

A river of tears fell down my cheeks as I read *Recovering the Sacred*. This is a must read for anyone who wants to know the truth about Federal Indian Policy, past and present.

—Charon Asetoyer, editor, *Indigenous Women's Health Book: Within the Sacred Circle*

Fierce in her convictions, forceful in her analysis, and engaging in her writing, LaDuke connects the dots between indigenous struggles, the toxic and sacrilegious practices of multinational corporations, and the wellness of all of us who must share our fragile planet.

—Robert Warrior, author, *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction*

In this powerful book, LaDuke explores issues that go way beyond the desecration of the environment and into the heart of insidious crimes against the very DNA of Native peoples.

—Amy Ray, musician/activist

LaDuke skillfully demonstrates why the protection of Native spiritual practices is critical to social justice struggles and to the survival of the planet. She weaves together a broad range of issues that all point to the impact of European cultural and spiritual genocide on indigenous peoples. LaDuke demonstrates again why she is one of the leading Native thinkers and activists today.

—Andrea Smith, author, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*

Through the voices of ordinary Native Americans, writer and full-time activist Winona LaDuke is able to transform highly complex issues into stories that touch the heart.

—Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, author, *Outlaw Woman*

Winona LaDuke's "activist scholarship" captures the essence of politicized spirituality that [combines] "ecological integrity" with our cultural identity for "spiritual health." It is books such as this one that will insure the passing of history and knowledge from one generation to the next.

—M.A. Jaimes Gueirero, editor, *The State of Native America*

Recovering the Sacred

The Power of Naming and Claiming

Winona LaDuke

South End Press
Cambridge, MA

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Recovering Power to Slow Climate Change

Just as the human body adapts itself to the regular intake of “hard” drugs, its systems coming to depend on them to such an extent that the user goes through a period of acute distress if they are suddenly withdrawn, so the use of “hard” fossil energy alters the economic metabolism and is so highly addictive that in a crisis, a user community or country will be prepared to export almost any proportion of its annual output to buy its regular fix.

—Richard Douthwaite, *Short Circuit*¹

Let's face it, we are energy junkies. The United States consumes a third of the world's energy resources with only a twentieth of the population. We own more major appliances, televisions, cars, and computers than we have people to use them. We even slather oil-based fertilizers and herbicides on our food crops. We have allowed our addictions to overtake common sense and a good portion of our decency. We live in a country with the largest disparity of wealth between rich and poor of any industrialized nation in the world. And, we live where economic power is clearly translated into political power. A good portion of that power is held in the hands of energy corporations. That is the story of the United States, and that is what we must change.

Oklahoma, the first “Indian Territory,” was a preview of the role Native Americans would play in the attempt to slake the settler society's seemingly insatiable thirst for oil. Edward Byrd, under a contract issued by the Cherokee Nation, was the first to discover oil in Indian Territory in the late 19th century.² Within just a few short

years, oil development raged across Indian Territory and stripped Native communities of control over the resources on their land. As historian Angie Debo writes, "The Department [of the Interior] was given complete control of mineral leasing by the ratification of the Creek Supplemental and the Cherokee agreements. Detailed regulations were adopted in 1903, and leasing developed rapidly. By 1907 there were 4,366 oil and gas leases in effect, covering about 363,000 acres."³ That was the foundation of most major oil companies in the United States.

A little over 100 years after Byrd's discovery, we can now begin to see the end of the world's oil reserves, the "peak" after which it will become increasingly difficult—and expensive—to uncover new oil fields. George Monbiot has reported that "every year we use four times as much [oil] as we find." Monbiot and others predict that the peak year for global oil extraction will arrive before 2038.⁴ In any case, the price of fossil fuels is likely to rise exponentially once peak production is past.

The Economics of Energy

"Energy is the biggest business in the world; there just isn't any other industry that begins to compare." Well-spoken by someone who should know. Lee Raymond is the chair of ExxonMobil, the largest energy corporation and probably the largest corporation in the world.⁵ The world's energy markets turn over a whopping \$1.7 to \$2 trillion a year. It is an immense business. And it will keep on growing as more and more countries and communities become electrified (a third of the world's population currently has no access to the world's power grid).

