

“Healing the Intergenerational Impact of Sexual Abuse”
First International Indigenous Sexual Abuse Conference

Keynote Address by Brother Phil Lane Jr.

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Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

My Very Beloved Relatives,

With a grateful heart, I want to extend a warm, respectful, and loving greeting to each of you who have gathered here from the Four Directions to further unite, deepen, expand, and empower the healing and transformation process of our Indigenous peoples and communities. It is a great honor and inspiration to be with you as we fulfill the sacred prophecies of the wise visionaries and spiritual leaders of all our tribes and nations. These ancient prophecies promised that after a long, difficult, and painful wintertime, of 500 years, our Indigenous peoples would fully arise from the ashes of our suffering and play a great role in the spiritual transformation of the entire human family.

Some years ago, a beloved tribal grandmother asked me a deep and soul-searching question. “Grandson,” she asked me, “what is the most sacred, the most powerful, the holiest of all ceremonies?” With some pride, I began to recount some of the traditional tribal ceremonies that I had participated in over the years. After I was finished describing the Sun Dance, the Sweat Lodge, Vision Questing, and other ceremonies I had participated in, she said, “Grandson, those are all very sacred, powerful, and holy ceremonies, but the most sacred, the most powerful, the holiest of all ceremonies is the birth of a child.” Then, she looked very, very deeply into my eyes and soul and said, “Then who are you?” This beloved grandmother strongly reminded me that this very holy and intimate

ceremony and creative power that ignites human life is equally sacred and must be respected at all times.

My beloved relatives, it is very clear – from the widespread sexual abuse including the increasing sexual abuse of children, incest, pornography, 2rape, child and adult prostitution, HIV/AIDS, and gang rape found within our communities – that when this creative power and sacred expression of life is abused, in any manner, the very foundation of ourselves and our communities is damaged and destroyed, sometimes for generations.

Through this heartbreaking abuse our trust, faith, and belief in ourselves, our loved ones, our communities, and in life, itself, is broken. Our innermost purity, innocence, and unconditional love are brutally and shamefully betrayed and violated. We become our own abusers and the abusers of others. We become isolated and alone. We are filled with fear and shame. We no longer care if we live or die.

Some of us even chose suicide rather than live any longer in the intense and overwhelming pain and suffering that seems to have no end. This is what has happened to many of us gathered here today, our loved ones, and countless others who feel hopeless, alone, and in deep pain and suffering throughout our sacred lands.

With great respect and great honor for the pain and suffering of your own lives and the lives of your loved ones and your great love, courage, and determination, for coming here and addressing the many forms of sexual abuse that are destroying the Sacred Heart of our communities, I have been praying and reflecting for some months on what I could share with you about the realities and healing of sexual abuse that would support and empower our healing journey.



Do I share with you my own great heartfelt belief in the beauty, healing, and unifying power of our cultures, spiritual traditions, sacred prophecies, the sacredness of who we are as human beings and the great healing power of this spiritual understanding? Do I share an overview of the growing challenges of sexual abuse in our communities and steps on our healing journey we can take to completely transform this profound sickness into healthy, prosperous, and unified human beings and communities? Or do I tell you of my own personal experience of sexual abuse over the generations and how facing, confronting, and healing this abuse has helped me to become a more loving, understanding, and forgiving human being?

One evening as I prayed about what I should share with you, it became very clear to me that I needed to follow the healing path, walk my talk, and share some of the details of my own personal experience of the impact of sexual abuse over the years, as well as, some of the collective steps we can take together, in unity, to heal ourselves and our communities. For a fundamental key to healing and transforming sexual abuse is being completely open, truthful, and honest about our own experience, no matter how painful and fearful this disclosure may be. As a wise elder once told me, "If we can feel the pain and shame we can heal it, if we can talk and share about it we can understand and transform it."

Both my parents attended residential schools. As a result of their abusive experiences in residential schools and the world they grew up in, I also experienced physical and emotional abuse growing up as a child. By the time I was twelve I had become so physically and emotionally tough that when I cut the meaty part of my hand almost to the bone with an ax, I felt no pain. I was so proud of myself for being able to go beyond the pain that I



walked up to my father and said with big a smile, “I cut myself.” When the doctor sewed me up, I refused to take anything for pain so I could show my father how tough I had become. Because of their own experiences and teachings growing up, my parents never discussed anything sexual with me or my sister. When I asked my parents where a baby came from it took months for them to give me some sort of vague answer.

