

Transcript: Frank Waln talks Native History, new Single and Seventh Generation Prophecy

<https://youtu.be/RCDkSdZu1ZE>

Disclaimer: This is a YouTube auto-generated transcript so there will be some errors.

00:09
everyone you are listening to vocal Oh
00:11
radio I'm Jesse Menendez my in studio
00:14
guest indigenous hip-hop artist mr.
00:17
Frank Waln how are you man what's up
00:19
brother is good to be back man I'm doing
00:21
good and it's an honor to be back on the
00:22
show now we've had conversations over
00:24
the years several yeah but for the sake
00:27
of our audience and maybe people who are
00:29
being introduced to you for the first
00:30
time let's give people a little
00:31
background about you and where you're
00:33
from
00:33
okay well I'm AC chungu Lakota hip-hop
00:36
artist and I actually come from the
00:37
Rosebud reservation in South Dakota my
00:40
reservation is located in south central
00:42
South Dakota that's where I was born and
00:43

raised in my tribe is the rosebud Sioux
00:45
tribe and that's home that's where my
00:47
family is I came out to Chicago in 2011
00:50
to attend Columbia College Chicago and
00:52
that's where I got my degree in audio
00:54
arts and acoustics why I produce an
00:56
engineer and I'll record my own music
00:58
and that that's how I ended up staying
01:00
here in Chicago but yeah I'm an
01:02
indigenous hip hop artist producer
01:03
performer and I travel around the world
01:05
sharing my music with people yeah you do
01:07
a great job of that as an indigenous
01:09
hip-hop artist I've asked you this
01:11
before but do you feel the burden of
01:14
representation that every thing that you
01:17
put down on tape everything that you rap
01:19
about and write about has to do with you
01:21
and the story of your people as opposed
01:23
to being able to just write a song about
01:25
your love for hip-hop or a graph or
01:27
breakdance yeah man it's a it's a pretty
01:29
it's a pretty unique position being an
01:32
indigenous hip hop especially in the US
01:34

where we're like completely erased you
01:35
know from the from from the minds of
01:39
society so I don't know if I feel a
01:41
burden so much anymore as I understand
01:43
my position in that and at the end of
01:45
the day I'm gonna write a song about
01:46
whatever I feel like whether that's a
01:48
love song or speaking on that history
01:50
but being a positive representation but
01:54
I think for me right now where I'm at is
01:56
a I to be a positive representation
01:59
because I didn't have that when I was
02:01
growing up you know like there was no
02:03
positive indigenous representation on TV
02:06
or music for me to look at and be like
02:08
there's a young indigenous person from a
02:10
reservation who's doing what they want
02:12
and calm
02:13
their message or you know who they are
02:15
where they're from and so once I started
02:18
getting attention for my music I was
02:19
like you know I'm gonna fill that void
02:21
because I wish I would have had that
02:22
when I was younger and I think that's
02:24

just how I was raised by my mom and
02:25
auntie's if you see a job that needs to
02:27
be done you do it and so I guess I'm
02:29
filling that role because I want to but
02:32
at the end of the day I don't fall I
02:34
don't fall into that trap of of you know
02:37
feeding the the outside Society what
02:41
they want from native people you know at
02:43
the end of the day I'm going to be the
02:44
artist that I want to be what is that in
02:45
your opinion what society wants from the
02:47
native people stereotypes man feathers
02:50
and leathers and you know the noble
02:53
savage you know every day especially in
02:55
a city like Chicago where we have in
02:57
need of mascot
02:58
you know I'm faced with those
02:59
stereotypes every day and so in just the
03:02
ignorance you know a lot of the history
03:04
of this piss turi of this country and
03:06
the history of my people and indigenous
03:08
history is US history
03:09
a lot of that history has been erased or
03:11
just flat-out totalize about in US
03:14

