



CHEROKEE NATION

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Wilma P. Mankiller
Principal Chief

John A. Ketcher
Deputy Chief

Dear Friends:

I was saddened to hear about Rai Okamoto's recent journey into spirit country. I have all great memories of Rai. He was an interesting man, highly political but almost courtly in some ways. I had a sense that he genuinely enjoyed the company of a variety of women and I would imagine women enjoyed his company. I certainly did. It was easy to share with Rai, the kind of confidence women usually don't share with men.

Though I occasionally talked to Rai on the telephone, I rarely visited with him after my return to Oklahoma. I liked to think about Rai continuing to live in San Francisco, dressed impeccably, squiring some spirited woman around the city. In a spiritual sense he will continue to do that. But his physical presence will be missed.

I knew Rai in his capacity as a member of the Rainbow family. Though long separated, we still seem interconnected in so many ways. As a distant part of that family, I want to extend my condolences to his family and friends.

I would like to end with my favorite quotation about life. As I grow older and lose more of my friends, this Blackfoot quotation means more to me.

"What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the winter time. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the Sunset."

I wish a safe journey home to all of you who have gathered today to remember and celebrate the life of Rai Okamoto.

Sincerely,

Wilma P. Mankiller
Principal Chief