

View from the Medicine Lodge



Jim Great Elk Waters



Forest Edge Publishing
Blue Creek Ohio

View From the Medicine Lodge (2012)

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Forest Edge Publishing
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First edition: 2002 pBook only
Second Edition: 2012 eBook & pBook

Printed in the United States of America
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication; available from publisher

Cover Illustration: Don Stephenson
Cover and Interior Design by Forest Edge Productions

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Various quotes: with appreciation , from *Through Indian Eyes*

The Sacred Weed; From *Through Indian Eyes* with comments by Jim Great Elk Waters

In the Rain: *MaxBluWing – Chautauqu-Echoes in the Wind, June 1, 1997. Author unknown.*

That's What Grandmas are For- an email for Jessica by Lazorleter. *Author unknown*

Dream Catcher: Lyn Dearborn, Mary Ritchie NativeTech.org

Are You an Indian: Les Tate :*Chautauqu-Echoes in the Wind, July 20, 1997. Author unknown*

Go Carefully: *Author unknown*

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What People Are Saying About the *Medicine Lodge*

“Folks! this is a great book. It is good Medicine for all !”

Marla Phillips, Energy Healer & founder of AdventureWithin.com

”Jim’s spirituality and warm personality put people at ease... Many have remarked that they feel a sense of peace in his presence that enables them to work more effectively.”

Neeake--Fred Shaw, Shawnee Olammapise (Truth teller) - sumac-enterprises.net

”You created a brilliant picture with your words and touched the depths of my very soul with your vision. I want to revisit and linger there a while.”

Leanne Robertson: Author/Writer

”Great Elk, you bring honor to the many areas of your service to humanity.”

Norma Foster, Founder, Interfaith Council for the United Nations

”You’re a joy and a blessing to know.”

Sedena Cappanelli, Co-Founder AgeNation.com & Native American Producer

”Great Elk...led me to a richer understanding of what has gone before us, where we are now -- and most importantly, all that we CAN BE”

Beth Trissel, Romance Author, bethtrissel.com/reviewer

”As Waters reveals the depths of his soul, he helps others in their quest to find peace and balance in today’s stress-filled world.” *Writers.Net*

”His alternatives to today’s convenient wisdom for attaining mental and spiritual wellness have inspired thousands.” *LearningAnnex.com*

”Wise, observant and a great story teller. history came alive for me through his... positive approach to life...”

E. Mackey

“Lasting wisdom and deeply meaningful ponderings... emphasizes the importance of finding balance. *James A. Cox, Editor-in-Chief midwestbookreview.com*

“This manuscript is too powerful for ‘Chicken Soup,’ It’s more like ‘Chicken Soup on steroids...’ but a book that must be read.”

Jack Canfield, Co-founder chickensoup.com

What Book Reviewers Say

“View from the Medicine Lodge is a soul-stirring, poetic, wise collection of Indian stories and life experiences from the heart of Jim Great Elk Waters: "Our religion is not of paint and feathers. It is a thing of the heart."

Once begun, this inward trek into what is the best of being Indian and human is not easily put down. Curled on the couch with my cat, I journeyed on under the gentle, eloquent guidance of Great Elk as he led me to a richer understanding of what has gone before us, where we are now -- and most importantly, all that we CAN BE: "No dream comes true unless you breathe into it life." And: "To be human is to be truth, less will make us hollow." Great Elk exudes a positive, irrepressibly hopeful spirit that is contagious. He makes me believe in the rich possibilities of this great land we call America and calls me to affirm those possibilities within myself. Despite his people's tragic history, which he touches on in a poignant and comprehensible way, they and he have held to the truths and traditions that make them Shawnee: "We are the total sum of all our ancestors."

But you need not be Shawnee or from any other tribe to appreciate the wisdom and poems threaded throughout this unique perspective: "One cannot be long angry in the loving arms of another." Great Elk teaches with warmth, humor and a noble dignity that does us all honor. His reverence for the Creator and the earth, living in rightful harmony with ourselves and others, remembering those who have gone before us, and our place in the great circle and dance of life shines forth in this inspiring book: "Happiness, laughter, and family voices in a home keep more people living right than all the laws man can make." This is a must read for anyone with a soul. It is brimming with food for those weary in spirit, and anyone who desires a better understanding of what makes us good. It is also a visual treat with beautiful illustrations by the author."

In the words of Great Elk: "I am an okama, (storyteller, or teacher), and it is my job to share with you that which has been shared with me. As we journey together, it is my prayer that I will inspire you, excite you, anger you, or in other words cause you to think. If you think, then you will begin to understand the meaning of this journey.

For those of you who read *View* only for its enjoyment, that is also good."

Beth Trissel www.curledup.com

★★★★★ A thoughtful and thought-provoking collection of essays, Written by Jim Great Elk Waters (the Shawnee Sub-Chief and a legislator on the East of the River Shawnee Nation Tribal Council), View From The Medicine Lodge is a thoughtful and thought-provoking collection of essays, stories, and poems that present Native American-based inspiration and life lessons to contemporary readers of all backgrounds. Lasting wisdom and deeply meaningful ponderings fill the pages this thoughtful account, which emphasizes the importance of finding balance between Man and Nature. View From The Medicine Lodge is an enthusiastically endorsed recommended for Native American Spirituality and Cultural Practices reference collections and reading lists.

Midwest Book Review (Oregon, WI USA)

Amazon Customer Reviews

★★★★★ Great gift item I received this book as a gift. What a great gift. The book contains many short stories that would have appeal to both the young reader as well and the older reader. The book would have a broad range of appeal. The book contains may one liners which can be used in our normal lifestyle. This book is a keeper and will become part of your library. This book will be on my gift giving list....

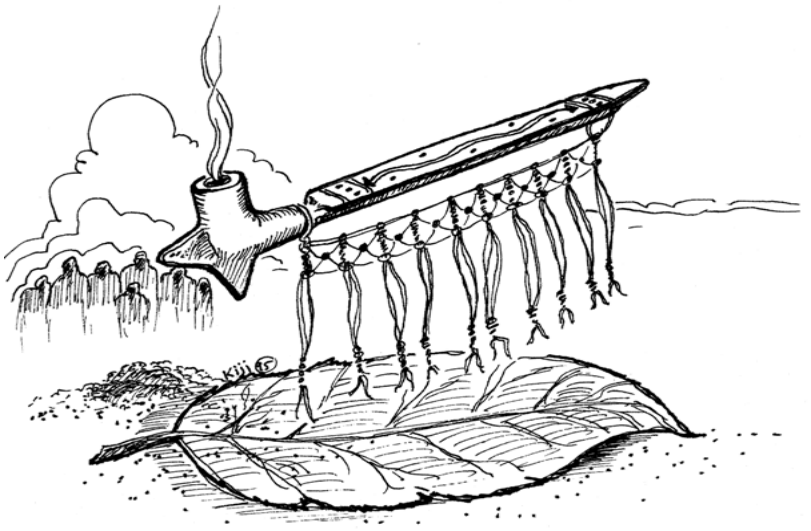
R. Ashabraner , Montana USA

★★★★★ So Much Wisdom, Jim Great Elk Waters is wise, observant and a great story teller. History came alive for me through his tales of Indian culture and his positive approach to life is evident in every story. His book will appeal to lovers of history, to families needing the answers reflected in his quote, "Happiness, laughter and family voices in a home keep more people living right than all laws man can make," and to those people looking for inspiration, "You can be your dreamed self if only you believe." I enjoyed all of his "Views from the Medicine Lodge."

Elizabeth S. Mackey, GA USA

★★★★★ Research, It was full of pretty good information and stories. I personally know the author and a few of the people in the book and in the references.

Cherie L. "Sunshine" Young, Ohio USA



Six Directions Midewiwin Pipe - used in the Sampa (Sacred tobacco) Ceremony

My Smoke Prayer

In the time when I sat down to write of my People and of their Way, to share this View from my Medicine Lodge, I removed my Pipe from its pouch and carefully filled it with Sampa grown by our Holy People specifically for Ceremonies.

Taking the Pipe, stem first, I offered the Sampa to the six directions: the east where the sun lives, the south from where we began our long journey home, the west where the sun sleeps, and the north of the Blackness and the cold. I then touched the earth as I offered the pipe to Grandmother Earth, and then reached high to offer it to Grandfather Sky.

I did this as is tradition of my Mide'/Shawandasse People since the beginning of time.

Carefully I lit the Pipe and made my Smoke Prayer, blowing the smoke again to the six directions. This done, I placed the Pipe on some mint. As the smoke curled skyward to carry my Prayer to Creator, I began.

This Smoke I made was to call for a Blessing upon these words and thoughts, that each person who reads from this book will better know the path of the Shawnee Indian today. As is my custom, I gave much thanks for the wisdom that has been shared with me, and for the great Gifts that Creator has bestowed upon my People. And, as always, I asked that if any Sacred words or phrases are read, that they will always be attributed to the Source, Creator, and not to this humble two-legged. I am but the messenger, the conduit for the inspiration.

The Smoke ended and the Prayer for this Blessing was done.
Adean

Now we could begin.

Dedication

I rededicate this book to my best friend and beloved wife, Lolita.

For near fifty years, she has been my greatest inspiration, the cause for this book (and anything else of worth, that I ever thought of doing). Lo was there near the beginning of my path to success and is here beside me now. She is the one who has always said that I am her creative genius, able to accomplish any task, to do it in a right way.

It was her reasoned voice that caused me to lose my fear of success. For that and so very much more, I dedicate this book.

Language Note

The native language I use in this book is that of the Algonquian Southern Cree dialect. In the near two hundred years since the vast majority of our Shawnee people were removed to the reservations west of the Mississippi, those who stayed behind had little linguistic interaction with the removed Shawnee. This they for the most part resorted to the common language of the remaining neighbors to the north, the Canadian Cree. This is the language that the few Speakers retain today.

Both the western and Ohio Shawnee speak Algonquian root language. The dialect of the western Shawnee of today is very different. This is, I believe caused by the effect of separation and influence of the pan-Indian languages of each area. I say this with great respect for our western Shawnee who have two centuries of interaction with the many Tribes in their country. Language without isolation grows. A perfect example is the English language we speak today in America. It is a far cry from that which the British speak. George Bernard Shaw, the Irish dramatist & socialist (1856 - 1950) said, "England and America are two countries separated by a common language. Likewise, the Shawnee of Ohio and those in the west are too "separated by our common language."

Many will say "You are wrong." I say neither are wrong,

"They say tomatoe and we say tomato. Lets move on. Pax?

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About View from the Medicine Lodge

It has been a decade since “View” was premiered at the 2002 BookExpo 2002 at Jacob Javits Center in New York City... and things have changed. For I am ten years older, “duh”...and hopefully wiser. But more importantly, new light had been brought on some of the original stories and quotes, and those have been excised or corrected. It continues to our vision to bring only the best of our world to our readers. That being said, we hope you enjoy the new chapters and art we have included in this 2012 revision of the “View from the Medicine Lodge. The elk

I am an okama (a storyteller, or teacher), and it is my job to share with you that which has been shared with me. As we journey together, it is my prayer that I will inspire you, excite you, anger you, or in other words, cause you to think. If you think, then you will begin to understand the meaning of this journey. For those who will only read View for its enjoyment, that is also good.

I promise that I will not intentionally offend you, but I will tell it as I see it. I will not soft-peddle my passion, and I will not bow to those who would want me to be “politically correct.” Not my nature. Know that I use “Indian” and “Native American” interchangeably, without malice or disrespect. Accept this, my friends.

As you turn the last page of the last chapter, I pray that I have caused you to experience emotion. That is the mother seed from which grows our comprehension of what it is to truly be “Indian” . . . and that is my job.

The genesis of Medicine Lodge was inspired by the many statements and stories from our Elders, of all Indian Nations. Without their wisdom passed through, we are lost spirits in a world of the invaders’ descendants. With this understanding, I realized that so many today don’t have a clue as to what it means to be Indian, even my own People. In View from the Medicine Lodge, I hope to focus, through the reflections of these views, on a wider concept in that regard with its myriad of facets that reflect the individual meanings of being an Indian today. In a documentary I wrote, I refer to this as “not a rehash of history but news at eleven.” View is that, the American Indian in all our complexity today.

Inspiration

Medicine Lodge's birth occurred at the Ohio Booksellers event in 1995 where I conceived the commitment to create a product that I could also sell there. I spent the day with my tribal brother and sister Sunset Watcher James Alexander Thom and his wife Dark Rain Thom, and Scott Russell Sanders, watching them as they shared their passion for writing with anyone who stopped long enough for them to converse. They are today's storytellers, creating oral traditions onto the talking leaves, the pages of their books. I saw fire in their eyes and felt their obsession. I knew that day that I too was imbued with the sacred emotion of the storyteller. It was their encouragement in those hours spent with their public that caused me to dream of this day.

When I sat down to assemble this collection of thoughts and experiences, I was unabashedly inspired by Mark Hansen and Jack Canfield of Chicken Soup for the Soul fame. Their gifts of love have opened many doors for those who are in need. I had originally submitted a manuscript of many of these essays to them for consideration. In the end, Mr. Canfield returned the manuscript with the comment that "This manuscript is too powerful for 'Chicken Soup,' It's more like 'Chicken Soup on steroids...' but a book that must be read."

Megwich

In our language of the ancient Algonquian Speakers, I wish to offer Megwich (my thanks) to the well-source that is so important in the creation of this book.