history books so you know after 500
03:16
years of that you just have this
03:18
overwhelming ignorance that exists in
03:20
this country about indigenous people and
03:22
our realities and our histories so I you
03:24
know I face that every day but people
03:26
usually want to put their story or they
03:28
try to view you through a colonial lens
03:30
every time you know you once shared a
03:33
story with me that I thought was
03:35
heartbreaking and alarming you just
03:38
mentioned ignorance in a city like
03:39
Chicago a city that I think the citizens
03:41
fancy themselves as progressive right
03:43
you were at school coming out of an
03:46
elevator and a young woman was in the
03:47
elevator with you and she remarked on
03:49
the beauty of your hair yeah yeah I was
03:50
I attend the Columbia college and I
03:52
was staying in the you see downtown my
03:55
first year here and I was overwhelmed
03:56
I'm from the country I was born and
03:58
raised on a ranch you know so just the
04:00
city life was it was really overwhelming
04:02

for me at first and so I get on the
04:04
elevator and this girl gets on she's not
04:06
native and I have long hair I've braids
04:08
she's like you have really pretty hair
04:09
what are you I was like thank you I'm
04:11
Lakota I could tell she didn't know what
04:13
that meant so I was like I'm Native
04:14
American and she said you guys are still
04:16
alive you know she thought we were
04:17
extinct and you know just think about
04:20
that let's just pause there's college
04:21
educated adults in this country that I
04:23
think indigenous people don't exist and
04:25
everyone in this country is
04:27
indigenous land it's kind of it's kind
04:29
of unfair he talked about the lack of
04:31
positive representation and media
04:33
growing up and let's be frank not only
04:35
was there lack of positive there was an
04:36
abundance of negative representation you
04:39
came out with a song recently one that
04:41
had an impact on you and a number of
04:43
ways could you remember seeing Disney's
04:46
Peter Pan when you were a kid
04:48

it's really enjoying it and then there's
04:49
this one scene that pops up that
04:51
impacted you then and fast-forward to
04:53
the present day impacted you again in a
04:56
way that you were able to revisit that
04:57
song and flip subvert the narrative that
04:59
it gave you back then yeah most
05:01
definitely so I you know like like a lot
05:03
of kids from my generation you know I'm
05:04
20 27 now we are loved all the Disney
05:08
movies in the even though they were
05:09
spoon-feeding those subliminal messages
05:11
and I was watching Peter Pan and was
05:13
really into it and then the scene with
05:14
the Indians really made me feel some
05:16
type of way as a kid because I didn't
05:17
really know what was going on you know
05:19
but I remember seeing them on TV the
05:22
Indians the quote-unquote Indians in
05:23
house they were like animals they could
05:25
barely talk they ran around like savages
05:27
and I remember when I was a kid when I
05:30
would see Indians on TV in my mind I
05:34
would think that's not us you know those
05:37

are TV Indians it was like it was
05:38
something different even though to the
05:40
world that was telling the world you
05:42
know teaching the world about Native
05:43
people but to me as a young Native
05:45
person it didn't represent any of my
05:47
reality or anyone that I knew or myself
05:49
or any any native person that I knew
05:52
never acted like that so that really
05:55
messed with me as a kid I'm like you
05:57
know the TV is saying this is Indians
05:59
but who we are is so much different
06:01
there's so much more to who we are and
06:02
so as I got older any night I started
06:04
making music becoming an artist I've
06:07
always wanted to flip that song and
06:08
sample it and and for those who aren't
06:11
familiar with that scene in Peter Pan I
06:12
by the way I've never even seen Peter
06:14
Pan yeah so what what scene are you
06:15
talking so there's a scene and it's
06:17
funny how even how its framed you know
06:20
the Indians quote-unquote exist in
06:22
Neverland so you even think about that a
06:25

