

Developing Native Writers - Lowell Amiotte - OSEU 4

In order to have the Indian voice heard, we're going to have to develop writers. People who actually put things down on paper. You know, earlier, when I was young and I went to school, we would read things about Native Americans, but they were all written by non-Indians. So gradually, we were trying to build toward developing a written voice. I think the old stories are very important, and a lot of them have been written down now, so they're easier to pass on.

We even established what's called the Oak Lake Writers Association, where we—again, I'm not a writer, but here I'm starting something. We invited them all in, known writers and young people who wanted to be writers, and they produce three or four books now. One of those that you may know is Lydia Whirlwind Soldier. She's been a very good person in that group. And another one from right here in Rapid City is Liz Cook Lynn. She's the one trying to get the Indian statues down at Holly Park.

So we started that with the idea that we now needed a written voice. And we have young writers like Don Montlow now who are coming on and starting to write things down so it's not all lost. I mentioned earlier the idea of the vanishing language. There was even a book called *The Vanishing American*, which was about American Indians. We don't want to vanish anything. We think we have a lot to offer, and people should stop and read other people's philosophies, learn something about their religion. I think it makes us very important.

The Indians always say we're responsible for seven generations. We have to make sure that Seven Generations has that knowledge and that it's passed on. And as we go on now through the times, if it's still all oral, we're going to lose a lot of it, or it's going to really change because outside factors influence it. So we have to get it written down by Indian people.