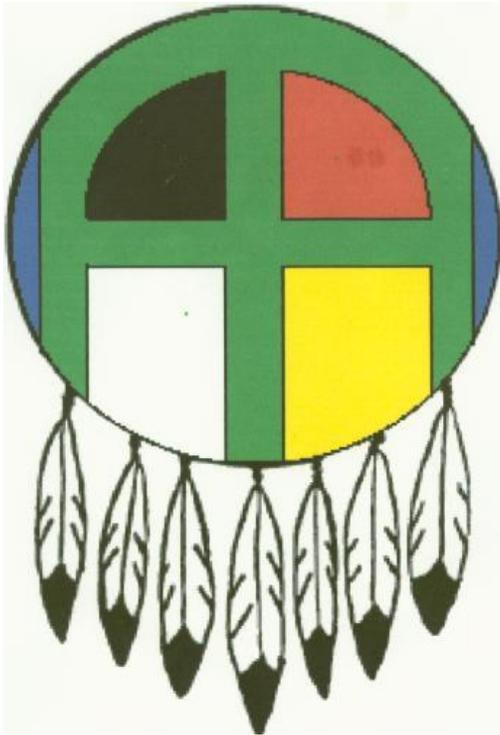




Four Directions Newsletter



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The Summer Solstice

The solstice marks the start of summer in the Northern Hemisphere, beginning this year on June 20th at approximately 6:39 a.m. (EDT). The word 'solstice' originates from the Latin words meaning "sun" and "to stop". During the summer solstice, the sun is positioned at its northernmost point, pausing to mark the longest day of the calendar year. For hundreds of years, Native Americans, particularly those of the plains cultures, have viewed the Summer Solstice as a call for celebration.

In present-day New Mexico, Fajada Butte, located in Chaco Canyon, is known to be home to a solar marking site that records solstices and equinoxes. According to tradition, Fajada Butte is considered sacred ground to many tribes across the western United States, representing a significant cultural center during the pre-Columbian era.

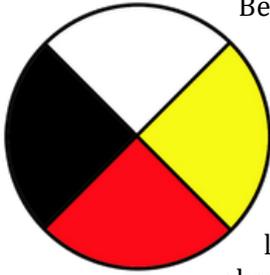
In 1904, the Sundance was outlawed by the U.S. government due to the perceived acts of self-torture. By 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed into law the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, granting Native Americans the right to freely perform traditional religious ceremonies. While the Sundance is still held today among some tribes, it is to a much lesser degree and geared mainly towards educating non-Native Americans on traditional tribal practices during the summer solstice.



My 36-stone Medicine Wheel and sweat lodge frame in Laguna, NM where I used to live.

The Medicine Wheel as a Symbol of Native American Psychology:

The original medicine wheels were stone artifacts built by the aboriginal peoples who lived in what is now the northwestern United States and southwestern Canada. They were first called "medicine wheels" in the 1800s. In Native American usage, medicine means anything that promotes harmony, and an illness is seen as disharmony within a person or between a person and his or her relations (Cohen, 2003). Medicine wheels took several forms, but most had a central stone cairn, one or more concentric stone circles, and several stone lines radiating outward from the center. The Ellis medicine wheel, built by the aboriginal Blackfoot Indians, was radiocarbon dated to about 1400 A. D. (Barnett, 2000). The central ring covered a burial lodge where skeletal remains were found. Many medicine wheels had small stone circles (tipi rings) in the area of the wheel (Barnett, 2000).