lot of time Native people are shown as
06:27
of the past or in this fantasy land you
06:29
know this this place that doesn't exist
06:31
where fantasy creatures were these
06:33
things of the past they never really
06:35
show us how we are today so they put us
06:36
and never
06:37
and in Peter Pan and there's this tribe
06:39
of Indians and they capture windy and
06:41
then Peter Pan and the lost boys have to
06:43
go get windy back and they have this
06:45
interaction with the the Neverland
06:47
Indians and they just run around like
06:49
savages and there's like you know like
06:52
like that stereotypical and they would
06:55
do all that stuff and no tribe ever did
06:57
that that's all all that came from the
06:58
imaginations of non-native people and so
07:01
that was the scene I was referencing and
07:03
there's a song and they're called what
07:04
makes the red man red super catchy of
07:06
course because it's Disney and so
07:08
actually a year ago or a year and a half
07:11
ago I was a vinyl shopping in
07:13

Minneapolis and I found the Peter Pan
07:14
soundtrack on vinyl and at that point I
07:17
was I was sampling vinyl and so I took
07:20
it home I the song was on there I
07:22
flipped it I sampled it and I made a
07:24
song what makes the red man red kind of
07:26
taking that you know that idea of red
07:28
man which you know it's kind of born out
07:30
of this slur you know our skin is all
07:32
the our skin native people you're
07:35
talking over you know hundreds of
07:36
different tribes so our skin tones you
07:37
know very we're not we're not red taking
07:40
that you know this kind of framing it as
07:42
this red man is this fantasy that that
07:44
you created the stereotype of native
07:46
people and this is where it comes from
07:47
I've heard your song what makes the red
07:49
man red yeah super dope reductionism on
07:52
point what was Disney's intention with
07:55
it what did they believe made the red
07:57
man red in that song oh my you know I I
08:00
didn't use that part of the song but in
08:02
the song I think their thing is uh
08:04

something happened that that made a
08:07
native woman blush and turn her cheeks
08:09
red and then forever native people were
08:11
red you know like what what a you know
08:13
what I'm saying but this is what this is
08:16
just the the level of lies that were
08:18
taught to to the world about you know
08:20
from from settlers about who Native
08:23
people were and and you know our
08:25
realities and a lot of it is just based
08:27
and flat-out lies and fantasy as a
08:29
Mexican in this country I feel some type
08:33
of way when I hear conversations about
08:34
immigration when I think about how my
08:36
dad came over and who certain
08:38
presidential candidates want to keep out
08:40
and for what reasons I'm wondering what
08:43
images and what thoughts come to your
08:44
mind when you hear how the United States
08:46
politicians speak about immigration
08:48
without paying
08:50
due to the history of this country yeah
08:53
a lot of it to me is just hypocrisy man
08:55
you know they they they talk about
08:58

immigration and keeping immigrants out
09:00
now and all these man-made borders but
09:02
at the end of the day their ancestors
09:05
were settlers you know and let's not get
09:06
it twisted a lot of there's a lot of
09:08
memes online and just a lot of you know
09:10
talk around immigration when they when I
09:13
mention indigenous people they try to
09:14
say oh well you know the original
09:16
settlers were immigrants everyone is an
09:17
immigrant um yeah there's a lot of
09:19
people in this country whose families
09:21
emigrated such as yours but the original
09:23
people that came in founded the United
09:25
States were not immigrants they were
09:26
settlers and they brought genocide and
09:28
violence and I think that that's a
09:30
nuance of the conversation that is
09:31
missed like you know immigrant families
09:33
come here for for a different reason the
09:35
opportunities whatever but they don't
09:36
bring genocide and violence and murder
09:38
and colonization and that's what the
09:40
original settlers brought so I wouldn't
09:43

