

# Luther Standing Bear

Luther Standing Bear was born on the Sioux Pine reservation in South Dakota, the son of Standing Bear, a Sioux chief. He was reared according to tribal tradition and he learned the necessary skills of the Plains Indian life. At the age of 11 years, ancestral life for him and his people was most abruptly ended. They were confined to reservations under the rules of U.S. government agents. By 1879, school teachers arrived to take some of the Indian boys and girls away and teach them to read, write, and wear the white man's clothes. They were taken to the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania where they were given European-American clothes, haircuts, names and forbidden to speak their native tongue.

In 1902 Luther contracted to serve as the interpreter and chaperon for the Indians in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Then in 1912 he became an actor; he helped form the Indian Actors Association to encourage Hollywood studios to hire more American Indian actors and technical advisers.

In his later life, Luther Standing Bear wrote several books, one of them was called *Land of the Spotted Eagle* and it described traditional Sioux life. He also published two titles for children: *My Indian boyhood* (1931) and *Stories of the Sioux* (1934). Along with these and other books, Luther also painted pictures of battles and ceremonies. By the age of 69, he had created an important series of drawings, all on paper. He also drew portraits of Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and Black Elk.

Towards the end of his life, he became less accepting of the European-American culture. He believed that Indians should be trained to be teachers, engineers, doctors, and lawyers for employment on reservations, and he favored a bilingual education as well as integrating Indian history into the curriculum.

## Reference:

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