

Red Thunder Camp
Tepee Circle
(7-15-16)

Joe Azure: ...My son, Joe Gone, Professor Gone and we were thinking about he wanted to do a follow-up on some of these environmental problems we've been having, not only here but everywhere with the mines and the different big industry, big corporations going around poisoning and polluting our mountains and our different natural environment. Anyway, we kind of- this kind of came together about that about a year ago and we were thinking of where to have it you know; to do some interviews for oral history and stuff. And I got to thinking well this is where for us it all started with Red Thunder versus Pegasus Goldmines up here in the Little Rocky Mountains. Back in 1978 I was coming from North Dakota. I was at my father-in-law's ranch, Bill (Hall) over there and I was working with him, helping him out around the ranch. And we was coming back to visit my Grandma Annie () and we stopped halfway from Malta over there and I looked up here and I could see that big hole they chiseled out of the mountains up here above Zortman. And I got to thinking you know that mine, we never realized how bad it is and it seems to be getting bigger and bigger and bigger. 'Cause we didn't know what they were doing up there. We just heard they were mining is all. We didn't know anything about it. And I got to thinking you know that's not good. They look like they're chiseling the mountain down; tearing it down a little piece at the time. That's not good. And as kids we grew up in these mountains. We used to hunt and fish and hike and you know swim and drink water out of these mountains. And then after the mines came in we're scared to do it because they use a lot of poisonous chemicals; cyanide, arsenic, lime; different things to mine that gold out of there with you know. And so we kind of started talking amongst ourselves, I and Robert Gopher and Ali and Hank Chopwood and different ones. We started talking amongst ourselves about something should be done about that. I wonder if we could organize something and- so about the same time Robert was gonna start this organization called Loud Thunder for traditional cultural purposes; to preserve traditions and culture and try to get some land to practice you know round dances and stuff on and () there. Anyway and we started- he started that organization with the help of his kids and then he told me that we could use the same organization called Chapter of Loud Thunder and then somebody didn't like it. They thought they'd get sued you know; the big Pegasus Gold Mining would sue the company and it would backfire on him. So they recommended us to start our own nonprofit organization. So we did. We decided to start another one called Red Thunder Incorporated and we started that one and we got organized and then I advertised for a lawyer and we got a guy from Chester, Montana named Don Marble to volunteer to come and help us with environmental laws. Then he knew this other outfit in Denver and we got a hold of this other guy down in Denver. His name was Paul Zogg. Was that you, Ali?

Ali Zaid: Yeah.

Joe Azure: Yeah, Ali helped us get a hold of this environmental law firm called Land & Water Fund out of Denver and they were environmental attorneys; the whole group of them. And then

the one guy they chose to help us was Paul Zogg. He helped us with this environmental law stuff.

So we started filing briefs against the mining company and the Interior Board of Land Appeals back east in Arlington, Virginia. And we won a stay, an injunction against the mine. They were trying to expand it over ten times since 19- I believe it was 1978 or '74. I can't remember. They expanded several times without even environmental impact statement or environmental impact study of any kind being done up here; just tiering it; tiering it one expansion on another. And in the meantime they were causing a lot of destruction. We noticed the fish were disappearing, the deer were disappearing. The grass and the trees were dying along the creeks and the streams where they were flushing their poisons down. So we noticed there was something wrong so we started investigating it ourselves and doing it all on our own you know pretty much. We didn't have any funding from any government so there was nobody; the tribal government, nobody was helping us. We was doing it on our own you know; just a small group of traditional people here in Fort Belknap. And my brother-in-law, Robert Gopher, and his family down there in Great Falls came down to support us. So we worked pretty hard you know and then we had our friends from Denver; Ali and some others come up and support us you know and take videos. And we made a few documentaries. One of them is called *Indian Tears of Love*. It sure helped out. And what's that other one, Ali, that other video we made?

Ali Zaid: *Extinct Civilization*.

