

# Lakota

by  
Bobby Bridger

## Introduction

In 1930 Nebraska epic poet, John G. Neihardt, had already been working for many years on his great *Cycle of the West*. He had completed the first four poems of the epic and was completing research for the fifth and final poem, *The Song of the Messiah*, which covered the *Ghost Dance Movement* of the late 1880s.

Neihardt traveled with his son, Sigurd, to the Pine Ridge Reservation hoping “to find some old medicine man who had been active in the messiah movement and who might be induced to talk with me about the deeper spiritual significance of the matter.” There, he heard about Black Elk, a “kind of preacher” who lived deep in the interior of the reservation near Manderson, South Dakota. Neihardt was warned by agency people that the old man had been approached over the years by many people who wanted to talk with him about the “old days”, but that he would talk to none of them.

When the two men met, however, they immediately became friends. People close to both of them remarked that old Black Elk seemed to know that Neihardt was coming. Black Elk looked closely at Neihardt and told his interpreter, “As I sit here I can feel in this man beside me a strong desire to know the things of the other world. He has been sent to learn what I know and I will teach him.” The old man instructed Neihardt to return the following year when the grass reached a certain height. When Neihardt returned their talks would begin.

Black Elk was born in December of 1863 and died in 1950. He was an *Oglala Lakota* - a *wichasha wakon* (Holy Man, or priest) and spent his entire life reflecting upon the meaning of a vision which he had experienced as a young boy. Ironically, as boys, both Black Elk and Neihardt had collapsed into comas and lingered near death for several days. It was during the experience of this coma that eleven-year old Black Elk had the tremendous spiritual experience of the power vision. Similarly, nine-year old Neihardt awakened from his coma and announced to the world he would become a poet or a failure.

Black Elk was a boy when the great warrior-chief and statesman, Red Cloud, repelled the earliest white invasion into the sacred Lakota territories of the Black Hills and the Powder River Country. A cousin of the charismatic Crazy Horse, Black Elk grew to adolescence during the Indian Wars. After participating in the Little Big Horn fight as a teenager, Black Elk, with his people, endured starvation and hardship as the U.S. Cavalry chased them across the Great Plains. Later, Black Elk was present at the murder of Crazy Horse. He also witnessed Sitting

Bull's heroic effort to save the Lakota from genocide and, as the old chief, joined Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West. After Sitting Bull left the Wild West, however, Black Elk traveled with the troupe to Europe in 1897 and, as part of Buffalo Bill's triumphant success in London, met Queen Victoria. As the Wild West troupe departed England Black Elk and three other Lakotas became separated from the company and missed the boat as it sailed to America. After a brief stint in a copycat "wild west" show which had followed in Buffalo Bill's wake of success, the Holy Man wandered throughout Europe for two years before reuniting with Cody in Paris in 1899. Black Elk returned to the Great Plains from Europe in 1890 just as the Ghost Dance Movement was reaching fever pitch and, noticing similarities in it an his boyhood vision became involved in the frenzy. Consequently, he was present at the Wounded Knee Massacre, which ended Sioux resistance to the western European invasion of their homeland. During his lifetime Black Elk witnessed and experienced the decline and fall of his people -the Lakota. He also prophesized the reunification of the Sacred Hoop after seven generations.

Neihardt wrote in his equally important work on the Lakota, *When The Tree Flowered*, that the Lakota believed every spirit had a twin who, if fate failed to bring into the world together at birth, spent their life searching for its mate. John Neihardt and Black Elk were spirit twins. In their meeting two gifted poets and holy men, two spirit twins, came together and fused into one great visionary voice to preserve spiritual truths and cultural realities for future generations. The way *Black Elk Speaks* is "told through" John G. Neihardt is unique in literature, and evokes the sense of reunion of the spirit twins.

Black Elk told Neihardt: "*There is so much to teach you. What I know was given to me for men and it is true and beautiful. Soon I shall be under the grass and it will be lost. You were sent to save it, and you must come back so that I can teach you.*"

So began the telling of Black Elk's story. He told it to the poet Neihardt, who told it to the world. *Lakota* is respectfully offered as a "telling of a telling of a telling."

