

## The Musicality of the Lakota Language - Donald Montileaux - OSEU 3

Our language...my father was fluent and then went to boarding school...and literally got it whipped out of him. He wouldn't even speak Lakota anymore. And my grandfather on my mother's side...he and my grandmother were fluent...and they spoke Lakota. And my mother didn't because she went to Holy Rosary which was a Catholic school. My father went to a public school. I'm sure that...I don't know if my mom ever picked up the language...she used to tell me stories that my grandma and grandpa would not speak all the time...but when they were mad at each other or they were trying to get a point across real sternly, they would start talking Lakota. So therefore, I don't have any...I have very very little Lakota that I understand. I wrote a book. In my book, I had a lady translate that, Agnes Gay. She's the archivist at OLC [Oglala Lakota College]. When she reads those same words that I read in English, those words become musical. They take on a whole different meaning, a whole different flow. I lose myself when she's reading. I actually lose myself in the language. And I know what she's saying. But, it's just more beautiful. It's just stronger. And she would tell me that some of those words...she'd say, "Don, I can't translate this word because in order to tell you what this word is, it would make it really long." So she would do something else. But my book is everyday Lakota. She's been fluent since she's been a child. And so she said, "This is everyday Lakota." There are so many stories.

There's such a kinship to the land...to the animals. I don't think we can express that kinship in English, but we can in Lakota. I know I have friends who have that spirit when they talk with those animals. Those animals still understand Lakota.