Joe Azure: *Extinct Civilization* we made right here; right out here in this area. That's why I was thinking that when my son, Joe, asked me to- you know try to do some oral history on that that I'd like to do it where it all started; right here; started right here in this Big Warm area; this valley, this Big Warm Valley. It started with a sweat lodge, with prayers, ceremony, suffering. You seen us working around here sweating. That's our Indian way. We put sacrifices ahead of ourselves to practice our ceremonies and our culture and our traditions. It's not like on Sunday we just walk into a church and you know pray for forgiveness and walk out; everything's taken care of. This, our Indian way, we do sacrifices and suffering. I've fasted in these hills and mountains for four days at a time without no food and no water to learn more about The Creator and the sacred ways of how the Mother Earth produces everything. You know all our Indian ways are connected to the spirit world and the Mother Earth. And that's where it all comes from. And our ancestors' teachings were handed down through oral history. A lot of them are not written down anywhere. And sometimes we carry these ways in a sacred way which means they're sacred or secret because just certain few could be trusted with them; not to put them up to seek glory or seek monetary gain you know. So with that I would like to pass the sweet grass around and ask the- ask my son, Joe Gone, to talk and then from there we'll all take turns talking. Talk a little bit about you know how we're going; what we're doing here I guess.

Joe Gone: Well first of all, I have to give dad credit for the idea of bringing us out here to your land and starting us off with ceremonies and a way of kicking off people who don't necessarily know each other, getting to meet each other, getting to interact; putting up a teepee and bringing a lot of people together to interact. And it's a way of getting comfortable. And so I appreciate

that idea. I'm glad it's coming to pass the way you imagined it. That's gratifying. Tiya and I last year, year before last when we were down in Bozeman visiting Montana State University, I was affiliated with the Native American Studies program there and one opportunity we saw was to try to rekindle some of the memories about Red Thunder as it undertook anti-mining work in the 1990's. I was just coming back to this reservation in that time period. I remember coming out here and seeing what was going on a few times. I sweat with dad and with Robert Gopher one time that I recall and was aware of all the activities, although not as in-depth and close-up as I wish I had been now. Because this is the kind of story you don't hear about very often, which is a story in which a big multinational corporation that's bound for profit for its stakeholders will mow over everything and everyone in its way to make rich people richer. That's the way of the world in which we live and it's very infrequent that people are able to stand up and say Hey wait a minute. That's not gonna work here. That's not how it's gonna play out. And oftentimes when it happens it doesn't matter; they get mowed over anyway. But I was privileged to be working for the Tribal Council in 1996 and the tribe was asked to sign a Consent Decree between Red Thunder and the tribes here and maybe the ZPA or the BLM, different government agencies to basically allow the reservation to get some kind of resources, reparations to help clean up this mess even though the mining company wouldn't have to admit wrongdoing in doing so. And I remember in the council chambers that time, I forget how many councilmen we had voting, maybe ten. And it was not clear what people were gonna vote because some people wanted to fight them in the courts and make them say that they had done wrong and make them pay millions and millions more than they would've had to under this Consent Decree. Whereas other people thought that all the lawyers in the world that any tribe could get wouldn't be enough to fight this corporation. So the vote came down tied up to one last councilman that was dad's cousin, William Snuffy Main. I remember Snuffy getting up in the chamber and saying Well I don't know what to do so whether to accept this decree or not. I'm just gonna flip a coin. So he took a quarter in the chambers and he tossed it and it landed on the floor and he walked over there and looked at it. Picked it up said Yep, it's heads. I guess we'll sign. So the tribe signed the Consent Decree and got a million and a half dollars or something to start cleaning up the water and whatnot. Not that long thereafter the mines declared bankruptcy and left a big mess up here; forfeited their bonds, which of course couldn't partially even pay for cleanup. It's ongoing today, I believe, still whether more money will come from the government to help clean up this mess. But the fact that they had to declare bankruptcy after being caught doing wrong by local people like Red Thunder, like my dad and these other people you've been talking about, there's a story that needs to be told because most people when they see a situation like this can't believe they can make a difference. But sometimes by miraculous circumstances a difference could be made. So that's the interest that Tiya and I have in wanting to make this story a little more publicly known so that around the world people could learn that sometimes you can put a stop to things that are being done that are wrong when it seems like there's no chance or no hope. So I'm really honored that we're all gathered here today and glad that a lot of my family are here I don't get to see very often. I'm glad that friends are here, people we've met before and some new people we haven't met. Because it's people coming together that make good things possible like they did in the '90s and like they can do now and like they'll do in the future. So I'm just pleased and honored that you all came. I'm glad that you're here and I'm glad to be sitting with

you here and hearing what all we have to say as we think and talk about these matters. Thank you.

