

Thoreau's Focus on American Indians to be Revealed at Aspen Seminar

ASPEN, Colo. – May 16 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – “Why, then, make so great ado about the Roman and the Greek, and neglect the Indian?,” wrote Henry David Thoreau in his Journal in 1857. A missing piece of what shaped this icon and American consciousness will be revealed at a weekend seminar in Aspen, Colorado June 3-5, 2005, entitled “Thoreau and the Evolution of the American Mind: The Next Step.” Thoreau scholar, Bradley P. Dean, Ph.D., will introduce highlights of Henry’s 12 “Indian Notebooks,” which he said, “includes just under 4,000 manuscript pages, probably to write a book he did not live to publish.” They reveal how Thoreau was intrigued by American Indians since his boyhood, and how this involvement influenced his philosophy, according to Native Voices Foundation (NVF).



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Photo Caption: Penobscot Chief Joe Polis, one of Thoreau's three personal heroes. Courtesy of Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art and ThoreauSociety.org.

“America’s most beloved disobedient,” says NVF’s Suzy Chaffee, “Thoreau inspired such leaders as Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, and free spirits around the world.”

To be held at a Rocky Mountain wildlife preserve in the heart of Aspen, the seminar is based on ideas illuminated in the 5-part film series: *The American Evolution: Voices of America*. Produced and directed by Connie Baxter Marlow and Scott W. Snare, the film series also explores: The significance of Thoreau’s life-changing experience on Mt. Katahdin in Maine, which helped form his mystical, transcendental philosophy, and how this expanded reality relates to the American Indian’s understanding of the nature of the universe. The films also revisit his timely essay, “Civil Disobedience,” out of which we may find insights to take the next step in consciousness.

“According to Ralph Waldo Emerson,” states Dean, “Thoreau’s personal heroes were three men: Poet Walt Whitman, abolitionist John Brown, and Penobscot

Chief Joe Polis, who served as Thoreau's guide to the Maine woods in the summer of 1857. Polis was able to tell the botanist a medicinal use for every plant he could show him. What also fascinated Thoreau, was how Polis flourished in both worlds, embodying a synthesis of white and Native American cultures – living in a beautiful house on Maine's Indian Island, while thriving in the wilderness and being an effective leader. Thoreau leveraged the strengths and insights of native peoples to improve upon the emerging new American culture. Folks will also be surprised that Thoreau was also a top ethnologist of his time, and the study of the Algonquin Indians was his primary scientific focus."

The evolutionary film series was shot on location in Concord, Massachusetts, and New York City, and features Thoreau through interpreter Richard Smith; Arnie Neptune, Penobscot Tribal Elder; Imam Feisal Rauf, American Muslim; Kyriacos Markides, Greek American author/sociologist; the mystical Mt. Katahdin (Maine); Dean, Marlow and others. Together they weave a tapestry of ideas from which a new way of thinking may emerge. "Thoreau respected and experienced the land like an American Indian," said Neptune. "He is a model of the white part of the four colors of humanity, each with a purpose, now coming together to heal ourselves and Mother Earth."

"Thoreau is taking us to the next step," declares Marlow. "Just as his essay, 'Civil Disobedience,' changed the world in the political arena through Gandhi and King, I believe the time is ripe for Thoreau's mystical experiences to come to light."

The seminar will run as part of a series of events being held in conjunction with the photography exhibit "Rhythms of Creation: A Family's Impressions of Indigenous Peoples of the World," which will hang in Aspen's Red Brick Center for the Arts throughout June. "With this exhibit and events we explore the evolution of the American Mind from a new perspective to find a pathway to those elusive 'inalienable' rights of peace, life, liberty and happiness, which a combination of American Indian and European vision promised in the American Constitution," says Marlow.

These events are co-sponsored by Native Voices Foundation, a Colorado 501(c)3 non-profit partnership, which inspires U.S. ski communities to welcome their tribes back to their beloved ancestral mountains to ski, snowboard and share their earth-honoring culture, and Friends of Earth People, Marlow's foundation, which has been creating forums for visionary Elders to share their understanding of the nature of the Universe since 1991. Part of the seminar fee is a tax-deductible donation to NVF. (www.nativevoices.org)

For Seminar Information and Registration go to: www.theamericanevolution.com

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News issued by: Native Voices Foundation

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Original Story ID: (381) :: 2005-05-0516-005

Original Keywords: Native Voices Foundation, NVF, Henry David Thoreau, The American Evolution: Voices of America, seminar, Colorado news, Aspen, Penobscot Chief Joe Polis, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Connie Baxter Marlow, Scott W. Snare, Bradley P. Dean, Ph.D., Thoreau and the Evolution of the American Mind: The Next Step, Rocky Mountain wildlife preserve, non-profit org, nonprofit, Friends of Earth People, Suzy Chaffee Native Voices Foundation