

*Fall Equinox Edition 2017*



# *Four Directions Newsletter*



*Native American Indian General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous*

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## The Autumnal Equinox

by Ush`ka Waso`

De' go:wah:eh no'khwe' oh? A'na eh go waa' swaahdyoohs? Neh kuh a'naeh go was'da doh gah gwaah' ne noh'do nyoh'shah ne swa 'nyah'sa goo?

"Why are you angry? Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?"

The first three directions are complex enough, dealing with our physical condition, our thoughts, and our emotions. But perhaps the direction that causes us the most turmoil is **the West direction, Haweni:yo, the direction of the spirit**. Not the Spirit as we regard **Hotye:nok'ta, the Creator of the Universe**. But spirit as it applies to man's understandings and interpretations. In this, we might call it religions or paths; **Khah`da'gwa (my path) or Ha:ha`gwa (your, or his, or another, path)**. What greater instruments of war or peace have there been in history than those of ideologies, philosophies and religions?

**The West direction(stone # 12), Nya'gwa'dzoni'ga', the Great Bear(Grizzly)** is the most powerful of the 4 cardinal directions.

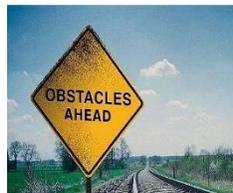


It is the unseen and internal convictions and commitments we have adopted along the path of the Medicine Wheel. It is the result of what we have experienced in the first 3 directions and an accumulation of good and bad, healthy and detrimental influences. So, is it any wonder why the questions I posed above might stir up all those things we have learned along the way? Is it any wonder why there may be conflict within ourselves and how we might choose to express that conflict by imposing it upon others? We do not want to suffer alone. Nor do we wish to admit that some of our experiences along our path may be the results of lies and deceptions. So, we must maintain a facade and present it to the world as we wish the world to see us. But in fact, it is not truly or wholly who we are. It is only what we have become through the influences and impositions of the world of mankind's understandings.



But it is here in the West direction where we can question everything. The Bear is a place where we can take a moment to reflect and decide what we will continue to carry along the rest of our path, and what has become burdensome and in conflict with our souls. Perhaps it is the soul which speaks to us here. And just as it is true of the other 3 directions, if truth and honesty with ones' self is absent, then the Bear can be fierce and uncontrollable. But if it is content in its habitat, then it can be powerful but gentle, loving but strict, peaceful but aware of everything around it.

The West direction is the season of Autumn when nature gives us obvious signs of change coming. The time of life is elder, and the time of day is nighttime. The colors of the West are usually black but can also be dark blue. The colors represent the darkness of night. But they also remind us that if we are to find truth, then all the encumbrances of the previous directions and all that we know must be gone. The blackness represents the void; the emptiness of this physical vessel, and it encourages us to return to the time when we were still protected from external stimuli in the womb. The bear seeks to hibernate and hide itself away in a den to escape what is to come. But while she is in her den, she gives way to new life and the birth of her helpless tiny cubs. Just as these new cubs are helpless, so are the new ideas born to us. They are immature, unable to fully comprehend this dark den of abstractions. So in the West, we must allow these new ways and ideas to teach us that we are differently apart, but are fully a part of the whole....*of the circle*. It is here where we must consider our mortality as we will soon approach the North where our journey will end. It is here where we contemplate our lives, past, present, and what is yet to come. It is here we must decide about our convictions, our faiths and traditions, our indoctrinations along the way and whether or not they have been beneficial to our soul or the source of destruction....Hmmm...pretty heavy, huh? But wisdom comes in many ways and by many paths...(Ush`ka Waso'=Many paths/spirits)



## The Drum Called Me Home

by Cindy C.

Way back, decades ago I had just arrived in NH because my mom and step dad settled on this side of the country. Born in Montana, it was as far away from home that I had been since I got out of the military. For me the move was just another geographical cure, newly divorced and restless, irritable and discontent, I dragged my 2 little kids with me to the little farm my parents made.



It was not long until I found the city nearby, got an apartment and rushed back into drinking and drugging. As always, the clubs would close and I was never ready to be done with my drinking when everyone else was ready to go home, so I invited a bunch of strangers back to my place to continue the party.