Joe Azure: Very good. () [too low] Anything else?

Joe Gone: That's it for now.

Joe Azure: You want to pass that sweet grass around? Anybody wants to talk go ahead. Shanti you want to say a few words?

Shanti Zaid: Well I was pretty young when my parents were coming back and forth up here to the reservation and working with Robert. But I remember Robert coming down to Boulder a bunch of times, as well, and hanging out with him there. And I remember just a whole series of sweat lodges and I don't know if they were in Colorado or up here, it all kind of blends together. But I definitely remember that the sweat lodge was kind of the core of everything that we were doing; that they were talking about. The conversation was always filtered through that spirituality and through a sacred understanding of the world. It was never- it wasn't the same kind of environmentalism that's you know "we need to survive in the world" and "we're just destroying too much." But it was a kind of relatedness to the earth, a relatedness to the elements and something much more akin to hurting a family member. That was how this gold mining company was understood; the kind of damage that they were doing. And I remember lots and lots of road trips coming up back and forth from Colorado to Great Falls and to Fort Belknap and how long it took, you know; just the amount of effort and work driving back and forth and back and forth and constantly having meetings and constantly having sweat lodges, and trying to just figure out new avenues and new strategies and building such strong relationships in the process. And looking at different kind of political struggles now it's- you know you kind of see it as kind of this really hardship that's involved and people really suffering. But my memories of all of the work and the activism was just people joking all the time, people laughing all the time; just being creative, trying to think of new things and just you know the kind of spirituality that was at the core of it and the humor that was at the core of it is really strong in my memory; so this whole process of coming- figuring out the ways to address this gold mining company. So those are some of the memories that stick out for me.

Ali Zaid: Keep going.

Shanti Zaid: We'll be around later. It's your turn. I don't think I have anything else to say at this point. [laughter, cross talk] ()

Joe Azure: Hand it that way.

Shanti Zaid: All right.

Joe Azure: Your turn to say a few words, Ali.

Ali Zaid: Okay. Well I'm grateful to have this opportunity to come back together again and talk about this. It's been so long since we had a chance to get together like this. I'm grateful for Joe for bringing us together here and grateful for The Creator allowing him to do that. () So I'm grateful for all of this time that we have to get together to talk about it. It was my understanding that Robert was curious about this article that he read in the newspaper and it talked about Pegasus Gold and them using cyanide. And Robert said Well isn't cyanide what they use to kill people? And he mentioned that to either Joe or David up there and David told him that Yeah that's what they use cyanide for. So I guess that's how the conversation got started and I had no idea what was going on. On my end that's what was happening. Robert was involved, Joe was involved, David was involved and I had no idea about Montana or Fort Belknap or anything. But I started having visions and dreams. I'm reading this book called *Medicine Woman* and somehow that book touched me and it started- it triggered something in my brains; in my mind. And so I went on this search for a medicine man. It took me three weeks of asking everybody Do you know an Indian? Don't you know any medicine people? And they were like, No man, we don't know anybody. And it took me three weeks. I finally went to this restaurant one night and the lady said So you read any good books lately? And I said Yeah, I'm reading this book called *Medicine Woman*. I said I'm looking for a medicine man. Well let me go call my girlfriend. So she called her girlfriend and came back and gave me a phone number. She said Well he's coming to Boulder- he's coming to Boulder next week. So I called the phone number and I went to meet him and when I walked into the building it was a little late and I just sat by the door and Robert was up there talking. In my dream I had seen Robert's eyes and that was a vision. He was sitting on my sofa, I have an L-shaped sofa and he was sitting on that end and I was sitting on this end and I was laughing and crying, laughing and crying. And that was a dream. Well when I went to see this guy and he took off his glasses and I looked in his eyes and I knew that was him. So he looks at me back there and he's like Hey are you ready to go sweat? I didn't even know what a sweat lodge was. So we went and sweated and when we got out there we went in the sweat lodge and probably the most intense heat I've ever experienced in my life. But he said What's your name? I said My name's Ali. Yeah Ali what took you so long? I've been waiting for you. So that's how it began with me. And so long story short, he brought me up here or came up here to visit and he says Well I want you to- I'm gonna take you out to meet your brother. His name is Joe Azure. I said Okay. So I came out and that's how I met Joe. And then Joe took me around and started showing me all the people that was damaged by the mining company and hair falling out, deformities; all kind of stuff going on. And it had such an impact on me until I couldn't resist getting involved. So I went back and I sold my car. I had a little sports car. I sold my car and I bought a camera and I came up here and I started filming. And that's how it began. It seemed like every time I'd come up Robert, like Shanti was saying, he would throw me in the sweat lodge. Hey we need to pray first. We need to pray first. And so we did a lot of prayers; a lot of prayers. And then I would have maybe- I'd stay here for a week and we'd sweat maybe four days out of the week and then have to rush shooting that last day, trying to get as much as I could done and then I'd go back. So that went on for about a year and then he called me up and said Ali, we've got to put it together now. So I ended up- I had over 60 hours. I had almost 70 hours of footage and I had to narrow that footage down to 50 minutes and I didn't know what the beginning of it was gonna be like. I didn't know what the video- I didn't know anything how it was gonna- what was gonna