At 12, with no real understanding of sexuality, an older boy from the European tribes, who I deeply trusted and admired, got me drunk for the first time and sexually abused me. Afterward, I became so angry, drunk, and sick that I tore up the basement he abused me in, vomited everywhere and eventually passed out. (I realize now that, in a way, this was my first act of protesting and showing resistance against sexual abuse.) The next day the older boy who I loved and admired so very much completely rejected me. This experience of sexual abuse at the beginning of my life as a young man hurt me very, very deeply.

As I understood more and more the reality of what had happened to me, combined with intergenerational trauma and the impact of the sick, racist materialistic world that surrounds us, my shame, fear, self-hatred, rage, and anger grew stronger and stronger. As a young man, I abused myself with alcohol and drugs. I would strike out with violence if I felt the slightest disrespect. One time I beat up a 6’5” United States Marine, who had just returned from the Vietnam War, so badly, that they had to remove his eye. Since everyone present witnessed that he started the fight I was exonerated of any responsibility for the result of my actions.

I had abusive and unhealthy relationships with women. Sometimes I didn’t care if I lived or died. Because I felt so ashamed, fearful, unworthy, and



untrusting, I was unable to have a trusting, honest, warm, and loving relationship with others. I couldn't talk to anyone about any of my feelings.

The only thing that saved me from a painful, premature death was the spiritual and cultural teachings, prophecies, and stories of the greatness of our Indigenous peoples that were shared with me by my beloved parents, elders, extended family, and loved ones, as well as learning about the spiritual teachings and prophecies of the great Spiritual Teachers who have always guided the human family.

Although our family was impacted by intergenerational trauma in some parts of our life, I was very, very fortunate never to hear my father raise his voice to my mother, hit her, or even swear in her presence. I also have always known deep in my heart that my parents have always loved my sister and me more than life itself.

Through these spiritual influences, in 1967 in the darkest heart of my suffering, I had a spiritual experience that inspired and empowered me to free myself from my self-destructive addictions and to do all I could to serve the people and the Creator. During this time of spiritual renewal, I met a beautiful and deeply spiritual woman who I believed I would be with forever. We had a beautiful wedding and for two years our life together was filled with great spiritual love, unity, growth, and beauty.

In our mutual desire to be of service to Indigenous Peoples and the Human Family, we left our jobs, our home, and all our possessions and traveled to Bolivia. We found Bolivia to be a sacred land filled with millions of Indigenous relatives of great spiritual strength, understanding, and wisdom. In a way, it was like going back in history when our own Indigenous



peoples of North America retained our spiritual purity, innocence, and unified strength. I never wanted to leave, but the Creator had another plan.

Every morning, I would pray and meditate for an hour. Understanding that forgiveness was a primary key to my healing, I began to pray fervently to the Creator to learn to be forgiving. After two months of praying with all my heart to learn to be forgiving, my beloved wife was brutally raped by the drunken son of a wealthy Bolivian family known for their long-time brutality and abuse of Indigenous Peoples. Even though I confronted him shortly after the rape and he was arrested, because of the wealth and power of his family and the corrupt justice system, he was eventually set free.

It was through this experience I realized that along with our own hurt, pain, and rage, we also carry the hurt, pain, and rage of our ancestors. For when this happened it seemed like the unresolved hurt, pain, and rage of a 1000 generations come boiling up inside me. My faith in the Creator was shattered. I spoke to the Creator with great anger and bitterness.

“I tried with all my heart to serve the people and fulfill your sacred teachings! How could you allow my beloved wife to be brutally raped? What did she do to deserve this brutal attack on her sacredness as a woman and a human being?”

In the end, our relationship was destroyed by this brutal act of rape and all the pain and hurt that comes with such an experience.

To all my beloved relatives here today that have also suffered from rape and other abuse, I want you to know, from the bottom of my heart, that I stand with you and will support you, in all your efforts for justice and healing. Together, through our unified prayers and the power and strength



of our Creator, we will live to see the day, either in this world or the world to come, when rape and other forms of abuse will be completely eliminated from our sacred lands forever.

