

Raymond (Ray) Cross

AUG 24, 1948 - JAN 24, 2023



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Raymond (Ray) Cross

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Raymond (Ray) Cross died on January 24, 2023, at his home in Tucson, AZ following complications from a spinal cord tumor. His family was at his bedside.

Ray was born on August 24, 1948, in Elbowoods, ND on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, home of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara (MHA) Nation. The youngest of ten children, Ray was raised in a rustic farmhouse without running water or electricity. His father, Martin Cross, was the tribal chairman, and his mother, Dorothy Cross, was the daughter of a Norwegian homesteader.

The family's pastoral life was upended when the federal government broke ground on the Garrison dam in 1953, which flooded tribal peoples' homes and engulfed their ancestral lands (becoming Lake Sakakawea). Ray's father fought in vain to stop the dam.

Consequently, the family relocated to the high ground reservation town of Parshall, ND, and Ray attended Parshall elementary school and high school, where he's remembered for sinking two free throws to send a playoff game to overtime.

The 1960s drew Ray to the San Francisco Bay Area where he attended Stanford University and graduated with a B.A. in 1970. Drawn to civil rights, he earned his J.D. from Yale Law School in 1973 and was admitted to the California Bar.

Soon after, Ray kicked off his career as an attorney with the California Indian Legal Services in Mendocino County. In 1975, he left for Boulder, CO to serve as an attorney for the Native American Rights Fund. There, Ray represented the Klamath Tribe in the contentious Klamath Basin and secured their aboriginal hunting and fishing rights. In Ray's final weeks, he beamed upon learning that the Klamath River dams will be dismantled—a swan song.

They say you can take the boy out of the country, but not the country out of the boy. True to these words, Ray returned home to the MHA Nation in 1981 to serve as lead tribal attorney.



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Reviving his father's fight against the Garrison Dam, Ray launched an 8-year legal battle, leading to the halls of Congress, where he won reparations of \$149 million for the tribe for the federal government's taking of 156,000 acres of land. Ray's work, including his two victories in the U.S. Supreme Court, is memorialized in *Coyote Warrior*, a book by Paul Vandevelder.

In 1989, Ray wooed Kathy Johnston with a "howdy" while they were studying at Harvard Kennedy School and they married the same year. Together, they blended work and travel while adding a daughter, Helena, and son, Cade.

Ray transitioned from courtroom to classroom as he began teaching—first, at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and then at the University of Montana as an expert on federal Indian law and public land law.

Ray's final years were committed to organizing citizen coalitions through petitions and lawsuits to advocate for tribal voter rights and combat tribal government corruption. In failing health and unable to travel, he gained a fervent social media following who he hoped would continue these efforts.

A lover of animals who wouldn't swat a fly and an advocate for the most vulnerable, Ray was a gentle soul. A reader of Melville and airport paperbacks alike, his interests weren't limited to the erudite. Not to mention he had an insatiable sweet tooth (See's Candies preferred).

Ray (Indian name: White Duck) is survived by his wife, Kathy, and ducklings, Helena and Cade, who miss him dearly.

Ray was preceded in death by his parents, Martin Cross and Dorothy Cross; siblings, Phyllis Cross, Martin Cross, Jr., Marilyn Hudson, Mike Cross, and Forrest Cross.

The immediate family will celebrate Ray's life privately with a scattering of ashes at Prayer Rock on the family's Yellow Eagle ranch in North Dakota (summer 2023).

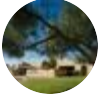
In honor of Ray, go forward with courage, kind words and good deeds.



Tribute Wall

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Evergreen Mortuary, Cemetery & Crematory shared 2 photos to the **Memories Album** album.

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Media

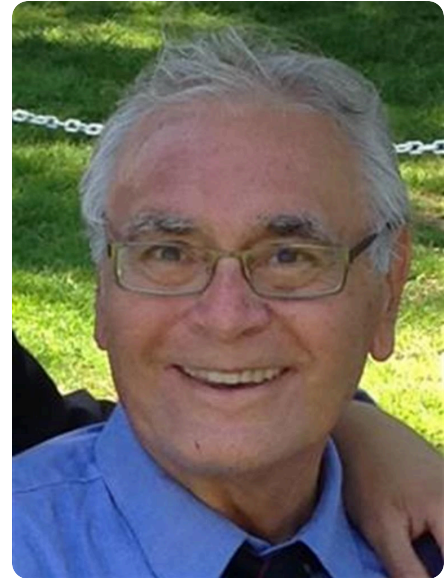
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Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Raymond (Ray) by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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