One night, long about 3 am I hear yelling in the living room and people are holding the front door closed as someone outside is kicking it. Then suddenly, Bang! Bang! Shots fired through the door, people screaming and dropping to the floor. My military training kicked in and I felt suddenly cold sober as I got people to lay on the floor and dialed 911. No one died but 2 people were seriously wounded. I saw in my daughter's bedroom a bullet hole not far from her pillow and that was a moment of clarity for me.

My mother came and took the kids away and my sister took me away. She took me to a woman who said she was going to help me get clean and sober, the old way. She drove me out of the city into the backwoods to a place where there was land set aside for Native American cultural events.

There was one small house on the property. All around me were trees and more trees, a small pond and this big circle area made from tree poles that were lashed together. I had never seen such a place before. She called out and a woman dressed in old blue jeans and flannel shirt came out, her dark hair in braids, along with three big dogs. The woman who drove me there said, "I got another one for you." Then she got in her car and drove away. I was dumbfounded.

Braided woman said her name was Jane and told me to come on in and I followed the dogs and her inside. There I was met with mid-evening darkness, a kerosene lantern sat in the middle of a small table with beadwork and all kinds of other little piles I couldn't yet identify. There were herbs hanging from the rafters in the tiny kitchen and an old water pump at the sink. Shelves full of books filled every other space. She took me into the next little area and showed me where to sleep. It was a bunkbed built into the wall and under the bed there were bins full of pieces of wood. I assumed firewood. She told me to sleep on top because the dogs had the bottom bunk. She was going to sleep on the wood floor. She told me where her outhouse was and gave me a sandwich and sent me off to bed; said we'd talk in the morning.



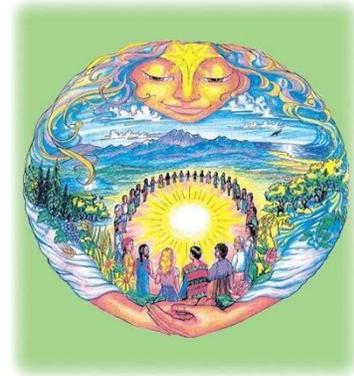
I didn't sleep well, shaking from DTs and afraid to fall out of bed, I wet myself. I was a mess. Bright and early she was there, getting me up. Coffee boiling on her cook stove and a gray squirrel she was feeding at the table. She helped me strip the bed and took sheets out to the fire pit, boiled water and we washed and hung them. Then she said, now we talk.

Jane told me about her life and how she ended up out there as caretaker to the property. Alcoholic like me, she thought she was on the fast track, until her life took a turn for the worst and she was homeless. A woman brought her out there to care for an old man who was dying. She said she lived on the property for 30 years and the only time there are other people who come around was during powwow season. I did not know what powwow was. I had left my Montana home when I was a very small child and wasn't raised in my culture. So here I am stuck in nowhere New Hampshire in May and in this place for who knows how long and I missed my kids.

Jane gave me chores to do. I already knew how to lash so she put me to work lashing the arbor to sure up poles and replace old ones. In the evenings, we sat outside by a fire and talked and talked, she told me stories of her ancestors. I told her about my life and what had become of me and my drinking history. She told me her story one drunk to another. When I had time off I would sit by the pond and reflect on her words like, "for anything to grow it has to struggle first" and "chaos proceeds clarity" and "there is a solution"

She taught me how to carve spoons out of the wood that was stored under the bed. She showed me how to do simple beading. She said, "if you make a mistake, don't pull it out, just do better next time." She introduced me to the black bear that visits her and the dogs and eats out of their bowls. She taught me about the plants she was drying and what good medicine they were, and the weeks went by.

And then it was full summer and powwow was coming on. I was full of fear I didn't know what to expect. It had been so quiet and serene. Then came the busy work, putting out signs and greeting campers, helping them set up. Vendors set up their booths and the gates opened. I was amazed at all the regalia, feathers of all kinds, women in buckskin dresses. She told me a little about powwow, its history and the local tribal people, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki. Said this is intertribal powwow. Jane explained the drum, the heartbeat of Mother Earth.

