

## Episode 1 - Text 6

### **For Us, This is Not a Celebration**

by Roberta Conner (2003)

For us, this is not a celebration. It is an observance or commemoration. We want both sides of the story told – the Army Expedition’s and our own – and we want to tell our own story. We want to protect resources on the National Lewis and Clark Trail including sacred sites. We want to help create economic opportunities for our people. We want the nation to realize and recognize tribal contributions to this great country including aid given the Corps of Discovery. We want the U.S. government to do what it has promised. And, above all, we want to protect the gifts the Creator gave us.

The journal entries by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, as well as those by the other writers of the Expedition, tell us what they observed, what they perceived, and what they believed. They cannot reflect the impressions of the only other participants in this significant time in history – the indigenous peoples. As visitors, they attempt to put the goings-on in context but they were clearly at a disadvantage in language and knowledge of the terrain. As deft as Clark was at measuring and as astute as Lewis was in observation and dialects, they were still left to conjecture frequently.

Against pretty overwhelming odds, many indigenous groups have survived the past 200 years. Many also perished. Languages of our ancestors are no longer spoken in many Native communities. Efforts to document and preserve dialects, languages and songs are dangerously close to language loss.

In our region, we have been welcoming travelers for a couple of centuries. We are friendly, but please be mindful this is the place the Creator gave us. It is our only home. We may reside elsewhere temporarily but this is the only place we’ll ever be from – it is part of us and we part of it.

Source: Roberta Conner. (2003). For Us, This is Not a Celebration. *The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial: Many Voices – One Journey – Join Us, People, Land, and Water Special Issue*, p. 19.

#### About the Author

Roberta Conner is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Director of the Tamástlikt Cultural Institute. This institute is dedicated to accurate presentation of the culture and history of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla Tribes. Ms. Conner was a member of the Council of Tribal Advisors (COTA) for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. To hear her speak about her tribal homelands go to [www.trailtribes.org/umatilla/homelands.htm](http://www.trailtribes.org/umatilla/homelands.htm). To hear her speak about the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial go to [www.lc-triballegacy.org](http://www.lc-triballegacy.org) and search for her name. Ms. Conner also compares and contrasts entries in the journals of Lewis and Clark with tribal perspectives in the book, *Lewis and Clark through Indian Eyes: Nine Indian Writers on the Legacy of the Expedition*, edited by Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. and published by Vintage Books in 2006.