It was through this very painful and heartbreaking experience of rape and other abuse I have faced in my life that the Creator taught me some very important spiritual principles.

Be careful what you pray for, the Creator will always answer your prayers. Sometimes the answer will come in ways we don't expect, but the Creator will never give us a test we can't pass, as long as we keep praying and remain faithful.

We cannot learn to be a truly forgiving human being unless we are treated with great injustice and with hurtful actions we don't deserve. The only one who can teach the person with the whip what true love and forgiveness is about is the person being whipped.

When we ask the Creator for strength, we will receive tests and difficulties to make us strong. When we ask for wisdom, the Creator will give us many problems to solve. When we ask for great courage, the Creator will give us heroic obstacles to overcome.

If it were not for tests, how would the courageous be distinguished from the cowardly? Without tests, how would the precious diamond be distinguished from the worthless pebble? For we can not be a good leader of warriors unless we have been in front of the fiercest battles and received the deepest wounds.



And, finally, as our wise spiritual leaders have always taught us, “Do you think you can say you believe in the Creator and will not be tested? For when the cry of truth is raised, so is the cry of denial!”

With these and other spiritual understandings and practices to support me, I have had the opportunity to work on the healing of many forms of abuse, both personally and with the thousands of our Indigenous peoples that I have had the honor to listen to and heal with over the past thirty-five years.

The most difficult challenges of sexual abuse that I have ever had to confront and deal with personally, was the sexual abuse of my nine-year-old daughter and the sexual assault of a very dear sister. The man who sexually assaulted my sister, I had previously helped to get sober and on his healing journey working with young people. I loved him like a son. He called my parents, grandfather, and grandmother, the sister he sexually assaulted, his aunt and me his uncle. The man who sexually abused my daughter was the husband of a dear friend and spiritual sister who I worked with at the University of Lethbridge.

What was most hurtful about both these experiences, as I’m sure many of you fully understand, was that the sexual abuse was done by Aboriginal relatives that I deeply loved and trusted and who claimed to believe in and practice our spiritual and cultural traditions.

I found that this profound betrayal of love and trust, followed by a complete denial of what they had done, ignited a rage and a desire for revenge so deep within me, that without our sacred spiritual teachings, healing ceremonies, and the heartfelt counsel of my father and other, wise elders, I could have very easily savagely killed both these people and the other abusers who supported them in their lies and deceit.



When these devastating incidents occurred I vowed to the Creator that I would do everything within my power, no matter how long it took or what attacks, however vicious, were directed at me, to ensure that my beloved daughter and sister got the justice and healing they deserved. I also vowed I would do everything within my power to confront, prevent, and heal sexual abuse for the rest of my life, forever.

Both abusers were given the full opportunity to avoid legal action and travel the healing path, including the spiritual support of respected elders and a restorative justice process. Not only did they completely deny and lie about what they had done, but they did everything within their power to destroy the credibility and lives of my beloved daughter, sister, myself, and anyone else who dared to support us.

Both of these men were friends and joined forces in their efforts. In the end, after seven years of pursuing justice and healing, the man who sexually assaulted my sister, who has since become a comedian, finally pleaded guilty to the sexual assault in a New Brunswick court. Although he received a conditional sentence from the court, he never apologized for his actions or did anything to make amends. The man who sexually abused my daughter eventually fled Canada and returned to the United States.

Even though these issues have not been completely resolved, I have complete faith that the Creator's Divine Justice will eventually deal with both of these men and those that supported them in their abuse, lies, and deceit, in either this world or the world to come. As a wise elder once told me, "the Grinding Wheel of the Creator's Justice grinds slowly, but very, very exceedingly fine."



At the same time, I know that our Beloved Creator is the ever-forgiving and no matter what abuse we have done in our life, if we are sincere in our prayers and desire for forgiveness and we try the best we can to make amends to those we have abused, the Creator will always forgive us.

It was during this very difficult process of trying to find healing and justice that I discovered, just as we are coming together at this conference for strength, healing, mutual support, and networking, there are also informal networks of abusers who support one another's abusive behaviors across our sacred lands.