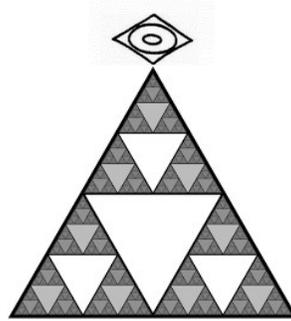


When the call for dancers to the east gate happened I just stood as all did for grand entry. The drum started and I began to cry. Jane took my arm and took me into the circle and showed me to dance. Told me I had to do veteran's dance by myself because she wasn't a veteran. I danced and cried all day. I met so many wonderful people and knew I had come home.

When powwow was over chores began again, all cleaned up, the grounds and me. I was ready to go back to my kids. Jane sent a message to my ride and I went back to the city a new-found person. I go to those grounds often in my head and most every powwow season. Jane continued to introduce me into the local Native community and I have found sober friends and AA meetings.

I'm 62 now, Vietnam era Native American veteran. Ten years ago, I was gifted with a buckskin dress made by a fellow female veteran, she said she gifted it to me because of the 12-step work I was doing in the city with homeless vets. So now I dance proudly, sometimes take a flag in grand entry. I can't think of a better place to have been in 1987, other than the tiny cabin with Jane to get my start on the Red Road. Today I am so grateful for my life and the learning experiences that I was given so that I serve the primary purpose to help another alcoholic achieve sobriety and to be of maximum usefulness to all my relatives. Aho. Cindy

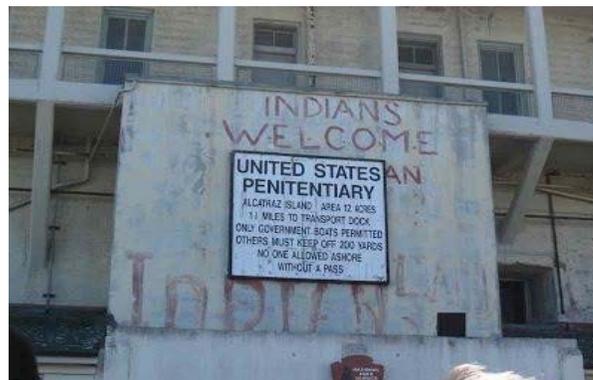
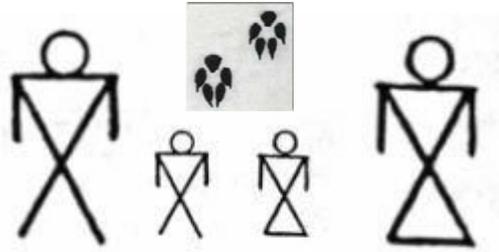




Creator First

Community second

Clan and Family last



### Freedom From Bondage on the Red Road By Frank T.

When I was a little kid in my integrated inner-city neighborhood I loved everybody. In my family, my father was a heroin addict and my grandparents on my mother's side were functioning alcoholics.

I made a lot of foolish choices. I learned early to abuse alcohol and drugs. They lead me down a long painful road of self-destruction. I went to City reform school and later to NY State reformatory at Riker's Island.

When I was paroled in 1967 from Riker's Island. It was my desire to stay clean and sober and help raise my beautiful daughter. But I had little idea of how to accomplish this, I

tried. It worked for a little while and we had another little daughter a year later. I was doing good but seems suddenly, I relapsed on alcohol and it lead me to the very things I had been trying very hard to leave behind. I lost my daughters and their mother. I was again headed down a long dark path of ruin.

Years later, I found myself in Federal Penitentiary. It was there that I was introduced to the path called, Red Road and participated in sweat lodge. I embraced the good red road of spirit and have learned to walk this path in a calm peaceful way. I have learned like the Muslims say, there is no God but God. It is our diversity that makes the world go around, as the Medicine Wheel teaches us. We are all related.

I will live the rest of my life on parole but they aren't worried about me because blessed by the grace of the Great Spirit I am on my path to freedom and forgiveness. I have my daughters back in my life today. I have a loving family and friends and a good recovery program. It continues to be a long road but this road I walk with the light. I cannot go back and change my past, I would if I could. All I can do is continue to light my sage, say my prayers, attend lodges when invited and practice these steps in the way of the medicine wheel. – Aho!...Frank T.





