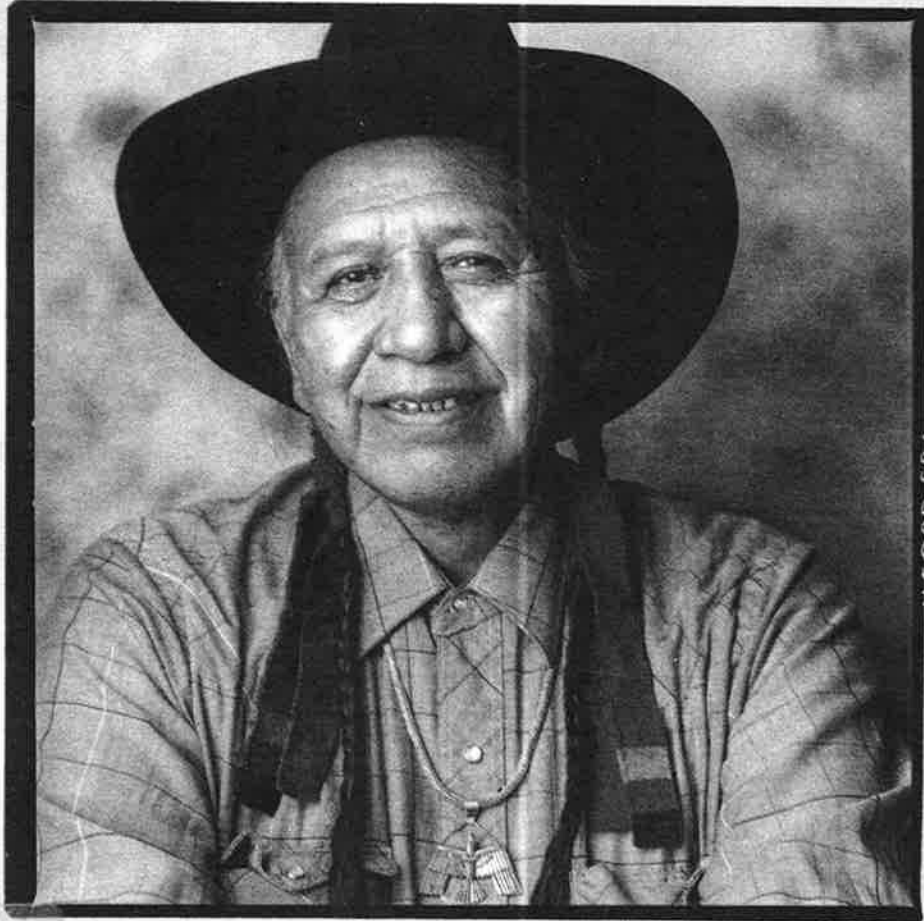


# Black Elk

THE SACRED WAYS OF A LAKOTA



WALLACE BLACK ELK

◀◀◀◀ AND ▶▶▶▶

WILLIAM S. IVON

## CHAPTER 2



## Hard Times

I look like a scarecrow. Like I'm trying to scare something. I've dressed like this all my life—funny hat and funny shoes. That protects me. It's like a camouflage. The way I look serves me a purpose. I could go anywhere. I see a lot of people smile at me. It's not just out of love, but because I look funny. My sister-in-laws are always teasing me about it. They smile at me, and then someone says to me, "They didn't smile at you because you look good. You look funny, you know." They tease me that way. One time this teacher said to me, "You know, I want to tell you something, but I'm afraid you might get mad." So I said, "No, go ahead and fire. I won't get mad." So he said, "You know, you have the dumbest look on your face, but you're the smartest man I've ever known." That's what he said. Then I told him, "Oh, that's good. Thank you. That also protects me."

