



Lakota People's LAW PROJECT

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Unitarian Universalist Church
Urbana Champaign, IL

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Greetings. My name is Madonna Thunder Hawk, and I'm a co-founder of and organizer for the Lakota People's Law Project. I have worked for many decades to win justice for my people — the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, the Great Sioux Nation, and Indigenous communities across Turtle Island and around the world.

My focus has always largely been on our children. I helped form Lakota Law to address the epidemic of South Dakota's Social Services Department taking our children away from kinship care within their Native families — often with no reason and no warning — and placing them in non-Native foster homes. This practice followed years of our young ones being removed and placed into (often religious) boarding schools, where far too many suffered or died.

As Indigenous people, we frankly have a complicated relationship with the faith organizations. The desire to freely practice their faith partially drove the colonizers of these lands, but then we found that we were expected to convert and conform to a new God and a new society that did not recognize our values and sacred relationship to nature and everything that surrounds us.

But in the 1970s, in the early days of my activism, I also found that faith communities often rallied to our side when we needed help with the legal process. And today, people of faith often demonstrate elevated compassion for our struggles and continue to share their generous spirit with us. For these things, I am grateful.

These days, I help Lakota Law work toward the continued renewal of our culture and toward important environmental and Indigenous justice goals. Among those are respecting and returning sacred sites to the first peoples of these lands, helping Native people vote, and stopping pipelines like Dakota Access, Keystone XL, and Line 3 that poison our pristine waters.

I thank you for listening and joining us in this journey toward justice! Centuries of attempted genocide and cultural erasure have not stopped us. We are still here. We won't stop working toward a world that values peace, equity, wisdom, harmony with our fellow human beings, and respect for the natural world. We are all related.

Wopila (thank you)!

Madonna Thunder Hawk
The Lakota People's Law Project

Securing Lakota people's rights to self-determination and renewing Lakota culture