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### A Vision of Terra Hawk

As I slept the night of the first day of spring 2017, I was also awake in my mind, or perhaps my spirit. A waking dream, which to me is a vision of things to come, a spirit came to me and I was lifted out of my body to a place far above Earth. It was breathless as I looked down on our beautiful planet which I so dearly love. But then a dark shadow began to cover the face of Earth (No'eh te`jate') and I was terrified. I anxiously asked the spirit next to me what was happening. The spirit told me that it was the darkness residing in the hearts of all humankind which was full of all manner of selfish evil. It told me not to fear but to wait and watch as it pointed to the right.

To the right of us were four figures which were as clear as the finest crystal and I somehow knew them as messengers, perhaps angels. I don't know. They were most beautiful and serene and the first one appeared as a child. The spirit told me to watch as it sent the child down to Earth. As I watched in great fear for the child I began to see the shadow over Earth very slowly diminish as if it were an eclipse. I asked the spirit what was happening and it told me "That child is the Spirit of Truth." I understood this very well since my Native American spiritual path teaches us that our children are "Hadik'sha wakon" (Seneca) i.e., Sacred little Beings. They are the vessels of Honesty and Truth because their spirits still belong to Creator and they have not yet been corrupted by humankind.

And immediately, the second messenger followed as the shadow over Earth continued to recede. I asked the spirit the name of that messenger and it said, "That is the Spirit of Justice. It has come to judge all those who have harmed Earth, and all her children, and all her gifts. There can be no Justice without Truth. The messengers have brought Truth so that no one can ever be deceived again and Justice will not, and cannot, be denied."

Then, after a time, came the third spirit and I asked what the name of that messenger was. It told me, "Now that Truth and Justice for all of Earth's children has been established, the Spirit of Hope will once more flow over the face of Earth. All the Creator's creatures lost Hope when they could no longer see Truth or Justice was being provided for the most oppressed and violated of the Creator's creatures." Now the shadow was but a crescent shape and Earth began to shine again.



The spirit took my hand and told me it was almost time for me to return to earth. But I insisted on staying until the fourth messenger was sent down. The spirit told me, "The name of the last messenger is Peace. There can be no Peace without Truth, Justice, and Hope. But you will not see that in your time. First there must be war against the forces of evil (Hanisee'ono) that still reside in the hearts and minds of humankind. Peace must wait until the time of man is over and the time Truth and Justice of Creator is established."

My heart was full of sorrow when I was told this revelation. The spirit and I hurled down

toward Earth despite my objections, and I felt myself

return to my body. Then I awoke in bitter tears, feeling I had failed in my mission and my ministry during my stay on Earth. I begged to die and be taken rather than continue to watch the suffering of all our relatives, all Creator's creatures, great and small. Were it not such a vivid waking dream I would not have remembered it. But I regard it as a vision from Hot'ye Nok'ta and I am its messenger. So, I pass it on to you to do as you wish and to follow that which you are inclined to do. It is not my purpose to choose for anyone. But I choose my own way and that which I am guided to do in the spirit...May you all find Truth, Justice, and Hope...and perhaps, unlike myself, you will be fortunate to see Mother Earth at Peace.....Ush`ka Waso'

Isn't that just the way of step 7? We must practice humility through our willingness to be rigorously honest about our shortcomings. Without this critical thinking, we will never realize justice for the harms we have done others, or even make an attempt to honestly, truthfully write down that list of others we had harmed. There will be no justice for them or for us, no hope for them or ourselves. Nor will either side ever know peace without truth.....Jamie Terra Hawk



**Tell us your story of recovery! Send it to: [NAIGSO-AA.org](http://NAIGSO-AA.org)**



## *To thine own self be true!*

"Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible. So, we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love."

"The spiritual life is not a theory. *We have to live it.* Unless one's family expresses a desire to live upon spiritual principles we think we ought not to urge them. We should not talk incessantly to them about spiritual matters. They will change in time. Our behavior will convince them more than our words. We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone."

“There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen - we send them an honest letter. And there may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided. ***We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone.***” (BB pg. 83)

*Abuse of one another, or of ourselves, is never an acceptable solution!*



### Our General Manager's Story

My name is Gary and I am an alcoholic who has found a Power greater than myself which has relieved me from the bondage of alcoholism. My Grandmother was

Lucynthia Ann Walton. These are the ways I have been taught to introduce myself by my AA elders and my Native American elders. My story starts many years ago, long before I was born into this world. I grew up being told I had grandparents on both sides of my family who were “Indians.” But I was never taught what that meant. What I was told was that I had drunken abusive grandparents. I was told that my paternal grandfather was so abusive when he came home drunk that Grandma finally tied him to the bed after he passed out and beat him with a broomstick. The story goes that he never came home and abused her anymore! I was also told about my maternal great grandfather abusing my great grandmother in drunken rages. I watched my father come home drunk and beat my mother.

