

# A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON AN ICONIC LEGEND



Ernie LaPointe, a great-grandson of Sitting Bull, reveals family stories that illustrate the famous leader's life and death in ways that will alter the commonly held knowledge of the Lakota chief. This is a touching, poignant oral history put to paper in a Native American voice.

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SITTING BULL HIS LIFE AND LEGACY LAPOINTE



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## HIS LIFE AND LEGACY



ERNIE LAPOINTE  
GREAT-GRANDSON OF SITTING BULL

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The hardback edition of this book, first printed in 2009, was the first time the story of Sitting Bull had been written and published by a lineal descendant. Now available in paperback, Ernie LaPointe, a great-grandson of the famous Hunkpapa Lakota chief, presents the family tales and memories told to him about his great-grandfather. In *Sitting Bull: His Life and Legacy*, LaPointe not only recounts the rich oral history of his family—the stories of Sitting Bull’s childhood, his reputation as a fierce warrior, his growth into a sage and devoted leader of his people, and the betrayal that led to his murder—but also explains what it means to be Lakota in the time of Sitting Bull and now.

In many ways the oral history differs from what became the standard and widely accepted biography of Sitting Bull. LaPointe explains the discrepancies, how they occurred, and why he chose to tell his story of Tatanka Iyotake. This book is powerful. It is a story of Native American history, told by a Native American, for all people to better understand a culture, a leader, and a man.

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# BETRAYAL

The white man's tactic of divide and conquer was working well among the Hunkpapa. Many of Tatanka Iyotake's faithful followers and supporters in his fight for the Lakota way of life had turned to the Wasicu way. They had also accepted the Wasicu religion and abandoned the sacred pipe and the ceremonies. These actions saddened Tatanka Iyotake because members of his own extended family had turned away from the ancient ways and teachings of the Hunkpapa Lakota.

McLaughlin had been successful in convincing many of those under his supervision at Standing Rock that they should settle down and give up the nomadic lifestyle of the Lakota. However, he had little faith in his ability to convince Tatanka Iyotake to become a farmer. The old Lakota leader's determination to continue the old ways worried and frustrated McLaughlin. To keep Tatanka Iyotake and his family under control, McLaughlin recruited an informer to observe every decision they made. This included infiltrating even the closest circles around Tatanka Iyotake.



*Sitting Bull and One Bull, 1885—note how Sitting Bull is dressed in the traditional way and One Bull is dressed as a white man (Serle Chapman)*



*Sitting Bull at Fort Randall, 1882 (Family photograph)*

acquainted with the wife of the post quartermaster, Captain Horace Quimby, who was from New Hampshire. When transferred to South Dakota, he had brought with him his wife, Martha, and their two daughters, eighteen-month-old Belle and five-year-old Alice. His wife's sister, Margaret Smith, also relocated to South Dakota

with the Quimby family. Martha Quimby, her sister Margaret, and her daughter Alice visited the Hunkpapa camp. They soon became friends with Tatanka Iyotake's family, usually bringing gifts and food. Martha Quimby later claimed to have taught Tatanka Iyotake to write his name as "Sitting Bull"; but, of course, James Walsh had already taught him when he was in Canada. However, he may have chosen to pretend not to know how to write his name in cursive. Such a small act of kindness would have been completely in character.

On one visit, Martha noticed Tatanka Iyotake had made a sketch from his winter count ledger, drawn on buffalo hide for the Indian



*From left to right: twin boy, Alice Quimby, twin boy, Four Robes with baby girl, Sitting Bull, Margaret Smith, Captain Quimby on horse at Fort Randall, 1882 (Family photograph)*