

Letter to the Editor: Honoring Larry Casuse

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 10 March 2023 03:08



Dear Editor,

In 1973 there two were events that shook “Native America” to its core. The U.S. Government/Military Siege of Wounded Knee, South Dakota and the cold-blooded murder of a young Diné (Navajo) warrior named Larry Casuse, co-founder of Indians Against Exploitation, in Gallup. There was no “Community Conversation” then and the silence of “leadership” is complicity now. Alcohol is still illegal on the Navajo reservation.

Gallup earned the moniker “Drunktown, U.S.A.” after the ABC News Segment showed the world the unholy trinity still exists even after the tragic events 50 years ago. The Liquor Establishment (that Larry fought against), “Law Enforcement” and the “Court System” that are still in denial while our Diné people continue to suffer and die from alcohol. Gallup still has 23 illegal liquor licenses *over the legal state limit*. The failed attempt to address this issue is the example of Nanizhozhi Center, Inc., where enabling is offered along with violence, robberies and excuses marked by two successful lawsuits against the multi-governmental organization.

As the president of the Kiva Indian Club at the University of New Mexico, Larry saw the rampant abuse of our people at the hands of these greedy owners of the Bulk Alcoholic Poison they hawk to other surrounding Navajo communities with individual bootlegging in mind. This escapes the eyes of those promoting a town that still depends on the sales of alcohol to thrive.

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After Larry was slain, his body was mercilessly dragged out onto the streets of Gallup and left uncovered while cops took photos of themselves standing over his lifeless body as if they had killed a trophy animal. It is very likely that the “trophy photo” still hangs at the local Gallup Fraternal Order of Police. This is Gallup’s Legacy.

As co-Founder of Indians Against Exploitation, Larry also educated us about the Jewelry Industry takeover: From the renowned Annual Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial to the Annual Native American Arts Market and the multitude of jewelry shops owned by real (Middle Eastern) “Indians” that pervade the city. Ironically, the majority of the shops are owned by non-natives that make a great living while many of the artists who create the jewelry live below the poverty level.

In Wounded Knee, there are reminders that we live with the false narrative of a Government that still holds an innocent man, Leonard Peltier, in their Florida prison. This is the continuation of the exploitation of “Native Americans” that they cannot change. The European Invasion left its Trail of Bloody carbon footprints on the backs of the Indigenous populations that were massacred under a Genocidal Policy that still exploits us to the day we die or are killed at their hands.

There is irony in this. While Gallup holds record numbers of Liquor Licenses, the city continues the Legacy of “Drunktown, U.S.A.” with impunity causing the catastrophic numbers of death in every form and possibility. From 1973 to this day. And like an alcoholic in denial, the end story always stays the same. No change, only new high numbers of those who die by alcohol in the “Indian Capital of the World”.

***Sincerely,
Mervyn Tilden
Kinlitsoh Sinili
(Church Rock), NM***