My Dad grew up on a farm in Indiana in the 1920's & 30's, son of an Irish coalminer and a full blood Indian mother. He grew up watching drunken abuse and probably feeling like an outcast because he was a “Halfbreed.”



Then I grew up to become a drunken abusive husband and father. I drank until I believed the only future for me was to drink myself to death. Some might say that I had grown up in the culture, that alcoholism and abuse have become the Native culture. I once heard a Native get very angry because several seemingly white people claimed their desire to learn Native culture. He went on to say that drunkenness and abuse was the culture where he had grown up.



I tell you these things for many reasons. First, is because of the need for alcoholics to bond through their common problem and through a common solution. The very basis of Alcoholics

Anonymous is one drunk talking to another- carrying the message of recovery through spiritual principles. Many AA's today preach that the only solution is working AA's Twelve Steps, yet the original members of AA never worked those steps. AA's original steps were numbered 6 and were borrowed from the Oxford groups.

When I crawled into that first AA meeting I read the Twelve Steps on the wall and thought they were the biggest joke I had ever seen. What I identified with was what those alcoholics shared about their drunken experiences. When they announced that they were going to stand, hold hands and say the Lord's Prayer I wanted to bolt from the room thinking, "they had just went on and on about how AA was a spiritual program, now they want me to pray a Christian prayer!!" I struggled with the rest of the "program." I stayed because I was so desperate to stop the insanity my drinking had become. When we joined hands and recited that prayer I felt a great Power pass through that circle.

Again out of desperation I worked those 12 steps as I felt they applied to me. I even got on my knees one night after a meeting and asked that Power greater than me to remove my desire to drink because I knew I could not fight the desire on my own. I listened to those people because I had no idea how not to drink. But I also had to have the freedom adapt the "program" in a way it made sense to me. Somehow every time I came to a major stumbling block someone would be placed in my life to drop those little clues on how to interpret AA principles to concepts I could understand.

After a couple of years of sobriety I was encouraged to become involved in the AA service structure and began studying AA history. I enjoyed this opportunity very much but became uncomfortable with the concept that only "elected" representatives could participate in meetings. It seemed to me if someone took the time and money to come then they should be recognized and be allowed to take part in the meeting. However, I stayed active in the AA service structure for many years because I had come to love Alcoholics Anonymous and the people it helped. There is no greater joy than to see someone's eyes light up with hope when they hear that certain something they need for their own sobriety journey.



At about 15 years sober I moved to a different area. I found myself floundering in an AA that was strange to me. The people were ignorant of AA's Traditions and how they applied to not only the group but to the individual. I began to feel isolated, unable to fit into AA or the local culture. During this time I stumbled upon the Native American Indian General Service Office website. Here I found what appeared to be violations of AA traditions. I started to talk via email to Don W, then general manager of NAIGSO. Don was very patient with me and spent a lot of time explaining NAIGSO and its purpose. Don pierced my spirit with his wonderful insight and experiences. He awoke a part of me that had been sleeping for a very long time. On the NAIGSO website I found an announcement about the Native American AA convention in Cherokee, NC. I began to attend the conventions and the sobriety campouts in Cherokee and was introduced to the sweat lodge and other native ceremonies. I came into contact with a couple tribal elders and became a part of their sweat lodge family. They guided me in a way that was often baffling and confusing but has led me to an understanding of who I am.



From the editor;

Please do not send us your personal photos in your articles unless you want them published online. **Your anonymity is your responsibility!** It causes technical problems revising the document once we send it online and the authors decide they do not want photos or other information printed. Thank you.—Jamie Terra Hawk, Ed.



My name is Tracy Spotted Eagle I am fullblood Canadian Blackfoot woman. I was adopted by American family when I was 15 months old. The couple lived in New Jersey. It was a White couple.

