



Wellbriety!

White Bison's Online Magazine

Volume 3, Number 6

Wellbriety for Prisons Support for Reducing Recidivism



**MW12 Steps in
the prisons**



**MW12 Steps in
halfway houses and
pre-release centers**



**MW12 Steps in home
communities**

Wellbriety Movement



Wellbriety for Prisons

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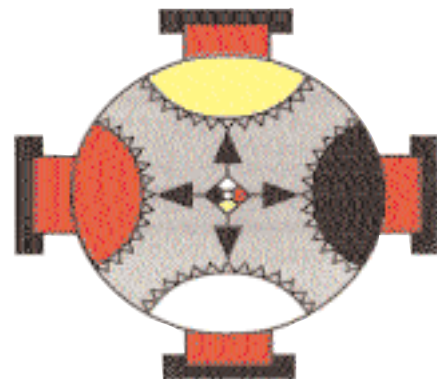
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The Medicine Wheel and the 12 Steps teams up with understanding about the criminal mind to create a program for Native American inmates. This program can take place in prison, in halfway houses and pre release centers, and in home communities either in cities or on Reservations. The idea is to offer a Circle of Recovery to those who are inside or have been inside the Iron House. The Wellbriety for Prisons four-day training session is for:

- Correctional and community counselors
- Social workers
- Halfway House and pre-release center personnel
- Community workers
- Teachers
- Members of the clergy
- Individuals in Recovery
- Native American Counselors
- Traditional practitioners (Medicine people and Elders)
- Probation and Parole officers

White Bison and Blaine Wood, Cherokee, are preparing to offer a series of four training sessions throughout 2003 in Boise, Idaho.

Read the article in this issue of Wellbriety! Online Magazine to see how it all fits together.



Visit White Bison, Inc. Online at <http://www.whitebison.org>



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Wellbriety For Prisons

A Way to bring incarceration numbers down

Why is recidivism so high for Native people who've been to prison? What do people need to make prison a *one-time-only* experience or a *not-at-all* experience? White Bison's Wellbriety for Prison's Program has some of the answers.

A New Program to Deal with Incarceration

The correlation between alcohol abuse and prison time for Native Americans is almost 100%. A good start on sobriety can take place in prison because abstinence from alcohol is close to 100% on the inside. But what happens when someone gets out and heads back to the community or Reservation where he or she came from?

"People can find health in prison," says Blaine Wood, Cherokee, the man who heads up Wellbriety for Prisons for White Bison. *"But when they get out, if they choose not to go to AA they find themselves lost,"* he adds. *"When people parole back to a Reservation or community situation they are often paroling back to a problem that got them put in prison to begin with. The whole idea is to get tribal leaders and the sober people on the Reservations and in Native communities behind a program to create this help right at home."*



Blaine Wood, Facilitator of the Wellbriety for Prisons Program

People can find health in prison, but when they get out, if they choose not to go to AA they find themselves lost.

Wellbriety for Prisons uses the **Medicine Wheel and the 12 Steps** program as its core learning approach, but it also adds knowledge on the criminal mind into the mix so that the needs of former inmates can be addressed.

The Medicine Wheel and 12 Steps Program is culture-friendly 12 Step work conveyed by a set of videos and a workbook as well as teaching by a facilitator. It is also taught by the new book ***The Red Road to Wellbriety: In the Native American Way*** which was introduced in September of 2002. Where conventional 12 Step work is strong on words and a mainstream cultural orientation, the Medicine Wheel and the 12 Steps Way draws on visual learning (pictures) and kinesthetic learning (movement and hands-on activities) to balance the words with emotional, cultural, and ceremonial experiences. It also uses a strong

The aim of the Wellbriety for Prisons Program is to provide a series of intensive four-day training sessions covering all 12 Steps so that the participants can take the program back to the prisons or communities they work in.

The first Wellbriety For Prisons specialized Firestarters Program is scheduled for Boise, Idaho from January 23-26 of 2003. Other dates for sessions in Boise during 2003 are April 17-20, July-17-20, and October 16-19.

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cognitive teaching style that helps people work with the very thinking process that got them in trouble to start with. These special features, not found in conventional AA, make this approach work for Native people.

The aim of the Wellbriety for Prisons Program is to provide a series of intensive four-day training sessions covering all 12 Steps so that the participants can take the program back to the prisons or communities they work in. The program is for people who work in prisons, either as staff or volunteers, workers in probation or parole departments, pre release centers, or in halfway houses and treatment centers serving Native people.

Another important part of Wellbriety for prisons is the connected follow-up trainees can draw on after the four-day session is over. **Connected follow up** means that those who attended the program can come to follow-up workshops or communicate with the facilitators about their special needs for up to four years after their training. If they can organize a training in their own home communities or prison institutions it may also be possible to do a customized training right onsite. Connected follow-up also means participating in the **online talking circles** that are now taking place on the White Bison website.

The first Wellbriety For Prisons specialized Firestarters Program is scheduled for Boise, Idaho from January 23-26 of 2003. Other dates for sessions in Boise during 2003 are April 17-20, July 17-20, and October 16-19. Contact White Bison to sign up for the January session now.