Tribes have historically played a large role in energy production, although they have received a pittance for their resources. Conservatively, 10% of U.S. reserves and energy markets are on tribal lands, yet tribes receive less than 1% of the value of those resources—far below their market value. Tribal energy revenues do, however, represent a significant part of many tribal treasuries. The Navajo Nation, for instance, receives the majority of its annual \$100 million operat-

ing budget from the royalties and taxes generated from coal, oil, and gas leases.⁶

Fossil fuels, fortunately, are far from the only natural energy resource to be found on tribal lands. In summer 2000, Energy Secretary Bill Richardson announced the release of a new report, "Energy Consumption and Renewable Energy Development Potential on Indian Lands." The study noted that "sixty-one Indian reservations appear to have renewable resources that might be developed for power generation at a cost of less than two cents per kilowatt-hour above regional wholesale prices."⁷ About half of the reservation-based American Indian community lives on these 61 reservations.

In the past few years, the work of Native Americans and their allies has created some significant changes. For instance, Great Plains tribes, largely members of the Mni Sose Intertribal Water Rights Coalition, have successfully negotiated for some of the electrical power from the very dams that flooded their lands half a century ago. The Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) and the Bonneville Power Administration are participating in these agreements, and a number of Native nations in the Missouri Basin are receiving 25% of their electricity from these dams at considerable savings over what they had been paying. The Rosebud Lakota, for instance, anticipate hundreds of thousands of dollars in savings from their WAPA allocation. Tribes in the Southwest have negotiated similar arrangements. This type of thinking, combined with energy efficiency and alternative energy in Indian Country, makes immense economic sense.

Taté: The Wind is Wakan

I am standing on Porcupine Butte, near a village with the same name on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The KILI radio station stands next to me, blasting 50,000 watts of power across the prairie, with everything from Lakota talk shows to almost any imaginable kind of music. KILI is an amplifier for the heartbeat of the Lakota Nation. The winds, or *Taté* (pronounced "taa-tay"), are blasting as well; my hair heads out in all directions in sort of an Albert Einstein 'do.

It is February, and the wind speed at KILI Radio clocks in at around 17 miles per hour, strong and prime for a wind generator. That is why I am here. A consortium of KILI Radio, Honor the Earth, the Intertribal Council on Utility Policy, *NativeEnergy*, and the Midwest Renewable Energy Association is putting up a wind turbine. We plan on having the turbine operational by 2006. A couple of bluffs over, a second wind turbine should be up and running in 2005 on the land of the White Plume *tiosapaye* (“extended family”) along the banks of Wounded Knee Creek.

From Porcupine Butte, the rest of the world seems distant—the politics of Washington, D.C., and the seats of state governments—but it is here that some of the most dramatic potential for transforming America’s energy policy is emerging. The Lakota are looking to harness *Taté* and play their part in moving us from combusting the finite leftovers of the Paleozoic into an era of renewable energy. It is all part of a strategy by Native people across the Great Plains to power their communities in an environmentally sound manner and to, over time, build an export economy based on green power. In the case of Pine Ridge, the wind energy potential is immense, with the possibility of tapping 4,500 times more power than all the reservation’s electrical consumers use. In the fall of 2004, Pine Ridge signed a \$300 million wind development contract with a Chicago-based wind company. In other words, things are changing, and rapidly.

I’m waiting to go on the air with Tom Casey, the station manager for KILI Radio; Debbie White Plume; and Stone Gossard, the bass player for Pearl Jam. The band estimates that it produces around 5,700 tons of carbon on a six-month tour and is interested in doing something to make up for that in ecological terms.⁸ Pearl Jam figures that renewable wind energy at Pine Ridge is a good place to start. (The Indigo Girls have also raised money for the wind turbines and have been to KILI a couple of times.) Today, we plan on talking about wind energy and energy politics, the war in Iraq, and of course music.

We watch as Bob Gough pulls up in his vintage blue Honda Accord with Zoe “the rez dog” in tow. Bob is a brilliant and funny

jack-of-all-trades: lawyer for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, erstwhile handy guy, and secretary for the Intertribal Council on Utility Policy (COUP). Comprised of 28 different tribes, Intertribal COUP is committed to restructuring energy production in the Great Plains. Bob’s vision and commitment are playing a key role in advancing an agenda of wind generation in tribal communities across the country.