I remember I had my first sip of beer when I was about 7, my dad had a beer and I was drawn to it. My parents would keep wine in the refrigerator and I would take sips of it. That's my first recollection of alcohol. We moved to Dublin New Hampshire in the early 80s. I started my first year of high school. I got really drunk my first time when I was 13 years old. I just remember the feeling alcohol gave me and I really loved it. I got through high school with some occasional drinking.

My drinking really took of my first and only year at Plymouth College. That's when I started smoking pot too. I can say then that I did have fun but my grades were poor. The second semester I started blacking out from drinking.

I moved back home, bought a new car and was taking some classes at Keene State College. I did a lot of drinking and driving. I got four DWIs in a five year period. I'm so grateful I didn't kill myself or anyone else.

At this point in my drinking I was very depressed. I felt I had no direction in my life and I drowned my sorrows with alcohol. I was court ordered to go to rehab and try to turn things around. I started getting clean and sober and went back to school again at the Technical College. I eventually moved into the city of Manchester, where I still live today.

I continued to drink and was introduced to all kinds of drugs. I got married and had two boys. When my husband and I separated I moved back to Keene with my parents. I started to drink again. My sons were placed in foster care and I went down my spiral.

I moved alone back to the City and began drinking every day. I started getting arrested and going to jail a lot. I ended up living in the woods down by the railroad tracks.

My last drunk was August 9, 2015. I crawled out of the woods and ended up in the hospital for nine days severely dehydrated and a bacterial infection in my intestine. I moved into a woman's shelter after I got out of the hospital.

slowly started turning my life around. I went to meetings daily. I got a sponsor, I joined a home group and I stayed sober one day at a time. I moved out of the shelter and into a transitional housing program. My boyfriend was also getting sober at this time and we now share an apartment.



Now I have a good job. I got my driver's license back. and bought a car. My sons are now in contact with me. I have reconnected with my Blackfoot family in Canada. My mother June Spotted Eagle has been sober 4 years now. I also found I have 4 sisters and one brother who live on the Siksika reservation outside of Calgary, Alberta Canada.

I walk down this red road of and I am so grateful to be



recovery with my higher power alive.



## Deja' Vu?

By the time you get to steps 8 and 9 you might feel like you have been here before. Déjà vu?

No, this is not a coincidence. Step 8 states, “We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.” The feeling is real because you have visited this list before when you did your 4th step. And, by now, you might even have added more names to that 4th step list and may have done another “mini” fourth step on those additions you have remembered. Let’s not complicate things. Let’s just put those names on our 8<sup>th</sup> step list and consider making an amends to some of them, if not all of them. It’s a good way to start the process of “practicing these principles in all our affairs.”

Then in step 5, “We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.” Here we acknowledged what we had done to all those people on our 4<sup>th</sup> step list who are now on our 8<sup>th</sup> step list. So, in step 9, “Made direct amends to such people whenever possible except when to do so would injure them or others” we take the actual action to rectify these wrongs. Perhaps in step 5 we admitted to the very people we had harmed the exact nature of our wrongs, and now we are taking the action to correct those same wrongs.

Step 4 helps us feel a bit more comfortable with step 8 because half the work is done. And step 5 is a reflection of how we might go about taking action on the amends of step 9. Isn’t it great how the steps guide us gently to an end to the pain and misery we have caused others and ourselves? By now, our Creator must be pleased with the changes we have made in our lives and the reparations of the wreckage of our pasts. Truly we are blessed!—Ush`ka Waso’

## Carol's story.....by Carol F.



Just so you know I'm nervous about this... haha! I hope it makes sense. And thank you for this honor, it really means a lot to me! Ok, here goes;

Step 8 "Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all." When starting this step I was immediately reminded of my 4th step. The things I had done to people and the people I resented were very clear to me. I had looked into the situations with the people I resented and it was made very clear my part in those situations, I was

no longer the "victim", so making my list was fairly easy. More was revealed, I had a few people I had long forgotten. They were added to the list. I was not afraid to admit the harm I had done. I had taken the blame off people and I was not afraid to admit my wrongs and the harm I had done. So, I have made my list, ahh not so bad at all.

