

Thursday, July 10, 2008

Meeting the Longest Walkers.

Connecticut, or is that Quinnehtukqut? (Image from Energy Information Agency's website).
Having blogged a few times about the Longest Walkers, here is an update on their activities and my meeting with some of them today.
The 1978 Longest Walk was "a peaceful, spiritual effort to educate the public about Native American rights and the Native way of life. Native American Treaty Rights under the U.S. Constitution are to be honored as the supreme law of the land.
The 3,600 mile walk was successful in its purpose: to gather enough support to halt proposed legislation abrogating Indian treaties with the U.S. government."
This year's Longest Walk II is "with the message: All Life is Sacred, Save Mother Earth."
With their environmental message, it is fitting that, on the last leg of their walk, the Longest Walkers are camping at the Greenbelt federal park in Greenbelt, Maryland. On July 9, I visited the campground to observe a signing ceremony of the Sovereignty Declaration of One Nation; however, the ceremony was not held then. My friend and spiritual mentor Jun Yasuda was there, and I also spoke briefly with Dennis Banks, a founder of the American Indian Movement. Jun-san walked with the original 1978 Longest Walk; in the interim, she probably has logged tens of thousands of miles on peace walks.
With client and court obligations, I was only able to stay briefly. A highlight of the visit was being in the sacred circle when one of the walkers was beating on a drum and telling the story of coming from Alcatraz to Washington on the walk, which is the same path of the first walk.
Those close to Washington, D.C., and interested in the walk might be interested in the walkers' itinerary running through this Saturday. For instance, on Friday will be a Capital Steps pipe ceremony with Harry Belafonte and Dennis Banks (seen here talking about the Longest Walk). On Saturday and Sunday will be a pow-wow near the National Museum of the American Indian.
Although I grew up in a state with numerous Indian place names, there were few Indians living there at the time, and I doubt that has changed much through today. The state's very name is Indian, from Quinnehtukqut ("place of the long river"). On the law side, as I recently said, I have just a little knowledge about the law affecting and empowering Native Americans, and have much more to learn about that area of the law and about other Native American issues, including such matters as treaty rights, land rights, and sacred medicine. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Jon's news & views at 00:00