That process is, in itself, more than a little convoluted. We are working in some of the windiest communities on the planet, with very little infrastructure. Tribal governments and communities have seen more than their share of lemon projects and been ripped off by a long list of unscrupulous and shady Indian agents, corporations, and *wasichus*, “those who take the fat,” the Lakota word for white people. Starting with that history, think about convincing a community that change is possible and that we can do something amazing. After you get the commitment to move ahead, then you have to leverage the resources and buck federal energy policy. There is only a pittance of money out there for wind turbines, and there are only a handful of manufacturers. Add to that the tendency of most of the folks who want to invest in wind energy (whether private interests or foundations) to spend money near urban areas, and that most of the wind technicians live in nice cosmopolitan cities pretty damn far away from Pine Ridge, or any other reservation.

Multiply all those challenges with bad policy. While a federal law requires that rural electric cooperatives and utilities “buy back” power produced locally, the “buy-back” rate is rock bottom, little more than stealing. In other words, most utilities would rather bilk their customers with the sporadic high rates of “spot” purchases of power (as Enron did during the 2001 California energy crisis) than encourage local power production and a just price for power. So you’ve got to be really creative, clever, and committed. That would be an apt description of Indian Country.

“We believe the wind is *wakan*, a holy or great power,” explains Pat Spears, from his home on the Lower Brule Reservation in South Dakota. Pat is a big guy with a broad smile, the president of Intertribal COUP, and a member of the Lower Brule Tribe. “Our grandmothers and grandfathers have always talked about it, and we

recognize that this is sacred and this is the future.”⁹ Indeed, the Lakota, like other Native peoples, have made peace with the wind, recognizing its power in change, historically and perhaps today.

Alex White Plume echoes Spears’s words, talking about *Taté* as the power of motion and transformation, a “messenger for the prayers of the Lakota people.”¹⁰ The power of the transformation is growing stronger these days and tribal nations want a return to, as Debbie White Plume puts it, “the power the Creator gave us,” not the power doled out by electric utilities and energy corporations.¹¹ The wind is as constant on the Pine Ridge Reservation as anything, bringing the remembrances of ancestors, the smell of new seasons, and a constant reminder of human insignificance in the face of the immensity of Creation.

Spitting or Pissing in the Wind?

“While we’ve figured out that you don’t pollute upstream from yourself, we now are just figuring out that you don’t pollute upwind from yourself,” Bob Gough tells me.¹² Such is the idea of the “windshed,” a term coined by COUP to talk about why anyone east of the Great Plains might want to support the idea of a bit more wind power and a bit less coal.

Already, on the many Minnesota Ojibwe reservations and essentially anywhere in the Great Lakes and Northeast regions, advisories put limits on the number of fish considered safe to eat. The culprit contaminants are mercury and heavy metals. Their origin: coal-fired power plants and incinerators. A number of New England states filed suit against power producers in the Midwest, hoping to hold them accountable for acid rain and air pollution as well as for noncompliance with the Federal Clean Air Act. Some of that pollution, however, may be coming from further west, since the prevailing winds sweep eastward from the Great Plains.

“They are burning dirt,” explains Pat Spears, as he talks about the North Dakota lignite that ends up being burned in Basin Electric Power’s coal-fired plants in the Dakotas. Basin Electric, according to a recent study by the Natural Resources Defense Council, produces the most CO₂ per megawatt-hour of electricity of any utility nation-

ally.¹³ “That is pretty much the dirtiest coal in the country,” says Pat Spears. A couple of these power plants are located just upwind from the Fort Berthold Reservation, and they spew poisons directly onto some Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara communities. In Montana, the Colstrip complex at the Crow Reservation contributes a heavy dosage of CO₂ into the skyline, and then, of course, it blows east.

Further south, the situation is similar. Of the top ten emitters of air pollution in New Mexico, most are on the Navajo Reservation. The Environmental Protection Agency reported in 2000 that two power plants and their coal mines in San Juan County released 13 million pounds of chemical toxins into the Four Corners air in one year alone—toxins breathed in locally by largely Native communities.¹⁴ All in all, Native nations, according to Joseph Kalt at Harvard University, hold the third-greatest coal reserves in the world. The Bureau of Indian Affairs leases those coal deposits to big corporations that make sure the coal gets to market, usually returning to the tribes only a pittance.

