

PATHFINDER

The Untold Story of "The Indian Business"





A behind-the-scenes look at the Indigenous Sovereignty Movement told through the life and work of Dr. Rudolph C. Rýser (Oneida/Cree/Swiss), an Indigenous leader who has shaped and defined some of the most formative events in national and global Indigenous Affairs during the past fifty years.

Image: (from left) 1. Portrait of Dr. Rýser. 2. Scene from a National Congress of American Indians convention in the late 1970s. 3. Press conference in the late 1970s during the height of the Indigenous Sovereignty Movement. Secwepemc Chief George Manuel, a long-time colleague of Dr. Rýser' is on the right.

THE STORY



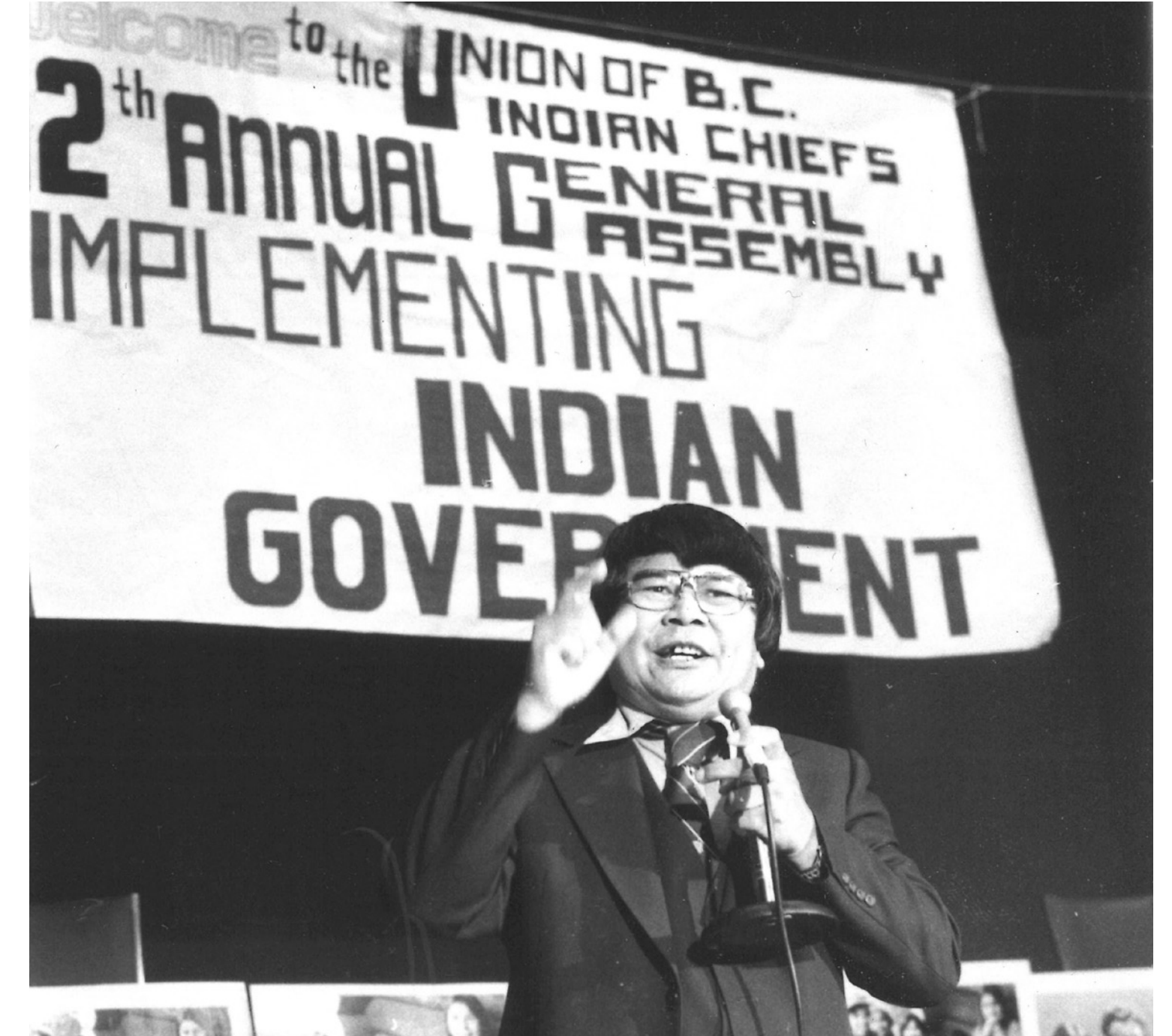
Dr. Rudy, as those who know him endearingly call him, stood up to the most powerful institutions in the world — the IMF, World Bank, and the U.S. government, among others, for the cause of Indigenous self-determination.