## The Lakota

The French called them *Sioux*, but they called themselves *Lakota*, or *the friends*, or *allies*. The Lakota nomadically followed the great bison herd's migratory paths over the Great Plains while also ceremoniously following "*the Holy breath of the Great Spirit*", or the stellar constellations above them. Here, on the Great Plains, they developed a unique perspective of life, spirituality, religion and culture which evolved to mean one single thing: *Lakol Wicoh'an*, which translates as "*Lakota way of life.*" *Lakol Wicoh'an* revolved around the physical and spiritual embodiment of the Lakota concept of *mitakuye oyasin*, or, "we are all related".

## Characters

## **The Balladeer**

The Balladeer is the narrator, or storyteller, interpreting the Black Elk legend by becoming *the single voice* of the “spirit twins”, John G. Neihardt and Black Elk.

### **Red Cloud (*Ma Pe Yah Luta*)**

Red Cloud was the warrior chief of the Oglala's. When the *wasichus* “discovered” gold in Montana and began to flood into the Lakota's sacred Powder River Country, Red Cloud declared war on “*every living thing west of the Mississippi.*” He soundly defeated the American Cavalry in a decisive victory against Captain William J. Fetterman at Fort Phil Kearney thereby becoming the first American Indian in American history to win a declared war against the United States. Red Cloud forced the United States to surrender to his terms and sign the famous Laramie Treaty of 1868, which promised vast sections of the upper Great Plains and Rockies in perpetuity to the Lakota. The breaking of Red Cloud's Treaty in the early 1870s by the United States government and gold crazy prospectors and speculators led to Custer's defeat at Little Big Horn in 1876. Red Cloud's treaty is still in litigation today.

### **Crazy Horse (*Ta Shon Ka Witko*)**

Crazy Horse seems to have wished for his life to have been shrouded in mystery for little is known about him. As a boy he had a vision of the spirit world and took his name because of a horse he rode in the vision. The Lakota's referred to him as “*our strange enchanted one*” and, because of his belief that he had the power to put a magical spell on any horse he rode, he became known as “Enchanted Horse”. Mounted upon one of his enchanted horses, he became invulnerable because he believed that he and the horse he rode were in the spirit world.

Crazy Horse was one of the only men who could organize the Lakota into a united force of opposition to defend themselves against the *wasichu* invasion. He rose to power masterminding Red Cloud's victory over Captain Fetterman and led the Lakota defeat of General George Armstrong Custer at Little Big Horn. After Little Big Horn Crazy Horse's tattered army was eventually starved into submission. Promised a reservation in the Powder River Country upon his submission, Crazy Horse initially honored the terms of his surrender until Nez Pearce rebellion broke out in Oregon. Crazy Horse, furious at the thought of Indians -even traditional enemies like the Lakota and Nez Pearce- fighting against one another, stated he would go back on the warpath if his Lakota lieutenants became scouts against the Nez Pearce rebellion in Oregon. When he learned of *wasichus* plans to arrest him, Crazy Horse fled to his uncle Spotted Tail's reservation. Troopers came for him and Spotted Tail convinced his nephew to go with them. Crazy Horse was returned to Fort Robinson where, as he resisted being placed in the military stockade there, he was murdered. On the night following his death his parents took his body to the prairie, where it remains hidden to this day.

