**Five Steps to Healing**

**the Wounds of Colonization**

In his book, *In the Light of Justice: The Rise of Human Rights in Native America and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the notable Pawnee attorney, Walter Echo-Hawk, explains how all Americans—Natives and non-Natives—are injured by our history of injustice and its legacy. For healing to free us from these wounds, we all need to participate in a healing process. He draws on many wisdom traditions to offer these five steps to healing:

1. **Recognize that harm has been done**: acknowledge that injury or harm has taken place

2. **A real apology is sincerely made and forgiveness requested**: the person or institution that harmed another apologizes in a sincere and appropriate way, admits the specific harmful actions they have committed, and asks for forgiveness

3. **Accepting the apology and forgiving the wrongdoer**: the harmed person or community accepts the apology and forgives

4. **Acts of atonement; the process of making things right**: the parties agree on voluntary acts of atonement by the wrongdoer that will wipe the slate clean

5. **Healing and reconciliation:** the atonement acts are carried out in a process that fosters justice and compassion and genuine friendship

Completing these steps may take years, decades, or centuries. The important thing is to start with the first step: acknowledge the harm, and commit to working through the next steps toward healing. It is important to take as much time as necessary, involving all the stakeholders, achieving unity, in order to complete each step. In chapter 10 of his book, Walter Echo-Hawk describes these steps in detail, and explains how the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples opens a path toward national healing.

**Resources:**

A beautiful film about reconciliation and healing called, “**Dakota 38+2**,” is posted at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pX6FBSUyQI> (1 hour and 18 minutes)

Read about the ongoing, exemplary Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation project here: <http://www.mainetribaltrc.org/>

Learn about **The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.**  See:

* Native American Rights Fund, *“Let All That is Indian Within You Die,”* <http://www.narf.org/pubs/nlr/nlr38-2.pdf> Contact Donald Wharton or Brett Shelton at Native American Rights Fund, 303 447-8760, or Denise Lajimodiere, President, National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, at 703 231-7214
* Boarding School Healing Project, <http://www.boardingschoolhealingproject.org/>