Most of these stories are known only by those who were there, and only a handful of those leaders are still alive today.

In this film, Dr. Rýser and others recount the vision, goals, and battles for Indigenous sovereignty in the United States and worldwide - and the threat that losing this history poses for Indigenous struggles today.

Image: The All Indian Pueblo Council at the South American Regional Conference of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in the late 1980s. From left, Russell Jim, Dr. Rýser, and unknown.





BACKGROUND

Dr. Rýser has committed his life to the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty for 6000+ Indigenous nations worldwide. A philosopher, agitator, and humble warrior, he defined the field of Fourth World Geopolitics and has worked tirelessly to advance the rights of Indigenous Peoples to control their lands, lives, and destinies.

Image: (from left) 1). Yezidi refugees in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. CWIS is currently working on creating an international criminal tribunal to bring justice to the Yezidi. 2. Indigenous Miskito soldiers during the Nicaraguan revolution. Dr. Rýser supported the Miskito, Sumu and Rama to defend their land from the Somoza Regime and Sandinista forces. 3. Chief George Manuel delivers a speech at the General Assembly of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs.

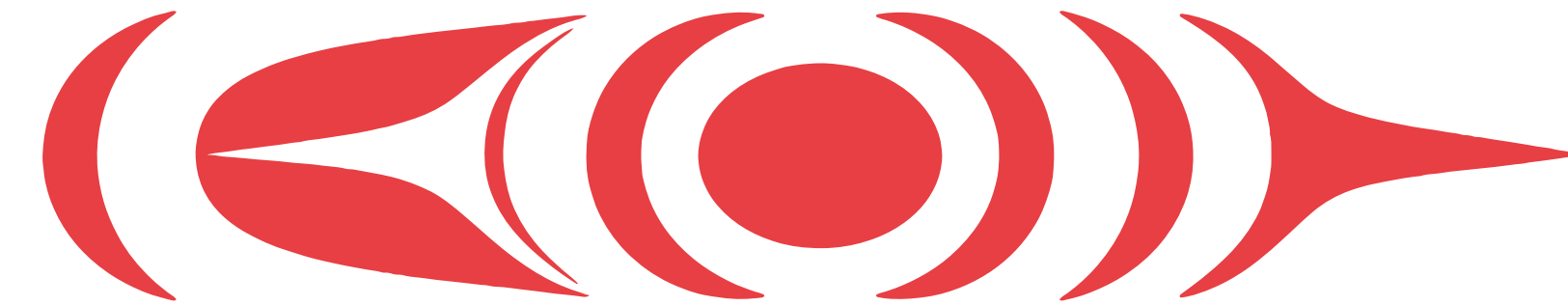


Dr. Rýser’s studies began as a child, with his mother who taught him about gathering and preparing traditional foods and medicines and the “spirit ways” influenced by *tomanowus* and the Longhouse tradition of the Pacific Northwest coast.