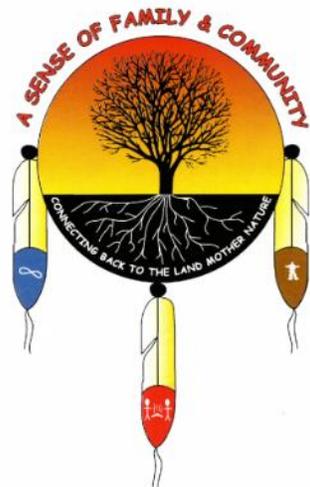
Because the aboriginal Indians left no written records, little is known about the original purpose or meaning of the medicine wheels. The most common speculation is that they were used to commemorate sacred places, but they probably had multiple uses and meant different things to various peoples over the centuries (Cohen, 2003). Some may have been used for ceremonies such as the Sun Dance. The Bighorn and Moose Mountain medicine wheels had 28 spokes, the number of days in a lunar month, leading to speculation that they may have been used as a calendar or solar observatory. In each wheel, two of the stone cairns are positioned so they line up with sunrise and sunset on the summer solstice. Similar alignments can be found in the stone rings at Stonehenge (Barnett, 2000) One of the prototypical medicine wheels remains within the Bighorn National Forest in Big Horn County, Wyoming. This 75-foot-diameter (23 m) wheel has 28 spokes, and is part of a vast set of old Native American sites that document **7,000 years of their history in that area.**

The Native American Medicine Wheel was used for various spiritual and ritual purposes, especially for healing almost any illness. **Since it was believed that illness sprang from spiritual imbalance, the focus of the healing was on treating the source of the problem, not the symptoms. As the medicine wheel focuses on balance of all things, it was thought this balance would help the spiritual in balance in the person who was sick.**

Medicine wheels were commonly used by North American natives such as the Ojibwa and prehistoric ancestors of the Assiniboine.



Below is my personal model which I use to teach addicts, alcoholics and persons with mental illnesses to find, or regain, balance and harmony in their lives. I incorporate into these Native philosophies the teachings of Jesus and 12-step recovery principles which serve to complement (and compliment) each other. This proves sufficient evidence to me of a Universal Spirit which touches the soul of all humankind in every corner of the world and has existed ever since the dawn of humankind....Ush`ka Waso'





The fourth month of the year reminds us to be strong and make “a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” April can be tumultuous and the weather uncertain so, while we eagerly anticipate the warm sunny days of summer, so we must also be cautious not to get ahead of ourselves too quickly. Isn’t this what a good alcoholic does? Isn’t this why so many of us procrastinate on writing out our fourth step? We want what we want, when we want it, how we want it, and we want it NOW! Ha! We don’t want to put up with the grey sides of our souls that have caused us so much pain, distress, humiliation, and shame any more than we desire to go into the torrential rains, winds, hail, or even snow, so common to the month of April. But it is at this intersection we must ask ourselves how well we did our 3rd step.

Remember the “3 frogs on a log” from the last newsletter? One frog “made a decision” to jump into the pond, but he took no action to actually doing just that. The 4th step is like that. The 4th step is where we actually do the work of turning our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand our own God. This is an example of faith in action that our Creator will give us the strength and courage to face the obstacles of our pasts that have burdened us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. So, as we step forth in faith and face our fears of the fourth step we must allay our concerns and remember that the “April showers will bring May flowers”. But unless we take this challenging 4th step, chances are that not many flowers will have the opportunity to bloom.



Step Five states “We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.”

Well, I don’t know about anyone else, but my concept of the Creator is incomprehensible, all-knowing, all-powerful, and mysterious. The God of my understanding already knows what I have done and what I haven’t done. So, I think it very foolish of me to think I can lie to, or fool, the Creator. It is an act of humility and sometimes humiliation that I own up to all my past misdeeds and behaviors and ask forgiveness of the Creator and quite bold of me to ask for just one more chance.

And what about admitting these things to myself? Just who am I kidding? Certainly not myself as I reflect on the nature of my wrongs. No, I knew exactly what I was doing when I picked up that first drink....and the motive behind it!



I was running away from life and all its rigors and drowning myself into obscurity so I would not have to face “the hideous Four Horsemen—Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, and Despair. Unhappy drinkers who read this will understand.” (P. 150 BB)



And if I submit to these lies then surely my spirit will not be moved toward recovery and I will be useless to God, to myself, and to all other human beings. No, my consciousness of conscience knew exactly what I was doing and, to my way of thinking, there is no such thing as fooling or deceiving myself. That is just another form of denial.