be the starting point. And so I was at Joe's place one night afterwards and was talking to this lady and I was- I said I'll put my camera up just for the heck of it and that ended up to be Rose Main. And so Joe was telling her about Hey Pegasus is up there destroying the land, doing all this and she says I can't believe you know they're doing this and she started crying. And that was the beginning. That was the opening part of the documentary right there with her crying. That's why it's called *Indian Tears of Love*. So from that point with all this footage, had to narrow it down to 60 minutes or 55 minutes. It all came through because of my dreams. My dreams showed me everything. They said Put this in, put this in. This is what that- and I couldn't wait to wake up, I couldn't wait to go to sleep. They were kicking in. It was so intense; it was so intense. I've never been involved in such an intense project. I really didn't have anything to do with it. It was just Spirit that guided me through all of this. And Robert kept saying- Robert kept saying We're getting help from my brother, Ali. And, He's the one that I had a dream about; and My brother's gonna help us do this; He's gonna help you; His name is Pete. He kept saying You remind me of Pete so much. And so I started putting everything together, putting everything together. He gave me three weeks to organize everything and that was the most intense three weeks in my life. But we did it and when- we never got any credit for what we did; never did; never got a thank you card; never got nothing. And I was really upset over it and Robert said Hey Ali we didn't get involved in this to get money from it or recognition. We got involved because we're trying to save Mother Earth and we're trying to save these people, help these people out here from this Pegasus Gold, which I found out was the third largest gold mining company in the world. So then I kind of relaxed and I understood. Yeah, you're right Robert. You're absolutely right. You know we didn't get in this for the money. And now here it is what, 30-some years later Joe Jr. gets involved and sees all of this and finally we get to talk about it; how it happened. It was a challenge, it was a struggle that they- that Pegasus, they had their own security team. They shot at us going up that mountain; hiking up that mountain and they poisoned that- what was that, Warm Springs out there where those little fish were? You guys used to swim out there?

Joe Azure: No, Big Warm.

Ali Zaid: Big Warm, yeah.

Joe Azure: Big Warm swimming pool.

Ali Zaid: Yeah, swimming pool. They- we went out there for the kids to swim and they had put poison in there. Killed all the fish.

Joe Azure: All the fish were floating dead.