A conscientious objector during the Vietnam War, Dr. Rýser’s work started as a young man when tribal elders asked him to write and translate what they were speaking. He then went to work with the Quileute and Quinault nations as a policy adviser and speechwriter.

Image: Oolichan Wind Salmon Appetizer, a traditional Indigenous recipe from the Salish Country Cookbook, written by Dr. Rudolph C. Rýser.





Dr. Rýser went to Washington D.C., where he served as a Specialist on Federal Administration in the American Indian Policy Review Commission and wrote some of his early legal and policy analyses aiding tribal communities.

When he returned from Washington D.C., he learned from tribal leaders of a growing political opposition to tribal governments and an influx of white nationalists that had moved onto tribal reservation lands in the Northwest. That knowledge led him to begin a seminal six-year undercover study of the burgeoning danger he called the “Anti-Indian Movement.”

Image: The American Indian Policy Review Commission in 1977 was a seminal moment in the struggle for Indigenous self-government. Dr. Rýser was a Task Force Specialist charged with determining the legal relationship between Indigenous tribes and the U.S. federal government.

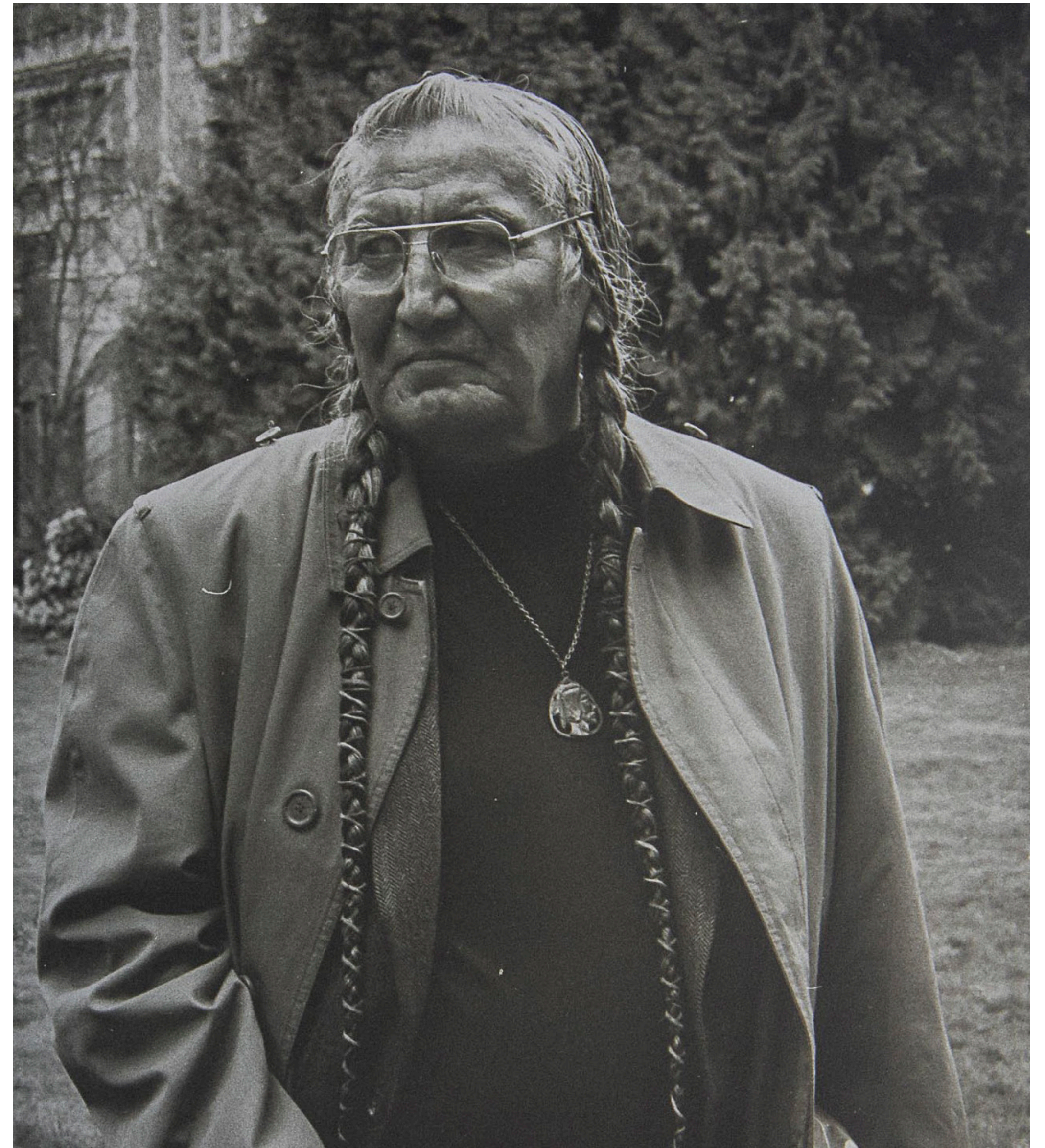


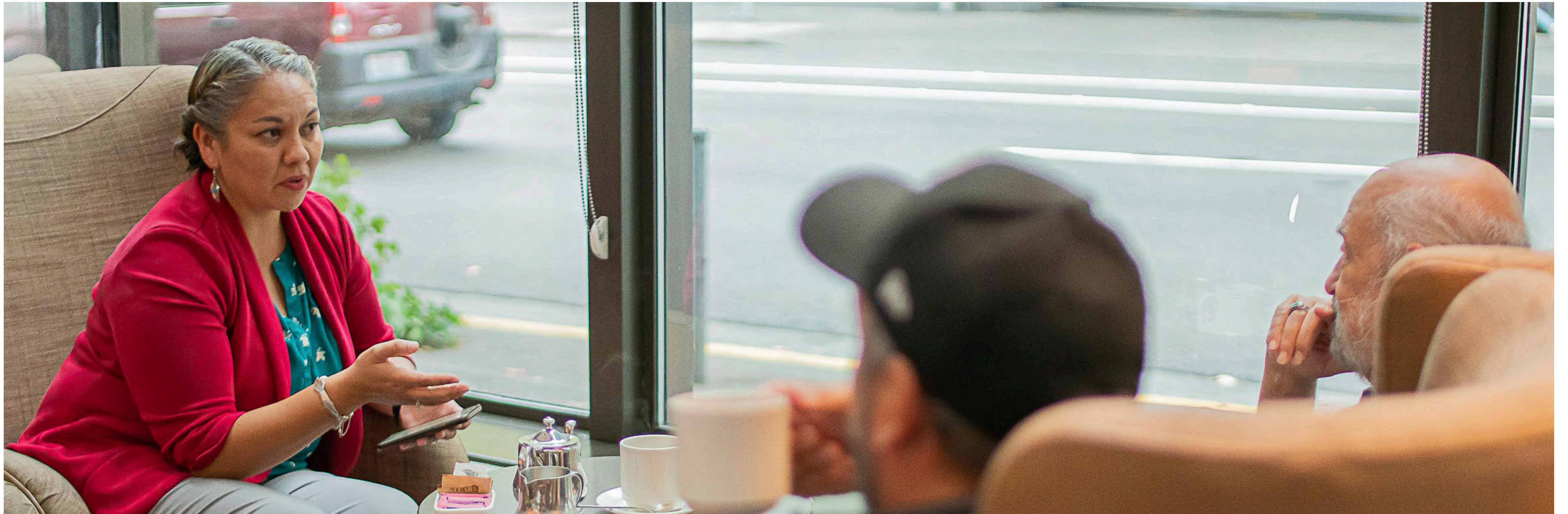
Dr. Rýser helped craft landmark U.S. government policies like the *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975* and contributed to the drafting of the 2007 *U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*.

