensure, that there is creation here seven generations from now. Again, that's seven generations from now of all nations, that's just not Native people. We're all in this together, and we all have to coexist. Turtle Island, there's enough here for everybody, the

Creator ensured that – that’s why the trees, and the wind, and the rocks all still continue to this day to look after us and root for us. We’d just like to share that with our listeners here.

DS: We’re going to read a couple of opinions from different people, spokespersons, in Indian country after this break. The music we’ve selected to take us up to the hour is from **Kashtin**, and the song we’ve chosen is entitled “**Nikanish**” from the album *Innu*.