

NEWS RELEASE

## Ken Blackbird Photography

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■ *For your photographic needs. [www.kenblackbird.com](http://www.kenblackbird.com)* ■

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- Cody, Wyoming -

### Native American Photojournalist wins Fellowship and Award

The National Newspaper Association Contest awarded Ken Blackbird, staff photographer for the *Cody Enterprise*, first place for Best Breaking News Photo, 2007. Blackbird will place this plaque on the shelf with his other numerous awards earned over his 15 year career in photojournalism. Although acknowledgement from his peers is nice, Blackbird is intrigued with the possibilities of Cody Institute for Western American Studies (CIWAS) fellowship also awarded in 2007.

"The fellowship provides me an opportunity to gain knowledge," said Blackbird, "That is something I can give back to people. The award is an atta-boy."

The CIWAS fellowship will support Blackbird's research trip to the Czech Republic, Belgium, Poland, and Germany to document how Europeans embrace Native American Plains cultures. An exhibition of photos called *Tribal Crossroads* will be built around Blackbird's research in Europe, his vintage Indian Country work, and the new work accumulated with the support of the fellowship. *Tribal Crossroads* will compare and contrast the cultural and social understanding between these peoples.

The importance of *Tribal Crossroads* is significant. No current compositions in photography document the depth of diversity and complexity of the contemporary American Indian like Blackbird's work

– let alone translate that experience into the global view of the impact of Native American knowledge and culture on the world.

Blackbird's inspiration for the project began in 1999 when he spotted Great Plains teepees with Sioux designs on a train ride through Italy.

He was a bit taken back by this discovery. Upon returning home, he began to research how those teepees got there.

"What I learned was that Native American cultures have an enormous influence and reach in the world," said Blackbird. "Something I didn't know. Through photographs, I will be able to start to influence people about our global impact. That could be important to a child growing up on the reservation. It's important to all of us."

Blackbird's research will not focus exclusively on Europeans who assume Plains Indian dress and cultures. Bruno and Kristen Schmäling of Germany are interested in the history, culture, and language of the Lakota. Kristen is fluent in the Lakota language. She offers Lakota language courses for free in return for donations from the students to support Leonard Little Finger's Lakota School Project in Oglala, South Dakota. According to Bruno Schmäling, the funds to start the recent construction on the school building came from German supporters.

These are the kind of global connections that Blackbird seeks to capture in his images.

Ken Blackbird is Assiniboine and a member of the Fort Belknap community in Montana. Blackbird is a photojournalist and freelance photographer that specializes Tribal marketing and portrait photography.

For more information about Ken Blackbird or the *Tribal Crossroads* exhibit go to [www.kenblackbird.com](http://www.kenblackbird.com) <<http://www.kenblackbird.com>> or contact Ken Blackbird at [kenblackbird@mac.com](mailto:kenblackbird@mac.com).