

# Miniwaukan News

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## The Future of Indian Country

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The world our grandchildren will live in is going to be dramatically different than the one in which our current leaders grew to adulthood. It is safe to say that the people now leading our tribal communities, the council representatives, program directors, principals, tribal college presidents and others are in their mid-thirties or older. They remember a world without Internet, satellite TV, Facebook, Bebo and YouTube. Our grandchildren will not. For better or worse, they will be exposed to life off the reservation more and earlier than our own grandparents could have ever imagined. Think of a 13-year-old growing up on your reservation today. What are the odds that child will be more assimilated into white culture than you were?



## **The Future of Indian Country** (continued from page 1)

Technology can be a force for strengthening our culture. This may be hard to believe when your children have the latest rap music as a ringtone on their cell phones, are watching Dora the Explorer on the Nickelodeon and God knows what on YouTube.

Technology *IS* going to shape our future but it can be a positive force in preserving Indian culture and values. Imagine a Dakota speaker in Canada, another in South Dakota and a third in North Dakota being able to communicate over the Internet using Web meeting software.

You might see a Cherokee rain dance at an All Nations Pow-wow but your nephew can see it on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEI-yJQvXaE>

If you haven't seen Native Biz site yet, you should check it out:

<http://www.nativebiz.com/>

While this site started for Native American businesses, it has grown to be a community site. Here you can find a slide show from the Smithsonian of photographs of our ancestors looking at the camera proud and sure of who they were – Seneca, Dakota, Ojibwe. Images of our past are something earlier generations had to search out. Native Biz also has daily news on stories in Indian country. News may have traveled fast on the moccasin telegraph but the Internet is even faster, although sometimes, it seems, no more reliable.

There is our own Tribal Leaders Forum:

<http://www.spiritlakeconsulting.com/tribal/>

Every week, and lately it has been every day, there are new posts on ethical issues. Some have commented how the opinions they read on the forum, telling us how the courses, blogs and opinions of other participants such as yourselves have shaped and changed their behavior.

How can you shape the future? We debated mentioning some examples of the unbelievably hateful videos and sites but decided against giving these any more attention. However, it is important to know that these kind of racist and ignorant views are still out there and it is important for us to continue doing what we can to stomp out these kinds of attitudes. Realize that your children, grandchildren, students and new employees are going to be part of an electronic culture.

**The technology shaping our future can have positive effects on efforts to preserve Native culture or work against us.**

## The Future of Indian Country (continued from page 2)

Talk to them about what they are reading and hearing. There is a lot of false information out there and if you know what they are learning, you can set the record straight.

Speaking of news, there is also the Indian Country Today Web site:

<http://www.indiancountrytoday.com/>

You might remember them as the paper that started out as Lakota Times. Forty years ago, it might not be until the next pow-wow that you heard the news of different reservations. Twenty years ago, you might hear by a long-distance phone call from a relative, or get the Lakota Times in the mail. Your children read it on Indian Country today, their friend's Bebo page or on their cell phones in a text message from their cousin.

Another great news site is Reznets: <http://www.reznetnews.org/>

Reznets news site that has articles by and about Indians and issues that affect us, impact us and are important to us. It's almost like a CNN-type site with a Native American twist.

We might complain from time to time about our tribal governments, but we also need to give them credit for what they do right. Tribal Web sites are a good source for accurate information on history, culture and government of Native nations.

A few examples of such sites are:

<http://www.spiritlakenation.com/>

<http://www.tmbci.net/>

<http://www.navajo.org/>

One thing that Native governments often do *right* is promote the history and culture of their tribes, on the Internet as well as in other ways.

Be part of creating that Native American presence on the Web. Create your own tribal organization Web site.

If that seems too big of a start, feel free to go to the Tribal Leaders Forum or to the Tribal Leaders Wiki and add your own stories, ideas or experiences:

<http://tribal-leaders.wikispaces.com/>

Shape the future! It's where your children will be living.

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## NATIVE AMERICAN ETHICS ON THE NET - Good News & Bad

It seems like it is always bad news. You don't have to look any further than the Original Pechanga blog to find almost daily doses of bad news on tribal ethical issues:

<http://originalpechanga.blogspot.com/>

There are plenty of really sad stories on disenrollment, violence and abuse, not just on the Pechanga reservation but all around Indian country. This is why we were so glad to come across this page with the Code of Ethics for the Prairie Island Tribal Council:

<http://www.prairieisland.org/Court%20Rev.%204-5-05/TRIBAL%20COURTS%20LINK/Existing%20codes/misc%20codes/code%20of%20ethics.htm>

(Yes, it is a really long complicated link, sorry about that.)

It is the Judicial Code and the Code of Ethics for Prairie Island Reservation in Minnesota that all tribal employees and politicians are required to sign. The code covers proper behavior in the workplace and treatment of subordinates and peers.

Here are just a few of the points from the Code of Ethics:

- To base my personal decision upon all available facts in each situation; to vote my honest conviction in every case, unswayed by partisan bias of any kind or unfounded hearsay and rumor or public clamor; thereafter, to abide by and uphold the final majority of the Prairie Island Tribal Council vote whether my vote was with the majority or not;
- To remember at all times that as an individual I have no legal authority outside the meetings of the Prairie Island Tribal Council unless having been given the express written authority as properly delegated by the Prairie

Island Tribal Council by majority vote, and to conduct my relationships with the staff of the Tribal government and enterprises, the local Tribal membership and population, and all media of communication on the basis of this fact;

- To resist every temptation and outside pressure to use my position as a Prairie Island Tribal Council Member to benefit either myself or any other individual or agency apart from the total interest of the Prairie Island Tribal government or its enterprises.

*What about YOU? What ethical image do you portray on the Internet? Are you one of those people who post hateful comments on Web sites? Do you write a blog that makes personal attacks without checking the facts?*



## **NATIVE on the NET – Fact & Fiction**

Still not convinced that the future of Indian country is online? Here are just a few facts:

- From 2004 – 2009, Spirit Lake Consulting, Inc. has run five projects offering online education to reservations in the Great Plains. Over 1,000 tribal members have take online courses through these projects, covering topics from direct care for individuals with chronic illness to starting a small business to ethical values.
- In 2006-2007, over 500 residents of American Indian reservations returned surveys to Spirit Lake Consulting on Internet access and use. The results showed that the average Indian is about as likely to read e-mail or surf the Internet every day as to read a daily newspaper (around 40%). Interestingly, when we only looked at people with disabilities and their caregivers, the figures were even higher 45-46%.
- Over half of those surveyed had both a home computer and an e-mail address; almost half (49%) had home Internet access. Since these numbers are two years old, and the use of computers, cell phones and other technology continues to spread, we suspect it is even higher now.

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### **Want to join us in the future?**

**If you would like to register for the latest online course, Introduction to Ethical Issues on Indian Reservations, e-mail Dr. Erich Longie at [Ericstev@spiritlakeconsulting.com](mailto:Ericstev@spiritlakeconsulting.com) to get a username and password, good for the next month.**

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