
LUKANKA

Lukanka is a Miskito word for “thoughts”

Christian W.C. Rýser

This commemorative edition of the *Fourth World Journal* (FWJ) is dedicated to its founder, chief editor, and prolific contributor of over 40 years, Dr. Rudolph (Rudy) Carl Rýser, my father. This special issue is the first of two compilations of selected, previously published works from this journal, from 1984 to 2023, alongside an article from the *Tulsa Journal of Comparative and International Law*, one chapter from the edited volume *Tribal Epistemologies: Essays in the Philosophy of Anthropology*, and the first chapter of his book in progress at the time of his death.

These articles were chosen by a small group of guest editors at the Center for World Indigenous Studies (CWIS), with the intent of honoring his life and work by exploring, in the first issue, the philosophical and theoretical foundations of his written work and, in the second issue, due out in June 2024, the practical application of those ideas to real world challenges.

Rudy imagined the journal as a forum to share, explore, and expand the knowledge in what he and his close friend Dr. Bernard Nietschmann collaboratively and imaginatively termed the “Fourth World”. The “Fourth” is a world to which my father and his colleagues were intimately familiar and belonged. He aimed to create a new framework that allowed us to better understand

and apply indigenous ideas and knowledge than that offered by the state-centric paradigm of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd worlds.

The *Fourth World Journal* began as a humble, dot matrix, soft-cover stapled journal, mailed to tribal leaders and sold in bookstores and coffee shops. Rudy wanted the journal to test the veracity and efficacy of his ideas alongside the experiences of others who during the early years faxed or mailed in their articles from around the world, often reporting about little-known peoples, events, and atrocities. Gaining readership was not an easy task, as many ideas and analyses appeared either ancient or novel at first glance, and even revolutionary (anarchic as one academic asserted) or illegal, to the uninitiated and unfamiliar. Bridging that gap with a clear understanding between reader and writer across cultures and worlds, especially the chasm between the academic and the “bush”—as he would often say, required an exact blend of savvy, tact, patience, and humor. He employed all these skills with great aplomb.

When I was seven, he began assigning me research tasks to complete, calling me his “first intern.” I compiled clippings from Indian Country newspapers on the office floor and puzzled over the magical complexities of the white man tools—

Compaq portable computers, word processors, alongside the developing networks of intertribal file sharing. For years, I traveled with him to reservations and sat by his side at the countless strategy meetings and tribal gatherings that defined his work and my childhood. I watched and listened, offering my perspective only if asked.

My childhood home was—like many Indian homes—always open, welcoming, and filled with extended family from the Fourth World stopping by for a meal or staying overnight. It was also an ever-evolving office filled with a deeply rooted sense of purpose, serving as a hub for council planning sessions and those seeking refuge from a violent conflict.

I remember when the term “indigenous” was first introduced as an alternative to “Indian.” I was sitting at my father’s side at one of many meetings of Pacific Northwest tribal leaders. Like many of our previous informal gatherings, we met at Shari’s restaurant over deep-fried oddities sometime in 1972. We were well into the Indian Fish Wars when Indian people fought northwestern cowboys over fishing rights. Words like “sovereignty” and “self-determination” became quickly defined by rifle shots across the bows of purse seiners, skiffs, and canoes. There were many in attendance on this afternoon, and I recall Joe Delacruz of Quinault, Kenny Hansen of Samish, Russell Jim of Yakama, Grand Chief George Manuel of Secwépemc, and Barney Nietschmann, who had flown up from the University of California, Berkeley, sitting around the table.

Amidst the din, my father posed a curious question. “What is one thing all Indians can’t stand?” It was asked rhetorically and with a playful, yet serious, hint to comment on the overcooked deep-fried mushrooms: “Horrible!” “Disgusting!” “Outraged!” All agreed in their mutual distaste; and the table asked the waiter to return the mound of hard-fried fungus to the kitchen. “Well, that’s clear. We’re all indignant in the face of such injustice!” he continued. The table roared with laughter. “A whole table full of indigenous indignants!” Thus was a term of reference born with dual meaning. They continued to scheme and plot how to mask their outrage and indignation by using the word “indigenous” as a “thought bomb”, and introduced it as a rider into all subsequent legislation and communiques.

The term indigenous was codified later at the Port Alberni meeting when the World Council of Indigenous Peoples organized in 1975. In 1979, my father founded CWIS at the request of Pacific Northwest tribal governments. Initially it served as a documentation center and evolved into a global research and education non-profit of activist scholars. He spent the next 25 years in Geneva and New York arguing for the correct terms of reference (and capitalized letters!) addressing the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Rudy’s contribution to global Indigenous and Fourth World Studies has been far-ranging and influential, spanning international relations, political science, policy, governance, law, indigenous ecological knowledge, geography, food sovereignty, tribal epistemologies, and culinary pedagogy. His publications and papers number

in the thousands. In choosing the articles for this first issue, we identified a selection reflecting the evolution of Rudy's thinking over time, while also exploring some of the breadth of his topic areas. Our collective intent is to give shape to his extraordinary curiosity, imagination, focus on the nuance and specificity of language, and sense of purpose in his body of written work.

