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The Native American Healer Reviving the Medicine of Her Ancestors

"What's Shaking in Nevada?" - Stewarding the Nation's Nuclear Deterrent without Testing

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Bolsonaro, is the Brazilian Trump. "We, the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil refuse to be treated as inferior beings!". — at [Amazônia](#).

FOCUS: Jair Bolsonaro Launches Assault on Amazon Rainforest Protections

Dom Phillips, Guardian UK

Phillips writes: "Hours after taking office, Brazil's new president, Jair Bolsonaro, has launched an assault on environmental and Amazon protections with an executive order transferring the regulation and creation of new indigenous reserves to the agriculture ministry - which is controlled by the powerful agribusiness lobby."

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Homeland, beloved Brazil... the extermination of the Indians. *Leni Kroeff* [January 5](#) ·

[Canada Police Raid Indigenous Checkpoints Against Mega Pipeline](#)

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Excerpt: "Canada's Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP, is evicting two camps located on Wet'suwet'en territory, enforcing a court order that upheld in December a private company's request to exploit a pipeline crossing indigenous land." [READ MORE](#)



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"Three quail on a post." Seems like there might be a children's story in that title. (Genoa, Nevada, 1/7/2019.)

**The Native
American
Healer
Reviving the
Medicine of
Her Ancestors
Matthew
Green**

When an elderly Lakota woman limped into the medical tent, one foot sporting a painful

burn, Linda Black Elk knew just the herb that would help. She began boiling yarrow, a plant that blossoms golden yellow and has been prized for its healing properties for centuries. Though she had applied the remedy countless times, Black Elk was startled by her patient's reaction.

"She started to cry," recalls Black Elk, who apologized for causing her any additional pain. "No, these are happy tears," the woman said. "Because I remember my grandmother talking about this plant when I was little, and I remember the Lakota name of it."

Keepers of a once outlawed body of plant lore who have endured centuries of genocide, colonization and repression, Native American healers are working to integrate their traditional medicine with Western approaches to offer patients new ways to heal.

A self-described "nerdy indigenous ethnobotanist" who lectures at Sitting Bull College, a tribal university in Fort Yates, North Dakota, Black Elk is among the leaders of this renaissance, sharing her journey with more than 30,000 Facebook followers and speaking around the world. Determined to make indigenous healing more widely available, she is also setting up a local clinic inspired by the medical camp she operated during the 2016–17 [protests at Standing Rock Sioux Reservation](#).

“Probably what is most important to me is the realization that ‘traditional medicine,’ or Native ways of knowing and understanding the world, are just as important, valid and useful today as they were 1,000 years ago,” Black Elk says. “I feel like indigenous knowledge and medicine can work with Western medicine to create something that is more complete, more whole.”

With growing numbers of people searching for alternatives to the biomedical model of health care, Black Elk uses her apothecary to treat illnesses ranging from arthritis and respiratory problems to heart disease and diabetes to anxiety, depression and more.

But her larger mission is to build a bridge between ancestral wisdom and modern science. Married to a great-grandson of Black Elk, the Oglala Lakota medicine man whose [recollections of tribal history](#), cosmology and myth were recorded in the 1932 book *Black Elk Speaks*, the 44-year-old is completing a Ph.D. in ecology and environmental science. What distinguishes Black Elk from other academic researchers is that she considers medicinal plants, such as echinacea, rose hip, blue vervain and valerian, her “relatives” — no different from the flesh-and-blood members of her family tree.

“She has the college education, but she also has indigenous knowledge,” says LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, a tribal historian who has known Black Elk for years. “Linda has been able to balance two worlds. That’s what makes her unique.”

Born into the Catabwa Nation, Black Elk learned about medicinal plants from her mother and grandmother and knew from a young age that she was destined to be a healer. A lecturer at Sitting Bull College since 2001, she leads students on field trips to identify herbs and promote what she calls “food sovereignty,” or the right to access healthy and culturally appropriate food while living sustainably and in harmony with nature.

What distinguishes Black Elk from other academic researchers is that she considers medicinal plants her “relatives” — no different from the flesh-and-blood members of her family tree.