When I go someplace, most of the time those little people see me. At first they'll pretend not to see me. They go past me a little ways, and then they will turn back and look at me. Then they'll nudge their mama or daddy or grandma or grandpa, and I'll hear them say, "There's an Indian back there." So the Indians are still here. We never phased away. We didn't just blend into society and vanish. In fact, we're appearing more and more and more. We get around more now, too. Indians are not just confined only to the United States or one state or one county or one city or one house. They know us all over this Earth.

One time I was walking around in Washington, D.C. Of course, I dressed just like this—jeans, cowboy shirt, cowboy boots, big hat, and braids. All my pretty clothes are hanging in those museums. I didn't know they were so expensive. Their price tag is unbelievable! These here are ten cents or fifty cents or a dollar. I could pick up any of my clothes at the Salvation Army or just drive up to one of those boxes and grab myself an outfit and go on. They're cheaper, so I could wear them. I could discard them, pick up some more, like that.

Anyway, what happened to me in Washington, D.C., was that I was walking around, and nobody ever saw me. I was invisible. Nobody ever said hi to me. All these guys were wearing five-hundred-dollar suits, white shirts, and neckties. They were just whizzing this way and that way. So they didn't see me. It was really funny. Sometimes it's really funny to be an Earth Man. So I went inside that big dome, and there were people sitting there reading the newspaper. Out of the corner of my eyes I could see that they were watching over me. When I would look at them, they would look away and pretend they didn't see me. And there were people there taking pictures. Well, the object is over there, but at the last minute they would quickly turn their camera over here, snap it, and go on. But I knew what was going on. So we were kind of playing cat and mouse there.

Anyway, what really protects me is these things hanging over my ears [braids] and my complexion, these funny clothes, funny hat, and funny shoes. It camouflages me, so I could go anyplace, anywhere. All these materials that I wear, they are just substitutes. And maybe I look dumb on the outside, on top, but I'm not that way. That spiritual power I wear is much more beautiful and much greater. We call it *wisdom, knowledge, power, and gift* or love. There are these four parts to that spiritual power. So I wear those. When you wear that power it will beautify your mind and spirit. You become beautiful. Everything that Tunkashila creates is beautiful.

So my name is Wallace Howard, Wallace Howard Black Elk. And Wallace Howard is a cowboy. He's Scotch-Irish. He's a white man that was raised by my grandfather. So he knows the sacred ways and comes to the lodge, and the spirit comes in. He understands my people. So back in 1921, four days after I was

born, he comes over with my uncle. They want that stuff he has, so they give him the honor to give me a name. So now he has to give me a name and a horse. He knows the Chanunpa. He knows these ways, but he wasn't prepared. So he got off from his horse and made me touch the rein of that horse. That was a signal that I accepted that horse and everything that was with it—bridle, martingale, saddle, thirty-thirty Winchester, saddlebags, lariat, silver mount, spurs, gloves, raincoat, and all that.

So he touched my little tiny hand to that rein to signal that I accepted all that stuff. Then he went on, "Now, I want to name you. I'm not prepared, so the only way I can do it is to give you my horse, my outfit, my name, and my language. So you're going to grow up to be a rough and tumble cowboy like me. You're going to be a bronco rider." So he was going on that way.

That was a cowboy prayer, see? But these are sacred ways, so that was also a real prayer. I'm alive. I'm not just a piece of rag. But that was his prayer, because that was the way he was. He didn't know how to say the Lord's Prayer or a bunch of Hail Marys, because he's a cowboy that was raised by my people. But he's an Irishman, so he has his own language and speaks English. He married one of my relatives. That's how come I have cousins that have blue eyes and blond hair. If I brought them here and told you this is my cousin, you wouldn't believe it.

Later that prayer becomes reality. Because he gave me his name, he taught me English and Irish, and I taught him Lakota. So he could communicate with my grandpa and grandma. I also became a bronco rider in the rodeos. But I lost a lot of that Irish language because nobody here speaks that language. So if I go back there [Ireland], I could speak Irish, too. Now you know where I got these funny shoes and hat, funny clothes. It was from that cowboy. So I pray for him, and a spirit comes in. He's a Scotch-Irish, so he speaks Irish in the Chanunpa ceremony.