“The pen is mightier than the sword” held significant meaning for him, both for its nonviolence (he was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War) and as a reminder of the transformative power of language to light a path toward understanding, balance, justice, and fairness. He always chose collaboration and rational debate to reach creative solutions when confronted with injustice, outrage, and violence, which Fourth World Peoples all too commonly experience.

His life as a writer took many forms. When he was an undergraduate at Washington State University, which he attended on a full Bureau of Indian Affairs scholarship, he sat in his first tribal meeting, at which a Colville elder asked, “Who writes English?” He did, and was thus tapped to serve as a scribe. From this moment, he considered his work to translate “English into English.” In the early days of the journal, he experienced a shortage of colleagues with whom to exchange his ideas, leading him to develop three *noms de plume*. You'll find an example in this collection: Bertha Miller—with whom he enjoyed a good debate over many years!

When asked to contribute my *lukanka*, (the Miskito word for thoughts), I accepted, feeling the weight of the task that would stretch my heart and mind. I believe my father would have wanted me to share in the spirit of *lukanka* and provide a small window of personal insight and story into his work and life so that others may read his work with a greater sense of how personal the Fourth World is to all who live it—especially to one like him, who's life work helped shape it.

Below, I share some comments to orient the reader about the articles in this issue.

Indigenous Nations & Modern States: Introduction

This introduction to Rudolph Rýser's seminal book on Fourth World geopolitical power structures, *Indigenous Nations and Modern States: The Political Emergence of Nations Challenging State Power*, reflects on how personal identity influenced his early political and diplomatic thinking and skills, and provided the genesis for what is now known as government-to-government relations between Nations and States. He discusses how his work with the American Indian Policy Review Commission in the 1970s led him to confront the oxymoronic and dubious “dependent domestic sovereign” status imposed on Indian Nations by the US while attempting to answer the commission's question, “What is the political relationship between Indian Nations and the United States?”

The resulting collaboration and consultation with Onondaga Chief Oren Lyons, Quinault President Joe DelaCruz, and Barney Nietschmann from the Department of Geography at the University of California, Berkeley, among many others, led to the development of “a new general theory of international relations and new modalities and institutions for international collaboration to resolve disputes between Nations and between Nations and States—to affirm the political identity and status of Indigenous Nations.”

Observations on ‘Self & Knowing’

“Observations on ‘Self & Knowing,’ “ published in a collection under the title *Tribal Epistemologies*, edited by Helmut Wautischer, is an intimate and personal inspection of the influence that cultural identity in the form of “Cowlitz Consciousness” links to and affects how the structure, meaning, and makeup of self become known. Using metaphor and comparative analysis, he introduces “Weaving the Braided River” as a way of knowing one’s self and cultural identity as a “relationship between people, their natural environment and the interpretation of the cosmos.” This chapter is one of my favorites, written while he lived with the people of La Comunidad Indígena de Chacala and in the village of Yelapa. It was a remarkably peaceful and reflective time in his life, allowing for deep introspection and imagination. His language is poetic and expansive, observing and expressing the very personal nature of the braided path toward self-knowledge.

Conjoining: The Reawakening to Spiralism from the Age of Progressivism

“Conjoining: The Reawakening to Spiralism from the Age of Progressivism” is a companion piece and a continuation of the ideas expressed in “Observations on ‘Self and Knowing.’” Elaborating on philosophical differences as competing “modes of thought,” Rýser expands on how mental and spiritual constructs “mediate relationships between all manner of things in the Living Universe” and that “Spiralism comprehends the totality of the Living Universe in both its material and immaterial forms and unifies knowledge instead of separates it.” He entertainingly expresses these complex relationships through an old Cowlitz story about how great mountains can be explosive yet remain related.

The Rules of War & Fourth World Nations

“The Rules of War & Fourth World Nations” is one of Rýser’s earliest publications, outlining the basis for international government-to-government relations between Indigenous Nations and States to mitigate violence and genocide against the Fourth World. He carefully deconstructs the Geneva Conventions of 1949 from a Fourth World perspective, allowing that “Indigenous National initiatives in the international arena are essential to the changing of violent conditions which surrounds them.”

He asserts that “only the changes and additions to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the World Bank’s new Indigenous Nation’s policy may be said to have significance in elevating the political status and strategic importance of Indigenous Nations.”

This is foundational in understanding Rýser’s approach toward strategically applying sovereign rights toward conflict resolution from a Fourth World geopolitical standpoint.