The second part of this step is "became willing". I didn't realize how unwilling I truly was to make certain amends to certain people. Some amends seemed easy and I was willing to do those. I knew some would be uncomfortable but I was willing to make those amends too. I was struggling with the amends I needed to make to the people I had retaliated against. I had already owned my part in the situations in which I resented, so why wasn't I willing? My disease justified my actions. I knew I needed help. I reached out to my sponsor and my higher power. I prayed for the willingness and for compassion for the people whom I resented. After all, they too were sick. I became willing through the practice of the spiritual principle of forgiveness.

I turned my focus on honesty, courage, willingness and compassion. I drew on my experience in the previous steps and I had been honest and courageous and willing. I was in the care of my higher power. I have accepted my part in everything I had done when harming people. I know some amends won't be received very well and some people may think I'm up to no good again. They may have a few choice words for me but I am no longer afraid. I became willing. I know that no matter how these encounters happen I'll be able to handle it with the help of my higher power.

I hope you like it because I spoke from the heart. Thank you again for giving me this opportunity! It really is an honor. Love you!! -- Love Carol F.



**Whew! That wasn't so hard!!**



### The Gift Of Recovery by: Sarahi A.

About a month and a half ago I was homeless. Living in a hotel with no money but the gift of recovery. No amount of materialistic objects could ever amount to the amazing things I have obtained as a result of being in the recovery process. I was homeless for about 4 weeks as a result of my own self will run riot. I had thought that I could have done a better job than the Spirit of the Universe. I wanted to do things faster, in my own time because in my world, things NEVER go the way I want them to. This is just another example of another alcoholic trying to take fate into their own hands.

That day I left, (I had left my long term treatment facility) I realized all the things that people had told me about leaving were true. You get sent back to a world full of hate and hostility and amidst of all of that, one has to put recovery above all else. If one is to fail, one is to die. The Big Book mentions this in a different light, "The insanity of alcohol returns, and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die." (pg. 66 BB) The allergy manifests itself in many different ways, spiritually, mentally, and physically. To me, being spiritually dead is the most detrimental of the manifestations. Here you begin to die slowly. I began my journey into the outer world spiritually broken. Self-will wasn't sufficient, my contact with the spirit of the universe was out of service. I had the phone in my hand and the scissors in the other to cut the power line off. In my own way it was my own form of self-sabotage since my only other form of destruction would lead to worse things.

If it weren't for my support system, the helping hand of other recovering alcoholics, service work, and the Spirit of the Universe, I would have gone back out. As much as treatment did help me, there came a point in my life where I needed my own direction, but I could have done it in a better manner that would not have put me at risk. I am living proof that after each and every day, if you just stay sober a day a time, and do the next right thing for the next right reason, things will work out. It is true that after all, I do not have to pick up that first one today, and I even had a great excuse to! But you see, it is not about what life throws at you, or in my case, what situation you want to take back next, it's about the action put into that, and in return where you would like to be. I was reminded that a drink would certainly not help me. This story just goes out to show that there is nothing more valuable in this world to an alcoholic, than the gift of recovery.





## Step Nine – Thoughts and Reflections

by Diane B.

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*“Make direct amends to such people whenever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.”*

Most people who are serious about their recovery are eager to make amends to those they harmed while in their addiction. We may carry much guilt, shame, and regret for our past behavior. We want to “clear away the wreckage of the past” by making our apologies. First and foremost, Step Nine should be done with the assistance and guidance of a trusted sponsor. Sheer enthusiasm to right our wrongs is not enough and can actually cause more harm than good (to both ourselves and others) if attempted too soon. There is a good reason that making our amends is the ninth Step!! We should always do our best to work the Steps in the prescribed order to get the maximum benefit from the Program.

We must always keep in mind the second half of Step Nine: “...except when to do so would injure them or others”. No matter how good our intentions, sometimes making direct amends may simply be too harmful. Perhaps the person is unaware of the harm we caused and telling them would cause significant pain. What if making direct amends could cost us a job or imprisonment?

That would bring obvious harm to ourselves as well as our families. Or maybe the amends process



might bring us into contact with undesirable environments from our past.

In situations such as these, we must always strive for a balance between “causing no harm” and “doing the most good” while keeping our recovery as the priority.

