

Volume I - Foundation Document for

Honoring Tribal Legacies: An Epic Journey of Healing



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Front Cover art: “Missouri River,” National Park Service, Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Suggested Citation: CHiXapkaid, Inglebret, E., & Wood, S. (Eds.). (2014).

Volume I – Foundation Document for Honoring Tribal Legacies: An Epic Journey of Healing. Eugene, Ore., and Omaha, Neb.: University of Oregon and National Park Service, 2014.



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COMING FULL CIRCLE



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We come full circle in Volume I when saying that a more balanced kind of scholarship has received a considerable boost from the National Park Service (NPS) in recent years. NPS employees and their partners led the way in helping formulate how the Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition would be commemorated. They called their observation the Corps of Discovery II: 200 Years to the Future, which acknowledged the depth of history but also gave it a forward-looking thrust. A historic agreement forged with Tribes along the Trail led to the inclusion of an activity called the “Tent of Many Voices” in the Bicentennial activities, an effort to document Indigenous oral histories and incorporate Native perspectives on the significance of Lewis and Clark’s expedition from the perspective of Tribal legacies. As a result, hundreds of Native people shared their histories, music, dances, games, and other cultural practices before live audiences. Video recordings of Tribal participants in these observations represent a vast and largely untapped resource that is available on the Lewis and Clark Tribal Legacy Project website (<http://lc-triballegacy.org/>).

Inside the “Tent of Many Voices” presenters told stories passed down for generations by their Ancestors. These stories did not necessarily match the accounts in the journals of Lewis and Clark. They articulated views seldom expressed in traditional American history texts. They revealed loss and tragedy, humor, and a sincere hope for the future of the generations to come. This was beautifully articulated by a Nez Perce elder, Otis Halfmoon, who spoke in the Tent of Many Voices:

You’re gonna hear the word reconciliation . . . a good word . . . that really means . . . the books are balanced. . . . And for too many Tribal people, not only the Nez Perce but too many Indian people, the books will never be balanced. . . . And that’s the truth of how the Tribes look upon it. And so I introduce another word, to heal. . . . We can heal. This is our community. This is our homeland, and we all live here together. Maybe this is what we can get out of some of this Lewis & Clark bicentennial.

Cultural bridging—finding a common ground for discussing the significance of the 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark’s expedition—included favoring terms such as “observation” or “commemoration” over a “celebration.” Healing and looking forward were recurring approaches, too. The records of these discussions provide rich material for thoughtful humanities conversations that will hold the interest and provide an intellectual challenge for descendants of Native Americans and Euro-Americans (or other immigrants and their descendants) alike.

A traditional emphasis on the cataclysmic destruction of Tribal communities is giving way to a growing recognition of Indigenous contributions, wisdom, cultural survival, and adaptation—in short, of cultural florescence.

- ✚ How did Native peoples respond to the survey party?
- ✚ How did its incursion compare to what had come before?
- ✚ How did they absorb these experiences into their realities?
- ✚ How did they contribute to shaping the new communities that would emerge?

Such questions, in turn, give way to an acknowledgement of histories unheard. This is happening not because of government attempts at social engineering or politicized systems, but rather because educators will accept the learning opportunity to find justifiable equivalents to Indigenous stories of adventure, discovery, and social interactions that truly represent the vast complexity of present and future American society.

When discussing complicated conversations, Slattery (2013) explains that successful interpretations can result in healing by uncovering the salient unconscious factors in a place where the individual experiences his or her temporal reality, especially when embracing the subjectivity of place. Fertile humanities issues are embedded in the ethics of the fur trade, with its pioneering spirit but lack of attention to sustainability, or in evangelization and mission-building activities, with their lofty ideals but low regard for existing faiths and practices. There is much to learn about the intergenerational outcomes of reservation formation and life that may have professed the goals of preservation and autonomy, but which resulted in dislocation and changing ways of supporting families or educating children.

The multi-layered motivations of treaties and federal policies, which may have held a promise of even-handedness but often resulted in reduced sovereignty, also now reveal teachings associated with how humans can deceive but how deception is short-lived when compared to authenticity and integrity. Epidemic management (with demographic disasters challenging cultural preservation), and the increasing presence of hunters, miners, homesteaders, and railroad builders (impacting the economy and human interactions in both positive and negative ways) provide equally telling lessons to be learned in terms of the consequences of how we treat each other and the environment. We hope that these and other topics, explored from multiple perspectives, will occupy many ensuing discussions raised by *Honoring Tribal Legacies: An Epic Journey of Healing* and the resources made available at HonoringTribalLegacies.com

Reference

Slattery, P. (2013). *Curriculum development in the postmodern era: Teaching and learning in an age of accountability* (3rd edit.). New York: Routledge/Taylor and Francis.



Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
IL, MO, KS, NE, IA, SD, ND, MT, ID, WA, OR

The purpose . . . is to offer America and our children an opportunity to learn who they are—an opportunity to learn about the Lewis & Clark Trail and the people of the Lewis & Clark Trail. And when I say that, I mean that the people who were there when Lewis & Clark went through or whose territory Lewis & Clark went through. We try to look at . . . [it] in at least four different elements: what life was like before Lewis & Clark, what happened during the Lewis & Clark journey, what happened during the last two hundred years, and finally, and I think one of the most important aspects, is what we are going to do in the future. I grew up in a tradition of the Mandans and Hidatsas on my reservation in North Dakota listening to the elders, listening to the people tell their stories. We offer this opportunity today for you to listen and to learn.

—Gerard Baker (Mandan and Hidatsa)



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