

Oct 1, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

The sculpture committee of Northfield MN, asked me to create an idea for a sculpture earlier this summer. The sculpture parameters were that it represent the indigenous culture of all the Dakota/Lakota people before the city was founded. It also included that it somehow represent the honor and gratitude the city of Northfield has for the former stewards and their ongoing contributions to the area.

I chose a sculpture of a simplified eagle to represent the Dakota/Lakota People. The Eagle represents so much to the original stewards: Origin story of Dakota/Lakota, departed Relatives, and a Messenger from God that bestows Power and Visions of healing, strength and spirituality. For the current inhabitants of Northfield the Eagle represents Truth, Justice and the American Spirit.

As a Sicangu Lakota Artist I was raised with the idea of family and how all that walk upon Mother Earth and under Father Sky were related. The idea of Mitakuye Oyasin: We are all related, the two legged, the four legged, the winged, and the many legged creatures. We are all connected and we all need each other to survive.

My Lakota/Dakota Oonci (grandmother) said we always respect and honor eagles when they present themselves to us. Wanbli Galeshka (Spotted Eagle) is the highest of all created creatures and sees everything from where he/she flies or observes. The Eagle is a solar bird, like the sun. When you look up into the sky and see an eagle soaring its wings and feathers are regarded as the rays of the sun, because of this the eagle is regarded as Wakan Tanka (Great Spirit).

When I was a young boy my Oonci taught me lessons that I try to live by and use today. One such lesson involved the idea of compassion, and to have empathy for others. We had an eagle fly over our chicken coop and I was worried that it would kill our chickens and we wouldn't have any eggs to give to our extended families. She responded by telling me a story of the eagle and our origins. That after the great flood we were not going to survive as only one woman was left. An Eagle befriended her and helped her to overcome her grief and hunger. Over time the Eagle provided materials for fire and food and the woman grew stronger. Eventually she went on a journey of flight with the eagle to experience his world, and when they returned she understood what it was to have the power of the eagle, but she was still sad and lonely for she was all that was left of the People.

The Eagle had empathy for his friend and wanted to make her happy and the world needed the two legged's just like all the other creatures. So he cried out to the Great Spirit. God responded by saying there is a way, but you have to sacrifice your life as an eagle to become a two legged. The Eagle told the young woman that he was going to be gone for a few days and she was to wait for him and that he would return. The Eagle pondered the sacrifice and finally went to the Great Spirit and said yes. God granted him his desire and he returned to the woman as a man and they created a family that grew into the Dakota/Lakota People.

We are related to the Eagle because of this story, it is who we are and who we become. If the Eagle survives so does the Dakota/Lakota. My Oonci said the Eagle embodies all who have come before me, my ancestors, my relatives, my brothers.

My Oonci said that if an Eagle appears to me without my asking or looking for, it is my relatives and ancestors speaking to me. This is called a vision and this would be a way of knowing that the path you walk is red, the red road is the path of connections to all creatures and being good. I have had a vision of the eagle and the eagle lets me know I as a Lakota/Dakota warrior am leading a good path and am honored and given strength by the Eagle.

So I chose the Eagle because it is the most prominent of symbols to demonstrate what the Northfield Land Acknowledgement represents in my eyes as a relative and a Dakota/Lakota. The Eagle represents our past, our future, our present. It is a powerful symbol of the Holy, and it represents prayer and a positive spiritual journey of healing. Black Elk, a spiritual leader, says that in one of our most sacred of ceremonies the prayer is for the "Spotted Eagle to come and take me..."

Yours in Art,

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