### **Sitting Bull (*Ta Bloh Ka Eyo Da Ka*)**

**Sitting Bull was a *Hunkpapa Lakota*. He was a medicine man who became a military leader as the advancing dangers of the *wasichu* invasion thrust him into the role of warrior-chief. Sitting Bull used his extraordinary spiritual insight and considerable diplomatic and organizational skills to become the greatest leader of the Lakota. After the Custer battle, he negotiated a brilliant retreat into Canada, where he created an unprecedented diplomatic situation which re-defined the interpretation of international law fully fifty years before the European concept of a "League of Nations." Remaining in political asylum in Canada for nearly seven years, as the United States, Canada and Great Britain argued about his legal standing, Sitting Bull finally returned to America and surrendered to his fate. Soon after returning to his ancient homeland and the Standing Rock Reservation on the Grand River, however, Sitting Bull stunned the world by joining Buffalo Bill's Wild West; indeed, the showman and the shaman became good friends. Buffalo Bill gave Sitting Bull a cherished hat and a trick horse trained to dance at the sound of gunfire. Believing himself needed more on the reservation to resist the thief of even more lands by the United States, however, after one season with the Wild West, Sitting Bull returned to Standing Rock and his cabin on Grand River. There, he entered into ongoing struggles of will with the Indian Agent at Standing Rock, James, "White Hair" McLaughlin. About this time the old chief also heard a meadowlark prophesize his death at the hands of his own people. Upon hearing the meadowlark's prophesy Sitting Bull broke his pipes, which symbolized his preparation for death. Ironically, this prophesy occurred just as the Ghost Dance Movement was beginning to sweep the Great Plains and *wasichu* fear began to associate the old chief as the leader of the messianic frenzy. As McLaughlin's Indian Police attempted to arrest Sitting Bull, the medicine man resisted and was shot and killed. Only hours after Sitting Bull's murder, Lakota's began to flock from all over the region to the Red Cloud Agency to seek protection. Big Foot's Minneconjou's were taken captive by Major Samuel Whitside and the Seventh Cavalry near Wounded Knee Creek as they attempted to make it Red Cloud. Surrounded by Hotchkiss Guns, the entire band of over 300 Minneconjou Lakota were murdered on one of the darkest days in American history, December 29th, 1890.**

## **The Recording**

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## **The Players**

**Narration: Bobby Bridger**

**Lead Vocals, 6 String and 12 String Acoustic Guitars,**

**Lakota Courting Flute and Eaglebone Whistle: Bobby Bridger**

**6 String Acoustic and Electric Guitars: John Inmon  
Bass: Bob Livingston  
Drums and Percussion: Paul Percy  
Trumpet: Bob Meyers  
Fiddle: Richard Bowden  
Background Vocals: Bob Livingston and Bobby Bridger  
Traditional Lakota songs: The Porcupine Singers\***

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## **Lakota**

by  
Bobby Bridger

(Narration)

***“ ‘I’ve been expecting you,’ the old man spoke low.  
He was colored like brown earth all covered with snow.  
‘My name is Black Elk, and I’m a Sioux man  
I am a Lakota of the Oglala band.  
Crazy Horse was my cousin; Red Cloud was my chief  
Wounded Knee calls to me still in my sleep.  
I went with Sitting Bull in the Wild West show  
Cody took us to Europe with Cheyenne and Arapaho.  
Sitting Bull rode a trick horse, but not in the show  
And now he is gone, where all brave hearts go  
Now, those Lakota are gone where all brave hearts go.’ ”***

***“ ‘Grandson this vision I’m remembering to you  
Is my own life story, so I know that its true.  
Its a story of two-leggeds, four-leggeds and wings  
Sundancing and dying, beginnings and endings.  
I am a Lakota -a Wichasha Wakon.  
But my vision is broken and soon I’ll be gone.  
For like all Lakota, my days come to pass  
And soon I’ll be going down under the grass.’ ”***

***“ ‘Smoke,’ Black Elk spoke as he offered the pipe.  
As the smoke swirled around him he offered his life.”***

(Song)  
(Balladeer)  
**Lakota**

**“Before the bison pastures emptied,**

The Earth held children to her breast.  
Before intruders scarred the mystery,  
Lakota/Sioux suckled the west.”

“The Mother Earth was filled with wonder  
And she could make a man feel small  
And she could shape his life with vision  
And understanding made him tall.  
When the sun danced it was a good day to  
die!”

(Chorus)

“But the bison emptied  
And the prairies filled with men  
Plowing crossroad and moving mountains  
When will it end? Tell me my friend?  
When will it end?”

“Lakota/Sioux do not die easy  
When being driven from their land.  
A Sioux can never trade his mother.  
She holds his vision in her hand.  
When the sun danced it was a good day to  
die!”

(Chorus)

“But the bison pastures emptied  
As the prairies filled with men  
Plowing crossroads, moving mountains  
When will it end? Tell me my friend?  
When will it end?”