Ali Zaid: Yeah all the fish was floating dead out there; just incredible what they did. They ran people off the road but we never stopped you know. So I thank Creator for that experience and I thank Joe Gone here for being such an instrument to bring it to life and let people know that Spirit is alive. And I found out that money don't run this universe or this planet. It's Spirit that does that. And if you tune into it you know it guides you. It'll show you everything to do. So that's been my experience with it. And before I forget, so I had it all put together in my mind,

just to go back just for a second. I had it all put together in my mind and had written out the narration, how it was gonna be narrated and I didn't know who was gonna narrate it. Karen was working at the time and Karen came home from lunch. I said We need to do this right now. You need to take your lunch hour and do this narration. So I recorded the narration. I went into the studios, I laid it down, and boom, that's how it all came together. It's an incredible story. Yeah. So it just shows that like Joe was saying, it was only Joe and I and Robert and Paul Zogg. That was it; nobody else that really got involved in it you know. Later on it was funny how I met Paul Zogg because I was in a coffee shop and the lady overheard my conversation and that's how the LAW, Land & Water Fund came about. And she said Oh you need to go see them. And I did and the lady in charge put Paul Zogg in charge of us. And Paul worked his butt off. He worked his butt off without any money; just totally pro bono. And then to have the tribe kick him out at the last minute and they get rewards for all this and he never got a thank you. That's why he's not here you know. He just- nobody ever recognized him for what he do. I told him Come and be a part of it but I couldn't convince him to come. But I'm glad I can share that with you. I had a dream and the dream told me to write down how this all happened. So I started writing down- I haven't finished yet but what I have done is the part that how I met Robert and if you're interested in that I'll make you a copy of that and then give it to you. Okay.

Joe Azure: Good one, Ali. Thank you.

Ali Zaid: () [too low]

Dylan Nelson: I just wanted to introduce myself. My name is Dylan Nelson. I'm a student from the University of Michigan and this is a remarkable and a unique opportunity for me. So I first just wanted to express gratitude to Tiya and Joe for taking a chance on me and then to the rest of you all for welcoming me. It's very rare that you get an opportunity to interact with something that seems very remote from your regular life. You know I'm from Chicago, I live in Michigan. But in fact this story is intimately connected to my life in a lot of ways and it's connected to all of our lives both in material and ideological senses. But just to reiterate what other people are saying both also in spiritual sense, so I'm really grateful for that. And then also just for the opportunity to be uncertain of myself and to have no opportunity to do anything but listen. And so yeah, I'm just grateful.

Ali Zaid: Great.

Joe Azure: Thank you.

Karen Robertson: This is gonna surprise everyone but I remember significantly more than a lunch-hour break and a narration [laughter] as far as my involvement with this whole project. [laughter] It was as Ali said, extremely intense. We were welcomed into a world that was foreign to us and embraced by everybody that was being brought together in a united front to protect Mother Earth. Robert was an incredible spiritual leader and mentor and helped everyone have a new way of viewing the world and the universe they live in. And in one of his talks you know he always had a way of bringing everybody to look at things in a unified manner. You know it all comes down to it doesn't matter who you are, what your religious background is,

