

WFWP USA: Historic Sacred First Nations for Peace Collaboration with HerStory Awards

Linda Lucero Nishikawa and Katarina Connery
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On a beautiful evening on Monday, March 25, over 40 gathered online to celebrate Native American women leaders and their profound accomplishments and stories. This program was a historic, a partnership between [Sacred First Nations for Peace](#) (SFNP), Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), and Global Women Peace Network (GWPN) which collaborated to present the SFNP Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award, the WFWP HerStory Award, and the GWPN International Global Women Peace Ambassador Award.

Dr. Linda Lucero Nishikawa, Pueblo, Hunka Lakota, President of Sacred First Nations for Peace, graciously welcomed everyone, introducing the overall program, WFWP/GWPN, and the Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. She officially opened the program and infused a reverent and celebratory spirit into the event, Elder Linda Mooney, President of Oklevueha Native American Church was invited to blow the eagle bone, and Elder Roseanne Benally, Dine, offered a beautiful Navajo prayer. Thus, began a program to honor amazing Indigenous women.



First was the Sacred First Nations for Peace In Memoriam Honoring the Legacy of Lifetime Achievement Award given to the first female Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Wilma Mankiller, November 18, 1945 - April 6, 2010. Dr. Nishikawa presented an informative and inspiring PowerPoint about Chief

Wilma Mankiller and her many accomplishments as the first woman Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Some quotes of Wilma Mankiller which were shared, "One of the things my parents taught me, and I'll always be grateful...Is to not ever let anybody else define me; [but] for me to define myself..." and "Every step I take forward is on a path paved by strong Indian women before me", these words were a great inspiration to all in attendance. Chief Mankiller earned national recognition as Ms. Magazine Woman of the Year in 1987. She was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1993, and in 1988 she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, from President Bill Clinton. A quarter (U.S.A. currency) honoring Chief Mankiller was made in 2022.



She boldly led her people, guiding a sovereign nation whose population more than doubled, from 68,000 to 170,000, from 1985-1995. As the Cherokee Nation leader, she was both the principal guardian of centuries of Cherokee tradition and customs, revitalized the Nation's tribal government and advocated relentlessly for improved education, healthcare, and housing services. Under her leadership, infant mortality declined, educational achievement increased, implementation of ultra-comprehensive legal codes, and chief executive of a tribe with a budget that reached \$150 million a year. Chief Wilma Mankiller was certainly a trailblazer in many ways, for the Cherokee Nation and Native Americans, and also for all women and men across the US and the world who have been inspired by her character and her work. It was quite significant that her daughter, Felicia Olaya, was there to accept the award on her mother's behalf. Ms. Olaya shared some heartfelt words about how she learned from and was empowered by her mother in many levels of her life. We were all honored by her presence in this program.



Next Mrs. Katarina Connery, Vice President of WFWP USA, was welcomed to share about WFWP and on the topic of "The True Power of a Woman Leader." This program was the first time that WFWP/GWPN collaborated with another organization to give the HerStory Award and the Global Women Peace Ambassador Award, which was created to bring out the untold stories of Native American women who have overcome numerous challenges to serve their communities with compassion and love. Mrs. Connery noted that it is quite significant that this first collaboration was with an organization representing First Nations people. Representing a white Western European heritage, Mrs. Connery reflected that there are many untold Indigenous stories of American Indian heritage, love, and sacrifice connected deeply to the land where we live, work, and play. It is important to uncover, understand, and appreciate those Native American stories and learn from those who have come before us, to know on what foundation we stand. She concluded with the words of Mother Moon, founder of WFWP: "Women have the magical power to create harmony and to soften hearts. Bridges build bridges. The world of the future can be a world of reconciliation and peace, but only if it is based on the maternal love and affection of women. This is the true power of womanhood. The time has come for the power of true womanhood to save the world."



With that, two extraordinary women who have been creating peace and bringing about reconciliation through their innate and unique qualities were given the HerStory Award. First was Elder Belva Weston, Crow Creek Sioux, who is a descendant of Chief Spotted Tail and currently is President of Second Look, a nonprofit organization. She works on cases all over the US for missing Native and non-Native Americans who were lost, murdered, or missing. Even though she does such far-reaching and impactful work, she brought a beautiful and embracing spirit into her remarks. One could easily feel her passion for helping in these very difficult and painful cases which stems from her love as a mother and grandmother.

Second to receive the HerStory Award was Dr. Diane Hardgrave, Medical Anthropologist. She is a descendant of the Shinnecock Nation and comes with a wide range of international and cross-cultural field experience that she brings directly into the classroom as a Professor at the College of Southern Nevada. Dr. Hardgrave served as a Peace

Corps Volunteer in Liberia and later went on to work with Save the Children for over a decade in Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Mali, Egypt, and The Gambia. In her very poignant and moving message, she shared how her vast experience and the foundation of her ancestors helped her to "literally fall in love with humanity." That deep love was evident as she shared how she was able to break through the various limitations that others placed on her in her quest to merge science and spirituality.



As a very special honor, this occasion marked the giving of the WFWP/GWPN International Global Women's Peace Ambassador Award. This award is a special honor given to women who are peace ambassadors in their own spheres of influence and who deserve international recognition. Women around the world have been recognized by the local WFWP national chapter. Here in the USA so far there have only been a handful of women honored who are of that caliber. Thus, it was a distinct pleasure to recognize Mary Murdock Meyer Chief of the Timpanogos Nation. The responsibilities and duties of the Principal Chief of the Timpanogos Nation are similar to Chief Wilma Mankiller yet specific to her Nation. Dr. Nishikawa noted the deeply serving heart of Chief Meyer which brings her from work as lofty as working in Congress representing her Nation or to something as simple

as passing out coats. She is certainly a true peace leader. We were honored that Chief Murdock Meyer was present to receive the award and share with us her kindness, wisdom, and leadership.

The highly supportive, joyful, and congratulatory spirit which was felt throughout the program was evident in the comments from the audience. Please see a few comments below. We are looking forward to hosting together with Sacred First Nations for Peace many more programs in the future to honor Native American women leaders.



Comments from Participants:

Felicia, I deeply appreciate those words of your mother. They are absolutely true.

Congratulations, Elder Weston, for your heart and extraordinary work for the sake of others!

So many Native Americans, like Elder Belva, have such an intimate relationship with the Creator. That is what the world desperately needs at this time.

Congratulations Elder Belva...you are amazing and an inspiration to many! Thank you for all the love and heart you give so freely to help people!

Thank you, Dr. Hardgrave, and congratulations for your award given. You hit it on the head with your comments on universal principle of spiritual and physical united as one.

Congratulations Dr Hardgrave. I am so incredibly blessed to know you and have you as a mentor!

Thank you so much for this time for sharing and honoring these strong and courageous women. Thank you for your lives, for all that you do to create change, and touch others' lives with love and compassion and leadership by example, and the sharing of your wisdom. Many blessings to you.

Dear Chief Meyers, congratulations! And thank you for being a leader of your Nation.

Chief Meyers, as the head of a nation, and someone who personally works with those in need, on the ground, you are truly the right person to receive this award. How fortunate that America could have such a remarkable Peace representative for the world. God Bless You and your precious work.

We concluded this amazing program with the Peace Pipe. A prayer to the Creator, our Heavenly Parents, and our Ancestors.