But now we come to the hard part, admitting the nature of our wrongs to another person. Yuck! Who wants another human being to know all the slimy, rotten, disrespectful, even obscene, events of our lives? No one, I think. So, what is required to overcome our pride and ego in admitting these things to someone else? Obviously, it requires humility, trust, and an earnest desire to stay more than sober. When we read “How it works” from chapter 5 of the Big Book, it states we must be “willing to go to any length to get it” and “be fearless and thorough from the very start”. It tells us we “have tried to hold onto our old ideas and the result was nil (nothing) until we let go absolutely”. (Pg. 58 BB)

So, step five is a very bold step where we actually put step three into real action and trust the Creator of our understanding to guide us and lead us into this fear-filled venture of exposing our darkest nooks and willing to become vulnerable and humble.





To Thine Own Self Be True

By Sarahi A.

Part of being human comes with baggage. When I was born into this realm, the Spirit of the Universe did not write my story to be one of tragedy. The Spirit of the Universe knew what my purpose was, and thus It instilled in me a mission. It spoke to me and told me to be true to myself in all aspects of my mortal living. Along the way I would experience the common troubles of any person living. Of course alcoholism has been my biggest.... let's say contribution to humanity, at the time. As a result of having an incurable allergy, I came into this program. So, I began with the steps and one of my biggest fears came true, the start of step 4. In step 4, with reluctance I had to break through my walls so I could see myself for who I really am. As I started writing I began to see the ugly side of me. Of course, I had lived in it for so long, I knew it was there, I just chose to not acknowledge it and keep rampaging through my life, pretending to be oblivious to my faults.

Although I saw my side, I couldn't help but notice that I took my power back from the things that haunted me. I saw the beauty inside of me that I also knew, was inside me all along. It was one of the first times that I finally looked in the mirror. The 12 and 12, talks about finding out where our major insecurities have corrupted us. (pg. 43) "We want to find exactly how, when, and where our mental desires have warped us. We wish to look squarely at the unhappiness this has caused others and ourselves." Although I had unleashed a total of 16 years worth of unhappy things, I only started to heal when I was ready for the truth. It fostered a place in my spirit, an adverse serenity that cannot be found anywhere else. So, as I wrote through fear, resentment, and ego, I found the faith and courage that others and the book talked about.

That grandiose faith; I became one with it! Before this time, feelings of inadequacy followed. I knew nothing about faith. It was just a fancy word that I saw posted up or embroidered in a pillow at someone's house or at a painting in IKEA. I began to see that, as a human, I am entitled to make mistakes. In the 12 and 12, there is a line that was necessary for my living. "No human, however good, is exempt from these troubles." pg.42.





I developed a pioneering example of responsibility for who I had been before this. I could admit that in my relationships, I was the sick one. Although not everything was my part, I exercised the fearlessness of this step. I took refuge in the fact that this meant that I could change who I was at the time and that I was no longer at the mercy of my alcoholism. So, I saw who I am and who I am willing to be. I opened the doors to my soul so the Spirit of the Universe and others can see the light that shines through me. I

shared the burdens that held me back for so long. All the things that I chose to carry for so long, it didn't matter how heavy, they disappeared. It was then that time and the Spirit of the Universe whispered in my ear to let go, let go completely. I had gotten the courage to stop being someone else and got to know me, the real me....Sarahi A.



Step Six begins in the 12 & 12 telling us that anyone “who has enough willingness and honesty to try repeatedly step six on all our faults—without any reservations whatever--...is entitled to be called a person who is sincerely trying to grow in the image and likeness of their own Creator.” (12 & 12, Pg. 63) That is indeed a very tall order! But yet, it is not impossible. It tells us that pouring so much alcohol into our systems destroys our lives. It is in fact a slow method of suicide, which is atrocious to most gods of our understandings, no matter the race, culture, or nationality. This step has been debated in many an AA forum, with many excuses, rationalizations, and justifications. It is plain that God will forgive us our trespasses, but must also demand an answer as to what we are willing to do in exchange. God does have expectations of Its creation and will not provide relief of our character defects without doing something for ourselves.

We must be “entirely ready” to do the best that we can and stop the excuses of why we don't give up this, or that, defect of character. The Seven Deadly Sins will plague every one of us at some time in our lives, and Pride from acknowledging what we really heads the way and prevents us need to do.