He envisioned self-government for more than 300 nations by working to formalize language in US legislation for US/Tribal Compacts on Self-governance and he wrote the policy and speeches for the leaders who would push the change through tribal governments and the U.S. Congress.

Dr. Rýser worked closely with CWIS Founding Board member Kiaux (Russell Jim) for over forty years. Together they put relentless pressure on the Department of Energy to clean up the nuclear waste contamination from the US government's Hanford Nuclear Reservation, which leaks into the Yakama River and on to the Yakama nation's land.

Image: Kaiux Russell Jim, former Head of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Indian Nation's Environmental Restoration and Waste Management Program. Russell advocated for the clean-up of nuclear environmental waste on the Yakama Nation's land in collaboration with his close friend Dr. Rýser.





Dr. Rýser mentors up-and-coming Indigenous leaders in the art of nonviolent persuasion. He works in the United States and internationally on many overlooked struggles, including the effects of global warming on Indigenous Peoples and their territories, exercising customary law by First Nations in Canada, Mexico, Nigeria, Iraq and Australia.

Image: Interviewee Amelia Marchand (Colville), Tribal Climate Liaison, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, and Dr. Rýser, are engaged in a lively discussion about the future of Indigenous sovereignty.

He currently advises the Yezidi who fight for justice in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Russia and the Tebu in North Africa fighting natural resource extraction on their land. We rarely hear of these struggles in mainstream news, but they simmer as undercurrents that drive conflict and wars.



This story is about the “Fourth World’s” struggle for self-determination and overcoming bigotry and internalized traumas, told through the eyes of one of its most effective proponents, Dr. Rýser. It is an untold story on the verge of being lost and one that will guide a new generation of Indigenous leadership.

Image: Dr. Rýser and Chief George Manuel map the locations of current wars against Fourth World nations in the late 1980s.





ARTISTIC APPROACH

This film is told through interviews with Dr. Rýser and the people who worked with him over the years set amidst the lush environmental diversity of the Pacific Northwest. We will use evocative, original, licensed music, historical footage, archival videos, and still photos. We have access to many historical videos and are conducting archival research to identify unique documents and images to give a visual sense of the different times and conditions in which the story occurs.

Image: The crew films composers and musicians Ken & Terry Benshoof. Ken was a founding board member of CWIS.



Our goal for the film's structure and aesthetic is to use language, images, and cadence to evoke emotion balanced with the intellectual curiosity that has fueled the dynamic activism of the protagonist and his global colleagues. Among the themes are the persistence and patience required

to effect change, honoring ancestral wisdom, recognizing one's place among the generations, the internalized legacy of colonization and bigotry (in all the players), and the grit and resilience found in action and a connection with others.

Image: A scene from one of many interviews with Dr. Rýser.



Film Locations

Elma, LaPush at Quileute, Hoh Rain Forest, Mt. Tahoma, Quinault, Ocean City, Yakama Nation, Colville, Seattle and more.



