

Dear NAYA Staff, Friends, & Community,

I hope this email finds you all well and in good spirits. I figured since my organization email address was reactivated, that I'd use this as an opportunity to set the record straight regarding my termination from NAYA as Business Development Coordinator on March 11th, 2019. I realize there have been many staff changes since my departure from the organization, but in an attempt to salvage my reputation, I came to the conclusion that it was necessary that I speak on my experience with NAYA leadership and the current Executive Director. Upon completion of my Bachelor's degree from Portland State University in Social Science and Indigenous Nations Studies, and guided by many amazing indigenous leaders in our community, I was excited to use my knowledge and passion in a role perfectly suited to my skills and experience. I felt incredibly blessed and honored to get back to work for our people, and to be part of this amazing positive change. What felt like a great opportunity at first ended in an extremely hurtful and traumatic experience, one that financially crippled my family and I, and was brought on by Executive Director, Paul Lumley. I have learned through this experience, and by the guidance of those ancestors and elders before me, that this is not a man equipped or qualified to lead a native community organization.

Before explaining the circumstances that led to my termination, I'd like to point out that the previous HR Manager, Lorilee Morsette was incredibly kind, compassionate, and professional. She immediately made me feel welcome and accepted, and that's not something you find often on your career path as a native person. I'm not sure what led to her forced resignation, but when I arrived on February 22nd, 2019, she demonstrated a very clear passion for NAYA values, and spoke in a way where she understood the various challenges that many of us natives experience daily. Having dealt with racial bias in previous academic and professional settings, I felt that I had finally arrived at a place where these challenges would be understood, and where I would be protected by the same values that line the walls in the cafeteria; the values I was raised by, and that I try hard to live my life by daily. As I would later discover, the very leaders selected to carry out those values are the first to abandon them. It was later explained to me by a handful of other native NAYA employees and friends that NAYA is a "white" organization, and neither demonstrates or appreciates the vision our community leaders had over 40 years ago. I would unfortunately find out that the Executive Director, Paul Lumley, someone who I looked up to professionally from a distance, would be the one to do the most damage. He was abusive, talked down to me in the most hurtful and disrespectful way, and triggered the most traumatizing experience I had felt in 11 years.

On my first day at NAYA, the Friday of my orientation, Lorilee explained that if we had any issues we'd like to discuss in private, that we could set up a separate meeting with her. Because there were a few other new hires in the Pizza Hut room at the time, I opted to meet with her the following Monday. Excited for my new role and to develop new relationships within our community, I met with Lorilee that Monday, and explained to her that 11 years prior I had experienced a trauma that left me diagnosed with PTSD, but that it didn't hold me back from performing the responsibilities in my new role. I explained that on my path to healing in those 11 years, I had earned 4 degrees, organized several successful youth and community events,

learned from and nurtured relationships with very well respected native leaders and teachers, and tried hard to get back to being the good person my family had raised me to be. I explained to her that 11 years before, I was in an abusive relationship, where my ex-partner punched, kicked, and slapped me, threw my belongings around the house, verbally abused me, and belittled me in front of friends. I didn't tell her that in the short 9 months my ex-partner and I were together that she had 3 DUI's, and that when she drank, would become extremely violent and abusive. Before that, I had never been in a violent relationship, and was glad to say that the majority of relationships I had been in ended in close friendships that I maintain to this day. As a native person we can all identify with family members that have struggled with alcoholism and addiction, and one thing I learned in my family is that although some may struggle, that we don't turn our backs on them. Although I realized I couldn't stay in this abusive relationship and left, my upbringing told me that I could still be a friend and support my ex-partner in her recovery. My male ego at the time didn't want to acknowledge the abuse I had endured, and I overlooked it in attempt to support her in hard times. I should have left, but where we come from we don't turn our backs on people who struggle with addiction. Again, I learned the hard way that our values don't align with the mainstream narrative. At any rate...