For us Native Americans we must get out of denial and recognize we have a long road to the Red Road. We have victimized ourselves and blame everyone else for our drunkenness and engage in self-righteous anger. In fact, we have actually lost the power over alcohol and have become its willing slave. We declare pitifully that we have a genetic anomaly that causes us to drink or get drunk. We declare we can't quit. But isn't it really because we like to cry in our beer and make desperate self-justifications and rationalizations which enable our minds to believe we can go on drinking. We have become helpless, hopeless, and hapless; these are the three H's of mental illness.

The 6th step says, "...it seems plain that few of us can quickly or easily become ready to aim for spiritual and moral perfection; we want to settle for only as much perfection as will get us by in life....So the difference between the "boys and the men" is *the difference between **striving** for a self-determined objective and for the perfect objective which is of God.*" (12 & 12, pg. 68) We are extreme examples of self-will run riot and have no intention of seeking the objectives of God. And we rationalize that no one is perfect, which is true. But the difference is the word, **striving**. That simply means that we acknowledge we will never reach perfection but we are not going to stop trying to reach a higher calling. This step also teaches us that we can use the principle of this program in other avenues of our lives. The question is always "Are we ready?" When I became ready, I got dry first. But that wasn't enough so I kept trying to do better. After these many years of staying sober I still find areas in my life that need improvement. I don't wait until tomorrow. I immediately ask my Creator **what I must do** to attain a higher plane of consciousness and conscience. I am never satisfied with my recovery and always seek new avenues of learning and teaching. "It is suggested that we ought to become entirely ready to aim for perfection. We note that some delay, however, might be pardoned. That word in the mind of a rationalizing alcoholic, could certainly be given a long-term meaning. He could say, "How very easy! Sure, I'll head toward perfection, but I'm certainly not going to hurry any. Maybe I can postpone dealing with my problems indefinitely."at the very least, we shall have to come to grips with some of our worst character defects and take action toward their removal as quickly as we can."

The moment we say, "No, Never!" our minds close against the grace of God. Delay is dangerous, and rebellion may be fatal. ***This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives, and move toward God's will for us.***" (12 & 12, Pg. 69)

No, none of us will ever reach perfection. But don't you get tired of those dry drunks who have been coming to meetings for 20 to 30 years and continue to be arrogant, egotistical, uncaring, hateful, war mongers and whore mongers? "But for the grace of God, there go I." These sad sack AA-ers serve a purpose too. They remind me of how miserable, lonely, and angry I used to be, and how, through the practical application of these principles I am today happy, joyous, and very, very free....and you can be



too!....Ush`ka Wa`so



O`ga`seh! All my relatives, I have been editing this newsletter three quarters of the year now. When I first agreed to do this newsletter I thought I would have many other First Nations people sharing their stories of recovery. To my disappointment I have only had three other contributors these past nine months. Most of the material is my own and it requires a lot of hours to lay out the graphics and publish it in a format that I hoped would be attractive and bring more readers and participation in writing articles.

It appears there is not much interest in this publication and I am very sad for that. I know we have a lot of problems in Indian country with alcohol and drugs, and more recently the desecration of our sacred sites by some of our own people who sell the bones of our ancestors for money for drugs and alcohol. This is the nature of a disease called addiction. It robs people of their free will and enslaves them to its destructive force and which is guided by the great and evil spirit, Ha`nisee`ono. We must save ourselves. No one else can do it.

I am dedicated to recovery principles and the traditions of our people. But if there is no interest in this cause then I waste my time. I will publish one more newsletter for the fall equinox and hope more of you will support our cause by sending articles of recovery, personal stories, struggles, and victories. If I receive no more responses, then the fall newsletter which will focus on steps 7, 8, and 9 will be my last edition. I started last winter with steps 10, 11, and 12 and will ensure the four editions have covered all of the 12 steps.

May you all find peace, joy, harmony, and love in a world which is ever more being dominated by hate, prejudice, injustice and war. It is up to us to carry the message of our prophets and medicine people....Peace...Jamie Terra Hawk (Ush`ka Wa`so)