It is imperative that I honor four important books that were well sources for this inspiration: Panther in the Sky and Children of First Man, both by James Alexander Thom; Wisdom Keepers by Steve Wall and Harvey Arden; and Through Indian Eyes by the Reader's Digest Association. I urge you to read these works to feel the fire and wind and water that makes the Spirit of the Indian live. My copies are dog-eared and filled with yellow "stickies," and I use them regularly on my speaking tours.

I want to give a personal thanks to the many Shawnee for their open sharing of the teachings of their Shawnee grandparents, and for keeping the fires burning. My deepest indebtedness is to my Elders of the Shawnee and Blue Creek People.

My thanks to Timm Severud, creator and publisher of the long-run ezine, Chautauqua—Echoes in the Wind. I have included excerpts from

his ezine and offer that his work has been pivotal in the Medicine Lodge's development.

Without exception, I am proud to offer my profound thanks to my friend and former publisher, Jim Riordan of Seven Locks Press, who so believed in the value of View From the Medicine Lodge that they added the first edition to their collection of titles.

With this in mind, I have set the following stories and quips to paper for you to share with me, these experience emotions of enjoyment and enlightenment.

Introduction

I am old, and I am very tired now. I think I will sleep for awhile here by the fire to let the flames dance on my eyelids as they help me remember other stories from other times. For an old man like me, The Dreams are so important.

Changing His Feathers - Shawnee Shaman and Storyteller

Being able to share the past is vital to the Storyteller. In the Indian Way, the storyteller is the Keeper of the Wisdom and the Messenger of Enlightenment. Much of this book is based on the spiritual precepts of my American Indian origins.

Often I am asked, "What is the mystique of the Native American? What is the secret to your serenity?" Inwardly, I smile, as I know that much of the time there is no magic and little tranquility in our lives. The fact is we have to deal with all the myriad problems that the rest of you do, coupled with a different philosophical bent. The philosophy will be addressed in the development of this book. The problems? You name it. We have them, too.

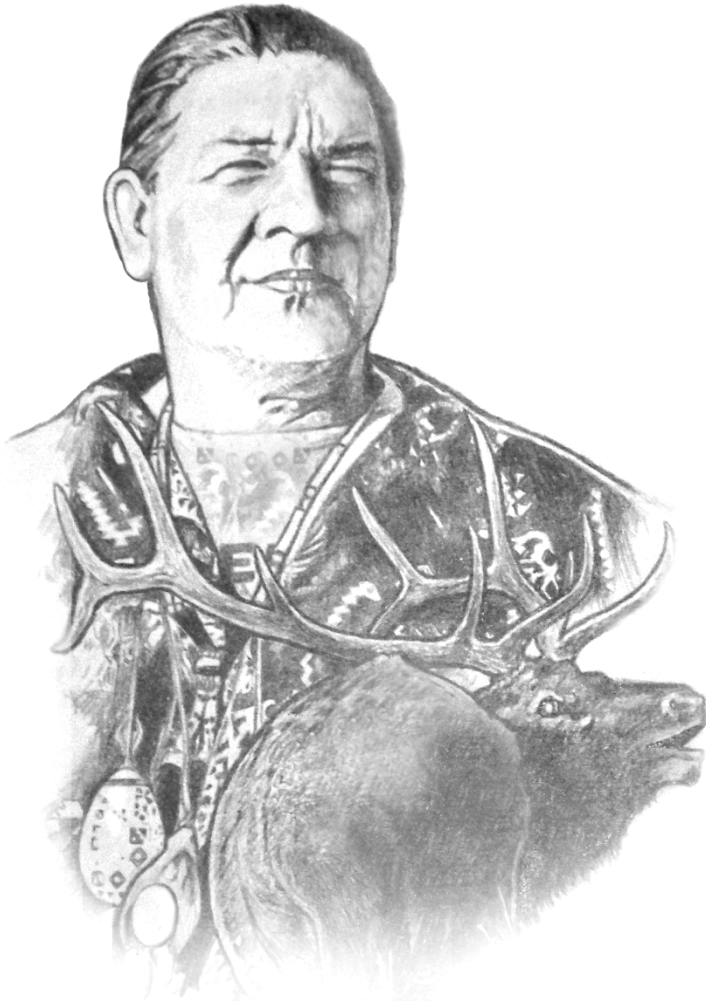
Many of these bits and stories are based on the beliefs of the Mide' and Coashellaqua faiths of the Woodland Indians. They are shared freely and are meant to illustrate what I use as guidelines for my life.

In general, we have been taught that we are but a part of Creator's Vision. Not the most important but, in fact, the last creation thought of the Great Spirit. Thus, we must be aware of our position within the Great Circle of all things living. This thought causes one to truly be more humble.

Why View From the Medicine Lodge?

It was plain to me that the purpose of this book was to share some of the ways of how my People bring a better balance to their lives. My driving saying is "Walk in Balance," or strive to perfect our lives while we are here, as best as we are able. The ultimate goal is to become the best two-legged or human possible. This is what I believe, that Creator envisioned when He first thought of us, and we became life.

Today's American Indian or Native American or First People (I forget the current politically correct term, even though I'm one of them) live in a near state of denial. We lost the battles, we lost the wars, but we did not lose our heritage. If tradition is to live in the First People, we must allow it to breathe and grow in the light of today, not in the past, the time of the Seasons of the Many Deaths.



Portrait of Chief Jim Great Elk Waters

By courtesy of Shawnee artist, Don Stephenson

About the Author

*My name is... there's the rub sayeth
the bard.*

Being Indian in modern times is a challenge, particularly in one's nom de plume. In most cases, we have both a given name and a tribal one.

My given name at birth was James Arthur Watters II, continuing the Eurocentric faction of my family's practice of honoring the father. Thus, my first name was a good strong and dignified moniker. In 1980 came name number two. As is the tradition of my Shawnee Tribe, I was given my "adult" name at my Naming Ceremony, held in the august halls of the mobile home kitchen of Crow Woman Knox, our Nation's Mother. Now I was known as Jim Great Elk Watters, another powerful and respectable name.

Then came the Algonquian translation, which was "*kiji wapiti nappe*," Great Elk Waters. Literally, it means the elk's raising its tail and exposing its white rump. "Does this mean I am really Big White Butt?" I queried. Is this my white half? I truly do not think so. (Now I'm getting confused!)

"Ah, but isn't the word *kiji* part of the name of the Great Spirit, *Kiji Manito*?" I asked those present at the ceremony.

Quickly, I set upon the fact that it would just not do to have a name so close to my God's Algonquian name. Fearful for my mortal soul, I have insisted that it be spelled *kiji* in lower case letters to differentiate the word in a respectful way and that I be called Great Elk.

So what happens? Nearly everyone I know calls me *kiji*.

I quit.

In the late eighties, I went to my parents and asked their permission to make one other change in my name. I wanted to drop the second "t" in Watters. During the days before Indians became American citizens in 1924, if you were an Indian and were found east of the Mississippi, it was a good bet that you would be removed to the reservations in the west, with only what belongings you could carry. All of your other holdings and properties were to be sold to cover the cost of relocation. It was in that atmosphere that the family bid to hide our "Indian" heritage and assimilate into society. In a bold move, my great grandfather G. T. (Waters) Watters added (as the story goes), the second "t" in Watters along with the claim that we were descendants of King Michael Watters

of County Sligo, the last reigning monarch of Ireland. Who knows? We may indeed be descended from ol' King Michael, but whatever, it stuck.

With their blessing and love, I was at last who I am today, Jim Great Elk Waters.

You should see the reactions of government officials at the DMV, Social Security, and the people at the passport office. Such is the dance of life. Call me anything you wish; just make sure I know you are talking with whoever I am.

Why do I offer all this? To allow you to understand, how different it is to be Indian today. The need to hide one's identity is no longer necessary or desirable. As you will see in the stories of the View from the Medicine Lodge, our life as Americans is "different," some good, some not so good, but always different. In any case, I remain your humble servant, whatever the name.

Megwich (thanks).

There is one other bit of confusion in my title. I know "who" I am, but when I'm asked my title, there is another pause. Which title do I use? Today I serve my Shawnee People as a Pipe Carrier, "Sub-Chief Emeritus" and Buffalo Clan Chief Emeritus. The Clan is my familial alliance of the tribal divisions that make up the Nation. I am honored to be a Pipe Presenter and Mide' (Spiritual teacher/leader) for my People.

It appears that I must have given up a simple life somewhere along the path. "Is it too late to change?" I question in the recesses of my quiet place. But that would just make another complication in this already long running life of mine.

I have paid my dues.

During 'Nam, I served before the mast at sea as an able bodied seaman aboard wooden hulled minesweepers in the U.S. Navy and was a high steel construction ironworker carrying on the family tradition as a "skywalker" (it's an Indian thing). I was a volunteer fireman and took my turn in burning buildings and rescues. I was a Cub and Scoutmaster, District Commissioner, and was a founder of several Packs and Troupes. I made custom designed banjo's for Art Gariepy, played stand-up bass in nightclub jazz combos, and painted seasonal window ads to make a dollar more. I was a printer, design artist, and "ad-man" for several companies. I started (and closed) several businesses. I was one of the founders of a little theatre group that still hits the boards today. When mid-life hit, I was driven to return something to society. I worked ten years for a mid-sized city in South-central Los Angeles, as a Rehabilitation Specialist, and was on the team that garnered the All-America City award in 1991.

And there was much more.

Amidst all this cacophony, I have found a peace in my Center Place. I am comfortable in this place to which life has guided my presence. I am honored (but a bit confused) by the many compliments bestowed during the last fifty-eight years upon this simple country boy from rural Appalachian southern Ohio.

In the end, I think of myself as a Shawnee Rabbi, a storyteller, a teacher, and a spiritual person who hopes and prays that my meanderings along the Path of Life will help soften the ground beneath the feet of others.

Along the way, I have been privileged to work with some truly great people and on so many worthy projects, to which I try to bring authenticity and dignity.

My brother Kepish “Tex” Watters (another skywalker) has been my lifelong guide. He once said that I was a “Renaissance Man.” I prefer to think of myself as a multi-tasking person who lives life with gusto. I have enjoyed working on many film/TV projects such as Disney’s Pocahontas as Unit Producer, writer, musician, and native voice of “Namontack.” I also appeared in many other film and TV projects, including North, Sioux City, Happily Ever After, Winning the West, Fear Runs Silent, Great Indian Chiefs, Little House on the Prairie, Hidalgo, Their Eyes Were Watching God, and Into the West.

I have been humbled by the tributes bestowed on my screenplays (WorldFest International Gold, Silver and Bronze awards) and for my work as a producer/actor. I can hardly take claim though, as I have a great team of creative partners who have contributed their talents to make all this possible. I am in the company of the greatness of the producers Julia Stemock, Kenn Kingsbury, and James Pentecost; the genius of the writers Steve Karels, Leanne Robertson, my brother Kepish Watters, Terryn Barill, and my wife Lolita. The wisdom of my consortium with publicist Norma Foster and world-class artists Ruth Eyrich and Bob Stalder, and honored composers Bob Christianson and my sister Tula Watters, all bestow their greatness as I view it all from my center of commonness. I think of the process of working with other talents as a form of cloning, the combining of their brilliance to further the success of each project.

I honed my creative skills under the tutelage of the orator Ms. Sade Burns and artist Ms. F. H. D. Crumrine. I was privileged to study at the Dayton Art Institute and under the batons of Professor Harry Smith and Dr. Maurice Reichart. As an artist and musician, I strive to combine the traditional with the contemporary to imbue the works with the spirit of

my ancestors, both Indian and Celt. I try to have my art, like my writing and poetry, make a statement that draws you into a journey most uncommon. I modestly offer that these works are hung in galleries internationally.

I am told and believe that the Great Turtle Island, and indeed all the earth and its inhabited creations, have been provided for us so that we may reside in Balance beside our Creator. It is our job to be a proactive partner in the affairs concerning the environment, and in human and animal disquiet. In matters of choice, always make good and right decisions. We need always to strive for balance rather than confrontation.

As I walk the Red Road, it is with the knowledge that it is not just for Shawandasse . . . but for All My Relations. Therefore, I am dedicated to the reunification of All the Red People and demand the rightful honor and respect that has so long been taken . . . be restored.

I steadfastly believe in the need to demonstrate respect, honor, and dignity and to protect the balance of relationships between All Things.

Like my Shawnee and Fort Ancient ancestors, I have acknowledged my oneness with this ancient homeland. I feel the land as if she were my physical Grandmother, and I am filled with the need to heal and comfort her from the long abuses she has endured. She is our source of life's renewal.

I could not neglect to pay tribute to some of the organizations that have chosen me to lead. First, to my People, the Shawnee, I am honored beyond words to have represented you as your Pocili (sub-Chief), Clan Chief, and UN Envoy. I am privileged to have serve as a board member and/or officer of the Interfaith Council for the UN, UNA/LA, Allied Ohio Tribes, eh'dasse, TBInc., Scioto Valley Artists Guild and founder of the UNBROKEN CORD. I am tireless in raising awareness and supporting causes like the Masonic Bodies, Optimist, Elks, John Wayne Cancer Institute, Rain Forest Action Network, Sierra Club, and Greenpeace.