Within two months of our separation, I had agreed to meet up with her to try and be a support in her recovery, and encourage her in a good way as she worked to overcome her legal troubles. She had lost her driving privileges because of the DUI's, and I agreed to drive her to the airport to fly out and meet with her estranged father thinking it could help her on her path of healing. In that time she had found out that I had met someone new, someone who would later become my wife, and was doing everything she could to try and repair our relationship. Later that very same day, I was again attacked, punched, and kicked in a drunken rage, and later wrongfully accused of felony domestic violence assault. It was a fraction of a second that would change my life forever. Although I will spare the details, know that for many natives and marginalized groups in our society, wrongful accusations and convictions are a very real thing. Before this, I had never been in trouble, was the first in the history of my family to graduate high school, to attend college, and my family looked to me to set a new example for our future. I am by no means perfect, but having been raised mostly by strong, resilient, amazing women in my family, I have never, would never, and will never raise my hand to a woman. I would never sacrifice my many blessings to hurt anybody, and I value love, kindness, and compassion for all living things. Regardless my true heart, I ended up in jail for 3 months, wrongfully accused of Measure 11 Assault II, and fighting like hell with very little hope to avoid a 70 month mandatory prison sentence. While I've come to realize some will doubt my truth, I've also realized that what others think is none of my business. I will carry on being the same good person I've always been, trying hard to be a positive and kind person, and carrying my truth with me. While incarcerated, I turned down the first plea agreement, given only the option to plead guilty, and that would have let me out with probation and a lifelong felony charge on my record. I was willing to take the risk of a trial knowing I was innocent, and a week before my trial was to begin, they offered another plea agreement that allowed me to plead no contest, and bumped the charge down to one that is expungable after ten years. My little sister was graduating high school a month later, and with very little hope in our justice system, decided to take that offer. I've been public about my experience since the beginning of this journey, and just when I

thought my community was giving me a hand up, Paul Lumley kicked my family and I down hard. And although some may look at my experience as a liability, it has become one of my greatest strengths. It has made me even more passionate about the success, health, and wellbeing of our community, and in a sense more aware of the hardships our people have faced for generations.

Fast forward 11 years, it's my first week in my new role at NAYA, and we receive an organization wide email notification that Lorilee had resigned, effective immediately. Considering the kindness and empathy she showed me, and knowing my background check had yet to come back, I immediately felt scared that when it does come back, it would wind up in the hands of somebody who doesn't exemplify the organization's values, or the values of our community. Before applying for the Business Development Coordinator position, I had gone through every aspect of the hiring process, including the disqualifying crimes list to make sure my charges, which are now expunged, wouldn't disqualify me from doing this work for our people. I checked and checked again, and according to all available information, was relieved to find that I had a real shot. I went through the whole process, had what I thought was a decent interview with Oscar, Sky, and Cecelia, and a couple weeks after my interview was contacted by Oscar Arana, and offered the position starting at \$53k per year. Having endured a life altering wrongful conviction, I was overjoyed at the thought that this position was Creator's new plan for my family and I. I was beyond excited that this was the new start that we prayed so hard for, dreamed about, and that would bring me back to the community of native professionals that I had missed so much. As it turns out, when my paperwork came back, it ended up in the hands of somebody who doesn't share the same values that we do. When they ended up in the hands of Paul Lumley, I was shocked to learn that his values are more in line with those non-natives who either never knew, or didn't take the time to learn what it means to share the challenges that the majority of us have. There is an arrogance that everybody can feel with the leadership, and in my two short weeks at NAYA, I wondered why there is a strange culture of fear among natives who work there. When I was called into his office that day, myself, Paul, and Oscar, he looked through me as if I were nothing. With tears in my eyes, I pleaded with Paul that I had already explained all of this to Lorilee, and had already confirmed that my circumstances DIDN'T disqualify me from the position. And wouldn't you know it? There isn't a single native person working in the micro-enterprise or new accelerator program, and another non-native was hired into the department because they continue to overlook the people, the sacrifices and hardships of the natives who deserve it.

