



Matika Wilbur Photography, Project 562

Frank Waln (Sicangu Lakota) is an award-winning hip-hop artist and recipient of the Gates Millennium Scholarship. He currently performs nationally and internationally, offering inspiring indigenous messages of hope and resiliency. He credits his teachers, elders, and ancestors for maintaining the cultural belief systems of the Lakota people: “They would send our medicine men to mental asylums. Our ceremonies had to be held at night so that the police and the church wouldn’t hear us singing. It was our love for culture, community, and for ourselves that kept our ceremonies alive. Indigenous ceremonial practices in the United States were outlawed. Yet here I am, twenty-four years old, and I get to practice our ceremonies. Our ceremonies survived. And to me, that’s a beautiful thing.” Frank’s dedication to helping his people fuels his passion for his artistry, “I love making music and performing,” he says. “I’m an artist. I make inspiration. I make hope for people back home. People call me an activist and a rebel, but how does wanting my people to be happy, healthy, and respected make me an activist or a rebel? It makes me a human being. Hopefully I’ll see the day that wanting those things for my people won’t make me a social outcast.”

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