

## **Fifth Generation Cowboys, Take Note**

As a Native American, I actively practice a traditional way of life inherited from a lineage that goes back thousands of years. I take great offense at hearing Anglo-American descendants of immigrants, bragging that they are 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> generation ranchers, and asserting self-proclaimed and imaginary rights to grazing our “Traditional Sacred and Cultural Forest Lands.”

In the last 150 years, the land that became home for the western United States, has been home to Native American people. Our Ancestral ties to the lands of North America go back at least 20,000 years- a thousand generations. Euro-American immigrants are comparative newcomers to the West, and behave with an unjustified pride and arrogance. Considering the track record of the great-great-grandfathers of 5<sup>th</sup>-generation ranchers, whom were active participants in the perpetual genocide of indigenous Americans or who stood by with silent assent, they can be compared to current behaviors and actions of what’s now happening to indigenous wildlife.

In Washington state and throughout western North America, these selfsame ranchers have been illegitimately grandfathered in to letting their cattle and sheep graze off private lands, which somehow also grants them the illegitimate right to kill wolves indiscriminately, along with any other native wildlife that get in their way. State and federal agencies hire helicopters with shotgun hitmen to do the dirty work for them, yes, “a Shotgun without a scope,” as reported by Donny Martorello. At times, the poor animal only gets wounded, resulting in a slow and excruciating painful death, while the American taxpayer pays for all of it.

In reality, any 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> (or even 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>) generation rancher is still a descendant of immigrants, and traces of that heritage and legacy upon the American landscape resembles the same hostile takeover, and in wildlife terms, is comparable to an invasive species.

Ranchers need to stop killing native wildlife, particularly wolves, as well as grizzlies, which we hold “Sacred.” You can own your cattle, but you can’t own wildlife. The real natives have been here for far longer and are wise enough to

know it is a reckless danger to decimate wildlife, especially predator species. Real natives honor all creatures and their right to live with respect and dignity.

Traditional indigenous peoples have a deep spiritual connection with the land that appears to have no counterpart in Euro- American ranching culture. Western ranchers commonly assert a level of privilege and entitlement that is as illegitimate as it is arrogant. The religious perspectives of many Anglo-American westerners are best described as “dominionistic.” They believe the land and its native plants and animals were placed here solely for their benefit and exploitation. By contrast, our traditional view is that we are the caretakers for all of our children’s resources which include all four-legged and winged-ones that exist on Mother Earth. Our traditional view is to walk in balance and take only what we need to exist, while mirroring the true values of conservation and sustainability.

When Judge John McHale ordered a pause in the killing of the Old Profanity Territory wolf pack, it was only after the slaughter of 6 of them had already taken place prior to the hearing, according to The Capital Press. Then an additional 4 more had their lives taken away the morning of August 16th in Stevens County, Washington. This demonstrates how subservient the government is to the whims of one single cattle rancher, and how completely one-sided overall management of these lands are today. These ranchers are not Native, nor are their cattle to our forests, and as such, they both need to be permanently removed.

The Colville National Forest in central Washington covers 1.1 million acres in Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties. Some 5,500 cow-calf pairs graze there in the summer to advance the private profits of ranchers. The closing of these allotments could possibly set a precedent for other grazing grounds. One tribe, *Kalispel*, as well as the broader public, are already disgusted by the manure from cattle in the waterways and campgrounds. The sad reality is people are becoming unwilling to go enjoy their own public land, or go to their cultural lands for cultural practices.

Colville National Forest representative, Travis Fletcher, has refused to discuss numerous petitions to remove livestock as a measure to solve wolf-livestock conflicts at any of the numerous Washington Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) meetings we have attended. Travis Fletcher himself has told us that these

allotments can be closed, if it is in the best interest of the wildlife or the public. However, Fletcher refuses to discuss our requests and our petitions to close them at any WAG meetings.

The Organization that I volunteer for, *Protect The Wolves*, represents 57,755 individuals who are and have been requesting the closure of the offending grazing allotments since 2016. *Protect The Wolves* will again be requesting the closing of McIrvin's allotments in Stevens County, Washington, due to his refusal to even attempt to coexist on the landscape with Our Sacred Species. The Kettle Range allotments are currently where ranchers allow their livestock to contaminate public use areas and trails intended for the public's use with cow manure.

The LeClerc allotment closing for Tribal Cultural reasons was approved by Colville National Forest Supervisor, Rodney Smoldon, then denied by Regional Forester Jim Pena 2 days later.

The Public needs to know that this gross misuse of public land and abuse of constitutional rights is expensive. Keeping just the LeClerc allotment open will cost the taxpayer almost \$675,000, as reported by the *Capital Press*, a livestock industry trade publication. Ranchers profit from public funding and on public lands- taxpayer dollars.

In short, Susewind should resign for his complete mismanagement of our public resources. Director Susewind is a hired henchman for banks and ranchers, and his track record is the compelling sad evidence. Irreparable disruption to ecology for ranchers on public lands, at the cost of tax payers, is paradoxical to good fish and wildlife management. The resources entrusted to him exist for the entire public not just a few of the Ranchers in Eastern Washington.

Wolves are every bit as sacred as the grizzly to native peoples. Like indigenous Native Americans, wolves are native residents of what is now called the American West, which have a right to survival and to thrive on their native lands. It is of grave importance to comprehend the important ecological role that native species have in the natural order and respect it. These majestic "real native westerners" deserve far greater respect and deference than do newcomers in cowboy hats.

*Roger Dobson is an enrolled member of the Cowlitz tribe, and is Director of Tribal Relations for “Protect The Wolves”, A Native American religious 501(c)(3) organization, online at [protectthewolves.com](http://protectthewolves.com).*