what your cultural background is, what your economic background is. You know we all have the same needs; the same basic needs for clean air, clean water and clean food. You know that's our health and that's our life. And he was never an angry man. He always presented himself very calmly and he educated himself as many of the environmental issues that were existing here and then he set about educating everybody else but as Shanti said within the context of the sweat lodge and within the context of prayer and I think that's the difference and I think that was the way that we accomplished as much as we did accomplish. There were a lot of people making a lot of things happen. You know we had a small budget and pulling money out of the air was one of the games that we started to play [short laugh] and how people, the right people would come in at the right time. The money would be there when you needed it. We met- I feel incredibly honored to have met what I believe were some of the last few true traditional elders that were alive at the time that still practiced these traditional ways. And being a part of that experience transformed the way I think, the way I live and the way I believe. And I will forever be grateful for the experience and coming up here to Fort Belknap made all the difference. It took us out of the city, number one. It placed us in an environment where we were in a healing environment; where we were fasting, we were praying, we were sweating, we were you know eating together, talking together. It was a unified community of people from all walks of life saying this earth matters. This is our mother, it takes care of us all. And Robert would get up to those corporate people and say You know don't you have kids? Don't you have kids? That's all this is about you know; future generations. They need growing vegetables; they need wildlife; they need the fish. And the devastation and destruction that was taking place was everywhere. It wasn't just Fort Belknap. As they started looking more and more into these mines and how they worked, nearly- especially after *Indian Tears of Love* came out I remember all these reservations and councils calling Ali up and you know Come down to our reservation; it's happening here to. Come down to our reservation; happening here too. You know this 1872 mining law is part of all the public land, giving pretty much free access, \$5 a acre to these corporations that can come in, file a mining claim and public land primarily borders on reservations. It should be a huge issue for every reservation out there because they border public lands. And that was a primary focus that Robert tried to make over and over again. This is affecting native people everywhere but this is everybody's problem. It's everybody's problem. But that's why it was such a central issue to the native people; not just at Fort Belknap but every single one of them that bordered on public land. And it should matter to everyone that lives near those areas because those are the immediate areas that are being contaminated and it's throughout the world. It's throughout the world. Canada owns 85% of these mines; of these mining companies are coming out of Canada and they're worldwide. And the fact that they can come into the United States, Africa, Asia, wherever they are, file a claim, make their profits, file bankruptcy and then leave the area as devastated and stripped as they do is unthinkable. It is inhumane. It's just wrong. Don't you have kids? Don't you care about your kids; your kid's future? It was eye-opening in every sense; mentally, physically, spiritually. I am very, very indebted to everybody that was a part of that. Robert and his family, Joe and his family, the Canadians that were coming down to support and show their solidarity and share their history, their stories; what's happening up in Canada. People need to educate themselves on what's happening in their backyards. Because it's happening in Michigan. They're having a big ceremony up Lake Huron around the Great Lakes area this weekend too for all the toxins that are being dumped into those lakes. You know Flint;

you know the big Flint news. These environmental issues are affecting everybody and everybody needs to start waking up and either stopping it or you know wait for the inevitable. And I don't- don't you have children? [laughter] Did you want ().

Tiya Miles: I feel very grateful that Joe Azure said yes to the idea that we might come and be able to learn more about what happened here and to record it and to make it accessible to lots of people. I think it's so important. And I'm also grateful to everyone who's here; who accepted an invitation to come from far away and to be here with us, try to connect with each other and to learn together about what took place and how we can reconstruct it and share it. I think I will say here something I don't really say, which is that I'm someone who when I was in college I was all about the black world. I studied Black Studies. I was co-editor of the black literary magazine, I was in a black dance group. And I thought that African American history was the history and the black struggle was the struggle until I met Joe and realized that native people have faced just as much as black people. And before Africans were ever brought to this country native people were enslaved here. I learned through knowing Joe that many of these struggles that we view as being separated are actually connected and intertwined that the attacks on marginalized populations are interconnected. And so I think that the defense has to be interconnected, too. I started doing research on African American and Native American histories out of that experience and I've been doing that for quite a while in my career. But at some point I realized that if there's no Earth it doesn't really make a whole lot of difference to be doing African American history and Native American history; that the environmental issues are so pressing and the things that all humanity and nonhuman persons face in the future are so dramatic and dire that I felt that I had to start tending more closely to environmental challenges. And so it just so happened or maybe didn't just so happen that Joe Gone and I started thinking about Red Thunder and wondering if there was a way that we could learn more about it. And that led to a series of smaller things that has led to this bigger thing and I hope to bigger things to come because I really agree with what's been said already; that we need hope. I feel like we need hope. Humanity...

Karen Robertson: You think? [laughter]

Tiya Miles: Yeah, we need hope. And so finding these stories, that can just light that little bit of hope for people I think is so crucial. And that's really why I want to be involved in this.

Karen Robertson: Nice.

Rosalyn LaPier: Well I just want to begin by saying thank you for the invitation to come and be a witness to this process that you have begun and as a historian and as a native person I think stories are really important and I think both telling stories and recording stories are an important part of what we should do as a community. And I think that this particular story is something that really should be told, continue to be told and be recorded for future generations to know about. And I think a lot of times in the world that we live in some of these stories where it is people in the community who are doing the work often don't get recorded and don't get told or passed on and the stories that we get told are the stories where it's a large nonprofit or a large

NGO that's the one that gets the credit for some of the things that actually happen really at the grassroots level. So I think any type of process where the community itself begins that; doing their own storytelling I think is extremely important. And I just want to thank you for inviting me again and my family to be a witness to this process. Thank you.

