



CHEROKEE NATION

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September 1, 1993

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Dear Friends:

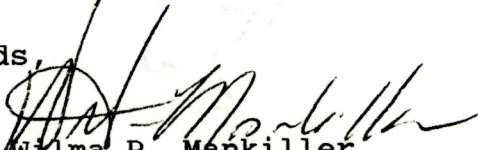
In the next millennium, women will not only create the agenda for political and social change, they will lead the way. To prepare our young sisters for this task, we must encourage women to continue to assume leadership positions in virtually every sector of society. Once they assume leadership roles, strong communities of women must support them because we live in a culture which still tends to denigrate women leaders.

Traditionally when Native communities have faced tough decisions, it is the women who have advocated taking a long view. Among the Iroquoian people, a matriarchal society, it is believed that leaders must consider the impact of their decisions on seven generations. What a different world we would live in if all leaders would follow this advice. This kind of thinking is needed all over the world.

According to one Native prophecy this is the "time of the women," a time when women's leadership skills are needed. Women, by and large, bring to leadership a greater sense of collaboration, an ability to view social, political and personal concerns in a uniquely interconnected, female way. Women are also consultive. We build teams, networks, and work groups to tackle problems or resolve issues. As a supervisor of 1,200 people, most of whom are women, I know that women are better at staying focused on their objectives and getting the job done. Or as our brothers would phrase it, women are better at "keeping their eye on the ball." This kind of leadership is needed.

Leadership is certainly risky, especially in electoral politics. Women have always been willing to take the risks involved in electoral politics and assume leadership roles in other sectors of society. Frequently we have simply not had the resources or support to assume those positions. That has changed somewhat. Continued change will not occur without women leaders organizing, networking, debating and singing our way into the next millennium, hand in hand with our young sisters.

With warm personal regards


Wilma P. Mankiller
Principal Chief