(Narrator)

(Black Elk)

“ *‘In the Moon-of-Red Grass-Appearing, before wasichus came,  
I was a boy preparing, you see I had not found my name.  
Wasichus was a whisper, but then the word grew loud  
Echoing in the lodges, throughout the camps of Red Cloud.’* ”

“ *‘Wasichus come to kill us! Wasichus want our land!  
Since I am just a little boy, I do not understand  
I only want to be Lakota when I grow to be a man.’* ”

“ *‘Wasichus come to heal us; wasichus want a trail!  
Lakota came to council in the camp of Spotted Tail.  
All that is but Crazy Horse, the strange, enchanted one* ”

*Who stayed out on the prairie, vision-questing with the sun.”*

*“ ‘They only want a roadway,’ Spotted Tail rose and said.  
‘They do not want our bison, they want our yellow lead.  
They know a man called Jesus, whose power is so strong,  
He’s sent them here to heal Lakota; we should not treat them wrong.’ ”*

*“The silence then spoke softly, falling as a shroud  
It quietly prepared our ears for the voice of Red Cloud.”*

*“ ‘These white men’s words are torn with lies.  
I know, for I have seen it with my eyes.  
They come to beg a roadway,  
But prepare to steal the Earth.  
I cannot trade my Mother, whose nursed me since my birth.  
We’ll show these mad wasichus how Oglala’s greet a thief!  
That is all I have to say!’ Then he broke his pipe of peace!”*

(Song)

(Balladeer)

## **Red Cloud**

*“A Dogwood limb trimmed with hate  
Makes a warrior’s arrow sharp and straight.  
And a wooden bow in a Sioux’s strong hand,  
Shapes into a fearless warrior band.  
And the band screams war out loud!  
Following the mighty name of Red Cloud.*

*“They waited by the Bozeman Trail  
Like the silent still before the gale.  
‘til they heard the clattering of steel,  
And the rusty turning of the wheel.  
Then the band screamed war out loud!  
Following the might name of Red Cloud!”*

(Chorus)

*“Red Cloud! I believe you came from heaven!  
Red Cloud! Raining blood each time you cry.  
Red Cloud! I believe you came from heaven!  
Red Cloud! Sometimes to live you have to die!”*

*“On the plains if you will listen close  
You can hear a wailing blue coat ghost.  
He’s moaning, ‘I am sorry; I was wrong!’  
While he’s crying to the tune of Red Cloud’s song*

And the blue-coat ghost cries loud.  
He's remembering the mighty name of Red Cloud."

(Chorus)

"Red Cloud! I believe you came from heaven!  
Red Cloud! Raining blood each time you cry.  
Red Cloud! I believe you came from heaven!  
Red Cloud! Sometimes to live you have to die!

(Narrator)  
(Black Elk)

*"Many long-knives died that day and left without their hair,  
For Red Cloud took it home with him, and now ghost heads bleed bare.  
We thought that would be all of it, we thought they would go home.  
We thought blue-coats had learned to leave Lakota/Sioux alone.  
And so we went onto the plains to make meat for us all  
To take the bison's precious gift to feed us through snowfall.  
And while we marched old women cried for babies they had lost  
In making blue-coat intruders bald-headed wandering ghosts."*

*"I saw a brother galloping in circles on a hill.  
The prairie sign for all to come enjoy the bison kill.  
And when we topped the hill that day the people stopped to stare  
To hear the sound of buffalo hooves roaring through the air.  
Rumbling bison everywhere, rolling like some brown sea.  
It seemed they covered all the world, the horizon of eternity."*

*"And then the wise-men offered thanks to the maker of this good thing  
They smoked a pipe while on the ground they drew a simple ring,  
And then spoke in six directions, ending with the Father Sky.  
And then one voice sang all alone -the ancient bison cry!"*

(Song)  
(Balladeer)  
**Buffalo**

"On the plains there is a buffalo,  
Answering the questions I don't know.  
All I need is his heart,  
To help me be part,  
Of the plains and of the buffalo."

"In my thoughts I hear you buffalo.  
And I'll go where you want me to go.  
All I need is your heart,  
To help me be part.

Of the plains and of the buffalo.”

“In my heart I feel you buffalo  
Questioning the answers I don’t know  
All I am is your heart  
Now that I am part  
Of the plains and of the buffalo.”

(Narrator)  
(Black Elk)

*“The spirit in the sun! The spirit in the sun!  
The spirit in the sun causes magic to be done!  
As every living thing must reach to grasp a strand of light  
We reached for spirit in the sun, sundancing gave us sight.  
Our medicine was circles and the colors of the wheel  
Spoke in six directions -in the center all things heal-  
And flower as a forked tree with songbirds on its limbs  
Celebrating everyday in ancient, singing rhythms.”*

*“A child must seek a vision, children must learn to see  
The name that they will grow to wear -the name that they will be.  
So that everyone will know them by their vision of good things  
The colors of their life shine bright like feathered songbird wings.”*

(Song)  
(Balladeer)  
**Sundance**

“Red tail drawing circles on a clear, blue sky.  
Sun shining so brightly that I have to shade my eyes  
Just to see him.”