In the days following my termination, I had a handful of conversations with Paul Lumley in an attempt to save my job at NAYA, and in those conversations I explained to him that my family and I spent around \$3k preparing for this role. Although that isn't much compared to his \$192k per year job, it was everything to us in that moment. Having just finished up at PSU, I was still in student mode without a professional wardrobe, and without a second car. Before making the decision to devote my time and career to community work at NAYA, I was working and saving up to renovate our food truck, Turtle Island Grille, and ended up spending that money to be fully prepared for doing the good and necessary work for our people. Yet still, Paul Lumley called me an abuser, accused me of falsifying personnel and hiring documents, and spoke

poorly of myself, former employees, and other native people in our community. After receiving a copy of my personnel file weeks later, I came to the realization that there is another person and / or people in our community that sabotaged my career. There were very personal details in our conversations that he wouldn't have known or said without taking rumors as facts, and it's obvious in our conversations that running a diverse community organization comes second to the social club he's created. While I have witnessed with my own eyes Paul's true character, I don't want my hurts and traumas to guide anybody's perception of him. I can only figure that if you are as morally bankrupt as he, and operate in a way that abandons the values of our community, that it will eventually catch up with you. At the beginning of my employment with NAYA, I was wrapping up with the LEAD program where I was finding this amazing transformative healing with an incredible cohort and some amazing people. Paul would later kick me out of that group as well for no good reason, and the healing process that begun, was later lost because Paul Lumley forgot what it means to be native. He cares more about those non-natives on the board and in the finance department than you or I, and would throw you away in a second if it meant honoring the vision our elders and ancestors had over 40 years ago. As I write this there is so much more that comes to my heart and mind, but in the interest of self-preservation, and perhaps this idea that I need to stay tough, I hold myself back.

In the days and weeks following my departure from NAYA, I fell into a deep depression that I hadn't felt since my incarceration for something I did not do. If there was any way I could put into words the deep feeling of hurt and emptiness one feels with a wrongful conviction looming, I would explain it here so you could feel my heart, but there is no way you can until you experience it. Perhaps you can understand the feeling through your own experience, and would find a way to relate to this emptiness that far too many of us in the native community feel, but I realize many of you exist in a privilege that most of us never will. As I struggled to sleep, and struggled to make sense of this extreme feeling of betrayal by these so called leaders in our community, I began to question my own existence as an indigenous person, and whether the values taught to me by elders and ancestors were the same values floating through the halls of our native non-profits and businesses. I wondered if the traditional values that mean so much to me are no longer serving me and my ability provide for my family. In those weeks I did everything in my power to be present for my partner and our beautiful 3 year old daughter, so that they wouldn't feel the emptiness I was feeling. At the core I am a happy go lucky type of person, an optimist, and probably fairly naïve as well. Naïve enough to think that the leaders at NAYA I looked up to, could never and would never be the ones to let us down so hard. After taking some time to heal from this unfortunate experience, I realized that the values that are near and dear to me are probably the same ones Paul Lumley forgot or never had, and that I'm probably much better off not working under pretendians and fake leaders. I found happiness again in the fact that those values that hang on the south wall off the cafetorium are values that mean the world to me, and that it's plainly clear mean nothing to him. I realized that we as a family and community have endured far worse, have grown immensely, yet he stays the same.

Paul Lumley, your arrogance and ignorance in this situation deeply hurt and affected my family and I, and still, you lack the character, care or concern to every admit you made a mistake. It is