“We can either give you coal or we can give you wind,” Bob Gough quips. The theory of Intertribal COUP and its partners is that if we put up more wind power, those utility companies won’t have to buy coal or other fossil fuels or nuclear power. That’s the larger strategy. To get there is a bit more of a challenge; the power lines are literally clogged with coal, so we continue to work on decommissioning coal plants. One strategy that’s been put into place in several states is the establishment of state laws that require local energy companies to purchase a set amount of energy from renewable or efficient sources.¹⁵

Ironically, climate change has actually augmented utility company CO₂ output in the Great Plains. As the average temperature rises, the Rockies’ snowpack evaporates before the snowmelt reaches the rivers. As the water flow into the Missouri is reduced, the hydroelectric commitments of the region are not met, and so electrical contracts must be fulfilled with coal power, releasing more global climate change gases. It’s a really dysfunctional economic and ecological feedback loop, which is one big reason why a move toward wind power is important: We’re combusting ourselves to oblivion.

Global Warming and the Quality of Ice

Our community has seen real dramatic effects as a result of the warming that is occurring in the Arctic Ocean and the Arctic environment. In the springtime, we are seeing the ice disappearing faster, which reduces our hunting time for walrus, seals, and whales. The ice freezes later. Ice is a supporter of life. It brings the sea animals from the north into our area and in the fall it also becomes an extension of our land. When it freezes along the shore, we go out there to fish on the ice, to hunt marine mammals, and to travel. Ice is a very important element in our lives. We see ice in different ways. When the quality of ice—in other words, its hardness, its durability, and our ability to walk on it, hunt on it—changes, then it affects our life. It affects the animals too. They depend on the ice for breeding, for pupping, denning, lying, and having their young. They molt on it; they migrate on it. So ice is a very important element to us. When it starts disintegrating and disappearing faster, it effects our lives dramatically....

There is no doubt that the ice disintegrating and the changes that we see in the Arctic are caused by global warming.... While the effects we're seeing today are dramatic on our people in the present, the effects for our future generations are going to be much greater.

—Caleb Pungowiyi, Savoonga, Alaska¹⁶

On a worldwide scale, global warming is daunting in its scope and implications. In the past 200 years, we have caused the amount of carbon dioxide gases in the atmosphere to grow by almost a third. That's more than we have seen in the past 20 million years. The Earth's snow cover has decreased by 10% since the late 1960s, and since 1990, the thickness of Arctic sea ice from late summer to early autumn has decreased by 40%. Antarctica has lost ice sheets the size of Rhode Island. As a consequence of the ice melt, the sea level is on the rise, low-lying land is being flooded, and the prevalence of waterborne and airborne diseases is exploding. Insect reproduction has also increased exponentially. The spruce beetle is now able to reproduce twice annually and has laid to waste at least 4.2 million acres of the Alaskan spruce forests, and many more acres in other states

and Canada. New vector-borne diseases are increasing. West Nile virus is a sign of those viruses and diseases to come.

In terms of money, we meet with another worrisome problem. Munich Reinsurance, the world's largest reinsurer, has reported a record number of natural disasters affecting its clients in recent years. The increase in the number of forest fires and hurricanes in North America illustrates the early consequences of a changing environment. Munich Re expects that \$300 billion annually will be lost through weather-generated disasters by the year 2050.¹⁷ Journalist Ross Gelbspan reports that "Britain's biggest insurer [has] projected that, unchecked, climate change could bankrupt the global economy by 2065."¹⁸

Power, Inequality, and Environmental Injustice

The year is 2003, 14 years after the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska. The oil industry still drives the state's politics and much of the policy on the environment. Senator Frank Murkowski has just been elected governor, and he has appointed his daughter to fill out his term. Linda Murkowski is proposing a bill that would exempt most new oil exploitation from any environmental impact statements, and Prince William Sound, devastated by the Exxon Valdez spill, is still not cleaned up. Out of the 28 most impacted species by the spill, only two are recovering. "It will be a long time till we know the damages to our way of life," explains Dune Lankard, an Eyak Native from Cordova.¹⁹ And still, ExxonMobil tries to keep reducing the fines it should pay in punitive damages.

