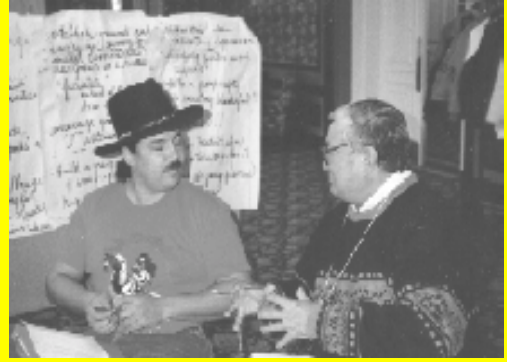


During my childhood, I remember mostly that my father drank and knocked me around. He worked at different jobs, but was usually home when I got back from school. I didn't like coming home without my mom being there, but she worked full-time as a housekeeper in a motel. One day my dad got mad because I didn't want to get smokes for him. He kicked me and broke my rib. As soon as my mom got home she drove me straight to my grandfather's house. I hardly knew him, because he lived on the reservation. She told me I was going to live there for a while. I was eight years old. Ten years later I moved to a place of my own. I guess you could say my grandfather became my mentor. My parents, who were both Crow, never talked about their Indian life, but my grandfather was full of stories, legends, and songs. He taught me about traditions and customs that were part of my ancient heritage. While I knew I was one of the First People on Earth, I think my parents felt shame about it. Kids at school called me apple pie—red on the outside and soft, white mush inside. I didn't know what that meant until my grandfather, Running Wolf, explained how the whites and Crows divided up the world, and how the whites settled for prejudice, while the Crows opted for wisdom. He also taught me about healing plants, respecting the earth, and my inner life. My pain and my mother's anguish brought me to this place. I guess you can benefit from adversity.



C.R.

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