These abuser's, including some of our own political and spiritual leaders, are so spiritual sick that they will do anything within their power and authority, no matter how dishonest, unjust, or damaging to others, to try to cover up their abusive behaviors and the abusive behaviors of their friends and relatives and stop any efforts toward healing and reconciliation.

I have found that the large majority of this abusive behavior and denial is a direct result of the intergenerational impact of residential schools and the reality that along with abusers in authority, there were also older and stronger children, who were abused, that were allowed or encouraged to physically and sexually abuse younger or physically weaker students. This type of abuse happened with both girls and boys.

In one related case, on the Blood Reserve, the high school gymnasium is still named after the very man who sexually abused, sometimes brutally, boys under his care at the St. Mary's Residential School. You can just imagine the feelings of hurt, betrayal, and injustice that those who were abused by this man and those who witnessed or know about this abuse experience every time they see or think about this gymnasium. Some of the



boys he abused, and who then brutally abused other boys, have continued in their abusive patterns, in one form or another, to this very day.

In fact, some of these men helped and supported the lies, deceit, and attacks of the men who sexually abused my sister and daughter, even though my daughter is a member of the Blood Tribe. In fact, one of the Blood Sun Dance Leaders who I went to for spiritual assistance, turned around and made the abuser of my daughter one of his Sun Dance leaders. I have also found very similar scenarios, realities, and obstacles to the healing of our Indigenous people throughout Canada and beyond.

On the other hand, when we look around this room at the heartfelt dedication and commitment, of each one of you to ending and healing sexual abuse and the many other people and communities, across Canada who is, also, dedicated to the healing of themselves and our communities, there is absolutely no question, that through our spiritual unity and the Creator's Love and Grace, we will be able to eliminate all forms of abuse across our sacred lands. In this healing journey, we will rebuild our Nations, even stronger than before, as prophesized by the wise visionaries and spiritual leaders of all our tribes and nations.

There are four very important actions that I would like to share with you for your consideration, that we need to take together, in complete unity, at this stage of our healing journey. These actions make the healing and rebuilding of ourselves, our communities, and our nations a full reality. They are justice, continued support, healing and restoration, and love and appreciation.

First, I would ask again from the bottom of my heart and soul, as I stated at the first National Residential School Conference in February, 2001, here in



Edmonton, that we as individuals, First Nations, Metis communities, and regional and national organizations, including the Assembly of First Nations, firmly stand together in complete and full unity, and do whatever is necessary to ensure that any Government of Canada or Church action for healing and justice addresses all residential school abuse, including emotional, educational, physical, cultural, and sexual abuse and the loss of our beloved languages.

Only addressing sexual and physical abuse, the current legal position being taken by the Government of Canada and the Churches, will not fully and completely address the healing and justice issues caused by Residential Schools. As well, this very limited and unjust approach will only further hurt and divide us.

All our relatives who suffered abuse in Residential Schools need a full apology and compensation in some respectful manner. This is not a unified position against anyone, including the Government of Canada and the Churches, but the collective vision and strong unified action that is required for the full healing, restoration, health, and prosperity of our Indigenous peoples, and thus all Canadians. For as we know, “The hurt of one, is the hurt of all and the honor and healing of one is the honor and healing of all.” In essence, there can not be full healing and justice without the full recognition and resolution of the injustice and abuse committed against our Indigenous people.

At the same time, it has been my strong experience in my healing work over the decades, that money, by itself, will not stop the pain, abuse, and our addictions. Only healing, reconciliation, and ultimate forgiveness can bring true happiness and spiritual fulfillment. This is why, after some of our



relatives have won their residential school cases and received compensation, they have committed suicide or completely wasted their money away. In the end, they were in greater pain, anguish, and suffering than before. Therefore, we also need to encourage all our relatives who are pursuing legal justice for their abuse to begin and deepen their healing journey before they go to court or participate in any alternative dispute resolution process.

Second, in order to further expand and deepen the needed healing of our Indigenous peoples, each one of us, our communities, and our provincial and national organizations need to do whatever is necessary, to ensure that the Aboriginal Healing Foundation is not terminated and receives, at least, another \$350 million and an expanded mandate to address all forms of residential school abuse, not just physical and sexual abuse.

