

## Seventh Generation Earth Ethics: Native Voices of Wisconsin

Patrick Nunnally  
*University of Minnesota*

ISSN 0003-4827

Copyright © 2016 State Historical Society of Iowa. This article is posted here for personal use, not for redistribution.

---

### Recommended Citation

Nunnally, Patrick. "Seventh Generation Earth Ethics: Native Voices of Wisconsin." *The Annals of Iowa* 75 (2016), 96-98.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12275>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

comes a much better read. The interweaving of local and national news with family stories helps readers understand the interplay between these larger and smaller worlds, and how lives went on, in spite of the massive changes occurring during those years.

Unfortunately, the reader (or at least this reader) comes away wanting unresolved issues resolved and wondering about how it all turned out. Probably because of the availability of family documents, it becomes mostly the story of DeLuca's mother, Helen, and less the story of the larger family. In particular, I wanted to know in greater detail how things turned out for Adele. Did she ever divorce her problematic husband? What about her son, with all of his many physical challenges? What happened to him? Details are thin on the changes ahead for the rest of the family as well. DeLuca comments in the epilogue that her generation no longer lives on the farm, but how, when, and why did that transition occur?

These are not the only mysteries in the book, and some are quite sensitive. One presented itself with Adele's letter of January 15, 1935. What she described would seem to be her seeking out and having an abortion in response to a pregnancy coming too soon after the birth of her disabled son. Is that, in fact, what she was describing? More discussion (any discussion) would help to shed light on a very important Great Depression story about the problems of obtaining effective contraception and the troubles families faced when trying to deal with a child's disabilities. This is a place where readers should not be left wondering what happened. The same might be said of the family's struggles with mental illness, with one son committing suicide and a second suffering to an extent requiring hospitalization at least once. Was Donny able to deal successfully with his illness and live a reasonably happy life in spite of the limits of effective treatment at mid-century? This good book would be made better with just a little more attention to these and the other issues mentioned above.

*Seventh Generation Earth Ethics: Native Voices of Wisconsin*, by Patty Loew. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2014. ix, 230 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$22.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Patrick Nunnally is coordinator of the River Life Program, part of the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Minnesota. His Ph.D. dissertation (University of Iowa, 1990) was "Visions of Sustainable Place: Voice, Land, and Culture in Rural America."

This collection of twelve interviews with Native American leaders from Wisconsin delivers exactly what the title promises, distinctive voices

that, collectively, portray a broad and deep ethic that is grounded in the earth, in community, and in relationships among people. Most of these men and women made their contributions in the twentieth century, a period of tremendous though uneven change across Wisconsin's indigenous communities. Representing all of Wisconsin's American Indian communities, the people here speak to issues such as environmental protection, treaty rights, education, and the maintenance of culture.

The stories and voices heard through this book are important in their own right. All struggle in one way or another with the second-class status allotted to Native Americans during this period, and all surmount the particular challenges they face in distinctive ways. Hilary Waukau, from the Menominee Nation, began his career as an activist for treaty rights by working against "termination" of Menominee sovereignty in the 1950s. By the 1990s, he was an international leader in global efforts to preserve indigenous rights. By contrast, Thomas Ste. Germaine served the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe community as an attorney after a career that took him to law school after several stints in professional football.

Some particular events and themes recur. The "Walleye Wars," a series of confrontations in the 1990s that arose from the exercise of treaty rights to fish northern Wisconsin lakes, were part of Waukau's story, as well as formative in the career of Lac Courte Oreilles' James Schlender. Treaty rights activism is central to the lives and careers of five of the twelve individuals profiled. Water is another important motif, whether in the artistic work of Truman Lowe or the life and work of Frances Van Zile, who is profiled as "Keeper of the Water."

The book is written in a manner that makes it accessible to a wide audience, which it richly deserves. Scholars of environmental history, of the varied and complex histories of American Indian people, and of gender will find much of interest here. Nonscholars who have professional commitments in these areas will find these lives interesting as well, as will people interested more generally in the history of the Midwest.

That said, it should be noted that author Patty Loew does not provide much analysis or scholarly context herself for these stories. The lived experience of remarkable people takes center stage, and it is up to readers to add their own perspectives on issues such as the history of Indian boarding schools, for example. Readers without that breadth of contextual knowledge will still find much of value here, as will readers looking for regional perspectives. The histories told here of Wisconsin are replayed with variations in Iowa, Minnesota, and across the Midwest.

Perhaps the book's greatest contribution is its eloquent reminder that Indian people are still here, that despite all odds they were not all driven away by the seemingly unstoppable forces of colonization, western expansion, disease, and racism. The region's indigenous people have always been, and remain, important parts of the region's demographics, culture, and history. Their stories should be foundational to the human history of this place.

*Equal Before the Law: How Iowa Led Americans to Marriage Equality*, by Tom Witosky and Marc Hansen. Iowa and the Midwest Experience Series. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015. xiii, 236 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer John W. Johnson is professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa. His books include *Affirmative Action* (2009); *Griswold v. Connecticut: Birth Control and the Constitutional Right of Privacy* (2005); and *The Struggle for Student Rights: Tinker v. Des Moines and the 1960s* (1997).

*Equal Before the Law* was published in June 2015, within days of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark same-sex marriage decision, *Obergefell v. Hodges*. The timing was fortuitous. *Varnum v. Brien*, the 2009 Iowa Supreme Court decision examined in *Equal Before the Law*, was an important link in the chain of state and federal legal precedents that led to the nationalization of same-sex marriage by the nation's highest court. The story of the road to same-sex marriage in Iowa needed to be told. It is a saga populated with intriguing personalities, complicated by rapidly changing legal issues, shot through with partisan politics, and contested as a high-profile skirmish in the culture wars.

Various individuals could conceivably have written a book on the *Varnum* case. An activist in the LGBT community, for example, could have prepared an impassioned apologia for same-sex marriage. Or a litigant or lawyer in the Iowa case could have crafted a riveting day-by-day account. Or a political scientist or constitutional historian might have produced a book replete with legal ruminations and lengthy footnotes. But none of these categories of writers were first off the line. Instead, *Equal Before the Law* is the work of two accomplished Iowa journalists.

Tom Witosky and Marc Hansen, both formerly of the *Des Moines Register*, begin their treatment of same-sex marriage in Iowa in the late 1990s. Iowa was then one of the vast majority of American states with statutory bans on same-sex marriage. In addition, the country was under the sway of the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which forbade states from according full faith and credit to a same-sex mar-