

Their hearts were open to us, and I was grateful. Renee Paar

The answer came, twenty five years later

There was a time, many years ago, that I was confronted by an angry, wounded Sioux Indian man, demanding to know what I, a white woman, would want to talk to him about. " I just want to know the truth, of how it is for you to live today." I replied. In order to do that, I would need to come to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, he told me.

Now, twenty-five years later, I'm riding through the Badlands, where layer upon layer of rolling hills and buttes meet a gray sky, talking snow. Buffalo grazed and horses stood, heads lowered against the weather. Kathy's "Lets make it happen" is now a fact.

Kathleen Price is a conductor of the highest order. Fascinating to watch, she orchestrates so much, for so many. Every person who enters Kathy's sphere is greeted, treated with utmost respect, interest, and care. Constantly on the phone, her Mission of Love encompasses far-flung places and those a hug away. Amazing, is a poor word for what Kathy does in one little day. What I feel this very intuitive lady doing for me today, is creating an atmosphere of entering in, to become a part of what we are about [here](#).

She stopped at the bottom of a hill, with steps leading up, and quietly said, " This is the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre ". And so we walked in silence up the steps, and looked at the names carved into the grey stone monument. In the profound silence, broken only by the wind, came the connection to the mass grave filled with the victims.....deep, old, necessary, to fully grasp the need of both red and white worlds. The staggering reality of being there, was overwhelming.

Wounded Knee was the tragic result of the "us" and "them" mentality of the time. But no longer can there be, us and them. WE, the people, have a job to do, and together we can do what we cannot do alone. So we drove on, with the awareness that we are all one here.....united, to do a work.

" Have you had anything to eat?" was Kathy's concern, as she talked to Steve, the truck driver of the huge semi waiting for us at the school, driven 1200 miles from Ohio. We bought Steve some food, and delivered it to him. Leonard Little Finger, great grandson of Chief Big Foot was there to greet us, and his warm handshake and direct gaze told me so much about the quality of the man he is. A welcoming talk, a prayer for the work ahead, and we set out to unload the truck. I grinned to myself as I saw how full it was, wondering what it took to get the doors closed after loading it. We carried, slogging through mud generated by drizzle and light snow, and many footsteps. At least four couches, chairs of all kinds, desks, clothing, a complete institutional kitchen, beds, refrigerators, deck building material and a steel handicap wheelchair ramp. The unloading went on for hours, and it was wonderful.

By the time we finished up the first night, linoleum had been laid in the bathrooms and kitchen, carpet in others, a working toilet, and a bathroom door was hung.

Outside, posts had been set and made ready for decking at the main entrance. More had happened....we had become a solid unit, a team focused. It was exciting to see what we could do, with Kathleen conducting all.....somehow we all fit the job. There was always something to do, hold, sand, vanish, scrub, move, change, brew.....or find hilarious.

Our hosts were gracious, always smiling or ready to provide a meal, spend time explaining a native tradition. Their hearts were open to us, and I was grateful.

Every day we arrived and entered that land belonging to Leonard Little Finger and those before him, survivors of Wounded Knee. The sacredness of this task I was privileged to be a part of, swept over me.

Many Lakota Indians came to visit, to admire the building, and to speak of how much it means to them, to have this language school for their children.

Leaving Rapid City, circling in the air to head toward Denver, my thoughts returned to my friend, who knew so well what I needed to learn about how it is to be a Sioux living in today's world.....thanks Dusty, for changing my life.