So I carry that name Wallace Howard, but I grew up in the sacred ways of my people. I was trained that way. You have to have a lot of patience to follow that sacred path. I remember when it came time for my first Chanunpa. I kept asking my grandpa, kept bugging him, "How do you make Chanunpa?" Well, he just kept going about his business, and it seemed to me

that he never heard me, but I kept asking. He just didn't answer me. He would just keep on working or keep on riding or say that it was time to go chop wood, but he would never answer my question. It seemed to me like he wasn't ever paying any attention when I asked him over and over. Finally, one day he said, "Grandchild, we're going to go over there, and you're going to hunt that Chanunpa stem."

So we went up this creek in our wagon. It was a dry creek bed. We were going to look for some ashwood, and he knew there was some along that creek. When we got to this one spot, he said there should be some ashwood up the bank and sent me off to look for it. So I went up there and found a cluster of ashwood. He told me just what size to look for, so I had to use my ingenuity to figure out which tree was the right tree. Also, it had to be perfectly straight. First, I prayed, and then I just sat there looking at that cluster of trees. Then I got up and started walking all the way around trying to select one. "Not that one; it has a little curve in it. Not that one; it has limbs coming out the side. Not that one; it also has too many limbs." I was going like that all the way around. Then I came back to where I started, so I sat down and started praying again. All of a sudden, I saw one right in front of me, right in the middle of that cluster.

So I went off in all four directions. First I went to the south, and I found a little opening through which I could see that tree. Okay, it looked straight. So I went on to the west side and looked towards the east. There was a little opening there, and I could see that tree. I went to the north, and there's an opening there also. "Okay, that's it!" So I went back and went east to west and prayed. I put a little mark on there, a little cloth. Then I went back down to the creek bed and told my grandpa I had found the right tree.

"I found the tree! I found it!" He believed me and said, "Yes, you're a good boy." So he measured the length of time it had taken me to find that tree. Maybe he had been watching me from someplace. I don't know. Anyway, I led him back to where I had prayed. He sat down, and I pointed it out. "See. It's right in the middle. Straight West." So he brought out the Chanunpa, filled it, and prayed. Then he sat there looking. Finally, he said, "I see

it. I see it." Then he goes to the south and looks through that little opening to see that tree. Then he went to the west and looked at that tree and to the north and looked at that tree. "Good boy, you found it!" So he sights in on that tree, and we went there. He prayed and sprinkled tobacco all the way around the tree. Then he said, "So let's go home."

Now I thought we were going to measure it, hack it off, put it in the back of the wagon, and haul it home. That is what I thought. But we went back without it. On the way home he said, "We'll come back for it." So I wasn't really in gear in my mind to understand what he was saying. I didn't understand the meaning in his language. I didn't have enough patience to really hear what he was saying. So I thought, "Okay, maybe we'll come back tomorrow for it." Tomorrow comes, and we have to go someplace. "Okay, it might be the next day." Next day comes. It's stone-people-lodge day. So we have to go cut some wood for the ceremony. So it might be the third day. So my mind kept on running along like that, you know. But I'm just a kid, so I'm impatient. Every day I waited. Pretty soon one month had passed by. "Maybe he forgot. It might be next month." I kept on going on in my mind like that. I kept trying to figure it out. Pretty soon fall went by. Then winter passed and spring came.

All the green was out again, and grandpa said, "Grandchild. Hitch up those horses. We're going to go see that tree." By then I had waited a long time, and it had passed. If he had said that we were going over there next year, that would have been okay with me by that point. I had worried myself to death. Besides that, I thought by then that he had forgotten all about it. Then, just about the time I was getting ready to forget about it, he remembered. Now, he didn't say we're going to bring it back, just that we were going to go see it. But, again, I was off thinking that we were going to cut it, load it, and bring it back.

