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# LUKANKA

Lukanka is a Miskito word for “thoughts”

**Leslie Korn, Ph.D., MPH**

Guest Editor

At the time of his death, Dr. Rudolph Rýser, founding editor of the Fourth World Journal and chair of the Center for World Indigenous Studies, had just completed the charter for The Nations Indigenous Criminal Tribunal (NICT), a mechanism to hold perpetrators of genocide against indigenous peoples to account. The NICT was the final implementation strategy reflecting Dr. Rýser’s more than 50 years of work defining domestic and international policy and law that served the rights and needs of indigenous peoples.

The charter was just one mechanism Dr. Rýser developed to apply his theories of Fourth World geopolitics, which have as their foundation the principle that indigenous peoples must take the initiative and secure power for self-determination to achieve justice and not rely on state actors or mechanisms.

Despite devoting more than 25 years of annual visits to the UN in Geneva and New York to contribute to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Dr. Rýser was aware of the weaknesses of the declaration from the start. He identified its ultimate failure to be the lack of enforceability. Dr. Rýser expressed concern that the UN, which was run by and for state governments—many often still functioning as colonists or meshed with corporate interests—would be unable to act in the

best interests of Indigenous Nations living within states’ territories.

With the NICT project, Dr. Rýser was defining current and past acts of genocide against indigenous peoples. Never one to avoid controversy, his research on the ground revealed that Indigenous Nations were also perpetrating acts of genocide, often against their indigenous neighbors, and thus, also had to account for their actions.

His critiques and his efforts during his later career aimed to define mechanisms for implementing policies to achieve justice and equity for indigenous peoples. This would have to be effected, he asserted, by Indigenous Nations defining, directing, and funding the process for themselves and not looking to the states to do it for them.

This second commemorative issue of the Fourth World Journal, part two of a retrospective on Dr. Rýser’s work, is devoted to his focus on these implementation strategies and their evolution during the last thirty years of his work.

These strategies ranged widely and included inviting all interested and affected parties to the table to participate in defining solutions. Dr. Rýser worked with and educated all who were curious and eager to listen.

During his career as a speechwriter, policy analyst, author, peace negotiator, and educator, he mentored and guided numerous students, advisees, and mentees, including attorneys, indigenous leaders around the globe, state department officials, and undergraduate and graduate students, some of whom became co-authors and contributed to the journal.

The first article, **The Muckleshoot Experiment**, describes a simulation he developed for Muckleshoot tribal graduate students. Dr. Rýser always tested his ideas in the real world. The students were simulating a position and a strategy to represent negotiations among businesses, state governments, and indigenous peoples on the regulation of greenhouse gases.

This was an intellectual experiment and an effort to engage students' understanding of "the other." Dr. Rýser's motto was always to understand the opposition's point of view, but more so, to define the terms of reference and the language to win the upper hand and achieve the desired outcomes. The Muckleshoot paper tells the story of teaching students (many of whom have gone on to lead) these methods. It concludes that Indigenous Nations must assume the proper role of governing authorities over their territories, prepared to challenge the authority of state governments.

**Asserting Native Resilience** is a book chapter that evolved from an interview with Dr. Rýser by his colleague, Evergreen State University Professor Zoltan Grossman, Ph.D. In this discussion, Dr. Rýser makes the case for

harnessing traditional indigenous knowledge to address climate change, which disproportionately affects indigenous peoples globally, and argues that solutions must be driven by Indigenous Nations directly addressing the needs within their own communities. Drawing on his role as advisor to tribal leaders in the Pacific Northwest, he provides examples of past successes and failures, demanding reciprocity and an elevation of traditional indigenous sciences.

Ever the historian, in 2013, Dr. Rýser spoke to the Secretarial Commission on Indian Trust Administration and Reform, US Department of the Interior, at hearings held in Seattle. This paper, **Trust Arrangements Between States and Indigenous Nations in the International Environment**, defines the global and historical context for decolonization and trustee relationships. Presented just a year following the publication of his book, *Indigenous Nations and Modern States*, it draws on a global analysis that requires tailoring new relationships to the needs of indigenous peoples, providing examples of relationships that work, some that do not, and some that are still to be defined and crafted.