As well, the \$150 million that was just announced for the restoration of our languages should be channeled through the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and not Heritage, Canada. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation, governed and guided by Aboriginal people, has demonstrated over the past five years that they would do a much better job of administering, organizing, and integrating these needed resources for healing and restoration programs. In this manner, the resources would be able to be integrated into ongoing Residential School Healing Projects in a holistic, unified, and supportive process.

It takes at least five years for any institution that is brand new to fully function, especially with \$350 million to expend fairly, justly, and responsibly. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation most certainly has had growing pains, as is naturally expected, but they have managed to fund almost 1200 healing grants in Aboriginal communities, and have managed



our resources in a very transparent and very fiscally responsible manner. As well, all the work of the Foundation has been governed and guided by Aboriginal people. In fact, in terms of administration and management, program delivery, and fiscal responsibility, the federal and provincial governments have a lot to learn about how to best serve Aboriginal people from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation and other similar institutional developments that are governed and guided by Aboriginal people should be encouraged and further supported, not terminated. To allow the termination of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation at this time in our healing journey, would not only be grossly near-sighted, ill-advised, and unjust, it would be a major setback for the healing of ourselves and our communities. If the Government of Canada and our political leaders are concerned about improving governance and rebuilding our nations, then much, much more not less funding needs to be directed towards healing and capacity building.

Increasing resources to support the healing and development of our Indigenous peoples will accomplish far more than wasting resources in political battles over a foreign political system that does not serve us. Only when each of us, our families, and our communities are healed from the inside out, will we be able to manifest good governance, true participatory democracy, and nation-building. With this inner unity we will be able, as spiritually and physically strong and healthy people, to completely transform the materialistic systems that surround us into systems of governance and programming that are culturally and spiritually harmonious.

Third, utilizing the sexual abuse healing models developed by Indigenous communities, like Alkali Lake, British Columbia, and Hollow Water,



Manitoba, we need to develop as soon as a possible formal healing and restorative justice processes in each of our communities to assist both those relatives who were sexually abused and those that did the abusing toward healing, reconciliation, justice, and ultimate forgiveness. If an abuser is willing to follow the path of healing and restorative justice, we should give them all the love, forgiveness, compassion, and support we can. If they refuse to take the healing path, then we need to pursue justice through every legal means at our disposal.

When our tribes and nations were still spiritually and socially strong and fully understood the devastating impact of sexual and physical abuse, abusers of women and children were dealt with very severely, including castration, death, or banishment. As an example, my great-great grandfather, Owl Man, was told in a great vision that he would kill four men justifiably in his role as Head Chief and Leader of the Holy Man's Society of the White Swan Dakotas. Two of the men he killed were husbands who abused their wives, who were Owl Man's sister and daughter. Part of the fulfillment of this vision is described in *Singing for a Spirit* written by my uncle, Vine Deloria Jr.

Owl Man was informed that his son-in-law had abused his daughter again. Without saying a word he picked up his shotgun, mounted his horse and rode to his son-in-law's teepee. He walked inside and said to his son-in-law, "I warned you three times not to abuse my daughter and now I am going to kill you." With that Owl Man pulled the trigger of his shotgun and dispatched his son-in-law to the spiritual world.

A similar event occurred with a brother-in-law who abused his sister. After both killings, as was his responsibility as a hereditary chief and spiritual leader, he went to a hill overlooking his camp. As was tribal protocol, Owl



Man waited there all night, unarmed, for anyone who believed that he had killed the men unjustly. On both occasions Owl Man returned to his relatives at sunrise, with sorrow but thanksgiving to the Creator, that he had protected his relatives, for a little longer, from the great spiritual sickness foretold in his great vision, that would almost overwhelm our Indigenous people until the coming of the Fourth Generation.

One way or the other, for the sake of ourselves, our beloved children and our future generations, sexual abuse in all its forms need to be faced, confronted, healed, forgiven if possible, and completely eliminated from our Sacred Lands forever.

Fourth, we need to take time, each and everyday to deeply love and appreciate our own self and loved ones and give our heartfelt love and thanksgiving to the Creator of All Good Things for the great blessing of being on our healing journey, supported by the Creator's Divine promise and spiritual assurance that we will ultimately have complete victory over all forms of abuse.

