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Standing in the Light: A Lakota Way of Seeing (American Indian Lives)

Severt Young Bear, R. D. Theisz

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For most of his adult life Severt Young Bear stood in the light—in the center ring at powwows and other gatherings of Lakota people. As founder and, for many years, lead singer of the Porcupine Singers, a traditional singing and drumming group, he also stood, figuratively, in the light of understanding the cherished Lakota heritage.

Young Bear's own life in Brotherhood Community, Porcupine District of the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation, is the linchpin of this narrative, which ranges across the landscape of Dakota culture, from the significance of names to the search for modern Lakota identity, from Lakota oral traditions to powwows and giveaways, from child-rearing practices to humor and leadership. "Music is at the center of Lakota life," says Young Bear; he describes in rich detail the origins and varieties of Lakota song and dance. A descendant of chiefs and of Wounded Knee survivors, he recounts his role in Wounded Knee II 1973 and his association with the AIM Song.

A highly respected musician, teacher, and elder, Severt Young Bear performed with the Porcupine Singers throughout North America, taught at Oglala Lakota College, and served on the Oglala Sioux tribal council. He was music and dance consultant for the films *Dances with Wolves* and *Thunder Heart*. This book is the fruit of his long friendship and collaboration with R. D. Theisz, a fellow Porcupine Singer and professor of communications and education at Black Hills State University. Says Theisz, "We're trying to write this book so that Lakota people and our nonIndian friends can find better understanding . . . so that those people waiting in the dark—perhaps we have a little of them in all of us—can approach the light."

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