



Charles A. Eastman

Dakota Images

Charles A. Eastman, author and physician, was a product of two distinct cultures. Born in the winter of 1858 near Redwood Falls, Minnesota, Eastman was the son of Many Lightnings, a Wahpeton Sioux, and Mary Nancy Eastman, a white and Indian woman. Because his mother died shortly after his birth, Eastman, who was raised by his paternal grandmother, was known as Hakadah ("The Pitiful Last"). After the 1862 Sioux Uprising, he was with the band of Indians that fled to Canada. When reports reached them that Many Lightnings was to be hanged at Fort Snelling, the young Hakadah was adopted by his father's brother. In Canada, he received his adult name, Ohiyesa ("The Winner"), which was given to him after his band won a lacrosse game. When Ohiyesa was fifteen years old, his father unexpectedly arrived in Manitoba. Many Lightnings had been imprisoned in Davenport, Iowa, where he had converted to Christianity, changing his name to Jacob Eastman. By 1874, he was homesteading at Flandreau.

Ohiyesa accompanied his father to Flandreau, where his training in the white man's culture began, and took the Christian name of Charles Alexander Eastman. His education progressed rapidly. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1887 and received a medical degree from Boston University in 1890. He then took a position as government physician on the Pine Ridge reservation, where he married Elaine Goodale, supervisor of Indian schools for Nebraska and the Dakotas. In protest over government cheating of Indians on their annuities, Eastman resigned his position in 1893.

Eastman next set up a medical practice in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and traveled extensively as a representative of the YMCA. In 1897, he moved to Washington, D.C., to act as a Sioux representative during three sessions of Congress. He then rejoined the Indian Service, working for three years at Crow Creek in South Dakota. In 1903, President Roosevelt appointed him to revise the Sioux allotment roles to determine family groups and standardize names for purposes of inheritance.

In 1902, Eastman's first book, *Indian Boyhood*, appeared. Elaine Goodale Eastman, who had encouraged him to write, collaborated with him, and between 1902 and 1918, Eastman published nine books and numerous articles. His subject matter included his own life, Sioux legends, customs, and beliefs, and Indian-white relations. Throughout the rest of his long life, Eastman held various government appointments and served with many organizations. He died on 8 January 1939.

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