Originally, a \$5 billion award was approved by an Alaskan jury, but it was deemed "excessive" in 2001 by the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco. The legal battle continues to go back and forth. Not surprisingly, ExxonMobil argues for reduced damages despite record profits for the corporation. In 2002, it was the richest corporation in the world. In that same year, *Forbes* reported that CEO Lee Raymond received \$32.6 million in compensation, almost 10 times the energy industry median.²⁰

Dune Lankard, Evon Peter, Chief of the Gwich'in Nation from Arctic Village, and Violet Yeaton, from the Port Graham Village on Lower Cook Inlet, have joined with hundreds of other Native Alaskans to form the Alaskan Native Oil and Gas Working Group to challenge the "sacred cow" of Alaskan politics: the oil industry. They are also challenging the Alaskan Native Corporations, which the community members charge were created largely to exploit resources and continue to be one of the largest problems for Native peoples.

The new coalition also seeks to challenge the state of Alaska to look at diversifying the economy of the region and to address the pollutants now within the state. The challenge is immense. Alaska, although stunning, is also amazingly polluted. It ranks number four of the most polluted states in the country with over 535 million pounds of toxic releases into the environment in 2000 alone. Much of that is either military or oil industry pollution. The oil industry, like the military, has exemptions from reporting its toxic releases. The fact that federal law exempts exploration and production facilities—such as Prudhoe Bay and Cook Inlet, pipelines such as the TransAlaska Pipeline, and natural gas refineries such as Phillips Petroleum at Nikiski—from Toxics Release Inventory reports would, it seems, call into question the point of even having an inventory.

The industry justifies the reporting exemption by saying that the facilities are located "too far from communities to have an impact."²¹ Lankard, whose Indian name refers to "a little bird who screams really loud and won't shut up," makes clear that his concerns are not only aimed at the big corporations like British Petroleum, ExxonMobil, and Chevron but also the Alaskan Native Corporations. "The Chugach Alaska Corporation has decided it wants to drill for oil near Katalla, on the Copper River Delta and an ancestral village site of the Eyak," Lankard says. "We've never been asked for our opinion. The Copper River Delta is the world's finest salmon habitat and fishery, and we do not want to lose this way of life. If the development happens at Katalla, it will affect everything we know about the Copper River Delta."

Violet Yeaton of Port Graham Village echoes Dune's concerns: "Our traditional use in an uncontaminated state is crucial to the

sustainability of our culture." A 1997 EPA draft study documented heavy metal contaminants in the traditional resources. Yeaton tells me, "Before the final report was completed, the EPA renewed permits for oil and gas development to the companies. It is unacceptable that Cook Inlet oil activities be allowed to continue based on exemptions from the law, which are illegal elsewhere. We require zero discharge."²²

Robert Thompson is an Inupiat from Kaktovik, a village that has historically been involved in oil development. Acknowledging that many people are "in support of oil development in his area," he also points out that "the smoke from Prudhoe has reached Kaktovik at times."²³ The debate over opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has also been used to pit Native communities against each other. Some Inuit, for instance, hope to avert oil development in the offshore region that would impact their traditional areas and instead support oil development in Gwich'in territory. The oil interests, and subsequently the state government, have driven a complex, untenable wedge into the heart of Alaskan Native territory.

Alaska is a snapshot of how colonialism and neocolonialism are repeated. "The discovery of oil on the North Slope pushed Congress to enact the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971, which took nearly all the land from Indigenous control, and allowed the industry and state to gain access to the resources. It set up a tool to divide and exploit the Alaskan Native tribal nations and our traditional lands and resources," explains Chief Evon Peter of Arctic Village. When Alaska entered the United States in 1959, approximately 85,000 Native people lived throughout the state. The discovery of oil one year later drove a federal mandate to redress aboriginal title questions in the region and, in particular, to find a tenable legal loophole through which to secure an 800-mile pipeline through the heart of Alaska from the North Slope to the oil companies.

In 1971, the government, with an estimated \$562 million dangled by oil companies, finally figured out how to address the problem of Alaskan Native jurisdiction. As Clayton Thomas-Muller of the Indigenous Environmental Network explains, "President Nixon convinced Wally Hickel to retire as governor of Alaska in order to be

immediately appointed as the new Secretary of Interior, making him instrumental in brokering the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act.²⁴ Evon Peter notes that ANCSA was passed with little input from the affected Native nations. "With the passage of the ANCSA legislation, all aboriginal land claims were extinguished. The law passed without a voice or vote by Alaskan Native people or the general public."

