

Excerpt from Indian Country by Cinnamon Spear (Northern Cheyenne)
“Indian Country is entirely complex:

We have Rezzers
Off-Rez Rezzers
Urban ndnz
Enrolled
Not enrolled
One nation
Multiple nations
Light
Dark
Rich
Poor
Traditional
Not traditional
Those with degrees
Those with ceremony
Ndnz who’ve never left home
Ndnz who’ve never been home

THE SPECTRUMS ARE ENDLESS.
THE SPECTRUMS ARE ILLUSIONS!

We need to learn that we’re Indigenous.
We need to learn that we’re sovereign.
We need to learn that that means something.
We need to learn that we are spirits first.
We need to learn we’re human beings next.
We need to learn how to co-exist.
We need to learn where we each are.
We need to learn to respect each other.
We need to learn what privileges we have.
We need to learn what weaknesses we have.
We need to learn that each of us is worthy.

We need to learn to work together for the betterment of the collective. We were once communal societies: Every person had value.

The colonizer divided us. The colonizer broke up our families. The colonizer built fences in our homes. The colonizer created haves and have-nots. The colonizer stole our food sources and destroyed our economies. The colonizer replaced our political structures with his failed democratic form of government. The colonizer did all of this, and more, and it's not OUR FAULT. But it is OUR RESPONSIBILITY to heal our selves, families, communities, and nations.

What are we doing about it? Do you even realize that just because this was done to us doesn't mean we have to live with it?! We are in charge of our own existence and we can absolutely change for the better. It starts with YOU. Yes, YOU, whoever is reading this.

We never used to exist as individuals or as individual families. We were communal, a collective. We all lived, hunted, camped, prayed, and created together. Each of us today has adopted an individualistic me-me-me mentality. Mine-mine-mine, not ours. We have to be aware that the colonizer's thoughts have made home in our heads. More importantly, we need to be willing and intentional to police our own thoughts so we can make a shift! TO SAVE US.

Harm never used to live in our homes. Danger never used to live in the darkness. Cheyennes never used to beat or kill each other. We never used to harm our own bodies with poison every day. We had trust and love and safety and celebration and real honor. We all used to share and help each other. We all provided for and protected each other.

We CAN GET BACK TO THIS WAY OF LIVING. We CAN GET BACK TO THIS WAY OF THINKING. We CAN GET BACK TO THIS WAY OF BEING. The change starts INSIDE each and every single one of us. You have to do the work. No one is going to do it for you. “