Perhaps that which has challenged me to change for the better, more than any other external influence, has been my travels as a Mason. It is through this experience I have moved into a better being. I am a Master Mason, raised in the Rome Masonic Lodge #535. In 2010 I was made a 32

Degree Scottish Rite mason in the Valley of Cincinnati. I have set in the East in two bodies, and am in line for several others.

I can only say, I truly regret that I waited so long to start this journey.

Please check the back of the book!

We currently have in development so many wonderful projects, including a motivational DVD series, five new tomes, Native Leaders Portraits series with limited edition prints, Shawnee music and storytelling CD/DVD series, and several other extraordinarily interesting undertakings.

It is our job to cause balance in all matters, by recognizing and fulfilling our responsibilities.

For the record, I am an enrolled citizen of the East of the River Shawnee (Roll #R2009-BU-038).

I have resided in both the traditional Shawnee homeland in Ohio and California. Lo and I at this writing, live deep in the Shawnee State Forest of Southern Ohio, the traditional homeland of the Talig'wah Blue Creek Community.

I met Lo at a USO dance in 1963. She was a widow with three small children. When I met her and her children, I knew that they had been sent as a Gift from Kiji Manito to fill a great need. I had been taught that as a Mide' I have had several lives to perfect my being as a two-legged, to better prepare me to Pass Over and be with Creator and the Ancestors. When you are in the "last" life, you cannot have children, who by their being would continue your existence in this world and prevent you from Passing Over until the end of the line of progeny.

The Gift of my family has ensured my eventual reunion on the other side of the Veil.

Truth be known, I fell in love with my three children, Steve, Robyn, and Kathy before I finally discovered the wonderful love with Lo. I am so very honored that the children of another man would call me their Dad, and that their mother would have trusted me to fulfill that responsibility. We have been a loving family closing in on fifty years, the "kids" have grown up, and we now are the proud grandparents great-grandparents to a multitude.

I know that I may have given you more than you ever wanted to know about this person, but I felt that you needed to know a bit about me

before you read this book. In doing so, you just might get a feel for how I view the Medicine Lodge.

1 Tomorrow's Contemplation on Today

*These days people seek knowledge, not wisdom.
Knowledge is of the past, wisdom is of the future.*

Vernon Cooper, Lumbee Elder
From *The Wisdom Keepers*



Grandmother Turtle

It is told to us by the Ancestors in our oral traditions, that when we seek knowledge to see the important things, we must go on a quest, a spiritual search, to walk on the other side of the web of life. This long-held tradition has always been our greatest guidance to wisdom.

In the oral tradition of my People, the Shawnee, I would like to help you understand our relationship to the land and our first quest story, of our Grandmother, the earth.

A long time ago, in the time of our first grandfathers and our grandmothers (yes, we too have grandparents), before there were the two-legged humans, before Tula the earth existed, there was only water. Everywhere as far as one could see there was only water. Swimming in that great sea were all the People, the birds, and the animals.

One day a voice cried out, “Oh great Creator, we are very tired of swimming. Why is there no place to rest? Could you please give us a place to lay upon?”

And the voice of Creator spoke: “Why have you not asked before? I have been waiting. I will help you make your place to rest.” Creator continued, “At the bottom of the water, there is much mud where the great Tula Geah, the Earth Mother, lives. If one of you will bring back a piece of the Earth mud, I will make a place for you to rest,” and the Voice was silent.

So all the People decided that someone should dive to the bottom for a piece of the mud. Then they would have a place to stand or lay.

*The power of
need always
exceeds
the fear
of truing!*

Old Grandmother Turtle, in her crackled way said, “I will do it!” And in unison, all the People said, “Oh no, Grandmother, one of the younger people will do it. You are too old.”

First was the duck. “I can do it,” he said as he took a big breath and dove. Down, down, down he went, and up, up, up he came. “Where is the mud? Did you find the mud?” they asked. And he answered, short of breath, “no.”

Grandmother Turtle again volunteered. And all repeated, “You are too old.”

Each of the people in turn tried. Taking even bigger breaths of air, they went ever deeper, down, down, down. And up, up, up, with no mud.

Each time Grandmother would say, “But I can do it.” Finally, all had tried. And now because they were exhausted from their futile attempts and desperately wanted a place to lay, they finally agreed, “Alright Grandmother, you try.”

First, she took a really big breath, and because she was wise, she took another even bigger breath. With a splash, she dove down, down, down . . . down, down, down. Until they could no longer see her shadow in the water. She had been under for a very long time now, and all the People knew she had drowned. And they were sad.

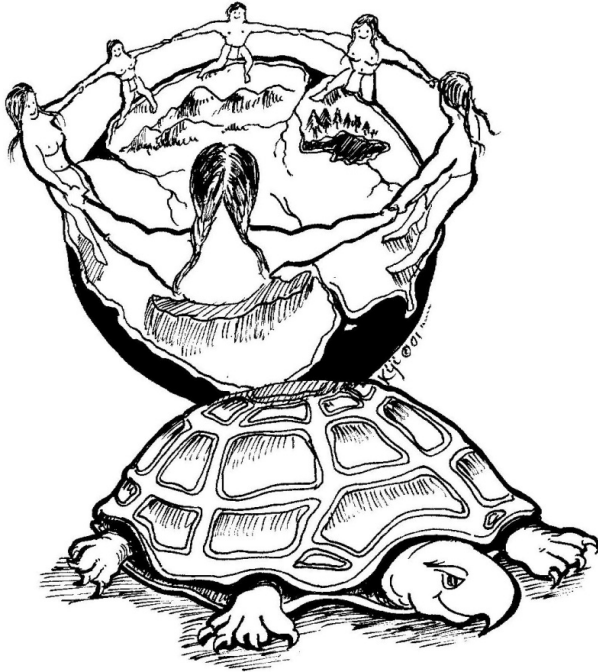
Then bubbles slowly began to appear. Bluup. Bluup bluup, bluup bluup bluup. Suddenly, there was a great commotion in the water. Deep in the cobalt blue they saw the shape of the old turtle. She was rising, up, up, up; and at last she broke the surface with a great gulp for air.

On her shell was a piece of mud. Instantly, keeping His promise, Creator made much land from the Tula on the shell of the old turtle. Now all the People had a place to rest. All the people were very happy. And Grandmother Turtle was the happiest of all. The oldest of them had caused the creation of Tula, for the young not yet born, from the earth that had been brought from the depths.

The next time you see a turtle, look at her shell. You will see it is all fractured, cracked from the weight of carrying the world on her back. Then you will remember the time when this storyteller told

you of the creation of Tula, the land we call earth. It is my job to tell you of these things. It is my job to help you understand our connection with all that is in and about us.

Aden, it is done.



Grandmother Turtle with the whole world on shell.

Been Trying

In Indian Country things are much the same as in your home town. We do things like you and have similar feelings. A modern Indian is hard to identify from any other American. Despite all our differences, we are a part of the fabric of this society.

With that said, here is a story that could happen anywhere. It just happens to be about an Indian family.

Still chewing on the same bit of bacon he had been working on for the last few minutes. “Well,” he says as we sat at the window in Jennie’s Diner, “do you think that Harry’ll get his barley before the wet sets in?”

“Spit that danged rind out, Pa, and listen to me. This is real important,” I says, as he puts his napkin to his mouth and discreetly removes the piece of pig skin.

“The dean over at Bellwhist, they say, is looking to fill the Psych 104 spot next period. Mentioned your name, I did,” he says.

“Pa, I can speak for myself, and anyway I can’t afford to work for those wages in this day’s world. Now would you please listen, for just a minute? Please!” I nearly shouted.

Surprised myself, and Pa gave me one of those patented glances that he used to throw when I was a kid. Heck, I’m twenty-four now, a college grad, with dry ears, and he still makes me feel worthless. He’s done that to me near all my life. Seems I’ll never measure up to HIS expectations.

Oh yes, he puts on those airs with his suit and tie, using his hanky and all, but everyone knows he’s just a dirt farmer. A danged redneck plow jockey. And he acts so proud.

Then he says, “So what’s put the fire in your forge now?” he says, and starts chewing on another piece of slab bacon. “Just love this taste,” he says.

“Well?” he says.

“Well, what?” I says.

“What is so important that you ‘please’ to tell me?” he says.

“I’ve been trying to tell you that.”

“Tell me what?” he interrupts. God, he infuriates me when he does that!

“I’ve been trying to tell you that ol’ Mr. Jacobs, the Constable, is writing you a ticket on that worthless wreck of a F-100 pickup.”

“Looky there, he’s sticking it in the window right now,” I says.

“Oh that,” he says.

And I’m puzzled, as Pa is known to be as tight as a bolt on a bank vault.

“Pa, that’ll cost you plenty,” I says, looking back at ol’ eagle eyes Jacobs. God, has he cost me a bundle over the years, I think, and turn to see Pa sipping his coffee.

“I will never understand you if I live to be . . . ”

“Hush boy,” he says abruptly. “You’ll soon understand.” Looking first at the window and then directly at me, he says, “I’m going away, and you will have to look after things.”

“Going where, when, why?” I near well shout. I pause “You didn’t tell me you were going.”

“Shush boy, calm down,” he says. “Been going to tell you, but I didn’t have all the information. Guess I do now tho’,” he says. “I’m going to die, soon,” he says matter-of-factly.

“What?” Stones pound my head as I try to understand what he has just said.

“Gonna be okay. I mean that you are gonna be okay,” he continues. “Been dying from the cancer for some time, but didn’t know how long I’d have.”

“Cancer?” I say in disbelief, as horror images of that dreaded disease race through my memory.

“Prostrate,” he wrongly intones as if he’d said butter or something. He continues, “That’s why I sent you to that big school upstate, to fill your head with all the things I never had the chance to learn.”

“But, Pa, prostate cancer will . . . ”

“Doc told me he would send the word today.” He stirs his coffee a bit. “If it was good, he’d have brought it his self.” Puts the spoon neatly on his napkin. “Bad, well, Jacobs was to put the report in ma’ truck.”

He stops, not moving at all, just looking out the window at the truck for the longest time.

“I didn’t know, Papa,” I says. “Can I . . . ?”

My whole world’s spinning in on me now.

“You already have,” he says. “In our family, no one’s ever been more schooled than you, and with good common sense to boot,” he says. “No sir, son, you done it all, already.” He pauses to look out the window again. As he looks back, I see a tear run down his cheek. Papa never cried.

“Our ancestors prayed for the Cord from the first parents to remain unbroken.” He gazed deep into my eyes until I felt he was square in my heart. “You’re the future they envisioned, and mine, the family’s reason for being. You are our future,” he says with open pride.

He stops and takes out his handkerchief, wipes at his eyes and says, “Now eat your eggs, a’for they get cold, as if they ain’t already.”

I Recall

I recall the memories from those days when all meat was juicy and tender, and no game was too swift for a hunter. When I was young, every day was a beginning of some new thing, and every evening ended with the glow of the next day's dawn.

Ivaluarjuk Iglulik, Elder
From *Through Indian Eyes*



Miracles in Commonness

You call it wild, but it wasn't really wild, it was free. Animals aren't wild, they're free.

Leon Shenandoah, Onondaga

In my special garden enclosure awash in spring colors nearly thundering with joy, I sit encompassed, peace bound. I am surrounded by flamingo walls and patio pavers and carpets of grass that feel firm, while roses and tomatoes and young and tendriled beans reach skyward. They extend in crescendo as a chorus paying homage to the center of this tiny universe, the grand giant tree that is my dark green roof encircled in cerulean blue, in cityscape a hundred miles square, on a grand boulevard constant with traffic mirroring the gray-black ribbons that freeway all about not four miles away.

I have determined my morning refuge.

Familiarity with the complexities of life, one soon loses sight of the magic of simplicity.

Here, with strong coffee and morning newsprint, I sit to ponder life anew this day. As I scan each word and illustration, I am imperceptibly distracted, first by slow-learned awareness that the sounds of man have been replaced, or more appropriately, have been overwhelmed by a tiny bird's voice, and another, and another until the very air that surrounds me is filled with a bewilderment of melodies.

They speak and serenade one another in constant joy, seeking mates and chastising others fluttering too near. The brilliance of their sounds combined, overwhelm the urban cacophony and cause it to be transformed as if by plan, into a bucolic meadow, far in the countryside of my distant youth.

Here in this place, I am alone in a dream-meadow, filled with undomesticated garden visitors of now, and sepia sounds and grayed images from times long ago. Here in this place, for the moment, I exist in the combined best of realities. Here I accomplish what others futilely seek as they plod about, encased in the fabrications of daily routine.

I am as fascinated this morning as I was in childhood, by the daring acrobatics of house wrens darting through the oleander thicket and elm tree, held mesmerized by conversations between dove and mate in echoed melody. Orchestrated rhythms of countless anteceded coveys in the dance of life eternal, continuing.

The magic of these angel-like beings, flying without prescribed direction or necessity, must please today, at this exact moment, the Creation Source, just as it did the first time He saw them in His thoughts and they became that which they are. Feathers, red and yellow and brown and gray, against the bottomless blue of sky and verdant green of giant trees, reflect their sister world of plant people in color, play against grass green and earthen-toned garden soil.

Yes, this is true magic gifted to those who will but pause to observe this constant in a world of needless change. I am the artist taunted to re-create in medium this sphere which is all about. I am the country child in wide-eyed wonderment, filled with inherent knowledge, understanding that only Creator can master such things.