Joe Azure: Thank you.

Connie Azure: I think I'm with Paul Zogg, Ali.

Ali Zaid: Yeah.

Connie Azure: I was videotaping Ali earlier on my phone and I looked at him and I said Ali do you think this would've ever happened; we would get recognized or you guys would get credit for the work you did? He said Yeah I knew it; I knew you would. I think I was 15, about 15 years old when dad put me as Secretary-Treasurer of Red Thunder. [laughter] Writing grants at 15 years old and trying to take down multimillion dollar mining companies.

FR-?: You go, girl.

Connie Azure: I remember a lot of hard work and a lot of sweat and tears and by the grace of The Creator they got it done. And I remember a lot of our people shunned us and my dad would be getting threats and people trying to fight him. We literally went through hell and back for this project (). It was really upsetting when the tribe came in and let them settle for what, a million and bankruptcy. The hard part's over. We got the mining company out and- I came from North Dakota and I just want to thank my brother Joe for inviting me. I swear The Creator was working getting us out here because I almost backed out you know. I was short on money and I just kind of said a little prayer and I knew I had to be here (). [too low] I get really emotional [crying] when it comes to this issue 'cause I come from a tribe where the almighty dollar rules multimillion dollar corporation oil companies that took over our land and destroyed our land and our people are dying, being raped, killed; where people gave up. They all just got on drugs. Threw their medicine bundles in the lake. If I learned anything from Red Thunder it's if anything's gonna get done it's got to come from a grassroots level. It's got to be people that unite that are led by The Creator; stand together and they stand strong and they get it done. You know I fell to drugs too and I couldn't see our land being destroyed. I lost hope. And I didn't really want to die anymore and I- I mean I didn't want to live anymore. I just wanted to die and I think that's about 80% of how our people are now. We have about five deaths a week. Our kids are being born addicted to meth and abandoned at birth. And right now we have lower life expectancy rates than countries at full-blown war like Iraq and Iran. And I've buried everybody I knew; all my friends. And the only thing that got me out of it and brought me back was what I learned right here; my teachings. I held strong to The Creator and I barely made it out. I ended up in ICU three times. Robert came to my bed one time. I about passed away. My brother David, he was a little boy. I was in Rochester. I got flown to Rochester and just got out of surgery and I just remember and Robert and Dorothy and my brother David standing around my bed and they were like talking to me, like telling me You can't go; not yet. And I know God has a purpose for all of us. Man, that was a lot of work. I was young and you know I probably didn't

put as much effort as these guys did into it. But man it's hard when you lose hope. It's hard when you see your people dying and your elders being abused; the kids being abandoned; riff raff coming in raping and abusing your people. The almighty dollar always comes in and destroys. And for some darn reason we're always sitting on something they want. How did we end up being on the damn biggest oil reserve in U.S. history? [laughter] I don't get it. And why did I have to be there you know? Life is really- I had a spiritual awakening and it took me- I'm 41 years old now and I really, really know how fragile life is because I faced my own mortality more than once. And I know I got to stay strong for the people and I know you know I'm getting up there and coming back two years clean. I started a company already, a nonprofit and I'm just in a fight right now to save my people. Try to get them off drugs and going up there and trying to help them 'cause I lived what they're living. And I'm just really thankful to be here. I'm glad to see you all and grateful to be able to participate.