Black Elk’s work has taken her beyond the U.S. to address audiences in Great Britain, Italy, Australia and Guatemala; still, her priority remains protecting Native Americans’ cultural, spiritual and natural heritage — a calling she embraced in the wake of the Standing Rock protests against the proposed 1,200-mile Dakota Access pipeline.

Braving riot police armed with dogs and military-style vehicles, and getting hosed with water cannons in subzero temperatures, Black Elk ran a medical camp for sick and injured protesters. Some two dozen Western-trained physicians and Native American healers volunteered to pool their knowledge. The elderly woman with a burned foot was just one of the hundreds Black Elk treated, and that combination of modern and indigenous medicine served as a model and inspiration for the clinic she’s opening in Fort Yates.

“We created this space where anyone could come and receive health care,” Black Elk says. “We had people coming from hundreds of miles away — people who didn’t even care about the pipeline.”

Dr. Donald Warne, associate dean at the University of North Dakota's School of Medicine and Health Sciences and an Oglala Lakota, says Black Elk's values cut a sharp contrast to the profit motive driving most U.S. health care. "In modern systems, we're always concerned about intellectual property, who gets the credit, who gets the patent. It's not what she's about," he says. "She's about ensuring the knowledge is spread to people who need it and want it."

While many people attest to the benefits of herbal medicine, health care professionals strike a more cautionary note. Craig Hopp, an expert on plant-based remedies at the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, says a skilled herbalist might help with minor ailments, but his advice is clear: Consult a doctor for anything remotely serious. "As beneficial as herbs might be, they're not going to treat your cancer," Hopp says. "That's where I'd draw the line and say you need some serious medicine to get through this crisis and don't mess around with the other stuff."

What's more, say the skeptics, few indigenous remedies have been [subjected to clinical trials](#). But could there be other ways to discern the medicinal properties of plants besides carefully controlled laboratory studies? For her part, Black Elk prefers to approach a wild herb and offer it a pinch of sacred tobacco or sing it a song before asking for its message.

Sometimes she will hear a voice in her head, speaking in English or Lakota, or receive an image in a dream. "Other times, I will meet a plant relative, and I'll get an impression," she says, "a feeling of 'I can help you. I'm available for you to harvest, and use as medicine.'"

With researchers positing that sophisticated forms of plant consciousness may be possible, Black Elk looks forward to the moment when science catches up with the truth indigenous people have long known: The spirits of trees, herbs and flowers can teach as well as heal. One day, she hopes their lessons will not only open new pathways for curing diseases but also provide a blueprint for restoring the balance between people and the planet.

"As an indigenous woman, I have been taught to think, How will my actions today impact the next seven generations after me?" says Black Elk. "If anything, what happened at Standing Rock helped show the world that our connection to the land — which is still as vibrant and real as it always was — is the key to moving forward to create a better world for everyone."

5 Questions for Linda Black Elk



What was the last book you finished? *Aanjikiing/Changing Worlds: An Anishinaabe Traditional Funeral*, by Lee Obizaan Staples and Chato Ombishkebines Gonzalez, an amazing bilingual account of an Anishinaabe funeral rite from beginning to end.

What do you worry about? I worry about the water. It makes me crazy that the rivers and streams that my ancestors relied upon are so polluted.... I can't drink the water that nourished them. I can't cook with it. I can't bathe in it. All I can do is pray with it and for it.... I worry about what kind of life my children will get from the water that I am leaving behind.

What's the one thing you can't live without? I can't live without fermentation. I eat fermented foods and drink [fermented] beverages every day. As a nerdy scientist, fermentation is my most favorite chemical process.

Who's your hero? One of my greatest heroes is Sharice Davids [who recently became one of two Native American women elected to Congress]. She is also a former MMA fighter, a lawyer and an all-around amazing indigenous woman who sets the bar for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

What's one item on your bucket list? To canoe the waterways of North America with nothing but a knife, a tent and a fishing pole. I have the skills and motivation to live off the land for extended periods, and I'd love to be so close to Mother Earth that I have to rely on her for my very survival. But I'm not as strong as my ancestors, hence the knife, the tent and the fishing pole.