That evening was a long evening for me. I kept thinking that before long I'd have my own Chanunpa, first one. I had a lot of things going around in my head because of how I had been educated up to then. I still had two parts. I'm an Earth Man, and I'm still a little guy. So we went there, and all of the trees had green leaves sprouted out except that straight one we had picked

out. We went to it, and grandfather began praying, "There will be a time that we are going to come here and take you with us." Right away my mind started up, "When? Next week? What day? What time? After church on Sunday?" My mind started running like that, but I tried to ward it off. By then I wanted to try to have a little patience.

So then it went on. The next year, that fall, that winter, and then the spring was coming around again. Grandpa said, "Let's go. Let's see." So we went back. We went to that tree, and he pulled off some bark and began to inspect it. There he saw those little guys [insects] making tunnels in there, so he said, "So, it's time." Then he notched the tree and pushed it down from north to south. Then we cut it to the right size. Next my grandpa takes a straw and begins to poke around in the center of the tree. It's filled with dry powder. So he began poking around in the powder and making a deep hole in there. Then he tears off the bark, picks up one of those little guys and pushes him into that hole he made. Right away that little creature starts digging in and pushing that powder out of the hole. Pretty soon he had worked clear through to the other end. Then grandfather thanked that little guy and put him back. "Thank you. Go back to your food. Go back to your shelter. Go back to your home." Like that. Then we prayed, left there, and brought that piece of ashwood home.

Right away I could already see myself whittling away, but grandpa had other plans. He told me to take it into the lodge. There he instructed me how to cross-stack up some wood and place that piece we had brought back in the middle. Then I had to stack three more pieces on top of that. Then he said we would leave it there for the rest of the summer and through the winter.

The following year we made a journey over to the stone quarry. That is over in Pipestone, Minnesota. That stone—you call it *catlinite*—is found only in that place. You can't find it anywhere else in the world. It is a red stone. Our old people say that it is the blood of the buffaloes that gave their life so that we could live. That blood turned to stone. It took us four days to get there by wagon. We brought along all our food and made camp four times before we got there. Then we worked for eight days and nights to remove it from the ground. We dug way down into

the ground, removing the dirt a bucketful at a time. There were a lot of big boulders in there also. Finally, we broke through the granite, keep digging, removed that shell, and there it was. So we had found it. Then we pried it off and brought it back.

When we got home, grandpa laid out that stone and cut it into little elbows. Then we took the main one and began to drill out the bowl. We used willows, buffalo grease, and ashes. It took a long time to make that hole, so you have to have a lot of patience for that. Then we drilled out the hole in the stem. You have to make sure that stem hole aligns with that bowl. When that was finished, we had to shape the outside of the stone. Then we had to polish it. That also takes a long time. You use grease and ashes and rub it with a buckskin. So it took us a year before we were finished with that stone. Then we had to shape that stem to fit that stone. All in all, it took me four years to complete that Chanunpa. It took me four years, because I kept bugging him, "How do you make a Chanunpa?" I kept bugging him that way. I wish I hadn't asked all those questions. It was tough, you know. I didn't know what I had gotten myself into, but now I realize.

The knowledge [of Grandmother the Earth] is there all the time, but all those flimsy-whimsy ideas kept bugging me. My brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles—they all went to school. So they yak, yak, yak. That's never ending. So, back from 1890 to the 1920s, they were going to school to the first, second, and third grades. One of my uncles went through to the sixth grade, six years. By then he's twenty-one, so he quit school. Now he's educated. Some of the others started when they were fifteen or sixteen, and only went for two years, because when you're eighteen you don't have to go to school anymore. So they only went to the second or third grade. There's no high school there, only school to the sixth grade. Anybody who goes there, we consider them educated. When they come back, they speak English, so their way of life is different then. Then this other way of life is totally savage for them. We're just ignorant pagans. They look at us that way.