Yakama



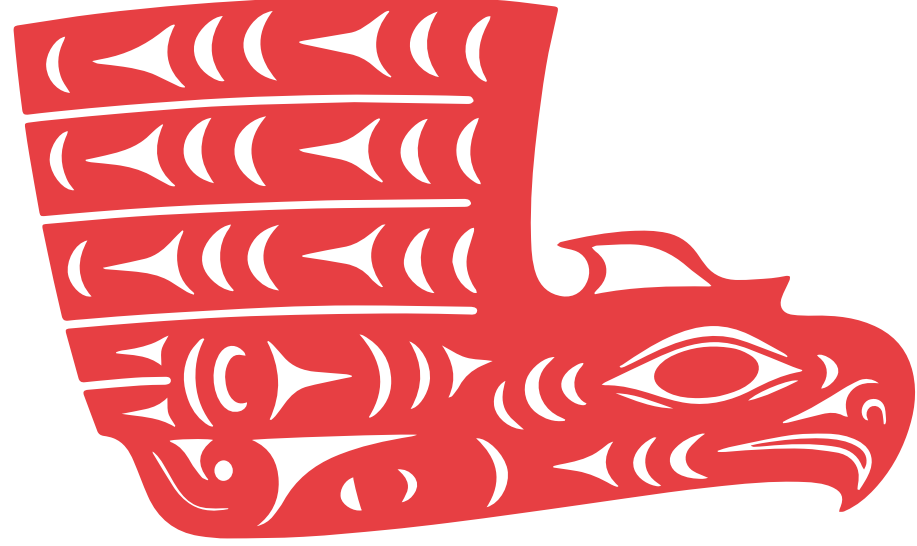
Hoh Rain Forest



LaPush



Colville



AUDIENCE & ENGAGEMENT

This film will be of particular interest to Indigenous peoples who want to discover the hidden history of Indian Affairs during the past fifty years in the United States and worldwide.

We seek to reach a global audience of teachers and students of Indigenous history, public policy, and other related studies, as well as the general public.

Image: Bobbi Jim (right), and her family. Bobbi is a traditional elder and interviewee who worked with her husband Russell Jim and Dr. Rýser.





We will submit the film to festivals and host several screenings with a Q&A with Dr. Rýser in the Pacific Northwest and Mexico.

After completing the festival circuit, First Nations Experience Broadcasting (FNX), a PBS Native network with affiliates in 25 US states, will be airing the film. In addition, the film will be shown by the Sinchi Foundation, based in the Netherlands, which runs a global streaming platform.

Image: National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) meeting in 1976. Dr. Rýser later took the helm as acting executive director of NCAI in 1983.

DISTRIBUTION



We are producing an interactive website, study guide, and 11 extended 7-10 minute interviews exploring each interviewee's activism and identity.

We will make the film available to tribes, tribal schools, colleges, universities, and libraries through the Film Collaborative.

Image: Interviewee Gary Morishima, PhD, Natural Resources Technical Advisor to the President of the Quinault Indian Nation since 1974.

SELECTED INTERVIEWS



Gary Morishima (*Japanese-American*)
Natural Resources Advisor, Quinault Nation



Bobbi Jim (*Wenatchee*)
Traditional Foods and Medicines Elder



Dina Gilio-Whitaker (*Colville*)
Author, *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*



Amelia Marchand (*Colville*)
Tribal Climate Liaison, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians



Tiffany Waters (*Chinook*)
Global Aquaculture Manager, The Nature Conservancy



Henry Cagey (*Lummi*)
Senior council member of the Lummi Indian Business Council and former Chairman of the Lummi Nation



