

Beatrice Medicine

Nominated by Sarah Bourke, D.Phil. Anthropology student



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Doctor Beatrice (Bea) Medicine was born on 1st August 1923 on the Standing Rock Reservation, Wakpala, South Dakota, as a descendant of the Sicasapa and Minneconjou bands of the Lakota Nation. She was given the name Hinsha Waste Agli Win, which translates to Returns-Victorious-with-a-Red-Horse-Woman.

Medicine received a BS at South Dakota State University and later went on to receive her M.A. in sociology and anthropology from Michigan State University and a Ph.D in anthropology from the University of Wisconsin. She has received a number of awards for her work including: the Distinguished Service Award in 1991 from the American Anthropology Association (American Anthropological Association), now known as The Franz Boas Award for Exemplary Service to Anthropology; the Bronislaw Malinowski Award in 1996 from the Society for Applied Anthropology; and the George and Louise Spindler Award for Education in Anthropology from the American Anthropology Association in 2005.

Over the course of her career, Medicine published two books and over 100 articles on issues including bilingual education, gender studies, and Native American education. Dr Medicine passed away on the 19th December 2005.

From a young age Beatrice Medicine witnessed the interactions between Lakota people, anthropologists and other researchers, including the roles of some Lakota people as translators of their knowledges into English. She also experienced the imbalance of power inherent in such research relationships. In her words, “I know I went into anthropology to try and make living more fulfilling for Indians and to deal with others in attempts of anthropological application meaningful to Indians and others.” (Medicine, 2001: 14).

As a young Aboriginal Australian woman and early-career anthropologist, I look up to the life and wisdom of Dr Medicine. Her book, *Learning to Be an Anthropologist and Remaining “Native”: Selected Writings*, has become a guide for my own journey in this discipline. Her words have inspired me to think beyond insider-outsider dichotomies, and to embrace my Indigeneity in the role of anthropologist. In Australia we call it “walking in two worlds” - a path which presents many challenges, but also exciting opportunities. In the right hands, anthropology can help to produce evidence of the strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples and their enduring connection to the land in the past, present and future.

We follow in her footsteps. Yaama Dhagaan.