When I was little, I would sit there watching my grandpa smoke his Chanunpa. Through that telepathic wave of intelligence, he would visit with the other old people. It's a silent

communication. They know how to talk that way. Then my educated aunts and uncles would come over to visit the old people. They'd come there and just sit to listen to what they were talking about. But, because they were educated, they'd sit there and yak. But when they sat around the old people, there were no words coming out of them.

So they'd sit there for five or ten minutes, and no words were spoken. Because they were educated, they got impatient. "Hey, you two, you're sitting there like wooden Indians. You're sitting there like dummies. How come you don't speak to each other?" They talked to them like that, but they were visiting each other. They were talking, but these others came there and disturbed them.

So from that point of education the destruction begins. We are kind of losing that silent communication. When they use that English, it's full of *ifs, buts, maybes*, and words like that. Those words weaken your mind. That leads people later to say things like, "Well, to my recollection, I don't remember," or, "I don't recall," or, "Maybe I said that." They talk that way. Then you show them a piece of paper where they wrote it down. "Oh, yes, I said it, but I didn't really mean it." So that's the educated way to talk. You could whip two tongues at the same time in there. So you could always change your mind. That's why my old people told me that English was a dangerous language.

But with this Chanunpa way, you are going to whip just one tongue. You're going to have only one mind, one heart, and one spirit. You have to hold that Chanunpa straight. We often talk about holding the Chanunpa straight. So I learned from making my first Chanunpa that I don't want to be asking my grandpa questions all the time. What I learned was to listen to him real carefully. I really got myself into it, and there's no way of backing out now. I'm in it now. I have to stay with this way.

So my grandpa taught me a lot. For instance, how to respect and how to have a little patience. So I was out there with those old people and old ways. I lived and grew up right there. I grew up with the power of the Chanunpa. So that is built right into me. We don't go to K-Mart and buy a Chanunpa, then crawl into the lodge, and the *medicine* comes out. It's not that way. It's not like

*hogie-pogie* where you pull a rabbit, a bunch of flowers, or some silk cloths out of a hat. A lot of people expect that, but it's not that way. It's a way of life. It's a path. This Chanunpa is not a chalice. It's not a wine; it's not a bread, not like that. It's not a religion. You live with it. You take care of it. You bundle it away. So there is no "Sacred Pipe religion."

Also, we have a main Chanunpa. Just one, it's the main one. It is never exposed to the public or someone who just walks in. People have to understand that Chanunpa. For instance, a lot of women will come in on their moon time [menstrual period] and contaminate the Chanunpa. Those people have to learn to respect themselves and this Chanunpa. Even a man—his clothing might be contaminated from being near a woman on her moon. So you have to purify yourself with sage. You have to wipe yourself clean. So the spirit told us, "When your robe [body] is soiled or dirty, don't come near the Chanunpa. Never let any man with dirty hands touch that Chanunpa." That's what he said. Even if we wash, take a shower, scrub ourselves with soap, and then put on those aftershaves, body lotions, and deodorants, that won't camouflage that contamination. When you are dirty, you have dirty thoughts. So you have to come to that Chanunpa with a clean mind. That's what the spirit meant.

So what we are talking about here is sacred. One little part of you is sacred. So there are a lot of things you have to understand, not just this Chanunpa. But when you start to study that Chanunpa, it connects up everything. It connects all life. So my instructions are to try to understand this Chanunpa in a really simple way, because that's the way I started. I started when I was only five years old. So if a dumb Indian who's only five years old can understand this Chanunpa, I think there are a lot of people out there who could have a better understanding of it. If they have that higher education, they should have a higher understanding. They should have a better brain. I don't have that degree. I don't have that piece of paper, so that puts me lower than them.

So it's better for me to be an Earth Man. I can see everything from the outside. Looking inside the culture of the white man, I can see and understand everything. Lucky for me I didn't go in

there, or they would have torn me apart. In some mysterious way, my grandfather and grandmother asked those sacred powers to give me a power so that I could continue in our old ways. So they hung onto me and gave me this power. But back in the 1920s and 1930s, those were the hardest times I ever went through.

