

Introduction to “Let’s Talk”

A Public Forum on Education – Presentations on the Native American Approach to Learning

September 23, 1993
Aspen, Colorado

Hello. I’m Connie Marlow, co-founder of PARENTS FOR CHOICE IN EDUCATION which was formed to bring information to the Roaring Fork Community so that we all may make educated choices on how we want to handle our children. We believe that we must all broaden our knowledge base beyond how we were handled and educated as children and beyond what the current trends are, to a deep-rooted sense of what a human being really needs to become a healthy, happy, and productive member of a healthy community.

The State of Colorado has charged us to come together in a cooperative spirit, as community members, business people, parents and educators to see how we can each contribute to creating conditions that will enable every child to reach his or her highest potential. We cannot ask the schools to do it alone.

PARENTS FOR CHOICE IN EDUCATION wants to see this charge become a reality and has created these forums as a place for us to come together and talk. The University of Colorado has recognized the importance of this charge and has generously donated this incredible round room for these discussions.

I would like to talk nuts and bolts for a minute here. We have three stimulating speakers who will speak for an hour and a half or so, we will then break for 10 minutes and will return for an hour or so of discussion. Please limit your comments to 5 minutes max. If you have some ideas to present that will take more than that, please see me and we will put you on the agenda for the next forum.

There is a donation basket in the front room. The efforts of PARENTS FOR CHOICE is not funded at this time by anyone beyond its co-founders, Sandy Jones and myself and our very supportive husbands. These speakers have come a long distance and in the true Indian tradition have not asked to be paid for their time. The give-away is at the heart of the Indian way of life. At its foundation is the concept that the abundance of the Universe is not to be bought and sold, but given freely, as the Earth gives to us. When

hoarding and counting stops the world will come into balance. If your abundance is in the form of money, please consider donating to help defray the expenses and honor these people in that way. If it isn't please consider taking this sense of the give-away home with you and give of your gifts, your abundance to someone else.

There are bumper stickers out there too, with ancient wisdom condensed into words we moderns can understand. These are also a give-away. If you choose to give a donation the money will go to an endowment fund for accessing and implementing ancient wisdom.

The next forum will be October 12 or 14 and will feature speakers who will present thought-provoking, challenging ideas.

I would now like to introduce our speakers. But first I would like to say that Alden Naranjo and Wallace Black Elk come to us from another culture, one radically different from our own. The framework upon which they hang their culture is so different - their concept of time, the connectedness to all living things, their honoring of life in all its forms, brings a form of expression fundamentally different from ours. I would ask you, if you want the best chance of hearing what these men are saying to please open your hearts and minds and listen. Do not expect to hear the logical linear presentation of ideas that you would receive from a member of our culture. Listen, and what you will find at the end is that perhaps a beautiful tapestry was woven, that ideas came in an interconnected way quite unfamiliar to your ears, but perhaps understandable by your heart.

And afterwards we will have a discussion, not a question- and-answer period. In the Indian tradition questions are not answered. You are given information from which you may discover the answer, because as you discover the answer you may add an evolutionary bit of insight into it. The Indian approach to learning and living is an ever-changing future-oriented system where change and insight are sought and integrated into life, systematically replacing what went before.

Our keynote speaker will be Alden Naranjo, a Ute Indian from the Southern Ute Reservation in Ignacio, Colorado. The Ute Indians are the original caretakers of the land we now call home. That Alden is here to contribute his knowledge to how the children of this land may be nurtured and educated is extremely fitting. It represents a solidarity with the land and its people that goes back thousands of years and forward into a future we cannot see. Perhaps the white culture is now ready to shift our concern for the Earth from merely keeping it clean and picked up to listening to it and learning from it.

Alden brings us a broad perspective on education. He was educated in white-run boarding schools as most Indian children were in his generation. He went on to graduate from Merritt College in California in criminal justice. He subsequently returned to the reservation where he became a law enforcement officer for many years. During this time, wondering who he was and why he was here, he sought the company of his elders. He brings to you the education he received from these two cultures.

Wallace Black Elk was recognized by his people at the age of 7 as visionary and was kept hidden from the eyes of the white man as they scooped up the Indian children to put them in the boarding schools. Wallace was educated by the Earth, its creature, the grasses, the trees and by a circle of elders who trained him in the ways of the Creator. He now travels around the world sharing his knowledge with top scientists and governments leaders and his healing abilities with those who seek him out.

Dr. Emily Bornstein comes from the majority culture. She was educated at our best schools, having graduated from Carlton College and having received her PHD. She has been a practicing psychologist for 20 years and has worked extensively with children and families from the majority and traditional cultures. She is currently an apprentice to Wallace.

I am personally very excited that this evening has come together in the manner it has. I expect great notions to come of it!