“What's Shaking in Nevada?” - Stewarding the Nation's Nuclear Deterrent without Testing

A Presentation and Discussion on 06 December 2018 with

David Feather , Senior Director, Program Integration
Mission Support and Test Services, Nevada National Security Site

For all of the old-timer and newcomer Nevadans in NSF who were always curious, but afraid to ask about the goings on at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS), or as many of us will always call it the “Nevada Test Site”, David Feather, Senior Director at NNSS, came to our rescue. Dave opened his presentation with heartfelt amazement about how many NSFers were out early on a chilly December morning to learn about and discuss national security issues. Dave is a newcomer to Nevada, having moved to Las Vegas about a year ago to serve as Senior Director with the new NNSS site contractor, Mission Support & Test Services (MSTS). Although still baffled about how to grow a tomato in the parched soils of the Great Basin, he is rapidly becoming big a fan of our Silver State.

Starting with a short history of the nuclear weapons testing program at the old Nevada Test Site (NTS), David reminded us that 1000 nuclear weapons tests took place at NTS starting in the early 1950s and continuing until 1992 when the U.S. halted nuclear weapons testing in accordance with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). About 100 of the tests at NTS were conducted “above ground” and the remaining 900 were below ground detonations set off in bunkers or tunnels. Rather than becoming obsolete in 1992, the NTS (now NNSS) evolved into a critical national asset for guaranteeing the safety, security and reliability of nuclear weapons in the stockpile without nuclear testing.

The Test Site is a very unique facility comprised of 1360 mi² embedded in 5000 mi² of the Nellis Air Force Base, located about 65 mi NW of downtown Las Vegas. It is owned by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), a semi-autonomous organization in the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), and contractor-operated now by MSTS. NNSS is the only place in the U.S. where explosives and nuclear materials can be “mated” for the purpose of testing. It is much more than just a remote, secure and geologically-stable place in the Mojave desert; it is also home to a complex of state-of-the-art fully-instrumented test facilities staffed by over 2200 scientists, technicians, and skilled laborers. Three major programs are integral to the current mission of NNSS – stockpile stewardship, global security, and

environmental management of the legacy sites used for nuclear testing.

Of the work conducted at NNSS today, 90% is for the NNSA Stockpile Stewardship Program (SSP) and the remaining 10% is for environmental management and global security customers from the Intelligence Community, Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, and law enforcement agencies. The remote desert environment of NNSS is ideally suited for testing tools, techniques, and training for to protect against radiological, biological, and chemical weapons proliferation and attacks.

The key mission for NNSS, stockpile stewardship, grew out of the need to unpin nuclear weapons designs with a more first principles science approach, rather than the build-test-rebuild approach that had dominated the early days of the nuclear program. Every year the three NNSA National Laboratories (Los Alamos, Livermore and Sandia) and the DoD must certify the viability and reliability of all stockpile nuclear weapons based on sophisticated models designed to mimic the behavior of materials under extreme pressure and temperature conditions similar to those accompanying a nuclear detonation and on a suite of non-nuclear tests conducted at NNSS.

Since its inception over 20 years ago, science-based stockpile stewardship has dramatically increased our knowledge of the fundamental properties of nuclear materials and reduced the uncertainty about the reliability, safety and security of nuclear weapons. Back in the old days a nuclear test was followed by a gaggle of scientists racing out to collect and analyze samples from the test site to ascertain, after the fact, what really happened. Today non-nuclear tests are conducted in steel vessels contained in deep underground tunnels at NNSS. Scientists monitor carefully constructed tests of controlled amounts of nuclear materials and explosives with very powerful high-speed X-ray photographs taken as the explosion is unfolding. Test data are then used to validate and/or adjust the models.

Physical tests are also conducted at NNSS to determine the material properties of plutonium under very high pressure and temperature using gas-gun technologies. Relying on a long history of experience handling and testing nuclear materials, scientists and highly skilled technicians assemble test devices and conduct a range of experiments that validate the stability and reliability of nuclear materials and weapons without having to “shake the desert.”

Dave reminded us that NNSS is also home to unique facilities where intelligence, law enforcement, and other government officials can “live-test” nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological detection systems using real materials and simulants designed to detect the proliferation or use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In the unimaginatively named BEEF (Big Explosives Experimental Facility), several agencies can conduct tests on large amounts of high explosive materials under controlled and monitored conditions.