even call them immigrants you know I
09:44
would call them settlers because that's
09:45
what they were and they did bring
09:46
genocide and violence to my people
09:48
and so when I hear these politicians who
09:51
descended from those people who came
09:53
into this land stole the land murdered
09:55
my people talk about keeping immigrant
09:57
families out who just want to come in
09:58
for for reasons that aren't as violent
10:01
as their ancestors it's all hypocrisy to
10:03
mean as part of that that erasing the
10:05
history history of this country because
10:07
people get uncomfortable when you talk
10:09
about Sedlar colonialism in the u.s. you
10:11
know I wonder how people react to that
10:13
you perform for a lot of diverse
10:16
audiences I've seen your performances in
10:17
between songs you stopped you put it
10:20
right there in people's face what the
10:21
song is about why you wrote it and you
10:23
also provide some historical context and
10:26
what it is you're saying how do people
10:27
react to these things especially since
10:29

we're talking about ignorance and some
10:31
folks not really acknowledging the
10:33
history of this country mm-hmm well it's
10:34
a mixed bag you know but I would say
10:36
when I perform I think I think art is
10:40
one of the best ways to express the
10:42
truth one of the truest ways and art is
10:45
also a really great way to get people to
10:47
look at an issue or topic or something
10:50
from a different perspective a different
10:52
lens so I feel like when I perform it's
10:55
so intense and and it's so powerful
10:57
people have never seen anything like it
10:59
before that a lot of people are just so
11:01
overwhelmed
11:02
oh my god I didn't know this was going
11:04
on I didn't know this history existed I
11:06
just I'm so overwhelmed by all of this
11:08
and then and then there's a small
11:11
handful of people that'll still be in
11:13
denial like you know try to try to
11:14
explain it away like oh that's not what
11:17
really happened and they'll reference
11:19
the lies and the history books and I'm
11:20

like no you need to listen to the people
11:22
who actually live this history you know
11:23
we know our history we lived it and
11:25
history was told by the victors you know
11:27
but uh what's really cool about it as
11:30
well is bringing that message on stages
11:32
to see young Native kids be proud of who
11:37
they are and where they come from
11:38
because I grew up in a time when it was
11:41
shameful to be native because in 1883
11:43
the US government passed a law that
11:45
banned and outlawed all Native American
11:48
religions ceremonies cultural practices
11:50
in this country and that law existed
11:52
until 1978 when the Indian Religious
11:55
Freedom Act was passed so for almost 100
11:57
years it was illegal for us to be
11:59
indigenous in this country we would get
12:01
thrown in jail we would get persecuted
12:02
and also during that time our
12:05
grandparents were taken to boarding
12:07
schools where their hair was cut they
12:08
were beat if they spoke their language
12:09
their tongues were poked with needles
12:11

they were abused for being who we were
12:13
so out of that came this culture of
12:15
shame in being indigenous and so when I
12:18
grew up it was shameful to be Native
12:20
even from our elders because from the
12:22
time they were babies it was beaten to
12:24
them that was shameful so I also
12:26
recognized my position and in flipping
12:28
that narrative for young Native kids and
12:30
almost every time exactly in fact every
12:33
time I do a show and in a Native
12:36
community a young Native person comes up
12:37
to me and says I was ashamed to be
12:39
Native until I saw you perform or I
12:42
found you music and to me that that's
12:44
the best part about about what I do in
12:46
bringing that message is yeah the
12:47
education for non-native the school but
12:49
like our own people and our own kids
12:51
need that message more Native American
12:54
communities the struggle of the
12:57
indigenous people has been brought to
12:59
the forefront more recently as we've
13:00
been hearing about the acts of
13:02

solidarity and peaceful protests and
13:04
water protection that's been hand
13:06
happening in the Dakotas as it pertains
13:09
to the Dakota access pipeline this is
13:11
something we talked about the very first
13:13
time I had you in studio years and you
13:16
years ago before we even talked about
13:19
what people are upset over talk about
13:23
native and indigenous people and their
13:26
relationship to the land and why this is
13:28
not just about oil yeah most definitely
13:31
on what that's a great way to start the
13:34
question because a lot of people get
13:35
caught up in the politics of it and oil
13:37
and you know that's really looking at it
13:39
from from for me from the wrong
13:41
perspective because indigenous people
13:43
and when I say indigenous I'm talking
13:45
about all black and brown people of the
13:47
world because I consider as all
13:49
indigenous you know we all had cultures
13:51
that were indigenous to the land that we
13:53
were from and a lot of us all of us were
13:55
colonized all throughout the world
13:57