The Legacy of Grand Chief George Manuel

As a tribute to his friend, collaborator, and brother in spirit and mind, Grand Chief George Manuel, Rýser reflects on their life and work together in “The Legacy of Grand Chief George Manuel.” He recounts the process and path from the community and tribal organizations toward Fourth World solidarity undertaken as George Manuel forged the National Indian Brotherhood.

George worked “from the ground up” to implement the international government-to-government strategies he and Rýser envisioned. Rýser led the development of the global function of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and encouraged George and Mel Tonasket of the NCAI to enter into international agreements. Thus, government-to-government relations between Fourth World Nations were established with the imprimatur of the largest coalition of tribal governments in the United States of America. The movement toward global indigenous networks gained momentum, leading to the creation of the World Council

of Indigenous Peoples, which was made up of representatives of Fourth World Nations and was formally established with Chief Manuel as its first President. This heartfelt tribute is a testament to Rýser’s storytelling abilities, humility in service to friendship, and the weight of the greater good.

Rights of Distinct Peoples

Written under the *nom de plume* “Bertha Miller,” Rýser’s “Rights of Distinct Peoples” walks us through the history of the United Nations’ Commission on Human Rights and the formation of the World Council of Indigenous People in 1977, with a specific focus on the General Assembly’s 1992 Draft Universal Declaration on Indigenous Peoples to which he was a significant contributor.

“Fourth World Nations will not be denied the right to freely determine their political, economic, and social future. The Draft Universal Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples could have a profound effect on political relations in the world, and perhaps by having terms agreeable to both Nations and States, a more peaceful world will emerge.” Rýser spent the next 30 years refining the language and developing mechanisms to implement the declaration, which he later identified as the missing piece to actualizing the intended vision.

Between Indigenous Nations and the State: Self-Determination in the Balance

Initially published in the *Tulsa Journal of Comparative and International Law*, in “Between Indigenous Nations and the State:

Self-Determination in the Balance” Rýser develops the foundational background and arguments for self-government for tribal communities in the United States. In part two, he explores further the application of the policy and strategy that he was instrumental in developing, its practical outcomes, and the progress experienced by the initial members of the Tribal Self-Governance Demonstration Project toward sovereign self-government by the Quinault, Lummi, Jamestown S’Klallam and Hoopa nations. In identifying the context of changes in the domestic political dynamics to the international, he asserts, “The transition of these Indian Nations from non-self-governing to self-governing peoples will undoubtedly have a direct impact on changing political relations between Indigenous Nations and States long into the future.”

Who are Original Peoples?

The final article in this collection is from Rýser’s book-in-progress at the time of his death where he devoted his attention to the environment and the concerns of his later work, what he called biocultural collapse. Recognizing that the remaining world’s resources are in Fourth World territories, Rýser focused on developing mechanisms for accountability now that resolutions and policies like Free, Prior, and Informed Consent have been codified. This first chapter (of three completed) lays

the conceptual groundwork for strengthening indigenous governments’ self-determination and their ability to negotiate with transnational corporations and state governments around their increasing incursions to extract natural resources, which inevitably leads to environmental degradation.

Thus, this final article weaves full circle the major themes of Rýser’s career: identity, culture, geography, and self-determination, as it also lays the roadmap for issue two (forthcoming June, 2024), which focuses on strategy and tactics for implementation. Rýser’s opus was influenced by Chutupalu leader Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt’s wisdom: “The earth and myself are of one mind. The measure of the land and the measure of our bodies are the same.”

Dr. Rudolph Carl Rýser; Rudy, father, son, husband, grandfather, cousin, uncle, brother, friend, colleague, author, teacher, and my dad, passed into the spirit world late in the evening on Oct. 9th /10th, 2023, a day now reclaimed as “Indigenous Peoples’ Day” in the United States. As a testament to his always impeccable timing as a teacher, pointing out a curiosity or mystifying irony, he traveled to the spirit world on a day named for him in many ways. “Never take the serious all too seriously,” as he would often say. He walked to the happy hunting grounds fearlessly and gracefully, showing us the way, as all true leaders do.

In Commemoration of the Life and Work of Rudolph C. Rýser



Dr. Rudolph Carl Rýser was born in Elma, Washington, in 1946 to Ruth Gilham and Ernst Ryser as the youngest of eight children in Chehalis territory and with an extended family of twenty-two in the Obi family of the Quileute Tribe. He grew up in Ocean City, a town of 150 people just south of the Quinault Indian Reservation. He grew to maturity in the Cowlitz Indian culture on the US Pacific Northwest coast and is of Cree/Oneida descent on his mother's side and German-Swiss descent on his father's. He is Bear Clan.