Elise Krohn (*Scottish*)
Herbalist, Northwest Indian College

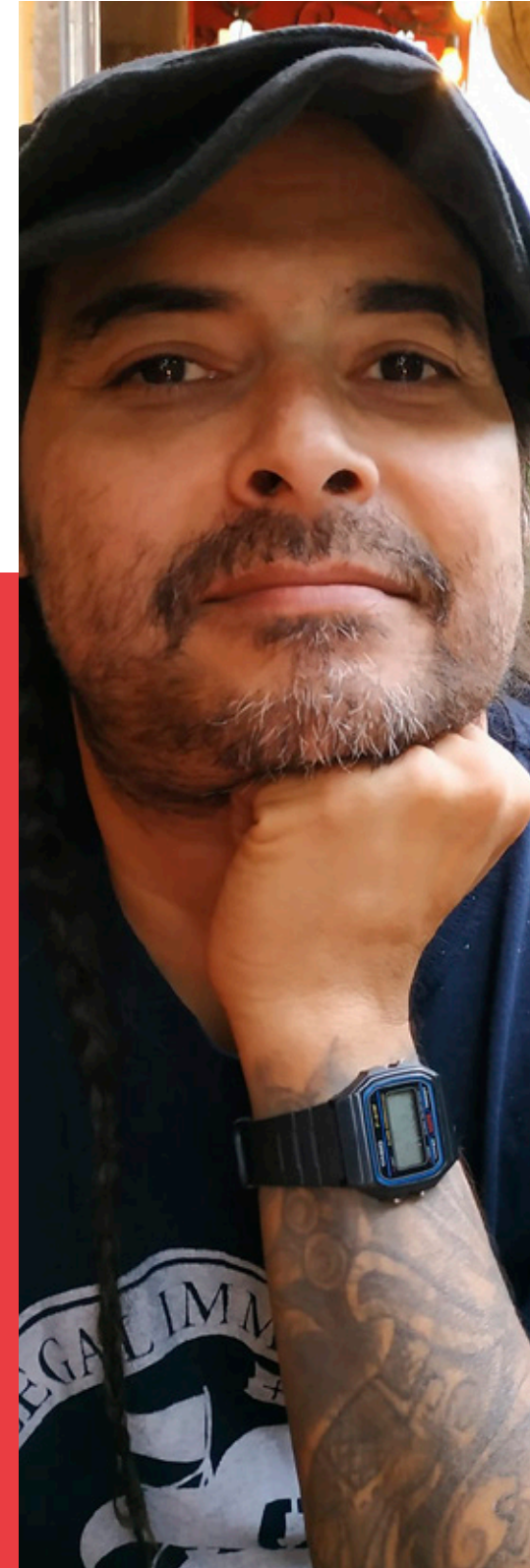
TEAM



Dr. Leslie Korn
Executive Producer/
Director/Writer



Nadine T. Brown
Executive Producer



Sam Stoker
Assistant Producer,
Editor



Alma Méndez
Photography and
Lead Editor



Max Montalban
Cinematographer
and Editor



**Christian
W.C. Rýser**
Narration



Jon Rýser
Musical Director



Kiala Löytömäki
Archival Researcher



“No right is more sacred to a nation, to a people, than the right to freely determine its social, economic, political, and cultural future without external interference.”

Written by Dr. Rudolph Rýser for Joe DeLaCruz’s speech “Indian Self-Determination, the Ideal, and Indian Self-Governance, the Reality.”

Director/Producer
Leslie Korn

Executive Producer
Nadine Brown

Asst. Producer
Sam Stoker

Lead Editor
Alma Méndez

Editors
Max Montalban, Sam Stoker

Cinematography & Sound
Alma Méndez, Max Montalban

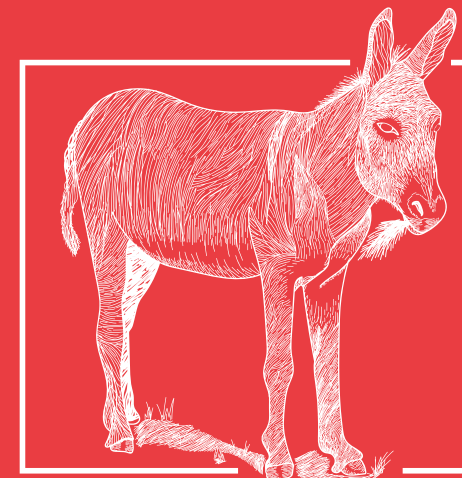
Format
90 mins (16:9), HD

Language
English, Mexican Spanish

Project Stage
Production

Completion Date
October 2023

Contact
Leslie Korn
lekorn@cwis.org



SINGING BURRO
PRODUCTIONS

We are currently in production and have filmed more than 45 hours of footage and interviews. We still have more to do and need your support to complete this documentary film.



CONTRIBUTE

cwis.org

To contribute to this feature film, the easiest way is by making a tax-exempt donation to the Center for World Indigenous Studies earmarked for Singing Burro Productions. 100% of all donations will be used to finance the completion and distribution of the film.

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