



Mythology for the

RED LADY

Although mountains have been considered feminine and sacred in every world culture, the transformation myth of Mt. Emmons to a female embodiment comes from a very local and very human source.

There are numerous stories about the “naming” of the Red Lady. The only one which the Old-Timers referred to was Frank Orazem's experience. When I knew him, like most of the elders, he was very private, humble and would never speak of himself before or over others. After knowing him for almost eight years, and asking him for the story that others had shared, he finally told his personal story.

Frank was coming out of the Big Mine just at alpenglow, when he looked up to see a rosy silhouette outlined in green in the bowl of Mt. Emmons. He was so stunned to see the image of the powerful Feminine, and being a devout Catholic who had always wanted to be a priest--not a miner--he knelt down and gave thanks for the blessing of this revelation. In his spiritual tradition, as in so many others, Mother Mary, as the Divine Feminine, protects and helps all who reach out to her. He felt that he had experienced an epiphany in which he "saw" the guiding Spirit of our valley in the reddish color of the iron oxide on the face of the mountain, and therefore, the "Red Lady". He was constantly asking me when "the young people would go up there and clean off the moss" which was slowly beginning to cover the ferric red stones. He wanted to make sure that we would be able to continue seeing and honoring her in coming years when he was gone.

This is a case of a first-person account of an amazing epiphany, and he and I felt was a sacred event and very important reminder: if we take care of the Red Lady, she will continue taking care of us.

High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA) was established in 1977 to keep a massive-scale molybdenum mine off of Mt. Emmons. The organization formulated an embodiment of the Red Lady in the selection of a woman each year to represent the mountain. This selection began as a fun dance contest and very important fund-and consciousness-raiser. Through the decades this archetypal embodiment and wisdom figure has evolved into, what many of the women and men who have held this representation, consider a sacred duty and trust to support Mt. Emmons' and the valley's health and environmental rights.

Vinotok added the Red Lady to the Trial of the Grump because it was important to remind ourselves we are a community which has been battling non-sustainable and untenable technological threats from various molybdenum and other hard rock mining companies for decades. The Red Lady in Vinotok is another manifestation of the fierce divine feminine energy that must be listened to, revered and protected.

By Marcie Telander, Vinotok Founder & Godmother



A Poem for Red Lady

There is a lady mountain in repose
Her silhouette guards our valley
Watching across history
Witness to our humanity
Protecting sheltering she
Preserves the landscape with her embrace

There is a fine lady in red flowing clothes
Incarnation of geography
Impart a human face on the theater of activism
Ignite the passion of our community
So, we may never forget how important
She is to Us

Here is a lady mountain in repose
Made mostly of precious molybdenum
My lady, sovereign mountain
Mother of our town!
Threatened by those who do not see beauty
Threatened by those who see resources in place of life

Here is a fine lady in red flowing clothes
One in a line of bold preservationist
Oath sworn to forty-three years of political action
Seek a relationship with the wilderness, within and without
Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves
Sky, Flora, Fauna, Watersheds, Mountains

Anna Claire, Wordsmythe