They used to preach against us in the twenties and thirties. That was the peak. There were no moccasins. There were no buffaloes to chase. The government set up schools and forced us to go. They cut our hair and changed our clothes. They forced us to speak English, and that caused us to lose our culture—language, customs, and ways. If you spoke Lakota, they would wash your mouth out with yellow laundry soap. You'd have to repeat in English what the teacher said. If you had to repeat it twice, you'd get a reward. They would put a clothespin in your ear. If you couldn't repeat it a second time, then another clothespin would be added. So I usually had about six clothespins in my ear. Or they would make you hold out your hand, and then the teacher would hit it with a ruler ten times to remind you of the Ten Commandments. Sometimes they would break that ruler.

Other times I would have to stand on my tiptoes. I would have to stand real still. Sometimes I might have to stand there forty-five minutes or fifty minutes. If I fell, they would whip me. So I had to stand there real stiff. I had to endure that. It took a lot of courage and endurance just to stand there and balance yourself for ten minutes. At your desk you would have to sit there with both feet together, your eyes forward, your pencil at a forty-five-degree angle pointing to your shoulder, your lips together, and all that. Then you would have to push your pencil with your elbow and have good penmanship all in the name of a forty-five-degree angle. Anyway, there were terrible things going on then. But now over here we have doctors, and they have the poorest handwriting. You can't even read their writing for prescriptions. So it's really something. We had really hard times.

Those Christian people would preach against everything we did. They'd say, "Don't go out there and eat those roots and herbs. Those are serpent food, devil's food. We have a hospital, so you come over here and eat those registered pills." So we were supposed to go over there and eat the right kind of poison. So

we'd go over there, and they would have that St. Joseph's aspirin. At the same time, over here Jesus is the healer. So what's wrong with Jesus? Why do I have to eat those pills from St. Joseph? So all this was going through my head. So I had a heck of a time trying to understand.

I didn't want to go to school, so I would hide out with my grandpa and grandma. I refused to go there. Then they would track down my grandpa and grandma and take me back. Sometimes they even threw us in jail for it. The longest time we stayed in jail was for ten day—ten days with bread and water. I had committed a crime because we chose to worship Tunkashila. So it was for no reason at all. So we were in prison many times, not just one time, but many.

The really tough part was that it was our own people who were tracking us down. They were Indian people. They wore uniforms and badges and carried clubs and guns. There were no roads, so they would ride over there on horseback. When they came they would tear up our sacred stone-people-lodge—break it up and throw it in the fire. If they found one of our *sacred bundles*, they'd tear that up and throw it into the fire. If they found a Chanunpa, they would just smash that stone into a million pieces and throw the stem into the fire.

So we would have to sneak out to the mountains to perform our ceremonies. We would ride way out there on horseback. We had to carry everything with us: blankets, buckets, our Chanunpa, our sacred bundle, or whatever we could carry. We'd send a scout on ahead, and he would be standing on the mountaintop and signal us if the coast was clear. So we would ride over there near the spot and then let our horses go, and from there we went on foot. But they were always trying to catch us. They knew where the waterhole for the horses was, so they'd go there and hide. They'd wait there until somebody came along, and then they would grab them and try to make them tell where we were holding our Chanunpa ceremony.

So when we went there we had to hurry. We had to do everything real fast like. We could build a lodge in no time, or we would poke a hole in the side of the mountain so we could go in there and have a Chanunpa ceremony. We would have to

heat up the rocks real fast and use just the right kind of wood so there would be no smoke they could see, just flame. We knew all that. We would make our tobacco ties, fill the Chanunpa, heat up the rocks, hurry. Then we would go in, and the medicine, the spirit, would come in. Pray. Hurry. Finish. Then we would hide our *robes* [sacred flags used in the ceremony] and pick everything up, disassemble the lodge, put the wood back in the woods, put our rocks all over or cover them up, cover up the damage, like that. Then we would take off and scatter in all directions. Sometimes I would come back on foot. So we had to go through all that. So that was kind of hard and sad.