It was not lost on Dr. Rýser that the US continues to leave unresolved much of its Trust responsibilities to Indigenous Nations, and he stated to this commission:

The Trust Commission would do well to consider recommending to the US government engaging Indian and Alaskan Native Governments in negotiations of Trust Compacts that specify the authorities

and responsibilities of both the United States and each Indian Nation or Alaskan community. These Compacts should consider social, economic, political and cultural elements in a framework specific to each political community.

In **First Nations and Canada**, Dr. Rýser draws on his first-person storytelling skills to share what would become an “action thriller” about his work with Chief George Manuel. He describes how Grand Chief George Manuel led the movement against the Canadian political establishment and secured fundamental indigenous rights on more than 500 reserves. This story is also the subject of an upcoming episode on the Constitutional Express for the documentary series called Pathfinder: The Untold Story of the Indian Business.

In **Applying Fourth World Diplomatic Knowledge and Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, Dr. Rýser deepens his analysis and recommendations on the requisites for actualizing UNDRIP and extending beyond it to achieve equity for Indigenous Nations at the international table. He concludes with a critique of the language of “Human Rights” and its applicability to Indigenous Nations, identifying the concept as originating in the Holy Roman Empire and the Christian Church and as the major mechanism of colonization:

“The concept of human rights contains political and social implications reflecting an earlier diplomatic time when communism and capitalism were seen as ideological

opposites. Language from both ideologies is built into the UN Declaration on Human Rights and in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. No consideration was given to societies that were as small as 100 people, nor larger Fourth World Societies essentially occupied by newly created states (independence movements) after 1948.”

**Regulating Access to Customary Fourth World Foods & Medicines: Culture, Health, and Governance** addresses customary law and its relationship to international law as a foundation for exploring rights and access to natural resources and Medicines. This article defines the roadmap for Dr. Rýser’s future work in policies and accountability mechanisms for Free, Prior and Informed Consent to address extractive industries in Indigenous territories.

Dr. Rýser defined and advised on numerous policies and mechanisms throughout his career, many of which he brought to fruition and others that will serve as his legacy as others carry his vision forward to completion. **To Establish a Congress of Nations and States (CNS)** reflects over 35 years of work that began with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and his work to bridge the divide between Nations and state governments. This article outlines the process of establishing relationships and a mechanism for communication and negotiation to resolve ongoing conflicts. It brings up to date his renewal of the vision of the CNS, providing a step-by-step rationale and guide for its creation and implementation.

In his role as Executive Director at CWIS since 1979, Dr. Rýser fielded almost daily inquiries and entreaties from Indigenous Nations around the globe who told of encroachment and extraction on their territories by various actors: corporations, state governments, and even other Indigenous Nations. Solving problems on the ground drove his problem-solving, often requiring unique methods and resolutions.

In **A Framework for Implementing the Principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) - Comity or Conflict**, addressing quickening problems of resource extraction on indigenous lands worldwide informed Dr. Rýser’s decision to identify, once again, the need for a mechanism to implement Free, Prior and Informed consent. During his later research in 2023, he identified what he defined as possible “friendly corporations” with existing policies on Free, Prior and Informed consent. However, he noted that these policies were not

tested due to a lack of mechanism (among other reasons), suggesting an approach to engage them and provide a mechanism whereby “warm” and hot “wars” over natural resources might be resolved.

The final article, **The Nations International Criminal Tribunal: A Brief Introduction**, ends where we began in this journal issue: with Dr. Rýser’s final project on the Nations International Criminal Tribunal (NICT). In this Introductory piece, Dr. Rýser briefly explores the basics of the NICT vision, which is the focus of the next Fourth World Journal to be published in January 2025. It will feature guest editor Hiroshi Fukurai, PhD, who worked directly with Dr. Rýser to develop the NICT.



**Leslie Korn, Ph.D., MPH**  
Guest Editor

## 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. Rýser 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 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> 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.