Under the new system, tribal control of Native lands was replaced by a for-profit corporate structure, the Alaskan Native Corporations, and the Indigenous people were made shareholders. The situation in Alaska, then, was not so different from the "termination era" in the lower 48 states that liquidated the assets of many Native communities. There is widespread concern that ANCSA has wreaked social havoc on Alaskan Native communities.

Today, Alaskan Native Corporations, like the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, hold land entitlements to 5.1 million acres of land. Many of the corporations have entered into joint ventures or partnerships with mining and oil development companies. Although 90% of the jobs on Corporation projects are held by Indigenous shareholders, the Corporations' obligations to their out-of-state partners are far more sizable than their payrolls.

Restructuring the Energy Industry

The new power plants of choice the world over are using either natural gas or renewable energy and are smaller, nimbler, cleaner and closer to the end user than the giants of yesteryear. That means, power no longer depends on the vagaries of the [electric power distribution] grid and is more responsive to the needs of the consumer. This is a compelling advantage in rich countries, where the digital revolution is filling the thirst for high quality, reliable power that the antiquated grid seems unable to deliver. California provides the best evidence: although the utilities have not built a single power plant over the past decade, individuals and companies have added a whopping 6 GW of non-utility micro power over that period, roughly the equivalent of the state's installed nuclear capacity. The argument in favor of micro power is even more

persuasive in developing countries, where the grid has largely failed the poor.²⁵

Some of us will be in the forefront of the micropower program and others will not. ExxonMobil is pretty much the Wal-Mart of the energy business and will not be supporting the development of many alternatives. It will instead be ensuring that its production and exploration continue almost exponentially. ExxonMobil must find 1.6 billion barrels of oil a year just to stay even with its present production.

The output of "mature fields" diminishes at the rate of 6% to 7% per year. A shrinking resource base creates a drive for constant exploration and development. If the Bush administration succeeds in opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, ExxonMobil will be right in the forefront. But ExxonMobil will also not be investing much into alternative energy. In fact, the company spent "not a penny" in 2001 on renewable energy. Company boss Lee Raymond considers it "a waste of money," according to a report in *The Economist*. He says, "Oil and gas will continue to be the dominant energy for the next 25 years."²⁶

We can either be about getting some control over our consumption and production of power, or we can continue to relinquish that control to large corporations. Unlike ExxonMobil, which is only thinking forward a couple of decades, more and more Native communities, as well as others, are looking toward the alternatives that will endure into the future. Localizing power production, increasing the production of power for the grid as an alternative source of economic development, and having a vision for the future are only a few avenues by which communities are regaining local control over their power.

Democratizing Power Production

The United States is the wealthiest and most dominant country in the world, yet it can't keep the lights on in New York City nor can it provide power in "liberated" Baghdad. Centralized power production based on fossil fuel and nuclear resources has served to centralize political power, to disconnect communities from responsibility

and control over energy, and to create a vast, wasteful system. We need to recover democracy. And one key element is democratizing power production.

Alternative energy represents an amazing social and political reconstruction opportunity, one that has the potential for peace, justice, equity, and some recovery of our national dignity. Right now, we are missing the canoe. While renewable energy is the fastest-growing market in the world, the United States is dropping way back in the race to develop new energy technologies. Heck, the Rosebud Sioux had to import turbine parts from Denmark, and that's a long way away.

Investing in alternative energy is investing in jobs since the fuel supply is itself free, courtesy of the Creator. Alternative energy investment averages 60 times more high-paying jobs than those created by the fossil fuel and nuclear power industries. It is our choice. We can either create jobs and economic stability in Indian Country, or we can continue to line the pockets of utility and energy companies.

Conservation and alternative energy make huge economic sense. The Starwood Hotel group (which includes the Sheraton) recently invested in energy-smart solutions for 748 properties. The investments saved the corporation \$6.1 million in one year, the equivalent of 9,400 hotel-room bookings. Those energy savings also represent the equivalent of taking 1,800 automobiles off our roads, planting 2,400 trees, or disconnecting 1,200 homes from the electric grid.

We stand on the cusp of something important. By democratizing power production, we are investing in "homeland security." After all, who's going to fly an airplane into a wind tower? Some of us believe that instead of contaminating Newe Segobia (at Yucca Mountain) with nuclear waste storage, we should be investing in solar panels. We know that the wind blows endlessly on Pine Ridge, the poorest county in the country, and we believe there should be wind turbines here. We must be about democracy and justice. We must put the power back into the hands of the people. That is why what is happening on Pine Ridge and a host of other reservations is so significant. It is tribal self-determination, and it is visionary.