Yet I am challenged by that same Creator to attempt to replicate this work. Striving for perfection in all things, for perfect balance in life, is a part of the creation, is the path of fulfillment to be walked if one is to be allowed one day to join the ancestors beyond the veil. Such are the miracles in commonness that fill my garden, that place of momentary escape.

Sipping coffee now cold, to sounds of tires on pavement and engines roaring against inertia, the smell of it all permeates my special garden place once more.

I rise and exit into a make-believe place of urbanity, where once again I try to create balance.

It's my purpose here.

Have by Love

Why should you take by force that from which you can have by love? Why should you destroy us, who have provided you with food? What can you get by war?

I am not so simple as not to know it is better to eat good meat, lie well, and sleep quietly with my women and children. To laugh and be merry with the English and be their friend. To have copper hatchets and what ever else I want, than to fly from all, to lie cold in the woods and to be so hunted that I cannot rest, eat, or sleep.

Anonymous
From *Through Indian Eyes*

A child's
embrace, a
grandmother's
grace, are gifts
beyond purchase.

Cry Not For My Father

For nearly all this century, my father, Chief Ten Moons Watters, was filled with the greatness of change that has occurred. He spoke often of his fascination of having been born in the horse and buggy days and paddle wheelers of his Ohio River region, and with the wonder of scientific discoveries and societies' evolution since.

From the dust of the dirt trail he walked to Turtle Mountain to the precious materials from the moon brought home by his modern heroes, he was charged with its wonder. Telephones, radios, and television enchanted him. He learned how they worked, tearing them apart and reassembling them to function once more.



He marveled at the explosion of communication and education. He was awed at the way the world had become small, how one could go to the far corners of the earth in but a matter of hours. The span of his life must have been truly spectacular.

Through all this, he had ridden two horses—one red and the other white—across the breadth of this time. One based in the tradition and honor of his Indian ancestors, and the other charged with his European/American forefathers' never-ending quest for the new. Mounted with a foot firmly planted on the back of each, he kept his balance throughout.

My father made no compromise. The world of his youth, in history and tradition rooted, had to accept the challenge and attune to the “unbelievable changes that have occurred” in his lifetime. This is the story of the closing of this chapter of his life and the unfolding dawn of his tomorrow, where he has returned to the innocence and magic of his youth.

As the Shawnee Buffalo Clan gathered on the top of the hill around the freshly dug hole in the sand, it was a one last time for remembrance. We had carried the body of our father, first by

caravan to this outlook above the Ohio River, and now by hand to this burial place where so many of our ancestors had been lain.

It had turned gray and icy in the valley the Iroquois named Ohio, the "Beautiful Place." Sleet driven hard by the bitter cold winds of the First Snow Moon cut our flesh, reminding those gathered that we had not yet begun our final journey.

The Elders, bundled in heavy coats and blankets, turned their backs to the frigid breath of the approaching storm. Their understanding of this time sent a gentle comfort that warmed the warriors, men and women, as they raised the box up.

Our salt tears froze upon our cheeks and rushed with the sleet to the sand. It was now time to send this great Chief, the Elder of all Ohio Shawnee, to the place of his ancestors. It was time to say tanakia, farewell until our paths cross again.

Each of his Tribe, his Clan, his children and friends, offered in their own way, their final rites according to their faith. Born of Christian parents, this son of Chief Big Dad and Ma Jessie received first, the final benedictions of that faith. Then the last rite of a 32nd Degree Mason. Next Tula Nappe, his elder daughter, offered prayers of her faith, the Bahai, and the others in silence said their parting prayers.

At last the Medicine Way Speaker, with a feathered prayer stick in hand, symbolic of the Coashellaqua ancient beliefs of the Shawnee, faced the east. In a booming voice that echoed off the hills of Ten Moons' youth, the Speaker cried out: "Wee-lo! Wee-lo! Wee-lo! We send you our Great Chief." To the south, again three times, he cried out and said, "We send you our beloved."

Looking into the west, down the long gray ribbon of river where the old Chief and his mother had often contemplated days' end, the shaman offered: "We send you our cherished father." Once more he turned. Now the sound reverberated north, deep into the ancient hills as he spoke those sacred words a last time.

"Wee-lo! Wee-lo! Wee-lo! We give you the care of your brother Chief Ten Moons," and they echoed into chilled silence. The ceremonies had concluded.

It was his way through life that the important things be properly attended. One could but smile at the thought that even during this time he had "covered all his bases."

The tears had dried and the cold again cut hard, as the reality of the moment returned with the bitter winter winds to these Woodland People. Yes, it was a time to remember, a time to recall our Shawandasse Babackis'iganatuk-Okema Metathwe Dekeelswa (Shawnee Elder-Chief Ten Moons).

He was born just thirty miles east of that knoll on October 30th, four years into this century and in the last days of the Harvest Moon. He had seen his world change from wagons and horses, buffalo and elk, to an environment he could never have dreamed.

His last recollections in this life were of his earliest times. He recalled his first school, the Turtle Mountain Territorial School, and the trip there by covered wagon.

He remembered the remnants of the great herds of buffalo and the first motorcar he encountered.

He told stories of the hard but honest life of his youth; and spoke always of his father and mother, his brother, and all their friends now long gone.

For nearly as many seasons as days in the year, he had walked on his cherished Grandmother Earth.

He had poured his cup to the brim and had filled his being with the grandness of life. His love touched so many and his gentle leadership had enriched all who knew him.

But he was the last of his generation. He was his own "Ishi." No longer could anyone reminisce the glory of his youth, and he missed that, to the center of his being. The Tribe and the Clan of his time were gone. And now it was his time to join All His Relations.

He lived well and full the measure he met, to outlive his chums was his only regret.

He closed his eyes to this place just days after he had marked his eighty-eighth year. He passed through with the First Snow Moon of the ninety-second year of his century. It had been a grand adventure.

To his friends and loved ones, I ask you to consider these thoughts. Cry not for my Akotha, Ten Moons, for my Father has at last gone home to All His Relations. Our predecessor faced death with the wisdom that strength comes from the ancient ones at

these times. Death is not to be feared nor welcomed, but is simply the last step of life, this side of the veil.

When we take our last breath from Grandfather Sky and rest our body upon Grandmother Earth's breast, our life, that spirit which makes us eternal, steps through the web of the ancient spider. Then at last we can walk with All Our Relations.

Yes, my nekahs, my friends, find joy in the memory of Chief Ten Moons, for that was his gift to you. Think of his presence as he would rest, wrapped in a blanket, at the entry to the ceremonial Great House. Remember the spirit that fills your being each time an Elder celebrates the Sacred Rites with our People.

Do not feel the pain of sorrow, for the Good Great Chief Ten Moons never gave you sorrow. But remember him at Red Fox Camp and Shawandasse as he sat in the shade of the trees, telling stories of another time to our children, of a time when he was the child.

He made the four-day journey from two-legged to spirit with his Kindewa Chena Meswammi Pitchkosan (his Eagle feathers and Sacred Treasures). The People, his family and friends, were ever vigilant and on the fourth day, he was lain among the bones of his Clan.

Now in the cool embrace of Grandmother Earth, with his first daughter near his head, his parents as always share the south wind from the hills below. With his warrior brother at his side, the remains of this great Shawnee Chief will make the passage from flesh to dust. That is, as it should be, the completion of the two-legged's Mortal Circle.

No, my friend, do not feel the bitterness of despair with the absence of our Brother Chief Ten Moons, Okema Metathwe Dekeekswa. But sing often our songs of happiness, for his life was a most happy one. And tell the stories he imparted to you, for that should be his greatest remembrance.



His gift was from the ancestors, our unchanged sacred oral tradition. The remembered word, the spoken history throughout the hundreds of generations is the living reality of All Our Relations.

Our Deep Roots

As great oaks tap Grandmother Earth's mystic powers, we must listen for the Elders and their earned wisdom.



The Boy and the Snake

This story is told in the lodges for the first people around the world since time began. Its message is clear.

I have taken the liberty of sharing the teaching tool in this modern narrative manner rather than in the stoic traditional form. Both are important; however, my Mide' taught me in this form. The best way to understand this is to compare the stories in the Torah, the King James version of the Bible, and the Bibles published in today's dialects. The words change, but the stories remain solid and are valid teaching tools in every format.

A long time ago, in the time of our Grandparents' Grandparents there was a young Mide' boy who was most trusting. He accepted that which anyone told him as truth for he had never been told a lie by anyone in his Circle of Life. All those who lived in his village of great mounds and lodges, loved and protected him. Although he was on his path to manhood, he had not yet learned of those who are different from his people.

It was during this time that he was counseled by the Elders and the leaders of the Men's Council and the grandmothers of the Women's Council. Here he learned much about the history of his People and of the long trail they had traveled from the First Parents Circle. At their feet, he sat and heard their many stories. They told him of all that was good and of Matchemonito, the Evil One, who would trick you with his stories. They all told him to learn to know the difference between that evil and the good that surrounded him.

It was here that he was also assigned to his Mide', his personal teacher, who would teach him of the four levels of the earth and sky. It was in this time that he was sent on his many Quests of Solitude where he was to meditate on the teachings he had so far received.

On one beautiful spring day, while he was preparing for this Mide'way manhood path by fasting alone, he had wandered into the forest far from the village of the many smokes. He had built a good fire in this camp place and had become engrossed in reflection on what had been taught him by his mentors. He was not aware that a visitor approached. It was his Mide'.

"Why do you sit here in thought when you are needed up there?" asked the old man as he pointed to a cave in the side of the cliff nearby. "Did I not tell you to discover everything about the levels of the earth," he continued, "and is not the cave a part of that earth?"

"Yes, Mide'," said the boy, quickly standing with head bowed to honor the Mide'. "I was thinking of the many lessons you have taught me, my Mide'," the boy stammered.

"Yes, boy, I understand, but now is a time of action, of exploration of those lessons well remembered," the old man stated. Then pointing to a small dark spot high up the nearby cliff, he said, "Go to that cave and when you return to our village, tell me what you have learned." With that, the old man turned and walked back toward the village.

The boy knew that there would be no other explanation of his task so he immediately set out toward the cave and began the ascent toward its black mouth high above.

He slipped on the loose stone debris at the base of the cliff and stumbled on up to the solid rock wall. The climb was hard and there were few places to grab the cold sharp stone wall with his little fingers and fewer places for his toes to find, but he finally reached the cave.

It was dark inside, and a cold wind blew from its innards. He thought, "This cave must be open to the great wall of ice that is far to the north where the wind blows cold and wet year round." He was afraid to enter the cave. That was normal. Even grown warriors did not cherish the idea of entering that cave.

At last he drew his courage and entered the cave a few feet. He waited for his eyes to adjust to the darkness. Soon he was able to better see the interior of the cave. It was very cold now and he could see icicles hanging from the top of the cave's maw. He

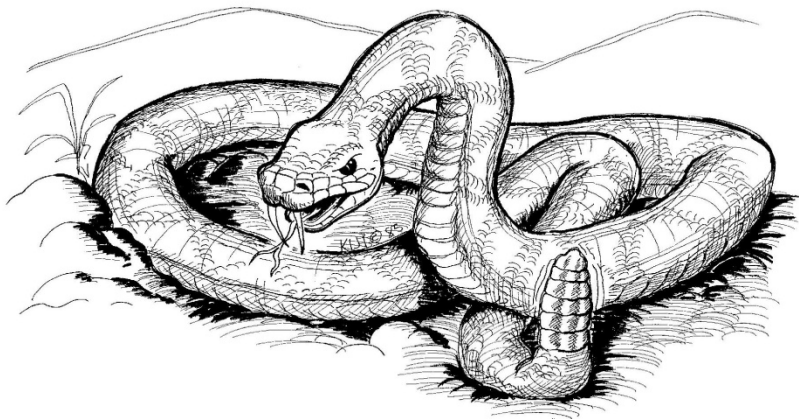
shivered. In the distant gloom, he was able to make out a stone bridge across a deep chasm.

Walking to the stone platform, he crossed the bridge.

The filtered light shimmered on the wall ahead. He thought he saw something strange in the ice that hung in sheets from above. Moving closer, he peered intently. Laying among the icicles was a water moccasin, a most poisonous snake. The serpent who was usually a gold and brown color was now blue from the cold.

“A blue snake? How curious,” thought the boy.

The snake moved its yellow eyes set into the blue flesh and looked up. “Man-boy,” he whispered, “I am very cold. My body is frozen and I cannot move,” the snake said. His voice was like crystals shattering in the cold air. “Will you help me?”



The boy hesitated. After all, it was a strange snake. But he had been told of this snake and its venom. Even though this moc was frozen stiff, he was still dangerous.

“I am frozen and cannot move,” the snake continued. “Hold me close to your warm flesh and carry me back to your campfire

where I may warm myself and be on my way.” As an added thought, the snake offered, “That is all I want, thank you.”

The boy looked at the snake and respectfully lowered his head, never taking his eyes off the serpent. “I cannot help you,” he said. “You are a dangerous snake that can kill me with your evil bite as surely as we speak. If I take you to my fire, you will bite me, and I will die and never see my people again.”

The snake looked away and said with a humble voice, “That is not true man-boy. I am honor-bound that I will not bite you if you help me.”

The boy still refused. “You are the great water moccasin. You are crafty and you lure your prey with your yellow eyes, and I am told that you do not always speak the truth,” the boy said with a stern voice.