“I can smell the earth and feel the touch of the air.  
I can see green-growing things and I can prepare,  
To be like them.”

(Chorus)  
“Seasons running through us changing time.  
Circling cloudy questions in the blue-skies of our mind.  
It’s like searching for a vision when you’re  
blind.”

“I have watched the winter blossoming into the spring.  
Chased a butterfly through meadows, dancing on his wings  
With the summer.”

“And I have watched the summer green turn brown upon the trees

Like I've watched my feelings turn into my memories,  
Just like circles."

(Chorus)

"Seasons running through us changing time.  
Circling cloudy questions in the blue-skies of our minds.  
It's like searching for a vision when you're  
blind."

(Narrator)

(Black Elk)

*"Well the old men tell the story of the first horse on the plains  
And of the first Lakota to rope his head with reins  
And ride the wind on pounding hooves across the prairie-land;  
It seems that they were meant to be -the pony and the man."*

*"There was a boy who had a dream and then followed on its course.  
It happened near the greasy-grass that this boy became enchanted -Enchanted  
Horse.*

*And in this dream Enchanted Horse went to the spirit world  
Where everything was shadowed -dancing in a darkened swirl.  
Where everything was living spirit -even in the stone.  
The boy rode on his pony through this spirit world alone."*

*"Returning to this world he learned his memories could find  
This spirit world still dancing, dancing dancing in the shadows of his mind.  
And so he went there often as he grew to be a man,  
And often wandered out alone onto the prairie-land.  
But even in the villages, he seldom ever spoke  
Except to tease the children with a playful little joke."*

*"They came to call him Crazy Horse and he became the name  
Who stood for our resistance to wasichus on our plains."*

(Song)

(Balladeer)

## **Permanent Change** (Crazy Horse's Song)

**"What's a man if not a dream,  
Hanging on to fragile things,  
That only seem to be real a short time,  
Permanently changing like the colors of the season with their rhyme?"**

**"What's a dream if not a man,**

Fantasizing with some plan  
To understand the meaning of it all,  
Permanently answering the cycle of the Mother when she calls?"

(Chorus)

"I think I understand.  
Then I think I don't.  
Maybe I will maybe I won't.  
I think I understand.  
Then I'm not sure.  
When pain's more gentle than the cure."

"What is life but a dream,  
Flowing in a gentle stream  
Of thought that's only real for a short time,  
Permanently changing like the colors of the season with their rhyme?"

(Narrator)

(Black Elk)

*"I have my ancient bison pastures, that is all I want.  
But your blue-coat "Yellow Hair" makes my people dead and gaunt.  
And as we gathered once again to camp on Powder River.  
The wasp of war was buzzing like the arrows from the quivers.  
And there were Dakotas, our cousins and allies.  
And Rosebud Oglalas, come to stop wasichus lies.  
Hunkpapas, Sans Arc, Cheyenne and Arapaho,  
Bad-Face Brules, Arikaras, but there were no Crows.  
For it seemed the sun was Sioux that day and brightly burning red  
As Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull sat alone communing with the dead  
To weave a net to snare the vicious wolf of Washita,  
Wasichus call him 'Custer'; Lakota felt his claw,  
And Cheyenne heard the snarling, snapping in his bugle horn.  
Yes, all had heard him on the plains, and many still yet mourn.  
The people wove into a net, waiting by the Little Big Horn."*

(Song)

(Balladeer)

## Little Big Horn

"There is a time to make a decision, there is a time to know.  
There is no place to run and hide, there's no place left to go.  
Some men then will curse the very day that they were born,  
The air was cursed with screaming on the Little Big Horn,  
Little Big Horn, Little Big  
Horn."