On a topic near and dear to the hearts of many NSF regulars, Dave let us know that NNSS is home to a series of Source Physics Experiments designed to mimic illicit nuclear tests conducted by adversaries such as North Korea. Scientists from U.S. national laboratories are able to test new and novel seismological and other nuclear test diagnostic equipment under real-world conditions at NNSS.

Nuclear accident and incident testing and training for first responders is another key global security program. NNSS technical experts based at Nellis and Andrews Air Force Bases conduct real-time monitoring for chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) devices during major events such as New Year’s Eve celebrations, Inaugurations, and the Super Bowl.

Dave concluded his excellent presentation with the take home message that DOE is currently making

substantial investments in NNSS facilities to improve our ability to maintain our nuclear deterrent and detect and interdict the proliferation of WMD, globally. On a positive note for students and others looking to pursue stimulating careers in national security, MSTS is committed to hiring 350 technical positions in the near future. Hopefully some of you may want to brush up on your nuclear physics and consider a new career in the south...while most of you may just want to attend more NSF meetings.

Graciously fielding a range of interesting questions, Dave reminded us that contrary to the antics of James Bond and Jason Bourne, nuclear weapons do not have an easily accessed panel where our hero can cut the green (or was it the red) wire to stop the device and save the world. In the real world, nuclear weapons are made from uranium, plutonium, high explosives and along with a bunch of non-nuclear components that can degrade over time. Luckily for all of us, NNSS tests and retests all these components to make sure that our weapons would work as and when expected (if ever needed) and never, ever when not expected.

On the timely topic of the President's threat to Russia to withdraw from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, Dave cautioned that despite Russia's potential treaty violations pulling out INF could have negative geopolitical considerations. In his personal opinion, the U.S. could design and assemble new weapons that would work without nuclear testing. That said, manufacturing all the non-nuclear components would pose a big challenge. If the U.S. proceeds down the path of withdrawing from INF, other countries may feel compelled to do the same, returning us to nuclear arms race that would be very costly and destabilizing.

Addressing questions about chemical and biological testing done at NNSS, Dave reminded us that this topic is a very high priority for the USG given the plethora of threats and events by both state and non-state actors. NNSS is actively engaged in response and recovery training for first responders through simulant tests of chem-bio devices in mock railcar, subway car, and other confined spaces.

In addition to training U.S. experts, NNSS also cooperates with nuclear and non-nuclear weapons experts from other countries. To reduce the risk of a nuclear accidents worldwide, NNSS hosts other countries to participate in nuclear safety training and programs designed to safeguard nuclear materials. Dave let us know that Russian experts would be visiting NNSS the follow week on one of these exchanges.

So, what happens to all the nuclear waste that was generated on NNSS over decades of testing and use. Factoid one from Dave is that 93% of NNSS was never disturbed in the legacy programs. The Desert Research Institute leads the cultural preservation programs on site and has reported on the unique, pristine ecological conditions of much of the site. That leaves the remaining 7% that is actively under waste consolidation and clean-up by the DOE Office of Environmental Restoration. Clean-up programs are slated to continue for the next decade and the USG had committed to monitoring and protecting these sites "forever."

Dave delicately danced on the final third-rail question many in the audience had come to hear...What about Yucca Mountain? Prefacing his response by stating that MSTS does not have responsibility for operating Yucca, he reminded us of three considerations for using the facility in the future; 1) the sunk cost of the extensive resources that still exist there, 2) missions that may be executed safely and securely on site, and 3) the political environment that may (or may not) make any future programs viable.

On the specific topic of using Yucca for potential reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel in the future, Dave invoked the "cupcake" analogy of our current nuclear energy fuel cycle. Most of the world uses "once-through" nuclear energy designs, which resemble eating all the icing of a million cupcakes then tossing the cake out to be disposed of. Reprocessing would constitute finding a safe and secure way to put the

icing back on the cake so it could be used again. Although technically doable and environmentally more beneficial than mining more uranium, preprocessing spent nuclear fuel is both politically and economically intractable at present. The concept did make a comeback a few years ago when DoD considered investing in small portable nuclear reactors to reduce proliferation and guarantee reliable fuel supplies for troops at home and abroad. These programs died an untimely death due to the political fallout following the Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan and the economic fallout due to the overwhelming success of fracking natural gas in the U.S. Bottom line on Yucca for now is...as goes politics in Nevada, so goes Yucca!