“Yes, my friend, in most situations you would be right,” the snake said. “But I am trapped in this icy grave. If you help me, I will be honor-bound not to bite you.”

The snake grew silent. His yellow eyes no longer moved back and forth as they had done before.

Nothing moved.

The boy thought of all the teachings of his Elders and of the Women’s Council and the Men’s Council and of his Mide’. They had all taught him to be kind and loving and to help the less fortunate. Yes, they did warn him again and again of the Evil One.

“But even the Evil One needs help too,” he thought. “I cannot just let him die, frozen forever in this icy grave place.”

Time passed and he still meditated.

“Just this once will I be able to trust him?” he wondered. “Even the Evil One can appreciate the gift of his life and will spare me,” he reasoned.

Finally, the boy, fearing that the snake may truly die in the cold, and feeling sympathy for the snake’s plight, bent down and picked up the frozen snake from among the icicles.

There can never be true trust of one who would have your all, for with that trust you will grant that desire.

He put the ice-covered snake inside his shirt and descended the perilous face of the cliff, searching for the places he used earlier in his climb. At last he reached the bottom and hurried back to his camp and the warmth of the fire.

As he reached the still burning campfire, he gently removed the snake from his clothing, bent down and tenderly laid its motionless body by the fire.

Before he could stand back up, the snake struck out.

The boy cried out in pain and regret. "You promised if I brought you here, you would not bite me!" he stammered in disbelief.

The snake coiled up, raised his head and stated, "I appreciate that you have saved my life and I regret that you will soon die, but you knew who I was when you picked me up," the snake said as it slithered away.

The boy dropped to his knees, feeling the fire of the venom as it flowed through him. His flesh and bone now ached from the poison as he watched the snake disappear into the scrub of the forest. His eyelids lowered and the light dimmed as he thought, "How tired I am now that I am dying." Now he could only feel the breeze as it brought the familiar smells of the forest he so loved. In that same light wind he could smell the smoke from the fires of his home, then, there was only darkness. The boy would never again see his beloved People, hear of their great wisdom, or walk upon the great mound village of the many smokes.

That is the end of the story.

In this day of great promise and good life, we still encounter Matchemonito in his deceptions. See him in the drugs, alcohol, or anything else of that nature. See him in the violence, crime, or perhaps even those we would want to love. See him in those who would make us other than we are, and cause us to lose it all.

As you are faced with such things, no matter how enticing they may seem, remember that you may never again see the forest or enjoy its smells, or smell the smokes from the great mound village of the many smokes, as you hear him say . . .

"You knew what I was when you picked me up . . ."

Beyond History

We have lived upon this land from days beyond history's records, far past any living memory, deep into the time of the legend. The story of my people and the story of this place are one single story. We are always joined together.

Pueblo Elder
From *Through Indian Eyes*



Then There was Light on the Bundle

In the days of Cornstalk and Tecumseh, each Shawnee village and town had a Great Council Lodge for the People to meet and solve the problems of the time. Council was important to these People who lived in a Chief Way Democracy, for here each person had a voice, and each voice was important.

Then people not from the Great Turtle Island came, and there were wars. For two hundred years, the People were pushed deeper into the woodlands, until at last there was no place for the invaders to push them.

After the People had been taken in chains to the lands in the sunset, after the last fires, of the last of the many great Shawandasse towns and villages had grown cold, and the name of this People was no longer spoken, we still came together in Council.

At first, the keepers of the Great Meswammi, the Peoples Bundle, met deep in the forest. Here, far from the eyes of the new strangers in our ancient land, they kept the Council.

As the woods gave way to the iron plow, the People that had stayed behind to keep watch over the graves of our Grandfathers' Grandfathers, finally rested. Council was held in barns and tobacco sheds and in the Long-knives' lodges where they now lived.

Tens of years passed, and the People held these secret councils away from the eyes of the ever-multiplying "territory settlers." Each year, it became more difficult to find a safe place to hold Council.

Finally, the pressure of the new ways, the strange new "houses," the plow that split open Grandmother's breast, the invaders' indoor schools and new religion had taken the People away from the power of the old ways. No longer did the People come to their Shawandasse leaders for guidance. No longer did the People hold Council.

In the darkness of the barn where they had held their hidden ceremonies, his face stained with the bitter tears of defeat, the Kitch Okema, the Great Chief of the People, gently nailed the People's singular treasure to the wood. Filled with the pain of failure, he placed The Bundle between the walls. With boards, he entombed the sacred hiding place and slowly turned and walked through the door.

The Chief, by this last act, had hoped that the ancient relics of ten thousand councils might be saved for a few years from the pot-hunters and museums. There would be no more Council. The Shawnee's place between Grandfather Sky and Grandmother Earth was gone.

A generation of People went without the presence of the People's Bundle. As it would be, Creator called upon a child to once again pick up the sacred fire sticks of the Shawandasse and lead its People in the ways of their Grandfathers.

At the feet of his Elders, the young one watched and listened as the old ones taught him the Ways. Daily he would learn more of the things of a thousand generations gone before. At times he felt that his head would burst simply from the volume of words that Grandparents told him.

Years passed as he learned and he practiced those instructions daily. It was now time. With trembling hands, this young man took the People's Bundle from the old Chief's hiding place. Now there was light again on the center of the People.

Once again we held Council.

Now, after nearly two hundred years of no home, The People had their own land.

We are those People.

We too, as did our Grandfathers' Grandfathers, again hold Ceremony in the old way in the People's Great Council Lodge.

We now hold Ceremony as the Ancestors did, upon the land of our Grandparents, as our Grandparents did before us, in this returned land.



The mystery of
all things
Sacred are
reminders to us
as we once
again open the
Bundle.

Tecumseh's Shawnee Creed

Do not kill or injure your neighbor,
for it is not him you injure . . .
you injure yourself.
But do good to him,
therefore add to his days of happiness,
as you add to your own.
Do not wrong or hate your neighbor,
for it is not him you wrong,
you wrong yourself.
But love him for Manito loves him,
As He also loves you.

Words
ageless,
crafted from
passion,
recall again
the cause of
civilized
people.

The First Encounter

As recalled from the stories of the oral tradition, told to Great Elk as a child by his Shawnee Mide' grandaunt Jean Price, and confirmed as a part of our oral tradition later by Shawnee Elder Brown Bear ...

There are many stories to be told about these things and these times. Maybe we should start back at the beginning. We start in the time of the First Encounter, not the Creation. This is the story as it was told to me. I was instructed to pass it on, as is our oral tradition.

In the time of our Grandfathers' Grandfathers, a long time ago, this story came about around the time when the land was getting colder. This time it came about when our People would walk to where the great white bear lived, and we would go to this place in the cold north every summertime. We went to this place to gather fish and to dry the water on the land to make salt so we could take it back across the Spaylaywitheepi to the warmth of the winter to the south.

These were good times for our people. We were not at war and we had not known war. This was before the time that man thought they should have the right to take something that others have by force. This was indeed a good time.

As we were camped in our summer camp along this great body of water, one early morning we awoke as a group of people were coming out of the cold of the north. They were walking into the morning sun. They were a strange people who spoke not our language and their appearance was different. Their eyes pointed to the stars and their skin was as burnished copper.

We could see as they came to our camp that they were tired and hungry and there was sickness in them; they needed a place to rest, and they needed food. So our people gave them places in our lodges and we gave them our food. We warmed water to warm their bodies, we put furs and blankets upon those that had little cover and we put moccasins upon the feet of those who had none.

We listened to their strange language and did not understand what they were saying. Some of our wise old men and women, our Shaman, our Chiefs, sat down with their old wise people and after a time, they were able to understand something about these strange people.

Their story was very sad, for it was a tragedy you see.

In the time of their Grandfathers' Grandfathers, there had come a great famine upon their land, a drought, where the four-leggeds and Feathered People no longer existed. The creeks dried up and there was no place for the Finned People, and they died. The tree people turned brown, the grass people blew away, and the dust was there, at once and everywhere.

And they went to a great holy man, and this two-legged set out to the place where the great prayers were given. When he returned, he possessed an important message for all.

“Walk out into the morning sun and at last you will come to the end of the Great Turtle Island, where you will find good food and water. And you will find the animal people; and you will find a place for you.”

These people did as their Shaman/Medicine Man—this great holy man of good vision—told them. They gathered together their belongings and walked into the morning sun, away from their land forever.

They walked, and their children grew to be men and women, and their old people died and were buried along the trail. New generations were born and grew old. At last, they came to the edge of the Great Turtle Island.

Indeed it was green and there was fresh food and water. This was good. But the famine and the drought followed. So they walked along the edge of the endless water. As they walked these many days, these many moons, these many seasons, since their Grandfathers' Grandfathers told them to leave, the air got colder and there was much snow.

Soon there was no green, only snow and ice, and they continued to walk along the edge of the land into the morning sun. Many thought this would be the end of all the People because they did not know what they could eat. But there was good food there. There was food in the water and food on the land.

Now, too, they had the great white bear with its long teeth, that lived in the water. It would come out of the water, and they would kill it with their spears. The meat was good to eat, and they used the fat to make fuel to keep them warm. They melted the snow and ice, and they had water.

So they continued to walk where it was cold, into the morning sun.

At last the day came when they had to make a decision, for if they continued to walk along the edge of the Great Turtle Island, they would be walking away from the morning sun. They knew that for all these years, the morning sun had provided for them and had taken care of them. So they decided to continue into the morning sun and away from the water.

They walked a long time. Many of the people died and again the children became old men. The children's children continued to walk, until at last they walked into our camp that one morning and we fed them. And we learned this sad story from them.

After a while, we learned to speak their language and they learned to speak our language. We came to know that these were good people, and we invited them to stay with us and help us catch fish. Ah, they were good fisher people. They knew the way of catching fish the new way, with things we know now as nets. These nets caught many more fish than the spear we used, and this was good.

Then the air began to grow colder, the days were shorter, the nights were long, and we knew that soon we must walk away to our summer place across the great Spaylaywitheepi, across the great Kentuck', the hunting ground of the people, to our place where our people have lived.

But it was strange about this river, my friends, because when this all took place, the Spaylaywitheepi did not run like it does today. The mighty stream flowed to the place of the cold, from the warmth of the mountains, not from the morning sun to the evening sun as it does now.

And this time, as we walked toward and came to the great river, these new people said, "Let us make camp; we must make a decision again." They sat and made council and after a long time, with much thought, they came to a decision. "If we continue our

journey as we were when we came into your camp, into the morning sun, what will we find, my brothers?"

Our leaders, our great Chiefs, told them, that "If you walk into the morning sun, at last you will come to the end of the great island.

There you will find good food, sweet water, and much game. You could put your canoe into the edge of this great body and go out into this water; but if you go beyond the sight of the land, you will never return. For no man has gone beyond the sight of the Great Turtle Island and returned."

They thought about this. They held Council and asked us: "But if we walk the way we are now, toward the warmth, not the setting sun, what will we find?" Our Kitch Okema told them that after a while they would cross the area known as the great Kentuck', our hunting area, and they would come to a mountain and then, at last, to the edge of the land.

"There again, it is the same as the edge of the Great Turtle Island where the morning sun comes. Do not go beyond the sight of the land because you will never come back."

Then they said, "We do not want to go back to the cold, the direction from which we came. But there is one more direction we must know about. If we were to walk into the direction of the setting sun, into the warmth instead of the cold, what would we find?"

Our chiefs told them a great story of a great plain of land where there were many animals, the shaggy buffalo, the bear, the elk, the deer, the rabbit, the squirrels. Grass was as high as a man's shoulder, the water was sweet and cool, and the land was good . . . and the land was where it should be, a good place to live. At the edge of this land was a great barrier mountain, which no man had passed across and lived to tell what was on the other side.

So they went back into Council and thought long. They prayed and at last they came to us and said: "My brothers and sisters, you have been good to us. You have given us a home, food, shelter, and clothing, but above all, you have given us a part of yourselves, your love, your respect. For this, we could never repay you.

"But a decision has been made by our people that we will part our ways here. It is decided that we will move into the setting sun,

we will cross that plain, we will go to that great mountain barrier and cross it. We will send someone back to tell you what is on the other side of that great barrier.”

So the next morning, when the sun rose from where it sleeps overnight and warmed our camp, we saw that our friends had packed all their clothing, their lodges, and were ready for a long journey. They came to us and spoke of the desire of some of their people to stay with us. We welcomed them and said they were our brothers and sisters. Some of our people, who had come to love these people very much, requested to go with them. We bid them good health and prayed that Creator would always be with them.

They parted that day, walking into the place where the sun goes to sleep, promising they would cross that great mountain barrier and send someone back to tell us what is there.

We never heard from them again, these people whose eyes pointed to the sun and who had faces of burnished copper.

This is the end of that story.

There is No Word

The Pueblo People have no word that translates as "religion." The knowledge of a spiritual life is a part of the person 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Religious belief permeates every aspect of life. It determines man's relation with the natural world and with his fellow man. The secret of the Pueblo's success was simple. They came face to face with nature but did not exploit it.

Joe S. Sando, Jemez Pueblo
From *Through Indian Eyes*

Some
emotions are
forever
impossible to
express with
the ardor
they require.