The tribal wind program is also an opportunity to bring the wealthiest Native communities (those on the east and west coasts) into a partnership with some of the largest landholding, wind-rich tribes in the country. This is not only about sharing wealth, it is about restoring trade relations between Indigenous nations, and, in some ways, allowing Native people an opportunity to recover land and culturally based traditions in the context of a new set of technologies and a new millennium. Speaking with some of the largest casino tribes at the United Southern and Eastern Tribes meeting in February 2003, Bob Gough laid out the potential for tribal investment, income, and environmental protection through new partnerships. "We don't just want to be there when the blue-haired ladies put quarters into the machines. We want to be there any time a light switch goes on."²⁷

The Mohegans of Connecticut have taken some of the first steps in adopting alternative energy. The tribe recently purchased a collection of hydrogen fuel cells to power its casino complex. While traditional generating systems create as much as 25 pounds of pollutants to generate 1,000 kilowatt-hours of power, the same energy produced by fuel cells equates to less than one ounce of pollutants. The Mohegans have been among the first to show an interest in investing in tribal wind power with the cash-strapped, wind-rich tribes in the West. A number of us hope this interest develops further.

The Lakota are also taking advantage of a new sort of politics on the wind. In March 2004, the mayors of 150 cities joined with Intertribal COUP, Honor the Earth, and other organizations in pledging to voluntarily meet the provisions of the Kyoto Accord, which the United States refused to sign. Taking things a step further, mayors of cities ranging from Denver and Duluth to Santa Monica and Dallas reiterated their commitment to make changes by issuing a Declaration of Energy Independence: "In the course of human events it has now become necessary for all people to face the threat of catastrophic global climate change and so we do hereby declare our commitment to a renewable energy future."²⁸ The mayors, joining with tribes, urged a commitment to renewable energy and called on Washington to support the transition.

In summer 2004, a coalition of churches joined in the effort, specifically supporting tribal wind generation as a centerpiece of energy justice and part of these churches' calling to be "stewards of God's creation."²⁹ Michigan Interfaith Power and Light, a collection of 100 congregations working to both mitigate global climate change and look toward energy and environmental justice, signed an agreement with *NativeEnergy* to buy "green tags," a market mechanism to reward green power producers, from the Rosebud expansion project and, over time, from other Native wind turbines. As with *NativeEnergy*'s support of the first Rosebud turbine, the green tags will be purchased on an up-front basis to help finance new projects.³⁰

Intertribal COUP and groups such as the Apollo Alliance, representing a host of environmental groups and 12 labor unions, are looking toward renewable energy component manufacturing as a way to create jobs here in the United States while mitigating climate change. The Apollo Project has called for a \$300 billion federal investment into renewable energy. That investment, according to the Project, would add 3.3 million new jobs and stimulate an estimated \$1.4 trillion in new Gross Domestic Product.³¹ The tribes' goal is to turn some of these investments into jobs in Indian Country.

So it is that new wind projects are planned for the reservations at Fort Berthold, Northern Cheyenne (Montana), Makah (Washington), and White Earth (northern Minnesota). The economics makes sense to tribes like the Assiniboine and Sioux of Fort Peck that hope to bring on-line a 660-kilowatt turbine. The Poplar, Montana, wind turbine would produce enough energy to reduce the tribal electric bill by \$134,000 annually and help finance other programs through savings.

While remote tribal communities on the Great Plains and elsewhere wrangle through the "white tape" created by the fossil fuel industry, they are clear about their commitment to ending the unsustainable exploitation of their natural resources. It is as if they were saying, "That was then; this is now. We will not be cheated or stolen from."

The fossil fuel century has been incredibly destructive to the ecological structures—the air, earth, water, and plant and animal life—that keep planet Earth habitable for humans. Whether human

populations will continue to flourish 100 years from now will depend on the choices we make today. Oliver Red Cloud, a traditional Oglala headman, reminds us of our spiritual agreements with the Creator when he says, "The *Takoche* [grandchild] generation is coming. We've got to take care of all of this for them."³² Native American communities are creating momentum for change and providing some critical leadership in the face of global climate change and the energy crisis to come. By democratizing power production, Native nations are providing the solutions that all of us will need in order to survive into the next millennium.