

## INTRODUCTION



### ***“Why the Hell Do I Need to Know All This Stuff?”***

In 2015, two teams of respected geneticists—one from the Harvard Medical School Department of Genetics, and the other from the University of Copenhagen Centre for GeoGenetics— independently published papers containing groundbreaking evidence that stunned the scientific community. After years of exhaustive research and worldwide DNA testing on living humans and skeletons as old as 24,000 years, they finally put to rest the mystery of the origins of Native Americans. Armed with their genetic proof, they announced, with much fanfare: Native Americans descend from a single-source population in Siberia.

Today, though both teams of researchers agree upon where Native Americans came from, they and their contemporaries continue to argue, snipe, and bicker, over the details. Some assert a single migration theory, while others insist on multiple migrations separated by thousands of years. Some even have the audacity to suggest that the first people didn't walk across the Bering Land Bridge, but rather, arrived by boat. Most dismiss this last “radical hypothesis” as preposterous.

What's both funny and sad about all of this testing, researching, postulating, and arguing, is that nobody thought to simply go to the source, listen to what the Indians had to say... and believe them.

Because, decades before all that testing, researching, postulating, and arguing, even a little seven-year-old girl named Mary knew that her ancestors came from Siberia... *by boat*.



Because there are countless ways that archaeological dating can be corrupted, throwing off results by millennia, there exists no *irrefutable* archaeological evidence of Siberians having migrated further than Alaska prior to about 15,000 years ago. Therefore, historians, archaeologists, paleoarchaeologists, geomorphologists, anthropologists and a host of other -ologists assert that there were no humans occupying the Americas before then.

But again, there's a tiny problem with this theory....

The Columbia River Gorge is a place of great beauty and power. The steep canyon walls, formed millions of years ago, climb to 4,000 feet alongside the continent's fourth largest river that rises and falls with the Pacific Ocean tides and mountain snowmelt cascading over cliffs in one of the world's largest, and most dramatic, concentrations of waterfalls. This was the site of Wy-am, a great cultural center and the longest continuously inhabited settlement on the North

American continent. Native people traveled from as far away as Alaska, the American Southwest and the Great Plains for trade and ceremony. Here, many archeologists will tell you, Mary's people have lived for no more than 12,000 years. But the oral history of her people describes the Missoula Floods that scoured the majestic gorge more than 15,000 years ago. And interestingly, we have Mary's Uncle Simon Goudy to thank for this evidence. In the early 1900s, *before* the theory was first postulated by the geologist Harlen Bretz, a man named Lucullus Virgil McWhorter recorded Uncle Simon accurately describing those floods.

And therein lies the truth and wisdom inherent to an oral tradition of which little is known outside the small group of Native Americans who have preserved it.

"It is a law for Indian people that we must—we *must*—hand down our oral history," Mary asserts.

*We must.*

"When I was little and my grandmother would take me to different reservations, she'd tell me about her relationship to the reservation and to the people. And I'd always listen," Mary laughs, "but I'd wonder, 'why the hell do I need to know all this stuff?'"



And that is why faith is so central to our story—because sometimes the collective truth compiled by the brightest, most studied minds in the world, with millions of dollars in funding and the most advanced technology and research facilities at their disposal, cannot stand up to the veracity of a seven-year-old Indian girl who listened when her grandmother told her she was a Siberian princess.

Even smaller than the group of traditional Native Americans who follow the law of oral history, is the group believing that their knowledge should be shared outside of their culture.

Frank Fools Crow, the highly respected Oglala Sioux elder and organizer of the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee, was one of those few.

He said, "survival of the world depends on our sharing what we have, and working together. If we don't the whole world will die. First the planet, and next the people.

"The ones who complain and talk the most about giving away Medicine Secrets, are always those who know the least."

Frank Fools Crow was also Mary's teacher and friend. When he was very old and preparing for death, he sent his headdress to his friend Bob Ferron, the grandson of Oglala Sioux Chief

Luther Standing Bear, to repair for his burial. Bob, who had introduced Mary to Frank, asked the Chief if he could use the opportunity to teach her how to tie feathers.

“I expect you to teach her what she needs to know,” replied Fools Crow, “because one day she will need to make one.”

So, when Mary tells a story, I’m inclined to believe it.



“Thousands of years of my family history are written in stone on the Columbia River.” Mary once told me, “and my grandmother knew what each of those petroglyphs meant. She showed me the past, present, and future of our people on the walls of The Gorge.”

Not all truths can be proven—nor, when one is writing about actual outlaw bikers, should all truths be proven, let alone discussed! And it is certainly true that truth can be stranger than fiction. So have a little faith as our story unfolds, and trust that the path to preserving (or even discovering) your faith may lead outside of the law.