First Journey

it is dark, dark like the trail
that winds amongst mighty elms,
oaks, and chestnuts at mid of night,
during the black of new moon.
no shape visible except for
the hand holding a buffalo horn,
illuminated by the soft orange glow.

over the embers centered in the Lodge,
the horn tips, water pours forth
upon that single source of light.
Instantly, it is ominous black.
the Lodge is filled with a
searing wet heat that now chokes
the very air desperately required.

the pungent, yet suddenly refreshing
fragrance of sage, fills your lungs
as your Mide' Sachem presses a
bundle of the herb to your face.
this is your first Sweat Lodge.

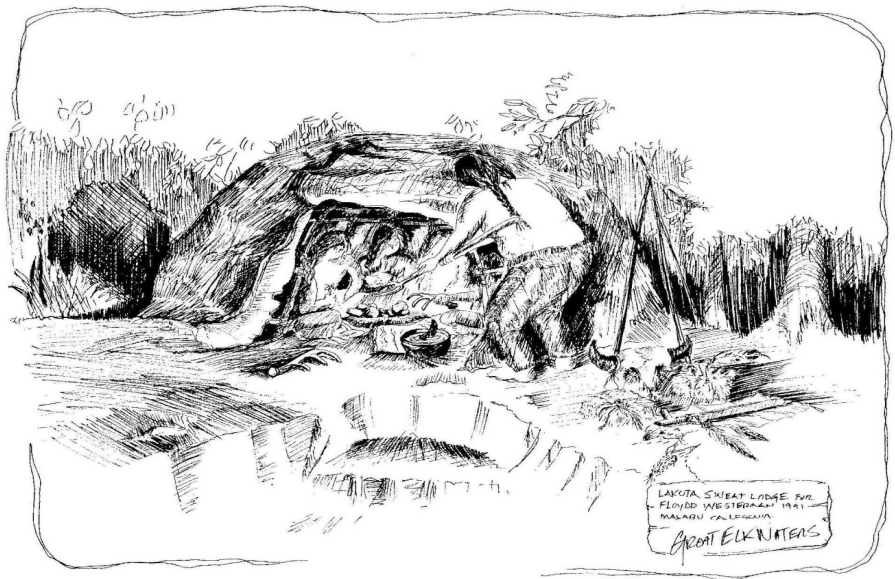
you now are on the good journey
to the end of learned selfness.
you have at last entered the place
where others' needs supplant your
own
and the certainty that "they" care
fills the center of your drum.

this part of a complex, refined

We discard
the bonds
of reality
as surely
does the
astronaut,
when we
journey
within the
Medicine
Lodge.

and practical religion/medicine that
has protected all the ancestors
from the first parents on, for All of Our
Relations.

*a song of the sweat lodge, conceived on the nineteenth day of
the Crackling Moon, in the four thousand and seventh season
of Little Fog's vision.*



Sweat Lodge at Max Gail's – Point Dume CA

Why the Possum's Tail is Bare

Shawnee teaching story

This is an ancient story told by grandparents to the children to teach them of things important. In this telling, I have given it a modern tone for those who have not heard many of the other stories and are, thus, unaware of the great humor that is in the art of storytelling.

In the time before our Grandparents, in the time of the Animal People, there was a great possum. Her name was Grandmother Possum and she was most special. She was an Elder, and the most loved of all the People. But that was not why she was special.

She was smart, and all the young animals would come to her for her sage advice. But that was not why she was special.

Grandmother Possum was special because of her tail. She had a most beautiful, long and bushy tail. Possum was so proud of the silky furred tail that she combed it every day.

Because her tail was so lovely, she would sing her "tail song" whenever the People danced. When they heard her, they would all run to her and ask if they might touch her tail, as it felt so wonderful. Being kind and generous, and well, being a grandmother, she always obliged. She never said no, even when she may be tired or "out of sorts."

All the People agreed, Grandmother Possum's tail was the most beautiful tail in all the Great Turtle Island. This was important because this was the time when there was no light to illuminate her tail. You see, this was in the time before the sun had been found. It was pitch dark, as black as the inside of a rock.

The every day routine was the same. The People would awake and set about their daily jobs. Some would hunt. Others would gather roots and such, and others would just move about as best they could in that darkness.

This was difficult.

There was a lot of, “Umph! Who’s there?” as Makwa the Bear, who was the leader of all the People in the Valley of Darkness, would say as he bumped into a soft furry mass.

“It is only me, Wapiti the Elk,” would come the reply, “and why did you bumpus, into my rumpus brother bear?”

“Well, mostly because I could not see you,” the Bear replied. “You don’t even smell like yourself, Wapiti. Did you change your deodorant?” he asked.

The Elk let out a whistle grunt and replied, “Ha, change deodorant? What is deodorant?” he asked.

You see, deodorant had not yet been invented.

“I just was rolling in the new mint that is growing beside the stream,” Elk offered. “Perhaps that is why I don’t smell like myself?”

“Perhaps,” Bear replied. “Perhaps.”

“You know, Wapiti, I am really tired of trying to find my way in this blackness, really tired of bumpus’ing into everyone every day,” Bear said sadly.

Now Bear was a great leader, and he put much effort into making the lives of the People in the valley as good as possible. So Bear sat down to think on the problem at hand. He thought and thought for a long time.

Bear suddenly stood up and stated, “I’ll ask Creator if we could have some light to see by!” he exclaimed.

The forest suddenly became dead quiet. The birds ceased their chirping and even the wind in the pines went silent. Not a Person made a noise.

“What?” Bear called out. “Now what did I do?”

There was no reply.

“Okay, what’s the big joke?” Bear asked.

For a moment it was still silent, then a voice spoke: “You said you were going to-oooo ask Creator why He had not-tttttt given us light-tttttt,” Cricket softly replied. “No one ever asked Creator why!”

“Yes!” another voice called out. “W-w-we might l-l-loose all we have if w-w-we ask for more,” stammered the rabbit. “No one ever asked Creator why!”

“Well, why not?” Bear asked, now totally confused.

“Perhaps it is because no one has ever thought to before,” pondered the old Owl. “Yes indeed, some one should ask!” Owl stated matter-of-factly.

Then the forest became very silent.

“Who would ask?” they all thought to themselves.

A big determined voice sounded out, “Me!” it said. It was Bear again.

“If I was the first to think of it, then I should be the one to ask, it’s my job.” Bear stated.

The woods were alive with chatter as all the animal People discussed the matter at-hand.

“Yes, Bear should do it,” one uttered.

“Only Bear is brave enough,” another chimed in.

Yet another of the faceless voices called out, “And he is the only one who is stupid enough.”

“Stop!” Bear yelled. “Stop before I change my mind.”

You could hear the breeze whisper in the treetops high above, “Bear will asksssoooooosh!”

And with that, Bear raised his head to the black sky and asked, “Oh Great Creator who has given us all, I have a little insignificant question to ask.”

Dead silence.

“Well, uhmmm, well, I uhmmm was wondering if you might be able to, well, give us just a teensy-weensy ittsy bit of light . . .” he stammered; then in a rush he finished, “. . . so-we-wouldn’t-keep-bumpus’ing-into-each-other-all-the-time.”

“Whew!” Bear exclaimed, and his voice echoed back and forth through the trees in the valley like leaves being blown by a gust of wind.

Then the forest was even more silent, if that was possible.

A distant rumble began and grew louder. It came crashing throughout the forest making the leaves quiver in the still air. The noise filled all the places where the animal People lived, and they were very frightened.

What had Bear done? What had we done urging him on, they thought.

Through the great noise came a stillness that calmed the valley and its inhabitants.

Then a deep but gentle voice called out, "Bear, what took you so long to ask?"

It was the Voice of Creator.

"Well, sir, I uh, well I . . ." Bear's voice trailed off as he was now afraid of what he had done.

"Bear? Didn't I provide you with a great sense of smell, and keen hearing?" Creator gently asked.

"Yes, oh Great Spirit," Bear said softly, "But . . ."

"But what, my brother?" Creator asked. "Is there a reason why you ask for light?"

Bear was silent. Not that he didn't have an answer but because he was shaking so much, words wouldn't pass his throat. At last he spoke.

"Good Great Mystery, you have given us all we could possibly need, and we are thankful, it is just . . ." Bear paused, ". . . it is just that we are always bumpus'ing into each other, and we thought, well, that is, I thought, with light we wouldn't be bumpus'ing so much, that's all."

Again there was a low rumbling that filled the forest and all who had raised their heads to hear, ducked back into their hiding places. The rumbling shook the ground and the trees and the People, too.

Then it changed from a rumble into, well, into a kind of chuckle, then a chortle, and then a big belly laugh. Creator was laughing, and it shook the entire world. No Person could ever remember when Creator had laughed before. This must be a very important time.

Over the roaring laughter and the shaking of the forest and the cries of fear from its inhabitants, a voice could be heard. It was Bear.

"Oh, Great Spirit, I am most honored that I could make you laugh, but are you happy or angry?"

The laughter slowed to a snicker and then Creator was silent.

"Bear, it has been a very long time since I have been so pleased," Creator spoke. "I gave you wisdom and you resolved a problem. I gave you courage and you came to me. I gave you a voice and you have asked me for a favor. But most important, I gave you free will

to choose, and you chose to come to me to help with your problem.” Creator paused.

“My dear brother bear, you please me,” the Maker stated. “Now what was it that you asked for . . . ? Oh yes, light. So be it.”

Now Creator spoke to all the People. “If one of you can go to the Great Cave where the heat of summer blows forth, and you go deep into the cave, you will find two glowing embers by a great fire. Take the embers from their place beside the fire and bring them out of the cave and into the forest,” He stated. “Then I will give you light.”

“Yes, but . . .” started Bear. But the air was now still and the aura of Creator’s presence was no longer in the forest. “But . . . I was just going to ask who should go for the embers,” Bear said dejectedly.

In unison, the many voices of the forest called out, “You silly. You asked; you got the job.”

This made sense to Bear, and he started off toward the Great Cave of the summer heat. It was a short journey as the valley was small. Soon he was at the entrance. Turning back to his fellow forest People he said, “Well, here I go! But if I don’t come out soon, please feel free to come find me.”

With that, he entered the cave. Soon they could no longer hear the sounds of his giant claws as they clicked on the cave floor. Bear was now deep into the cave.

As Bear felt his way along the wall of the winding cave, he soon felt a new experience. His fur was warmer, but he was aware that his eyes were trying to focus on something. This was unique since his eyes had been of no use in the black dark of the forest. Indeed, bear was experiencing a new sensation, sight.

As he rounded a curve in the dim glow of the cave, he was able to see a few stones alongside the path. In fact, he could see the path. This newfound sensation of sight hurt his eyes as he was not yet accustomed to it.

Soon he was eagerly exploring the cave with his eyes. The light became brighter and brighter and then as he came around yet another bend in the cave, he stepped out before a great fire.

Its flames flickered in the darkness of the cave casting wonderfully scary shadows all about. Bear was very excited over all this, and he let out a big roar.

“Roooooarrrrr!” he exclaimed and it echoed all through the cave, startling him as it cascaded down the path and out the Great Cave entrance.

“Oh my! Bear is hurt,” Crow offered.

“Or afraid,” snickered Snake. (Snake was always bad-mouthing the other People.)

“Hush up, Snake, before I sit on you,” Badger shouted.

The bear was anxious to see more as the fire was most mysterious and entrancing; but remembering his mission, he edged closer to the fire. At first, it felt warm like it was when he, as a cub had slept with his mother in the den. But as he drew closer, he got hotter. It was so hot that he had to pant for relief.

At last he was close enough to the coals by the edge of the great fire to touch them. As he gingerly stretched out his arm to take an ember and leave, the heat became so intense that it charred the bottom of his paw black.

“EEEyooooo!” he cried out in pain. “That hurt!”

He tried again with each paw, with the same painful results. Injured and in pain, he made his way back into the darkness and into the valley of his ancestors.

When the bear returned, the People all smelled his singed hair and burnt paws and asked, “What happened?”

Bear told them of the bright light and the painful heat, and of the burns he had incurred.

“I am a failure,” he told his companions. “You had expected me to bring light but all I bring is my failure and shame.” He lowered his head and sat near a big bolder beside the cave to tend to his injuries.

Badger stepped toward the cave and announced, “Bear did not fail. His claws were just not long enough. I have the longest and toughest claws in the valley. I can get the ember,” he stated with great confidence.

Into the cave he went.

Out of the cave he came . . . with no ember.

Same story: The embers were too hot to hold.

Animal after animal went into the cave and came back without an ember.

The People were becoming sad . . . and disappointed. The promise of light was slipping away as each of them came back without an ember.

Now Grandmother Possum had been sitting nearby doing what Grandmother Possum always did, preening her beautiful fur and singing her song softly.

But Possum was listening intently.

After the last brave soul had attempted to retrieve an ember, and had failed, Grandmother Possum at last stopped preening and stepped toward the cave entrance.

“I have been thinking,” she said.

“And . . . ?” all the People said in unison.

“I have heard that each of our brave friends have failed because they could not hold an ember long enough to bring it out of the cave, right?” she stated.

“Yes, that is truth,” they all replied.

“I think that the fur on my tail is so thick that I would not get burnt carrying the ember from the cave,” she offered. “If I can just get the ember onto my tail, I will succeed,” she said with great confidence.

“Oh my, that is a great idea,” Weasel said as he was licking his burned fingers.

“Yes indeed,” said Bear. And the rest of the People agreed.

“Be careful, Grandmother Possum,” they all said as she entered the cave.

Like the others who had traveled the cave’s path before her, she too had to become accustomed to the light and the heat. Soon she was at the Great Fire.