In conclusion, so we can again remember one of our primary purposes for our being here together, our very beloved children and grandchildren, I want to read a letter to you written by a little girl of 11 years to the man who sexually abused her. This letter has given me great strength, encouragement, and inspiration over the years when I felt like giving up in my efforts to address and heal sexual abuse. It was written by my beloved daughter, who has given me her permission to share it with you.

I share this letter with the deep and heartfelt prayer that all of us and our loved ones will be given the love, courage, strength, and understanding by our Beloved Creator to stand up together and ensure that every one of our



children who was abused, in any manner, has the full support they need from each of us to break the silence and begin their journey to full and complete healing and that we will live to see the day when our children will never be abused again in any manner.

Hereditary Chief Phil Lane Jr.

Founder & CEO of the Four Worlds International Institute

Dear George,

January 31, 1994,

With what you have done to me, I want you to know you have brought shame onto your family and before I die I will prove you have done this to me and other girls. After I had told about this I was ashamed I let you do this to me and was embarrassed but now when I wake up I am understanding you are a sick man and was acting like nothing was wrong.

Now all my friends know and support me. I just want you to know and think every time you are introducing yourself don't forget to say your a child molester, every time you are causing my father problems & are denying everything I want you to feel guilt, and every time you are thinking of molesting another girl my family will be watching your every move. I also want you to know you have perspired my father to stop all sexul abussing.

Deloria Lane Many Grey Horses

P.S (Get a life!!) As you said in a paper you wrote I was abandoned. Well if you go to any of my teachers I have good grades and no sense of



abandonment. Why don't you just worry about your own kid and him being abandoned? Everything I wrote in my last letter to Lenore was true!

Update

Today, Deloria is completing her second year at the University of California, Berkeley. Along with being a very active member of the Native American Student Association and a member of the cross country and track teams, Deloria has maintained almost a straight 4.0 average including straight "As" during her last semester. This past summer at the North American Indigenous Games, Deloria won gold medals in the 400m, 800m, 1500m, and a silver medal in the 200m. Next weekend we will speak together in Northern California at a healing gathering of Indigenous peoples and share our stories of intergenerational trauma and healing. Deloria has not forgotten her promise to her abuser.

My beloved sister Susan continues her healing work with our Indigenous people and is building a Healing Center. Every time I have the blessing of being with her, she seems to become more and more loving, gentle, and wise. Her heart is thankful, happy, and at peace.

For myself, I am very thankful to the Creator for all that I have experienced in my life. I have a very beautiful and loving wife, a young son of thirty-two months, four wonderful daughters, three very devoted and loving sons-in-law, three grandsons, and another grandchild on the way. My beloved mother and father are strong and healthy and my extended family supports me in all my efforts. Through the love and grace of the Creator, I also have many treasured relatives from the Four Directions.



From the bottom of my heart I give thanksgiving to the Creator of All Good Things for teaching me through all of my life's experiences, that everything that comes into our lives, is a gift from the Creator, for our spiritual growth and perfection, and, as well, for always nourishing, guiding, and protecting my loved ones.

From the bottom of my heart and soul I want to thank each one of you and the organizers of this Historic First National Indigenous Sexual Abuse Conference, the Mikisew Cree First Nation and all those other relatives who have supported this great initiative for your love, patience, kindness, and understanding in allowing me to share some of my own personal healing journeys, as well as, taking the time to respectfully listen to my thoughts, experiences, and perspectives.

May we all leave here in spiritual unity and return home in safety, with a strong, faithful, and happy heart, wise thoughts and a full dedication and commitment to the great healing journey that lies before each of us. In the words, my Dakota elders always use when completing a full statement of their heart and mind to our beloved relatives,

**Shunkmanu He Miye Lo!
Chanupa Sapa He Miye Lo!**

My sacred names are: A Leader of Warriors Who Takes the Enemies Best Horses and a Sacred Black Pipe Born of Thunder, Lightning, and Rain and I Stand Fully Responsible Before the Creator For All My Words and Actions.

[Hereditary Chief Phil Lane Jr.](#)

and the Four Worlds International Institute