Rudy was loved by all who knew him: a warm, loving, and generous spirit who gave his time and knowledge to help anyone who asked. He was a philosopher, author, educator, musician, and inventive chef. Rudy was a humble person

who practiced servant leadership to support individual and indigenous peoples' self-determination. He offered strategies and ideas to advance social justice that were often decades ahead of their time. He always worked collaboratively to support others without seeking any personal gain or limelight, save social change in service to indigenous self-determination.

For more than fifty years, he worked in Indian Affairs domestically and internationally. He began his career as economic development director at the Quileute tribe. He later served as a specialist on U.S. government federal administration of Indian Affairs on the American Indian Policy

Review Commission (A joint U.S. Senate/House Commission established to study U.S. and tribal policies). He authored the Federal Administration Task Force Report issued to the Commission in 1976.

He was the Executive Director for the Small Tribes Organization of Western Washington, established by twenty-three tribes to support recognition, community development, and organization. In 1979, he began serving as the Special Assistant to the World Council of Indigenous Peoples President George Manuel. He was appointed Acting Director for the National Congress of American Indians in 1983.

Rudy was a senior policy advisor and speech writer to numerous tribal leaders in the Pacific Northwest. He worked closely with his Yakama Taidnapum brother, Dr. Kiaux (Russell Jim), on the Nuclear Waste disposal project in Yakama Territory. He conceived of and developed the strategy for tribal self-government and, together with Joe DeLaCruz, President of the Quinault Nation, provided the genesis for tribal “government to government” relations with the United States government.

From 1987-1990 Rudy chaired the Puget Sound Task Force on Human Rights convening on hate crimes committed against African Americans, Asians, Jews, American Indians, Women and the LGBTQI community.

Dr. Rysér is widely recognized worldwide for the development and application of the field of Fourth World Geopolitics and is the author of the seminal book *Indigenous Nations and Modern*

States: The Political Emergence of Nations Challenging State Power (2012). As an author and scholar, he published and edited numerous books, monographs, encyclopedia articles, and papers in law and policy journals and helped his students and mentees publish.

At the time of his death, he was participating in a documentary series called *Pathfinder: The Untold Story of the Indian Business*, which tells about the Indigenous self-determination movement since 1950, and he was writing a book about his grandmother and grandfather’s ancestors who had also been translators and treaty makers in the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, following contact by settler-colonists.

Rudy contributed to policies and laws affecting American Indians and indigenous peoples internationally, contributing for more than 25 years to developing the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the U.N. World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. Following UNDRIP, he established the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to address UNDRIP limitations. The ICRIN has been ratified by numerous Indigenous nations worldwide.

At the time of his passing, Rudy was engaged in establishing and applying protocols and procedures for the accountability of UNDRIP statutes. His work established an accountability framework for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. His environmental work included leading an indigenous peoples working group contributing to the United Nations’ Convention on Biological Diversity’s Conference of the Parties, as well as

addressing efforts to stop extractive industries on Indigenous peoples' territories.

His work internationally began in the 1980s when he worked with the peace negotiations team to protect the Miskito, Suma, and Rama peoples during the Nicaraguan War and actively engaged North American Indigenous communities in global self-determination efforts. He traveled to Ghana to support traditional healers for the AIDS epidemic, helped Biafra establish their government in exile and worked for several years to help establish the Ezidikhan government. He worked directly with First Nations communities in Canada to help them protect their land rights and resources and with Aboriginal peoples in Australia. His most recent work was collaboratively establishing the Nations International Criminal Tribunal and coordinating agreements between Indigenous nations and state governments to address war crimes against Indigenous peoples.

Beginning in the 1980s, Rudy worked with undercover researchers to document the rise of the Anti-Indian movement on Indian reservations. He was a gifted prognosticator, identifying the downfall of the Soviet Union two years prior and predicting the rise of the far-right nationalist movement taking hold in the US Congress 40 years in advance. He had a keen, extensive

knowledge of the complexity of world geographical and political dynamics.

Rudy was a natural educator: he taught at numerous universities and colleges. He was known as the teacher's teacher — for his eloquent speech giving and his commitment to mentoring students as future leaders and activist scholars. He was an Indigenous foods chef specializing in authentic cultural cuisines, authoring the book, *Salish Country Cookbook*. He received the 43rd Annual Human Rights Award, United Nations Association in 1986.

He received his PhD. in International Relations in 1996 from the Union Institute and University, where in 2020, he received the Distinguished Alumni Award. He was nominated for the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order and was a 2012 Fulbright Research Scholar for the Contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems of West Mexico to Food Security and Adaptation to Climate Change.

He is survived by his wife and colleague of thirty years, Leslie Korn; his sons Christian, Jon, and Morgan; granddaughters, Anastasia Ryser and Aliyah Ryser; sisters April, Betty, Marge, and Barb; and numerous loving nephews, nieces, friends and colleagues.