But I was equipped, nineteen generations ago I was equipped to plow right on through. Sometimes those soldiers [Indian police] got hurt shortly thereafter. One time they came over there and tore everything up. On the way back home, this guy's horse spooked, and it threw him. But his foot got caught in that stirrup, and he was dragged to death. So they had sickness come to them and accidents. One guy's wagon overturned on him, and another guy's house burned down, and he lost his children in the fire. In some of those families, the whole family died. So those things happened. So we kept going.

Then those black robes, like Father Fagan, they would give us a rough time also. If we didn't go to church four times a month, they would hold back our food rations. So if we missed church, just once or twice, there would be no commodities issued to us, and we would starve. So we would have to wait until the next month and make those four churches. Then they would give that food to us. So they used that food to expand their membership or to prevent us from worshiping Tunkashila and having our Chanunpa ceremonies and lodges.

Then, like, Father Fagan, he would sneak up on us. He would come into the camp and go from village to village. He would go around asking everybody, "Did you hear any drumming?" He knew we used that noisemaker in our ceremonies, so he was trying to figure out if we were still doing that pagan stuff, see? Then somebody might accidentally say, "Well, I heard a drum over there." Then he'd write the name of that person down, but he wouldn't stop there. He'd write everybody's name down in that

family. He'd write down the names of the old people there and even that little baby's name. But that baby can't even talk. So he'd go through four or five families like that and make a long list of all those names. He'd have maybe a hundred names written down on that list. Then he would go over to the [reservation] superintendent, and he'd say, "I've got a list here of one hundred people who are complaining about those people having a sweat-lodge. They are making all this unnecessary noise, beating on the drum and keeping them awake. So they are complaining." Well, that's not what those people said, but he wrote it down that way. They didn't intend it that way, but that's what he told the superintendent. So the superintendent, he doesn't check those names—those names of little kids and babies—he just says, "Okay, chief, how many soldiers you got?" "Well, I got eight lying around here." "Okay, get them on horseback and go over there. If you find a sweat-lodge or anything, just tear it up." So that's the government people. They did that against us. They would pit Indian against Indian. So that came back on us and made it hard for us.

So I went through those things, and it was hard and sad. My people were always getting hurt. But through the Chanunpa, through some mysterious power, we were always in good health and good spirit, because when that spirit comes in you ask for help and health. During these hard times the spirit kept encouraging me, "Keep going. Keep going. I'm here. Nothing is going to happen to you. I'm going to help you. Tunkashila is going to help you. I want to send help to you." Like that. So, at the end of World War II when I came back, there was Father Fallon. "Don't go to *yuwipi* [a Lakota spirit ceremony]. Don't go to the Chanunpa ceremonies. Don't talk to the devil. Don't let those demons possess you. Don't eat those medicines, because that's snake food they give you." He used to preach to us that way. Then there is powwow. Powwow is mortal sin. Bingo is mortal sin. Gambling is mortal sin. But when I came back, there was all this banging and noise going on over there. So I asked this guy, "Are they repairing that meeting house?" He told me there was going to be a dance in there, and I said, "No fooling!" So he tells me that Father Fallon is now the superior, and he loves dancing.

So we went in, and here is Father Fallon. He had his robe tied up in back, and he was leading the dancing. It was an Indian dance with feathers and everything. I was still wearing my army uniform, and he saw me right away. He came straight over to me and said, "Hey, Black Elk, let's go outside and talk." So we went outside. Then he tells me that while I was away at war they got new, high holy orders. The holy father had changed those laws for the reservations. Now we could have powwows. Also, now we could dance—not too much, just a little bit. If we danced too much, that would be black. It would be a mortal sin. So we could dance a little bit but not too much. So little bit by little bit we were beginning to crack that shell.