In follow-up to his excellent NSF program, Dave is exploring opportunities for a small group from NSF to visit NNSS sometime next spring/summer. Please let Patty or me know if you would be interested in participating and we will keep you informed as plans materialize and are tested for reliability, security and safety.

Mr. David Feather , serves as the MSTS Program Integration Senior Director at the Nevada National Security Site, leading the Transformation Office and integrating program activities across NNSS. He has over 25 years of weapons experience both as a federal employee with the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) in Washington, D.C., and with Honeywell at the Kansas City National Security Campus. Most recently, he served as Senior Director of Strategic Transformation at the Kansas City National Security Campus, growing the portfolio of Strategic Partnerships Projects. While at the Department of Energy, Feather served as Director of Planning, Analysis, and Program Integration for Stockpile Management leading budget formulation and execution for the nuclear weapons production and operations programs. David graduated from the University of Kentucky with a BS in Electrical Engineering. He received a Master's Degree from Vanderbilt University also in Electrical Engineering.

[Dec 6 David Feather What's Shaking in Nevada Slides](#)

There's just one week left to [apply to join](#) the 2019-2020 Global Health Corps (GHC) fellowship class.

We've been searching high and low, near and far, for young leaders passionate about community, social justice, and health equity. Applications have been pouring in, and we're so excited to review all of them! **Have you [submitted your application](#) yet? If not, you have until next Wednesday, January 16 at 12pm EST / 7pm CAT / 8pm EAT to do so.**

GHC fellows undergo intensive leadership development training while working for 13 months within [high-impact roles](#) at health-focused [partner organizations](#). Here are just some of our exciting openings:

In Malawi...

- [Data Analyst](#), Cooper Smith
- [Business Development Officer](#), Amref Health Africa
- [eHealth Officer](#), Clinton Health Access Initiative
- [Marketing Analyst](#), Banja La Mtsgolo

In Rwanda...

- [Design Fellow](#), MASS Design
- [Supply Chain Officer](#), Solid'Africa
- [Finance Program Coordinator](#), Ministry of Health
- [Teaching and Learning Coordinator](#), University of Global Health Equity

In Uganda...

- [Curriculum Development Officer](#), Spark MicroGrants
- [Informatics and Data Analyst](#), Brick by Brick Uganda
- [Communications and Franchise Marketing Associate](#), LifeNet International
- [Health Worker Performance Management Officer](#), IntraHealth International

In the United States...

- [Program Manager](#), Vecna Cares Charitable Trust
- [Population Health and Quality Initiatives Associate](#), Housing Works
- [Advocacy Technical Specialist](#), Global Handwashing Partnership
- [Starr Center Program Coordinator](#), Montefiore Community Pediatrics Programs

In Zambia...

- [Senior Research Associate](#), National Health Research Authority
- [Resource Mobilization and Partnerships Officer](#), Planned Parenthood Association
- [Communications Officer, MACEPA](#), PATH
- [Public Health Analyst](#), Ministry of Health

Some tips to keep in mind as you're working on your application:

- When you submit your application, you'll receive a confirmation email from no-reply@email.zenginehq.com.
 - Didn't get it? Check your spam folder!
 - Still didn't get it? That likely means you didn't submit your application yet. Log into your account to check or email applyinfo@ghcorps.org with any questions.
 - Already got it? Congrats on applying!
- Recommendation forms are due **Wednesday, January 23**.
 - When your reference submits your recommendation form, both you and your reference will receive a confirmation email from no-reply@email.zenginehq.com, subject line "Global Health Corps Recommendation Form Submitted."
 - Already got this email? You're golden!
- You can view your application at anytime by [logging into your account](#).
- Still have questions? Our [FAQs page](#) has lots of helpful information, including a video tutorial on the application process.

Still have questions? Join us for an upcoming Facebook Live broadcast with GHC fellows and alumni:

>> Saturday 12 January at 7am EST / 2pm CAT / 3pm EAT
featuring our Malawi crew -- [RSVP here](#).

>> Monday 14 January at 12:30pm EST / 7:30pm CAT / 8:30pm EAT
featuring our US crew -- [RSVP here](#).

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