

WHO ARE YOU?



I recently returned from Peru with 14 other Native Americans. We had completed a three week tour around the country demonstrating different types of North American Native dances.

On the flight home, I was able to catch just a small part of a movie called, "Anger Management." The movie starred Adam Sandler and Jack Nicholson. The one part of the movie I did see, I found very intriguing.

The scene had Adam Sandler's character joining an anger management group. Group leader/psychologist Jack Nicholson's character asking him, "Who are you?". Adam Sandler's befuddled character answers, "well, I do this for a living." The psychologist interrupts, "I didn't

ask you what you do for a living." "Who are you?" he asked again. Even more confused, he answers, "I like sports." The psychologist interrupts again, "I didn't ask you what you like, who are you?"

Like Adam Sandler's character in the movie I have noticed that most Native people don't know who they are. As Natives, we know where we came from and most of us are very proud of our ancestors. But who are we?

At Pow-Wows or gatherings, we identify our tribe, maybe our clan, we mention our family name, or maybe a notable aunt or uncle. But who are we as individuals? In Western society, a man's identity comes from his job, where he lives, his clothing, even the car he drives. But Native people have never bought in to this materialistic spirit. The government, according to the last census, identifies us as the poorest, most uneducated, highest in alcoholism-basically the most pitiful of all people.

So who are we? I would like to answer this with two unchangeable truths. First, we are the people of this land, put here by Creator God as caretaker of North America. Nothing can change this no matter what people groups migrate here or leave here; we will always be the host people. Second and just as important we are people created by God for purpose and destiny. Our identity, or for that matter, no mans identity can come from any other than from his Creator.

For hundreds of years, many men good and bad have claimed to speak on behalf of the Great Spirit-many great, brave, greedy and selfish men. Our identity is not built upon the path of other men but upon the path Creator God has given us. Let us return as Native people to seek God for our personal identity and purpose.