What are our options if we have decided (after discussion with our sponsor) that direct amends are not the best course? Our sponsor may suggest writing a letter or making a phone call. Perhaps we could make a donation to a favorite charity in lieu of making amends to an employer which could affect our job. We may have had a history of saying “I’m sorry” to our loved ones which became meaningless through repetition of bad behaviors. The very best apology in many cases is simply changed behavior.

Most of the time, however, a direct amends can and should be made. A heartfelt “I know I caused you pain and I am very sorry. I am doing my best to make sure I never make you feel that way again...” is usually the best way to make our amends.

We must also keep in mind that although we are, of course, seeking forgiveness while making amends -- we may not receive it. Sometimes too much damage has been done, people may still be angry with us, or they may no longer trust what we say. This should not deter us. Even though Step Nine can be daunting for this very reason, most will discover that a heavy burden has been lifted upon completion of this Step.





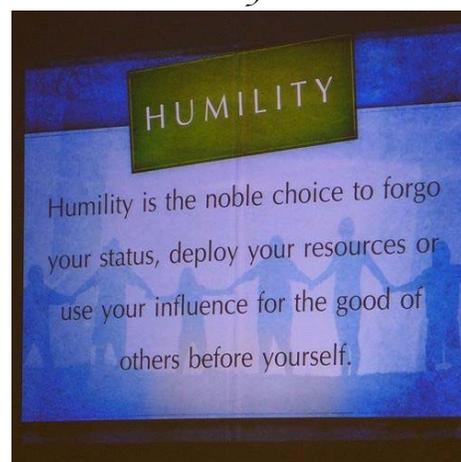
*"We cannot reap happiness while wallowing in the mire of immaturity, because immaturity fosters emotional chaos, self-degradation, and depravity."-- Moses Shongo--Seneca*

*"The only real freedom a human being can ever know is doing what you ought to do because you want to do it." (BB pg.552)*

*Truth is a relative term and interpreted differently by people around the world. But Indigenous People are usually on the same page when it comes to spiritual truths. Our elders, our medicine people, our prophets and our women follow a path of wisdom and knowledge which speaks to the hearts and souls of all humankind. These truths cannot be denied. But it is denial that prevents us from walking the Red Road every day. Between the Logs, a Wyandot, around 1812, asks a direct question, "Why would you devote yourselves, your women, and your children, to destruction?"*

*This question is relevant to all alcoholics and addicts. We have done great harm to our communities, our clans, our families, and to ourselves. The 12 & 12, step 7, page 76 states, "The chief activator of our defects has been selfcentered fear—primarily fear that we would lose something we already possessed or would fail to get something we demanded. Living upon a basis of unsatisfied demands, we were in a state of continual disturbance and frustration. Therefore, no peace was to be had unless we could find a means of reducing these demands."*

*The solution? On the same page it states, "The seventh step is where we make a change in our attitude which permits us, with humility as our guide, to move out from ourselves toward others and toward God." "If that degree of humility could enable us to find the grace by which such a deadly obsession could be banished, then there must be hope of the same result respecting any other problem we could possibly have."*





*This is the concept of respecting and loving one another. Alcohol and drugs devotes us to destruction. And, we Indians are no different than other races who struggle with addictions. But our daily reprieve from the ways of the material world, contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition, is realized, actuated, and implemented when we*

*hold to our old traditions, teachings, and wisdoms of our ancestors. The Lakota have a saying, "Wowienke he iyotam wowa sake." Or, "Truth is power."*

*Steps 7, 8, and 9 are all about finding peace through the admissions of our darkest truths. These are the things that set us free from the bondage of self. Following the Red Road requires that of us. And when we forego fear and replace it with humility as our guide, we will find a new freedom and a new peace...Ush`ka Waso`*

**Note from the Editor:** I wish to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to the many contributors to this edition. I hope this trend will continue. And now that you have written a bit of your experience, strength and hope, **I am certain there is much more to all of your stories...lol.** Please continue to share them with us and encourage others to read our/your newsletter and urge them to share their stories of recovery. I will be starting to format the Winter edition (steps 10, 11, & 12) as soon as this edition is put into publication. So send me your articles and events so I can lay them out. You have all faced your fears and now you reap strength and courage as a result. Ah`gatha he ga`hash de`sha! You have taken back possession of your power! Hot`ye nok`ta skge`no ha`gwa. May the Creator bless you all....Jamie T-H (Ush`ka Waso`)