whether you're talking about Africa
13:58
South America North America all over the
14:01
world we were colonized but a lot of all
14:04
of our cultures had relationships that
14:06
lived in harmony with the land we lived
14:08
on you know because it makes sense isn't
14:11
that reality you don't want to destroy
14:12
the land you live on in the water you
14:14
drink because then you're screwed right
14:16
but because of capitalism and money and
14:20
the settler colonies exploiting land for
14:23
for what they call progress but really
14:26
isn't progress we're destroying the land
14:28
beyond beyond us being able to inhabit
14:31
it and so indigenous people understand
14:33
that and in the United States so in the
14:35
United States we've been living here the
14:37
longest our nations and our cultures
14:40
existed before the United States even
14:42
existed so you know it's coming up on in
14:45
a couple days a Columbus Day as they
14:47
call it but the lie is that Columbus
14:49
discovered America and he did not
14:51
discover anything there were already
14:53

nations living here and who had it
14:56
figured out and who had had
14:57
relationships that lived in harmony with
14:59
the land including us we live we know
15:02
how to live on this land and we had to
15:04
teach the first settlers they came here
15:05
that got sick they didn't know how to
15:06
grow they didn't know how to hunt they
15:08
were dying indigenous nations had to had
15:11
to keep them alive and had to show them
15:12
how to live here and I feel like we're
15:13
still doing that to a certain degree and
15:15
I feel like natural energy extraction
15:18
happens a lot on indigenous land because
15:21
when they colonized our lands they
15:22
wanted to put us on the worst most
15:25
uninhabitable land but they didn't know
15:27
that land health resources arid
15:29
you know that land that looks hard to
15:31
live on is actually rich in resources
15:32
and actually a lot of our sacred sites
15:35
were rich in resources including for my
15:37
people the black kills but they found
15:39
uranium and gold there and they took
15:40

them away took it away from us so a lot
15:42
of natural energy extraction happens on
15:44
indigenous land but we're still we're
15:47
fighting that extraction now and we have
15:49
been for hundreds of years because we
15:51
understand that this is our homelands
15:53
and we understand how to live in harmony
15:56
with it and that includes not not
15:58
extracting natural resources to the
16:01
point where the land and water is
16:02
destroyed you have new music coming up
16:04
yes most definitely
16:06
tell me about it I'm excited to hear
16:07
some of this yes so I have a song coming
16:10
out on what the world called Columbus
16:13
Day but we call indigenous peoples day
16:15
and actually several cities in the US
16:17
have passed proclamations to to change
16:20
it to indigenous peoples day you know
16:22
because for us there's so many holidays
16:24
in this country including Columbus Day
16:25
that celebrated our genocide including
16:28
that Columbus was a rapist genocidal
16:30
murderer who brought genocide and murder
16:32

and rape to fissile hem and he's given a
16:35
holiday he's given a statue in this in
16:36
this city Chicago has a Columbus statue
16:39
of Columbus the discoverer of America
16:41
and every time I see that my skin crawls
16:43
because that's a that's a celebration of
16:46
our genocide imagine that if you know
16:48
someone who brought genocide your people
16:51
is celebrated in this country as someone
16:53
who brought civilization to your people
16:55
it's so it's it's so twisted and that
16:58
plays into the settler gaze that plays
17:01
into the erasure of indigenous people in
17:03
our history so I'm releasing a song on
17:05
indigenous peoples day and their song is
17:07
called seven and it's about a prophecy
17:09
my people have so the plains people and
17:13
you know in I'll backtrack I forgot to
17:17
mention this earlier is that my
17:19
perspective and everything I talk about
17:21
in my music I do not speak for all
17:22
indigenous people because there are over
17:25
500 different indigenous nations in the
17:28
US alone and those are distinct
17:30