Joe Azure: I want to thank you all for your speeches, talks and memories and all that. Each and every one of us is special to The Creator and he blesses us every day with you know just waking up. I think about it in the mornings when I smudge up. Just to wake up in peace and harmony is a great blessing. Overseas there's bombs going off, there's guns going off. People are scared. Mass evacuation of people are leaving their homeland as they're scared of the violence. There's a lot of violence in the world but for us to wake up in peace and harmony I give thanks every day just for that. Like my smudge, I pray to The Creator and I give him thanks just to wake up in peace and harmony without no violence, without no bombs going off, no guns, no one dying around me, no hardships; you know just to wake up in peace and harmony. If we really think about it that's a great blessing. A lot of people can't say that around the world. And we're all brothers and sisters, one tribe under The Creator. We come together here as a family, no matter what our tribe and no matter what our nationality, we're all children to The Creator. So I thought it'd be best to get us together here in this area where it all started. We always had our ceremonies here, our sweat lodges, our teepees, our memorial feeds, our pipe ceremonies and different things. We did have a pipe ceremony yesterday. There were just a few of us here but that's how we started it off. We started off right here in this area we had a pipe ceremony on the ground here. Nothing was up. There was no teepee, no sweat lodge up. But today it's different 'cause we put effort into it. We put our hard work and our love into carrying on these teachings of our ancestors, our native ancestors. I was taught love and respect for The Creator, love and respect for his creation of Mother Earth; the two-leggeds and the four-leggeds, the wings of the air and all the birds and the bees and the plants and the trees. And to see our beautiful Creator's creation of Little Rocky Mountains torn down and devastated for we don't even know how long. When they did the environmental impact study up here the BLM, the Bureau of Land Management, didn't even know how long the pollution would go on; indefinitely they said. Nobody knows the destiny of the pollution; when it'll end. But at the same time The Creator has his ways of healing things; healing the Mother Earth. Another thing I pray about is the Mother Earth you know. I give the Mother Earth thanks every day for her beautiful blessings of food on a table; children blessed with good health, their needs taken care of. At the same time I pray for the Mother Earth, healings for her. We look around the country everywhere there's mines going on poisoning places. There's oil drilling rigs going on poisoning places and hurting the Mother Earth you know. And I pray for her, too, that she'll be healed you know in a good way because

the Mother Earth is our mother. She provides us with everything. Even these cars and pickups we drive, they come from the body of the Mother Earth one way, form, shape or another. All these things we use; food, clothes, everything comes from the body of the Mother Earth. And then when we die our body goes back to the Mother Earth and becomes part of the Mother Earth. So we're walking on our ancestors here. Wherever we step, they died before us and they're all over the place. You know their bodies are in the Mother Earth. So with that I'd like to invite you guys to sweat. We're gonna do a sweat lodge ceremony directly after this. If you want to go ahead and eat and maybe we could sweat in shifts. The ones that are hungry could go eat and the ones that want to sweat, we could sweat and then we'll have another sweat later on. But the other half and the other half can eat you know; something like that would probably work best I think. And that's about it. I want to thank each and every one of your talks; it's a great thing. And I'm sure happy a lot of people showed up out here. I didn't think it would be that many people showed up. I'm glad to see my grandkids. I never get to see them hardly; my relatives, my kids you know. We ever hardly get together. I don't like them living on the reservation too much because too much hardships on the reservation you know. Even though we have beautiful country out here we still have a home to come back to and have ceremonies. We have some more- Ali was talking about a guy named Pete Gopher and he probably doesn't even know it but one of Pete Gopher's sons is out here.

Ali Zaid: Oh is that right?

Joe Azure: Yeah, one of the Mike Gophers, that's Pete's son. And then the other Mike is Robert's son. So they're here you know to show their support and solidarity with us and to also participate in the ceremonies and stuff you know. So you're all welcomed to share in our ceremony after a while but I think we'll split in two. Like I said some will eat and then the ones that are hungry could go ahead up to the house and eat. The rest of us will go ahead and sweat like that you know. I think it'll work better. Then we'll all fit, too. The sweat lodge is kind of small. We'll try that. If anybody wants to sweat, they're welcomed; women too.

Connie Azure: Well can we take pictures first before we sweat?

Joe Azure: Sure, sure.

Connie Azure: Like family pictures and then group pictures?

Joe Azure: Yeah, sure.

Connie Azure: 'Cause we don't have any pictures all together.

Joe Azure: Well I don't know about before we sweat because see this has all come on sudden and it's been raining and muddy out here and we just scrounged up enough wood to heat the rocks a little bit. [laughter] If we wait any longer the rocks are gonna get cold.

FR-?: Strike while it's hot.

Joe Azure: So why don't we just wait on- we're gonna be here tomorrow. We're still going on tomorrow, right? We're gonna be here tomorrow, too. Why don't we do that in the morning; take the pictures? That way we won't have no sweats or nothing to worry about going. The fire...

[end of recording]