sad that the values reflected in your leadership are more in line with your white and non- native counterparts, and I have very real and genuine concerns for the future of our community with you in a leadership role at NAYA. If you were really down for our people and community, you would express your concern with a Wells Fargo executive on the board of directors, making decisions on our community while they fund our genocide in plain sight, but that is another conversation altogether, and just one example of many how you are selling us out. Tawna Sanchez, I looked up to you my entire life. I'm proud to say that many of the traditional and family values I learned as a child growing up, were from your brothers, Eugene, John, and Fermin, men I have called uncle since before I can remember. We were all very close when I was young, and the lessons they taught me I carry with me to this day. It's very unfortunate that in your role as Director of Family Services that you have zero services for native men in our community, and it is a harsh reminder that too many of our brothers are left out here with no support. Even with your millions of dollars in program funds to help our most vulnerable, you seem to have forgotten about us. Regardless, I have hope that you will recognize this need and make the proper changes to help lift us up going forward. Oscar Arana, perhaps you should humble yourself and truly get to know the community of people you were hired to serve. You have an arrogance about you that gives the impression you are above the rest of us, but keep in mind, it is the spirit of OUR community that provides you with your good life. I have seen your economic plan for our community, and read your proposals that brought in over a million dollars for the economic benefit of our community, yet you are failing hard. It has been three months since I left NAYA, yet you still have an opening for a Business Development Coordinator. As much as I hate to say your new program will fail, I'm afraid that when people so far out of touch with the needs of our community are hired into leadership roles as you have been, that when it does fail, it will be on you. You will just as easily give those resources to non-natives and manipulate the outcome of the program even though they were brought in on our sacrifice, with our images, and to help lift US up. It wouldn't surprise me that when it does fail, you will find a way to keep your position while those talented people under you will suffer for your bad choices.

To my friends and the real natives who work at NAYA, please know I only want the best for our community and for all of the families that have sacrificed so much over the years to make NAYA what it is today. I have seen the commitment, dedication, and passion from so many who worked hard to build the organization, and many of those same elders and ancestors would be disappointed and hurt at what it's become. I have heard from many others in the community who have been bullied, manipulated, lied to, and let down by some of the leadership at NAYA, and I believe that if even one of us is let down, that Paul Lumley is failing in his role. I have gotten to know so many of you even before NAYA, and know that your hard work and effort is deserving of far more than you receive. Consider the sacrifices that many of you still make while Paul Lumley makes \$192k per year, and ask yourselves if that is a reflection of our community values. While I realize that my story may not resonate with many people, and I'd be truly surprised if it did, this is something I needed to get off my heart for my own healing, and to commit myself to being an advocate for others who have suffered as I have. Either way, my intentions are good, and I want nothing but success and opportunity for all of our people. As new jobs have opened up at NAYA to serve our community, those jobs are too often given to

non-natives who are completely out of touch with the needs of our community and it's incredibly disappointing when there are so many of us with the passion, talent, and commitment to make great positive change. While some of these positions have been filled by non-natives, at this very moment there remains an opening for a Business Development Coordinator, the job I was hired for because of my qualifications, yet taken away because of personal judgments by one. He made the excuse that my employment was terminated due to NAYA employment policy, and after requesting that policy many times, it has yet to be presented because the policy doesn't exist. Paul Lumley chose to abandon not only NAYA's values, but the values of our people because he forgot what it means to be native. Either that or, he never knew at all. Math majors should stick to math, and let the real community work be done by the people who give a damn about the rest of us. Paul Lumley is a sellout. Ron True and Gary Villa were some of my late father, Ron Belgard's best friends since the 70's, and I'll remember the vision they had, that Paul will never know. My father passed 10 years ago this month on Father's Day from a heroin overdose, may he Rest in Love...

If anybody cares to stay in touch with me, I can be reached via email at nicholasbelgard@gmail.com, or can be found online at www.BelgardMediaWerks.com, my web development firm, or www.TribalFX.com, my charity apparel company that I created to raise funds for native student scholarships. If not, just as good. I'm am learning to find comfort and peace of mind even without the community I have loved and learned from since childhood. I look forward to reconnecting with the community in some capacity, and could use all the support and encouragement as we get back on our feet. Many blessings to all of you, and if you've made it this far, thank you for taking the time to listen.

Best,

Nicholas Sanford Belgard
Rogue River, Tututni, Chippewa Cree, Chinook, Enrolled Siletz