different nations different cultures
17:32
different languages you know so there is
17:34
not one Native American culture Native
17:37
American language Native American
17:38
perspective even if you went to my tribe
17:40
and you ask these same questions to tend
17:42
if
17:43
people you would get 10 different
17:44
answers so my perspective is only one
17:47
but my people the plains people wanna
17:50
you know a handful of those nations we
17:53
had a prophecy that came to our people
17:56
many many years ago whenever we were
17:59
being we were being colonized during the
18:01
time of westward expansion and ceremony
18:04
a prophecy came to our people that said
18:06
our people were gonna suffer a lot they
18:09
were gonna face great hardships at the
18:11
hands of settlers in this genocide and
18:13
seven generations down the line that
18:16
generation will be the one that will
18:18
suffer the most and the flipside of that
18:21
prophecy was that that the seventh
18:23
generation will also be the one that
18:25

will help bring the healing and will
18:28
help bring the change that our
18:30
communities need and bring our languages
18:32
back and bring our cultures back out of
18:34
that genocide and I am part of that
18:36
seventh generation and our people don't
18:38
view generations as just an age of
18:40
people we view it from a non-western
18:43
perspective and that everyone alive
18:44
right now and this time as a part of
18:46
that generation so we are all everyone
18:49
listening right now you are all part of
18:50
that prophecy we are all the seventh
18:52
generation and I see that everywhere I
18:54
go you know and my community we have a
18:57
lot of hardships because of that
18:58
genocide and being survivors of genocide
19:01
we suffer with a lot of you know
19:03
substance abuse gang violence and a lot
19:07
of the violence that put us in that
19:08
situation because reservations are
19:11
concentration camps the violence that
19:12
put us in those concentration camps is
19:14
not perpetuated within our communities
19:16

with lateral violence so I see that
19:18
suffering but I also see the flipside in
19:20
that there's young Native people who are
19:23
learning our language bringing our
19:24
ceremonies back just what happened with
19:27
in cannonball Beach that movement being
19:28
started by Native youth I'm seeing that
19:31
that prophecy to be true and young
19:34
Native people who get that and who
19:36
understand that we know that we are
19:38
living breathing prophecy and we are the
19:40
answers to our ancestors prayers so
19:42
that's what this song is about it's
19:44
about that seventh generation that
19:45
prophecy and all of that that pain that
19:48
comes with being survivors of genocide
19:49
and that frustration of facing that
19:52
ignorance in a country that was built on
19:54
our genocide
19:55
and trying to just survive and be human
19:57
in a country that's built on the
19:59
dehumanization of your people it's all
20:01
on this song so it's a really it's a
20:03
really a powerful song for me I'm not
20:06

gonna lie I brought I break down crying
20:07
at the end of the song you know because
20:09
that pain is so overwhelming but it also
20:11
features on my manager and she's a big
20:14
sister meat to me she's an indigenous
20:16
woman her name's Taniya winder she's
20:17
also a poet so those features I'll want
20:19
a snippets of one of her poems and it
20:21
also features an elder medicine man from
20:24
our community at the end saying a prayer
20:26
in our language Lakota for indigenous
20:28
youth so there's a lot going on in this
20:30
song it's beautiful man beautiful
20:32
Frank one thank you very much for making
20:34
time an absolute pleasure as always
20:35
thank you brother it's always an honor
20:37
to come on the show and thank you to
20:39
everyone listening and thank you to
20:40
everyone who's receptive to the message
20:42
and I hope if you like my music check me
20:44
out online Frank Wan I'm on Twitter
20:46
Instagram Facebook you can find my music
20:49
anywhere online