**“Men cried out to Gods that day, cross-roading destinies.  
There is a call a man must follow, he cannot disagree.  
Lives unravel quickly when the hearts from souls are torn  
Little Big Horn, Little Big  
Horn.”**

**(Bridge)**  
**And the moon was blue and cold.  
Through the night the silence told  
That fate was there,  
They could see her lonesome stare  
Lying by them looking deep into their souls.**

**And the sun was flaming red.  
And the plains were hot and dry  
And death was there,  
They could feel its awful stare  
Looking at them from their brother’s frightened eyes.”**

**“Men cried out to God’s that day crossroading destinies  
There is a call a man must follow; he cannot disagree.  
Lives unravel quickly when the hearts from souls are torn,  
Little Big Horn, Little Big Horn, Little Big Horn, Little Big Horn.”**

**(Narrator)**  
**(Black Elk)**  
***“They said we murdered Custer and they lied  
His soldiers came to kill us and they died.\*  
And so we went onto the plains  
Fleeing from the soldiers  
While wasichus spun the wheel of hate  
To make coats for the shoulders  
Of all the fear existing in the thought inside his head  
Still forcing him to wishing that all Indians were dead.”***

***“ ‘Don’t touch me! I’m Crazy Horse!’ ” He said to the Indian Police,  
Who promised he would not be harmed if he would come in peace.  
‘I have no ‘Great White Father’; my father is the sky.  
Leave me here alone with him, it’s here I want to die.’  
A bayonet then lit the night and plunged its icy flame  
Until the strange, enchanted horse was nothing but a name.”***

***“The pipe was passed in silence through the lodge of Sitting Bull  
As the quietness softly listened to its heartbeat pounding dull.  
‘No, I cannot lead the people on with nothing but a lie  
No we cannot stop wasichus, but all of us must not die.***

*Yes, I have seen a vision, I've heard it from the lark  
The madness these wasichus dream has its end in dark  
And dreary traders mumblings which will cover all the earth  
Exchanging her for nothing; which is what his lies are worth.  
Yes, I have seen the image of the eagle on the gold  
That rules these mad wasichus soul  
And makes him leave his Mother's lap  
The run to embrace a man-made trap  
That only wants to kill him.' "*

(Song)  
(Balladeer)  
**Meadowlark**  
(Sitting Bulls' Song)

*"In the silence I have heard the meadowlark.  
I'm afraid I listened for too long.  
In the quiet I have heard the meadowlark  
And the understanding singing in her song."*

*" 'I know a valley where water runs sweet  
I know a meadow where grasses grow so deep.' "*

*"In the valley I listened to the meadowlark  
I'm afraid I followed her too far.  
In deep grasses I listened to the meadowlark.  
She was singing as she opened up all my scars."*

*" 'There was a day when the birds spoke with men.  
There was a time when the man was their friend.  
It was way back when he listened.' "*

*"In the darkness we must hear the meadowlark  
Shining through the night on her sweet song.  
In the shadows we must hear the meadowlark  
And the understanding singing in her song."*

(Narrator)  
(Black Elk)

*"The Iron-Horse tracks blackened over cold winter snow  
And the boxes were marked 'Cody's Wild West'. So  
We jumped in the boxes and we rode off so fast  
That we crossed the 'Big Water' to England and France  
Shooting out war-hoops and waving our lance  
And signing our names for a dollar a mark  
Where the air was no clear and the eyes held no spark  
The days of Lakota seemed buried and dark."*

*“And when I returned the mystery was gone.  
So I went to the prairie, where I cried all alone.  
For it seemed that the Mother’s breast had gone dry  
Leaving Lakota, the last of her children to die.”*

*“For ten years the sorrow grew until there came a word.  
‘Wovoka’, whispered softly until all the people heard  
How wasichus killed him, and how he flew away  
To visit the Great Spirit’s world, to learn a better way.  
And with all wasichus gone away the bison would return  
And to feed our empty bellies all we had to do was learn  
The dance of desperation; Wovoka danced and sung.  
The blue-coats grew uneasy. And the bugle filled its lung.”*

(Song)  
(Balladeer)

## **The Ghost Dance**

*“You can feel it coming; things will soon be clear;  
You can feel it growing; the spirit’s gonna re-appear;  
The spirit’s gonna re-appear!”*

*“You can feel it turning; turning on your thoughts;  
You can feel it yearning; it cannot be fought;  
It must not be fought!”*

(Bridge)

*“Take me dancing, dancing spirit world!  
Spin me reeling, feeling every swirl!”*