So when I came back from the war we had a ceremony, a lodge. Somebody came and tapped on the door. My grandpa, my dad, my cousins, my uncle, they said, "Now you've got a visitor." They wanted to know how well I was going to handle this visitor, because now I've grown up and I'm running the ceremony. I'm the one who is sitting by the door and pouring the water. I'm the one who filled the Chanunpa and has that power. So they wanted to see how well I was trained, how well I'm going to handle this visitor. So I said, "Tunkashila, we filled the Chanunpa, and now we're only here for health and help. So please do come in."

So we sang a song, and that visitor came into the lodge. Then something cold and slippery hit me on the chest and hit my grandfather on the forehead. It kept going around and around in the lodge. It hit me on the leg and then on the back and kept on going in a circle. You could hear water gurgling in there, and each time it hit, you felt something cold and slippery. That slap would make a sound, like "queeek, queeek." Then Grandpa said, "Someone came in and went that way. It came around and went back to where you are sitting. Do you know what it is?" So I said, "I forgot to ask him." That made them all laugh.

So everybody heard that water gurgling. It was amazing, because that sound was coming from those hot rocks. So it was water flowing through those hot rocks, and it was the *fish people* that had come in. They just swam right into that lodge. Then I heard them say in Lakota, "We are *fish-people*. We came from the bottom of the ocean to visit you. We came here to tell you that



these people on the top [of the land], they are using that wisdom, knowledge, power, and gift from the Creator to take that sacred fire and pack it into a destructive tool [A-bomb]. What is happening is that they are dropping the residue from that into the water, and it's going to affect us fish-people. That radiation is going to go up to the surface and is going to float across the land. It's going to harm all the green, and it's going to harm the *winged, four-legged, creeping-crawler* creatures, mammals, and it's going to affect you *two-legged* creatures. So that is the reason why we came here, to tell you this."

So the nuclear residues were being secretly dumped into the ocean at that time. And nobody knows nothing about it, see? So when I began to tell people what I had learned in that lodge, they thought I was crazy. They told me not to tell the scientists or congressmen or religious leaders what the fish-people had said. They said that if I ever made such a statement in public, I would be questioned about it, and if I couldn't prove it, that I probably would be thrown in the slammer. But what I learned from those fish-people then, the world found out about seventeen years later. Seventeen years later we found out that the ocean was being used as a dump for nuclear waste, and only then we put a stop to it. But by then it was already affecting all the green underneath the water and those fish-people. The whales were coming to shore and dying, and people were eating contaminated fish. So for years it was lie on top of lie in the name of science. But through this sacred Chanunpa, we know what's going on all the time.

So that happened to me just after World War II. So now here a few years later Father Fagan got sick. He went to many hospitals, but they couldn't cure him. So we told him that he should come to the lodge and that we would pray for him. So he said, "Okay, I think I'll do that." Here he had been preaching against us all this time, but now he was really sick, and no one else could help him. So he came to the lodge, and that spirit came in and touched him and removed that pain. So he said, "Well, that's good. As long as they are not hurting me, I think that's all right." Pretty soon others came. So we overpowered that negativity. We reestablished our ways. In fact, later I even trained a Catholic

priest, and he contacted the spirit through this sacred Chanunpa. It took him nine years to do that. In turn, he went to the Catholic congress and told those guys that the Chanunpa was really true and that they should stop trying to convert the Indians to Christianity. He actually said that. So at least he said something good for my people.

Over the years now things have changed on my reservation. They used to talk about me behind my back. They would tell everyone that I was a devil worshiper. They said I was possessed by demons. They all made those kinds of remarks. But now, just in the past few years, when I go back, everybody comes up to me and shakes my hand. They tell me they have been to a lodge or they had a Chanunpa ceremony and prayed for someone. So now I hear them saying "our Chanunpa" and "our sweat-lodge" and that kind of thing. So we plowed right through those hard times with the power of this sacred Chanunpa.