“Mmmm,” she pondered, “it is indeed very hot.”

Looking about the fire’s edge, she spotted a single ember that had fallen to the ground and had rolled a short distance from the blaze. Edging closer to the intense heat, she reached out to grab the hot ember in her paw to toss it into her tail fur.

“Ouch!” she cried out in pain as the heat burned the hair from her paw, and making her fingers hurt. The beautiful fur on her

hands had been singed black-gray, as was much of her fur elsewhere. Only her beautiful tail was still intact.

“This is going to be harder than I thought,” she said as she sat down to ponder the situation. With determination that only a grandmother can possess, Possum thought of different plans.

At last she was ready.

“If I can run quickly up to the fire and scoop up an ember, I can toss it into my tail fur and run it down the cave to the valley and send it skyward to Creator,” she said. “If I can do all this very fast, I may not get burnt too badly.”

So, just as she had planned, Grandmother Possum ran up to the fire and with her nose, she flipped the ember into her tail and ran quickly back to the valley. This burnt her nose but she was determined to bring light to her People. And she knew that she could not fail Creator.

At the entrance of the cave, she spun around and launched the still red ember into the sky.

Instantly, Creator took it and made it into the sun. In that same instant, there was now light.

Everyone cheered and pointed to the bright light in the sky, exclaiming their joy. At last there was light in the valley. Now they could see everything . . . just as soon as their eyes adjusted to this new experience of light.

The forest was filled with light, and the chattering of the valley inhabitants.

Looking about, they were able to see the magnificent trees and the grand mountains and the sweet water that flowed in the stream in the center of the valley. At last they could see how each person looked.

“Hey, everybody, Raccoon has stripes!” said Badger with glee, “and the Cardinal Bird is red!”

“There is Bear,” Rabbit exclaimed. “See, his paws are black from the time he burned them in the cave.” The chatter rolled across the valley as each person spoke of their being able to see all things. There was great joy in the valley.

Then Bear rose and held up his hand to quiet the People. He wanted to speak. “I for one am most thankful that Creator has

given us light,” he said. Continuing, “To you, oh Great Creator, we give our thanks and love,” he said in prayer.

“Ayeia,” sang out the others in agreement and praise.

“And to Grandmother Possum for her bravery and determination, we now have our sun,” Bear continued. Then he looked around to find her. But Grandmother Possum was not to be seen.

The People called out for her, but she did not answer. They began to look for their hero who had given them light. They looked in the trees and under the bushes. They looked to the mountain and the stream but they could not find her. At last, Chipmunk looked behind the great rock at the entrance of the cave and found her. She was hiding.

“Grandmother Possum,” Bear called out, “are you alright?”

“Yes, I am, but please leave me alone,” she replied. “I am no longer beautiful. I am ugly,” she said softly and began to cry.

As the People looked upon her they saw that the beautiful fur on her hands and face had been burned away, leaving her mottled with singed fur and bare hands and nose. But the most disturbing sight was her tail. In carrying the ember down the cave and into the valley, she had burned off every strand of the lovely fur from her tail. Her tail was now bare to the pink flesh.

Grandmother Possum was mortified. The person that all the People had called the most beautiful of the valley was now a singed and bare, ugly animal. She was so ashamed that she lowered herself even closer to the ground and tried to scrunch herself under a giant stone.

Then she heard a great sound.

Everyone was cheering. They were shouting her name over and over and calling her to come out to receive the respect due her. They continued until she obliged. The valley was filled with sound as the People all expressed their thanks and love for this most grand and brave person.

At last she came out to thank them. She was still ashamed of her appearance, but was most gracious as she thanked them for their praise and love.

Then the valley began to rumble again. The wind blew hard and the light became intense at the entrance of the cave. A great voice boomed out.

“Our beloved Grandmother Possum has given that which she felt was her most valued asset; her long fur. It is gone forever, and she feels that she is no longer worthy of being in your midst,” Creator’s voice echoed across the valley. “But we all love her and we all wish to honor her,” Creator continued. “How may we do this and yet honor her wishes not to be seen?”

The valley was now very quiet as all thought of a solution to their dilemma.

Then Creator spoke again. “Why did I not think of this sooner? I will make Grandmother Possum a place to live where she can still be with the People of the valley and yet not be seen. I will divide the light in two and make half the time dark, as it was before she gave us the ember,” Creator stated with great satisfaction. “I will call the light time day and the dark time night.”

“That is all grand and wonderful, Creator.” Bear timidly asked, “I don’t want to seem a nitpick, but won’t we still be bumpus’ing into the rumpus in the night?”

With that, Creator turned to Grandmother Hummingbird. “Sister Hummingbird, will you fly to the top of the sky and use your long slender beak to punch many holes into the sky?”

Quick as a wink, she flew high and darting back and forth she made a fine pattern of holes in the roof of the valley. Then she retired to rest from her work.

“Thank you, Grandmother Hummingbird,” Creator exclaimed. “That was just what I had envisioned. As the light of day slowly dims for night, my light will still shine through the holes in the sky.”

Creator paused and then stated, “I will call the tiny light that brightens the night sky stars.”

“And now I know how we can honor Grandmother Possum,” Creator said. “I will make her the Great Leader of the night and Bear the Great Leader of the day!”

It was said. It was done.

So it was that the People of the valley had bright light in the day and tiny lights at night, and they never had to go bumpus'ing into each other again.

Bear was a good leader of the day making sure that all the questions of the People had a good answer and that all the People were healthy and happy.

And Grandmother Possum was most pleased to be the leader of the night, where she could be with the People and yet not have them feel sorry for her looks mostly because they could not see her very well. In time, she developed great night vision and did rule the night in a good and proper manner.

So, if you see a possum, you will always remember that it was Possum's great sacrifice for the People that gave us light and the night with the stars. And you will remember why she looks as she does and know that she is the Great Leader of the night.

That is the end of this story.

3 Of the Soul and Spirituality

Our religion is not one of paint and feathers. It is a thing of the heart.

Follower of Handsome Lake, Seneca
From *Through Indian Eyes*



Red Fox Camp

morning smoke lay near grass
as red orange of first light
filters through trees into
the place of sacred blue water.
muffled cough, soft sleep sounds
gently emanate from lodge walls
as elders sit in last/first Council.

wings silent, float in final hunt
above the meadow for four-footed
ventured foolishly to search for
grain.
life continued, life at end -
the circle of time passes without
pause for all quiet, all aware.

it is the nature of being,
the rhythm is constant beating,
the drum in the heart of Creation
repeats endlessly without pause.
we sleep, wake, sadness, joy,
to sound eternal, dream, vision,
pain, delight in this circle
stretched atop the bowl of spirits.

morning smoke rises, black night,
frees color, sweet, effusive in
power tangible, infinite.
first smoke rises to carry
in sacred cloud, prayers for
those yet in slumber, meditation,
or on their seventh journey.
the circle is unbroken.

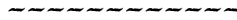
*A song at the coming of first light as we celebrate the year of the indigenous people.
Conceived on the ninth day of the Red Paint Moon, in the four thousand and eighth season of
Little Fog's Vision.*

Walk in Balance

Hello my friend,

Thank you for asking me to remind you of Our Way. I am honored to share again this with you. As each of us make important decisions which may cause profound reactions, it is wise to hearken the lessons learned from the Elders. The lesson taught with Walking in Balance is to understand that it is not the major acts, but the near imperceptible ones that change our destiny.

Be ever wary of life's changing breeze, for it portends philosophical challenges soon.



One of my favorite statements is to “Walk in Balance.” Most who hear it for the first time are either puzzled as to its meaning or immediately adopt it for their own. Yet few have a grasp of the concept of “Walk in Balance” as it is understood by the Shawnee. We are told that Balance is a state of being connected with all things, that everything we do has a profound effect on everything else in all Creation.

In our oral tradition, we learn that Walking in Balance is more akin to being placed at birth on an ancient, house-sized slab of rough gray stone. The somewhat flat surface is cracked and worn in a timeless manner with tufts of grass and plants emerging from the cracks in some places. As you live your life, everything has an impact on your stone's balance. If a butterfly or a raindrop lands on your stone, you have to adjust your position to accommodate that change in balance. You must do this in a graceful manner as not to cause your stone to wobble. If a bolder or a mob of two-leggeds jump onto your stone, your job is the same, keep your stone in balance. All this must be done in an agile way, being ever nimble.

On the bottom of this stone, slightly off-center, is a small singular point of stone carefully steadied on a stone below it. That is the stone of your parents, and it is balanced on their parents' stone, and so it is back to the First Parents.

When you have children, their stone will be balanced on yours, and their children's children into the future. The whole tower is balanced upon the foundation of Creation.

Each move you make, each thought, each action can cause the entire stack to wobble or shake. It is your job to keep it all in balance throughout your life. Now all this makes one think about their own lives and how all others are dependent on your ability to keep in balance.

All this is called the Walk of Life, or the Dance of Life.

So the next time someone says, “Stay in balance,” or you hear me say, “Walk in Balance,” you will know that they really mean to live your life in a manner in which you will cause as little harm and discomfort to others as possible, being ever mindful that your every action will cause a change in the world forever to the good, or the bad.

May we always Walk in Balance.

The Day the Sioux Ran

In 1984, the Medicine Wheel Feather Flag of the Tribal Chairman's Association of the many Indian Nations was carried by Sioux runners from New York to Los Angeles. This was to honor the occasion of the United States hosting the 1984 Summer Olympics, and to deliver the message from the Chairmen to the International Olympic Committee at the Summer Olympics, held in Los Angeles that summer.

Indeed the Great Spirit was with us that day as we prepared to receive the band of our brothers, the Sioux. These runners were brave men, young and old who took turns carrying the Sacred Feather Flag across the Great Turtle Island.

The staff had been created expressly for this occasion by the Elders of their Nation. For nearly a moon circle, they took turns carrying the flag. They were carrying the Sacred Message entrusted to them by the great leaders of the many nations of Native Americans. Americans—a word that has come to fill the hearts and souls of so many with pride. Still, it has a lingering taste of pecan hulls to those whose thoughts and Spirit are of the Ancient Ones. Yet, we are proudly American Patriots, first and always.

The run began at the edge of the waters where the sun rises in New York City. Each day they shared the honor of carrying the staff between the members of this chosen group, and with the many Native Americans and friends they encountered along the way. In all weather, day after day, they proceeded with dedication that they would reach their destination at the steps of the Coliseum—where the 1984 Summer Olympic Games were to be held—and to take their place in the Opening ceremonies.

As the first glint of the new day warmed the horizon, a great Council of many nations assembled. There were Navaho, Apache, Azteca, Zuni, and men and women from the Great Plains. People from the Mountains of the West and of the Woodlands and Lakes (where the runners had first started) had gathered.

The sun burned hot early, as it was the season of first harvest. Special care had been taken to sweep the camp clean and to prepare a great quantity of food and gifts for our guests. The people had come together, near the eve of the Night Hawk and the Owl, to hold Council and make ready a celebration for this most historic event. Then we danced and

sang of other glorious days, long past, well into the indigo blue of late night. Now all thoughts centered on the moment that was soon to be.

In our presence were many noble people, including the family of the great Jim Thorpe and government officials represented the great nations of the United States and Canada. There were many brothers and sisters, fine artisans who had given of their skills to show others how we truly live and think.

We were inspired and guided by the leadership and the spirit of the great Cherokee Indian Iron Eyes Cody and the Ogallala Lakota, Yellowhair. Our village chief was an Iroquois, Lyman Pierce, of the Southern California Indian Centers.

All those present were joined by many non-Indians, including the important people who had been chosen to deliver the long-traveled message from the American Indian Leaders that these braves had carried across the Great Turtle Island.

Drums and hearts beat-as-one, and the voice of the People sang in joy, as the word was passed, "They are near."

We pressed to the edge of camp to get a first glimpse of our brothers as they rounded into sight. Many young men and women ran out to meet the tired band and accompanied them as they entered the Council arena.

Our proud and joyful hearts filled to near bursting as we saw the Medicine Totem carried by the first runner. Its feathers seemed to lift the Sacred Hoop higher as the runners and crowd pressed into the camp.

Chants and cries filled the air, and many drums told of the great victory this day. The message from the tribal leaders was read to the people gathered in our temporary village, and all could see the brave men who had carried this Totem.

Grouped with the original band were young men from many nations who had joined them along the way. Even a boy of eleven or twelve had run many days. At times, when the older men were tired, he would take the lead and inspire the others on. The pipe was lit and food and drink were given. Afterward, when the excitement had subsided, and gifts were exchanged . . . the stories of their many encounters were told and retold.

That same day, the message of the Council of Nations was given to the Great Chief of the Village of Los Angeles and to the rest of the world. It was received by leaders at the Olympic gathering of the many Nations, at the summer games that early harvest season. It is sad to note that the message that had been so openly carried across the United States was not (as had been promised), read during the Opening Ceremonies, but,

rather, was received in private the following day by a representative of the Olympic Committee.

It was the shame of the organizers that this important welcoming message from the First People of the Great Turtle Island had not been delivered to the world as the Olympic people had promised. The Sioux had kept their word. They had delivered the message.

The story of the strength and bravery of these Sioux runners who had carried the message of peace and love from our People to the rest of the world, will long endure.

