

Verdell Primeaux & Johnny Mike

Verdell Primeaux is of Oglalla/Yankton Sioux and Ponca heritage and was born in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. Verdell represents the Seven Council Fires of the Lakota and the Eagle Clan of the Ponca Nation. Verdell's mother, Delores Arapahoe, an Oglalla Lakota, is a descendant of Chiefs Many Horses, Red Cloud and Crazy Horse.

At birth Verdell was diagnosed with a combination of spinal meningitis and yellow meningitis. Verdell's father, Francis Primeaux, Sr., traveled to Texas where he harvested, with the help of Amanda Cardenas and family, peyote, which at the time was illegal to possess even for religious reasons. Francis returned home with the peyote and through prayer and songs of the Native American Church, cured Verdell's illness. Today, Verdell considers himself a living testimony to the healing power of God and Peyote.

At the age of two, Verdell received Holy Baptism which was performed by his great grandfather, Solomon Red Bear, Sr. By the time he was five, Verdell began singing and learning Lakota culture and tradition. When he was thirteen, Verdell recorded four albums with his father and at the age of sixteen he began composing lyrics and rhythms.

Verdell believes that God has enabled him to help restore and maintain balance, peace, harmony and beauty for all people through his prayer music. In conjunction with colleague, Johnny Mike, Verdell developed healing chants or "Two in One" music, which are peyote melodies and harmonies sung without drum or rattle accompaniment. This newer style of songs from the Native American Church attracted the attention of Robbie Robertson who included Verdell and Johnny as featured guest artists on the Capitol Records production, "Contact from the Underworld of Redboy." In harnessing the musical power of prayer, Verdell seeks to reach young people everywhere and guide them to safe and happy lives.

Johnny Mike is a *Diné* (Navajo) from Kitsili, Black Mesa, Arizona. His maternal clan is Near the Water People and on his father's side he represents the Salt Clan. He has two children, Rachael and Shane, and resides in Chinle, Arizona. Both sides of his family have been prominent in the Native American Church. Johnny's grandfathers and grandmothers were some of the first to use peyote within the Navajo nation and at a time when people went to jail for using peyote as part of the worship of the Native American Church. From these roots, Johnny was brought up in the ways of the Church and looks back at his life with great appreciation towards his elders who led him on the peyote road. Their prayers helped Johnny survive hard times growing up and helped to shape his life. Johnny hopes, with his brother, Verdell, to in turn help out friends and relatives with their songs and prayers.