



THE CULTURAL SANCTUARIES FOUNDATION

Protecting the Protectors



Percy Warcloud Edwards of the Colville Confederated Tribe of Washington State who is part Arrow Lake, San Poil & Nez Perce (Chief Joseph Band). Photograph by Chris Rainier

As the heat of the summer continues, we are reflecting on the gatherings that we have been to in the last year as part of our multi-year project to document Native American and First Nations regalia across the US and Canada.

We have been at Powwows on the shores of the East Coast of Canada and in British Columbia, in Jackson Hole Wyoming, in the Meskwaki Nation in Iowa and with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians in Tacoma. We were in the record crowd at the final Gathering of Nations in New Mexico where 3,000 dancers and drummers entered the circle to celebrate their culture. We have attended ceremonies at Picuris pueblo, San Ildefonso pueblo, Taos pueblo and the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico. We have joined the celebration at the Cama'i Dance Festival in the icy tundra of Bethel, Alaska and were honoured to be invited to a Potlatch in Alert Bay in British Columbia. And we have visited new-found friends to photograph them in Arizona, on Apache and Zuni tribal lands, in Anchorage and Wasilla Alaska and in Washington State in the US and in all of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and BC in Canada.

We have so far photographed elders, leaders, kids, youngsters and dancers from many tribes and nations - Jicarilla Apache, White Mountain Apache, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Sioux, Diné (Navaho), Meskwaki, Zuni, Haida, Tlingit, Chippawa, Seneca, Crow, Tsimshian, Colville Confederation, Curve Lake, Mi'kmaq, Yup'ik, Ojibwe, Mohawk, Haida, Lakota, Unangan (Aleut), Ohkay Owingeh, Yakama, Kiowa, Comanche, Nez Perce, MHA Nation, Salish, Shoshone

Bannock, Dakota, Hopi, Anishinabe, Pasqua, Tsuut'ina, Cree, Nisga'a, Ho-chunk, Kickapoo, St'at'imc, Nakoda, Kwakwaka'wakw, Dokis, Lenapo and more.

We have many more miles to drive and many more tribes to meet and learn from.

For now, we are simply grateful: grateful to all those who have allowed us to photograph them for the project and to all those who are teaching us about what it means to be Native American and First Nations today; grateful for being invited on to tribal land and sacred places and to Powwows and Potlatches to bear witness to celebrations and ceremonies; and grateful for the enthusiasm and positivity with which the project and we, as its non-indigenous partners, have been received.

We are in awe of, and have been struck by, both the strength of the cultural identity and pride being shared and the power of the tribal revitalization that is happening all across the US and Canada. It is our honor to experience it firsthand.

We look forward to the coming year - when we will be continuing the project in Oklahoma, the Dakotas, Wisconsin, Florida, all up the East Coast and high into the Northern Canadian Arctic. And we are excited for the many meetings with remarkable people that lie ahead.



(On the left) Joan Scarff who is Gitxaala, Nisga'a, Tlingit and Skwxwú7mesh from British Columbia in Tsimshian regalia with baby Copper Alexander Martin NoiseCat and (on the right) Specwitsa Szik Grizzlypaws of St'at'imc descent from Xwisten Territory in British Columbia Canada wearing his bear dance regalia. Photographs by Chris Rainier.