I Have Seen the Promise So Often Broken, Made Whole

It is told to us by the Ancestors, in our oral traditions, that when we need to seek knowledge to see the important things we must go on a quest, a spiritual search, and to walk on the other side of the Veil of this life. This long held tradition has revealed our greatest guidance and wisdom. I, like my grandparents before me, have made this prayer-walk to ask for understanding. For I am a two-legged, and am in want, to find the true way, the good road for All My Relations.

I have heard their drum and I have had a mighty vision. I have seen a great nation of my People united in a common cause across the breadth of the Turtle Island. I have heard the voice of the People sing out in unity, rejoicing in the realization that once again we are a strength to be reckoned with.

I have seen a vision where the Red Nation of many sticks are considered equal with all others and where our voice is a part of all that causes this grand country to work. I have seen a vision of the return of our sovereignty and the making of a treaty that can never be broken.

Tecumseh, the great leader of the Shawnee in the last days of the freedom of his people said, "The way, and the only way to end this wrong, is for all the Red People to unite, in claiming a common and equal right in the land as it was at first, and yet should be."

I have seen the promise so often broken, made whole. Not in a cloud or in the smoke of a prayer-pipe, but in the crystal clear air of truth. I have visioned the birth of the Red Peoples emancipation, the sovereign Red Nation, the fifty-first state of this great United States of America.

A state noncontiguous, each county being the existing place of the individual Treated Nations, with additional federal land to be provided that all Native American Tribes and Bands will have a place to call their own. Each Nation, a county with representation in the state legislator; this new state coequal, with appropriate seats in the Senate and House where at last we will have the long promised representation in the mother government, the United States Congress. No longer will we have to be the stepchild of the host state where within its boundaries our greatness lay.

Simply put, a new state, a fifty-first star on the Stars and Stripes, where each tribe is a county and each native person has one vote. We can

be a state that will return the green grass and the blue waters that have so long been denied by our being “part-time” citizens. A state where we will at last be true, full Americans.

There need not be loss to any particular existing state as tribal lands are not part of a state, but federally held lands. This new star on the flag will shine as a dignified end to the five hundred years of shameful and immoral attempts to destroy our culture, our sacred places, and has been the cause of the unnecessary deaths of thousands upon thousands of the original People of this Turtle Island.

With Honor and respect restored, our great American nation can begin to heal this wound.

For, if a society, no matter how strong, cannot resolve the wrongs caused by its creation, it can never possess real honor or integrity. Despite proclamations and protestations, a nation bereft of these most basic qualities can not prevail as a truly free society.

Without this, we the People, all the people of this United States, are doomed by our inherited shame. The continued eradication of the way and life of the first people will ultimately destroy us all.

I have had a vision where all People, of all diversities, in this great nation, are united equally in honor and dignity. Then we will be allowed to set the example for all the world. Until that time I pray that we will strive to that goal . . . together.

A great statesman of the Six Nations Confederacy of the Iroquois who held the ancient title Tododaho, Leon Shenadoah said, “These are our times and our responsibilities. Every human being has a sacred duty to protect the welfare of our mother earth, from whom all life comes (and her children). In order to do this we must recognize the enemy, the one within us. We must begin with ourselves.”

The Gift of New Life

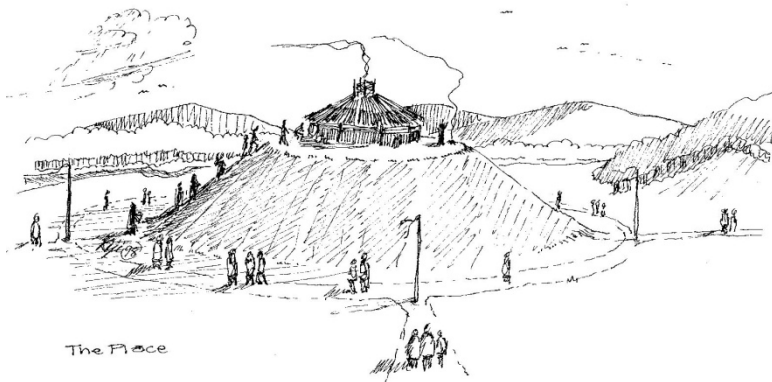
Know that each day is the gift of new life. Each day you are born again into the light after the death passage of sleep. You should welcome this gift of a new day with song. Sometimes I sing this one song.

The rock that was placed on my head when I went to sleep and that has held me dead, becomes the sun in the place that life begins. Once again, He who creates with His Mind has given me this life to live today.

Let me just once this day speak of good things, show a sheltered path to those I meet. Help me use my power of the touch to make this day a better one for someone. Then when the death of night once again returns, I will be worthy of another gift of life.

May I live this song. Sing this song to the Sky People, to the Earth People, and to all the People of Creation.

This is my prayer, this is my song, oh, Kiji Manito.



Mound of the Okeamas

4 Markers in the Forests

*And when your children's children think themselves
alone in the field . . . or in the silence of the pathless
woods, they will not be alone.*

Attributed to Chief Seattle, 1855
From *Through Indian Eyes*



Creation and Growing Up Indian

By Tom Hill (Seneca) and Richard Hill, Jr. (Tuscarora) from Creations Journey; With thoughts and comments by Jim Great Elk Waters (Shawnee)

There is a magic of childhood within the Indian-way that is so absent in the outside world today.

The native understanding of the world begins with the Creation. The many elaborate Creation stories are the best means to understand our world views. Original stories teach us what kind of people we hope to become, what kind of contribution we hope to make, what kind of legacy we hope to pass on to our children. In some ways, life's journey is an effort to keep the wisdom from the time of Creation a part of our everyday existence.

Iroquoians, like many other natives, believe that the Creation is ongoing and that people were placed on earth to re-create the Creator's good works—that is, to be creators.

Children are born within circles of tradition that define the world views of their communities. For example, an Iroquoian child's first moccasins are punctured to keep the relationship between the child and the earth intact.

Each culture has a distinctive philosophy about how to raise children. In the past, many native groups used cradleboards. Strapped in the vertical cradles, children saw the world from the same viewpoint as adults. Today they still are surrounded by symbolism that is their first introduction to the world they have entered. Each symbol is a token of the stories and traditions that they will be told repeatedly, to learn as they grow up.

Children learn by observing. They learn through the rhythms of the community, the songs, dances, and annual cycles of rituals and events. The Jewish writer/philosopher Dennis Prager laments “the absence of ritual today.” He notes that this absence “has removed many of the necessary markers of life.”

There was, traditionally, a seasonal calendar for storytelling, setting a rhythm of learning. Through stories, the ways of the ancestors were made real for children, and the world around them became a powerful place.

Learning to tell stories starts with learning to listen. To show respect for storytellers and other speakers, children were taught not to interrupt.

Ogallala-Lakota elder Standing Bear wrote, “to look when there was apparently nothing to see, and listen intently when all seemingly was quiet.”

Try to imagine what it was like to grow up in a time when making things was a never-ending part of daily life. Household goods, hunting equipment, clothing, and religious objects were produced within the community. Every day included artistic creation and spiritual expression. Children were surrounded by artists.

Think of what childhood must have been like for the child who wore a colorful shirt his mother had made, so much like his father’s shirt. Or the children who watched their father carve his bow drill, knowing he was sharing with them his happiness in his life, in his work, and love of the world.

These worlds of creativity and imagination still exist. Many native households today make traditional clothing for powwows and ceremonies, utensils for rituals, and objects of spiritual faith and power. Today, as in the past, nearly every native person is related to an artist. The creative process is still an integral part of growing up. It’s our job.



Ohio-Seppe

Cool sand mud soothes my flesh
as I rest engrossed at water's edge
watching this brown wet ribbon
flow through the tree-lined banks
of the giver of life, Ohio-seppe.

Toes burrowed beneath
tobacco tint silt lain here
in rhythm endless since glacier-melt
first trickled along new-sprung,
now ancient water pathways.

Bone-frames of trees and brush
erosion felled along the margin
of this enchanted water's flow as it
courses through the spectacle
of grove and field, branch and brook.

Oh, how I love this place of solitude
where the spirits of other places
and other folk roll beneath my feet
being part of the whole that is here
Not two-legged but of mud-water.
Returned to the root of life given
the blood of the land includes me
in its wandering rush to other places
in need also of its healing powers
oblivious to all, vigilant always.

Man now, first child always, drawn
Moth like here for a century half
In sheer wonderment of its reality,
this ever-changing gathered rain
and well and spring flow endless,

Recalled catlike or monster fish
caught, or washed ashore found,
all their descendants apparitions,
in reality alive within the
now green satin mirror surface.

Change is rule to this water Gift
that enchants me so with its voice
and scent and air that fills the
valley floor it claims home
for the long millenniums to now.

Oh, sing your songs to once more
as in truth and memory entwined
of the warrior, woman, and child with
toy upon the skin of this vessel
songs of past, and yet to come.

Sing to me of grandness of steam
and wheeled riverman's home
floating to destination and port chosen,
of their chanteys and spirits and mirth
of the naive joy abandoned upon you.

And tell once again of the sad horror
of lived rains and snows too profuse
causing you to grow and engulf

home and field and life as you continue
your journey west then south to sea.

Of the spring water-fed lush greens
of autumns filled color who defy equal
of snow softened blankets that edged
and summer fires life-quenched
at your impartial bluff and shore.

Of stories told again to ears new
share with me for I am yet child
in time worn skin age wrinkled by the
yellow red sky-fire that has tried to
exhaust your moist soul for all time.
And yet to the sun and cloud and wind
to each in its need you have shared
your abundance cycle without passion or care
as known purpose or thoughtless venture
continue to drink from your sweet excess.

Without care or cause I lay beside you
once more to infuse my spirit with your
gift and to fill my memories once again
of reason and dream, of smiles and woe
fulfilling my connectedness to life anew.

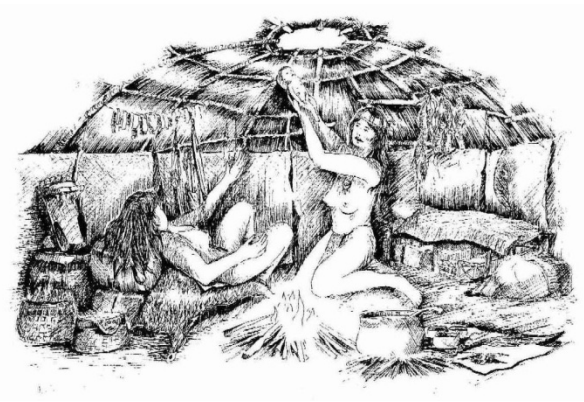
The Shawnee Woman

She walks the red road
of tradition, of blood,
gentle with children,
gifted extreme patience.

Uncommon strength imbued
and genuine nature always,
a leader by instinct
thinks forever Southwind.

Knowledge of skills, survival
personify with mate-tribe
female eternally, feminine,
contemplative, and compassionate.

She is the never ceasing,
great counterbalance Gift
to all, from the first musings
to Veil if this life-fading.



Birthing Lodge

The

On Character

It is said that, "The measure of one's character is not what we get from our ancestors, but what we leave our descendants." This is our character. Here are a few thoughts to ponder on the subject.

Character Traits: Each of us has three character traits: that which we exhibit—what others perceive; that we think we have—our ego; and that which we are. Get to know each well and keep them in their rank of importance.

Cultivate Your Character: Our character is like the evergreen tree. All its capability for being a beautiful mature tree is developed in its first years. But without nourishment and warmth, even the hardiest evergreen will wither and die. Like the evergreen, we need to care for and build upon the character we developed in our youth.

Weed Our Garden: We need to pay close attention to those distractions that will rob us of our core values. We must be ever wary of compromise in what we feel most important.

Laughter: Or, more importantly, what excites you to laugh is a sign of developing character or a declining integrity.

Beware of Erosion: We often do not notice what qualities we are losing until they are almost gone.

Reinforce Your Value System: Like a fence, all the whitewash applied will never strengthen your nature.

Once you know what you have, forget it. Character works best in that environment. Know what you stand for, won't stand for. Others will evaluate your character by the height of your principles, the breadth of your compassion, the depth of your conviction, and the length of your patience.

Character speaks loudest with action.

Having good character is not enough. You will never be what you ought to be until you are doing what you ought to be doing.

The practice of your principles will be the passing on of the gifts you received as your tree grows strong and tall.

Find time to shelter the weak; assist them as you would a relative, for they are. It is said by the Elders that "All things are connected."

Be a landmark to those wandering. Offer to be a mentor to someone in your fields. Help them develop the traits that have made you the "who" that you are. *Remember, no person is better than their principles.*

It Is Now

a smell of sweet grass and
sage is infinite, unending,
close mother kind warmth
of the moist lodge flows,

as this special time
obeys a most sacred and
parallel nature.

the flame in the center fire
does ritual dance on the wall
and spirit relics, important
gifts
that surround the two as
they
ready this age for new life.

blankets of skin, wraps of
fur
are near for their use yet
here.

sucking breath, hot
windblown
creation comes quickly and
the water flows from the
spring of all life two-legged.

it is now, it is time for the
work of Creator's child
grown as the cords' new
sound is issued.

The Good Great Spirit who
creates with Its thought
has envisioned anew, that
which the Manitou incepted
when the first She was
begot.

again the circle is completed.
again she has caused
morrow.
The cord is unbroken.

A song of the birthing lodge as we celebrate the year of the indigenous people. Conceived on the ninth day of the Red Paint Moon, in the one thousand and eighth season of Little Fog's Vision.