

George Spangler

Thank you very much for the introduction. I'd like to begin by telling you, first of all, that I'm new to the task of story-telling. I took very seriously my duties at the University while I was teaching and insisted on fidelity to the facts as best I could determine them, and I bored hundreds of students for dozens of years in the process. So I decided that I should inject a little magic into my talk today and with your forbearance and that of my associates, I brought along a remarkable instrument.

This is a time telescope. And it looks like an ordinary ballpoint pen but it has a couple of little devices, one of which is a button. And if I press the button, you can see the little red dot on the wall. If I look very carefully through the scope at that dot I can see the past and I can see it quite clearly.

In fact I see three vessels approaching an island, perhaps a Caribbean Island. Now they turn — here they come. That one's the Niña and then there's the Pinta and I believe, the Santa Maria. And they have arrived on these shores after 9,000 years at least of non-intrusion by aliens.

And what they found was a remarkable system; a circle of life that depended upon a seasonal round where people throughout the Great Lakes region moved from place to place as the seasons would dictate, wresting their lives from the resources around them. They participated in a seasonal round which was the very essence of the Ojibwe culture.

I'd like to talk to you a little bit about the seasonal round. First of all, we had mastodons. And the mastodons were here with human occupants of the continent and we deduced this from the fact of fossilized remains of mastodons. There's no doubt that there was an association between the Indian people and these giant relatives of the past.

Whatever was eaten here stayed here; whatever was mined here stayed here; whatever was learned here stayed here and became a font of cultural knowledge. Life was good. An error in navigation resulted in something that the scholars subsequently called the Great Columbian Exchange. Now, "great" is not intended to be value laden. It's intended to mean "large".

Then the rocks, for some unknown reason, began to bleed. First gold and then silver began to leave the circle of life. The waters began to bleed. Codfish became lutefisk, beavers became fur hats and so on. The native people, also began to bleed. They were introduced to new organisms, aliens from another continent and Indians died by the millions. Life was not as good as it had been.

This hemorrhage of the circle of life continued. Trees became lumber and forests became farms. The purest iron ore in the world flowed from the Mesabi, and the purest copper from the Keweenaw. The economies that had been nurtured over thousands of years had suddenly been ruptured. The seasonal round was no longer complete.

Across the Midwest in the Great Lakes region we found expansionist Americans from the East moving onto the plains, onto the prairies, into the forests and miners into the mines. Where under these circumstances would the native people go? It was difficult to decide and sometimes difficult to accomplish. Occasionally forced marches were necessary on the part of the governmental parties and it came to pass that these people were collected together on small patches of land called reservations. These patches of land were nowhere near large enough to support the seasonal round. The illustration here, the little red blocks that you see represent what amounted to most of the Indian reservations set aside for native people in the upper Midwest and Great Lakes region. The larger color blocks represent areas that will be discussed in considerable

detail as we go through the rest of the symposium; these are the territories ceded by the Chippewa in the treaties with the U.S. Government.

So here on this map is what happened to the seasonal round, from one vital circle of life that was compressed into these tiny little red blocks. It was known by the people that there wouldn't be enough land to support them. No longer could they pursue their semi-migratory annual movements.

It would not do simply to ship beef and commodity products onto the reservations. People knew that they wouldn't eat properly, that they wouldn't thrive on a foreign diet, but they wouldn't become farmers simply because someone had given them a plow. So these were extremely difficult times.

Lost along the way were some of our really important ecological features. They included the tall grass prairies, pine woodlands, passenger pigeons, many Great Lakes fishes, tons and tons of top soil and dozens and dozens of native cultures. These were all victims of breaching the seasonal round.

We had a little warning in the literature not long ago. This warning was from the American Friends Service Committee in the 1970s and the quotation basically says: "be careful about disturbing the balance of nature. You know not what you do and it might be very, very dangerous." By analogy we can extend this observation about disturbing the human nature to an additional corollary which is that it is entirely reasonable that cultural harmony should be protected just as well as the ecological balances implicit in the relationships between non-humans and their environment.

So with that warning, what did we decide to do about it? Well, the genius basically was left up to peoples back in the 1800s and some remarkably prescient thinkers participated in the deliberations that resulted in the treaties that now cover this part of the world. This brief list talks about subsequent litigation of those treaties and the resolution to provide some direction on how we might behave in the future. And that's the substance of the balance of this symposium.

What do we know? The first thing that's really important, I think, is that all of these sovereign entities were brought together. Three states, two federal governments, two additional agency sources of information, and, expertise with the COFTMA and the GLIFWC participation. And what resulted from this? We've discovered that in spite of the difficulty of the litigation and its adversarial nature, despite the hurt feelings, despite the sometimes arduous days of argument, we are, in fact, very versatile people. We have the ability to cooperate when it's absolutely necessary. And we have today a strikingly productive relationship between two of the most important resource management entities within the region, the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and GLIFWC who, together, have been instrumental in preserving the remnants, first of all, of what has remained after 9,000 years plus 500 post-Columbian years, and, in many cases, not only preserving and protecting what remains, but enhancing those resources for the benefit of all of us.

I'll leave it to my colleagues to discuss these items in detail for a remainder of our time on our program today, but I think we'd like to point out one more thing and that is the perseverance of the native people who have brought us all here together at this symposium and who have navigated their own course through hours and hours, weeks and weeks, days and years of difficult times.

So I'm very thankful that we can all be here together and discuss with open minds the progress that we have made, and whether or not this tiny little instant in geological time, this past

25 years, whether or not it has any real relevance compared to the previous 9000. With that I'd like to say that this, to my mind, genuinely marks another beginning.

I call upon my professional associates and colleagues to elaborate further on what have been the consequences of this remarkable collaboration in resource management here in the upper Midwest.