*“You can feel it moving; moving you along;  
You can feel it soothing; soothing you ‘til you are strong;  
Soothing you ‘til you are strong!”*

*“Take me dancing, dancing spirit world!  
Spin me reeling, feeling every swirl!”*

(Narrator)  
(Black Elk)

*“The trick horse heard gunshots then kicked at the air,  
And pawed at the ground like his master was there.  
But Sitting Bull lay on the dirt floor nearby,  
Giving blood to his Mother, the Earth, while preparing to die,  
While his killers, red Policemen, were stunned by the show  
The trick horse performed dancing off through the meadow.”*

*“The ‘Boots and Saddles’ bugle cry cracked the icy night.  
But by the time warm coats were on the morning tip-toed light  
Across the prairie skyline, lighting an albino sea  
And shining on Sitanka’s band, adrift at Wounded Knee.  
The dot on the horizon became a long, dark line.  
Silently, it cut the white sea, changing it’s design,  
As the quietness lay in waiting for the distant bugle warning.  
These mad wasichus meant to take the very light out of the morning.”*

(Song)  
(Balladeer)

## **Is The Darkness Only Searching For The Light?**

“When does a need change into a little seed  
In the darkness only searching for the light?  
When does it see that it’s time for it to be  
In the darkness only searching for the light?  
When does it know that it’s time for it to grow?  
Courage must be when a spirit’s ripe  
Dropping its seeds, changing into little needs  
In the darkness only searching for the light.  
Is the darkness only searching for the light?”

“When does a heart know it’s time for it to start  
In the darkness only searching for the light?  
When does it see that it’s time for it to be  
In the darkness only searching for the light?  
When does it know that it’s time for it to grow?  
Courage must be when a heart is ripe.  
Dropping its seeds, changing into little needs  
In the darkness only searching for the light  
Is the darkness only searching for the light?

(Bridge)

“Life we have found is a circle full and round,  
So we follow the rule of the circle.  
Life comes to leave, we are only as the trees,  
So we follow the order in circles.  
We are sisters of the earth,  
We are brothers of the sky.  
We are fathers of our sons.  
We are life. Life does not die.”

“There was a need and it grew into a seed  
In the darkness only searching for the light.  
There was a heart, and its courage made it start

In the darkness only searching for the light.  
And there was a tree, it was old and proud and free.  
Circling like the wrinkles in its heart.  
'til a man cut it down and the silence heard the sound  
Of the darkness only searching for the light.  
Is the darkness only searching for the light?"

(Bridge)

"Life we have found is a circle, full and round,  
So we follow the rule of the circle.  
Life comes to leave, we are only as the trees,  
So we follow the order in circles.  
We are sisters of the earth.  
We are brothers of the sky.  
We are fathers of our sons.  
We are life. Life does not die."

(Narrator)

(Black Elk)

*"The circle was fragile and so easily broken  
Then cast to the image of the trader's gold token,  
And our Mother cried Grandson, where words are never spoken."*

*"But there were feet that felt the heart-beat rhythm of the ground.  
And there were hearts that listened to the meanings that they found.  
But now they are gone where all braves hearts go.  
Now those Lakota are gone where all brave hearts go."*

(Song)

(Balladeer)

**Lakota**

(Reprise)

"Before the bison pastures emptied, the Earth held children to her breast.  
Before intruders scared the mystery, Lakota/Sioux suckled the west.  
The Mother Earth was filled with wonder, and she could make a man feel small.  
And she could shape his life with vision, and understanding made him tall.  
When the sun danced, it was a good day to die!"

(Chorus)

"But the bison pastures emptied  
As the prairies filled with men.  
Plowing crossroads and moving mountains  
When will it end? Tell me my friend?  
When will it end?"

"Lakota/Sioux do not die easy, when being driven from their land.

**A Sioux can never trade his Mother; she holds his vision in her hand.  
When the sun danced, it was a good day to die!”**

**(Chorus)**

**“But the bison pastures emptied  
As the prairies filled with men.  
Plowing crossroads and moving mountains.  
When will it end? Tell me my friend?  
When will it end?”**

**THE END**

\* *“They said we murdered Custer and they lied, his soldiers came to kill us and they died.”* comes from directly from John G. Neihardt’s **Song of the Indian Wars** . I used the line because it so perfectly expresses the essence of the Indian Wars.