Combining Three Powerful Ways

Wellbriety for Prisons combines the well-known 12 Step approach with cognitive change learning, and knowledge of the criminal mind. What does all this mean?

The 12 Step approach of AA has been around in the mainstream world since the 1930's. Many Native Americans have sobered up and gone on to live sober lives after entering its doors. The Medicine Wheel and the 12 Steps Way brings the 12 Steps into a circle and connects a great principle of living with each step. These 12 Principles point the way to working



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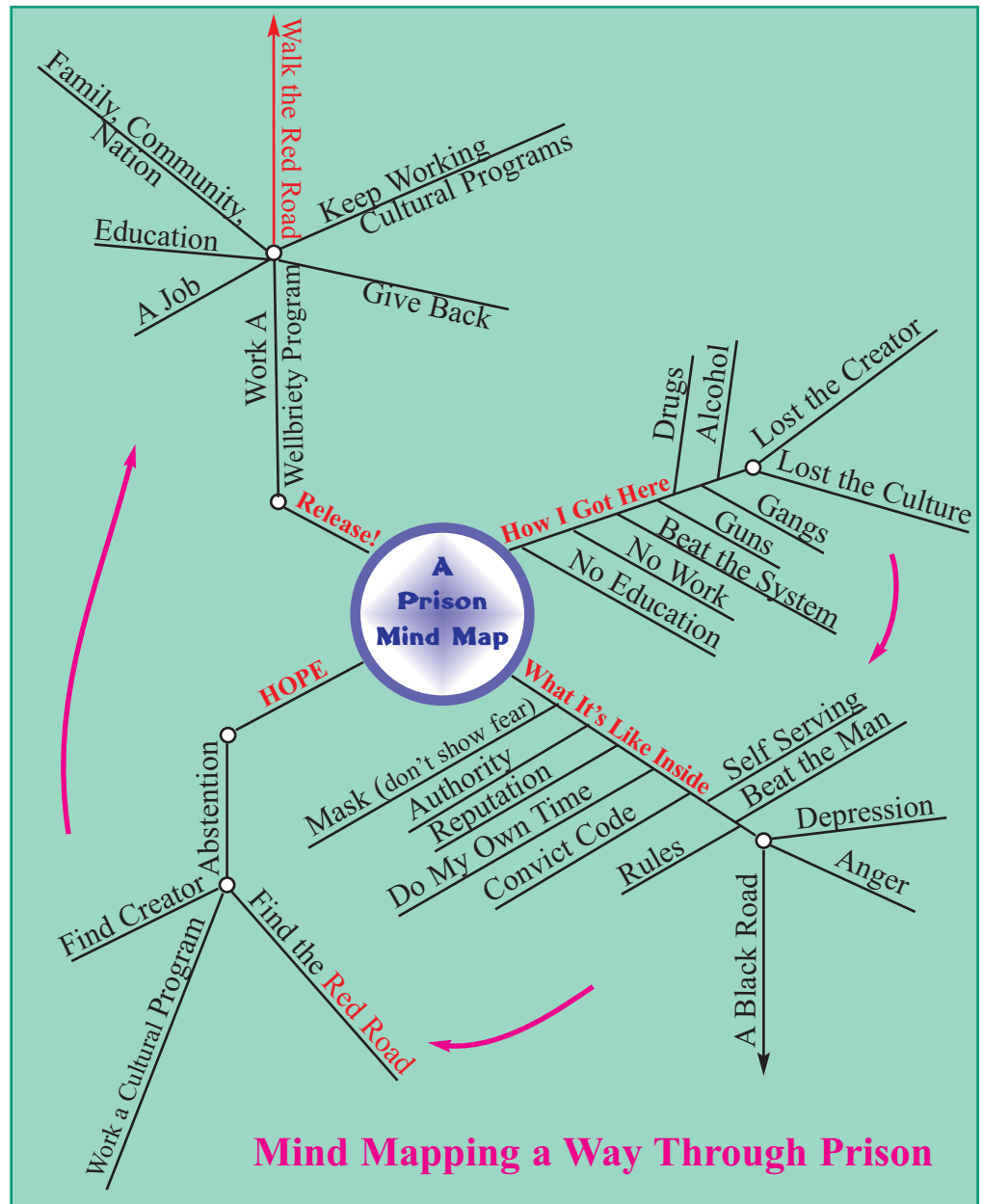
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the conventional 12 Steps in a cultural manner. Please see the Medicine Wheel and the 12 Steps drawing.

When the 12 Steps are combined with a cultural approach, each person's own tribal traditions can be used as he or she works the Steps. So, for example, the Steps can be taken in a traditional Sweat Lodge with a traditional elder or a sobriety and wellness mentor as a person's sponsor. Each time an individual or a group of people comes into a Circle to work Steps, the process can begin with a smudge of sage, cedar, sweetgrass or other local herbs. The sobriety Sweat Lodge and brushing down with an Eagle's wing is one example of kinesthetic learning. When we feel the eagle take our blockages and resistance away, and when we see and smell the smoke releasing our harm up towards the Great Spirit, then we can get down to the business of taking a look at ourselves much more easily.

Understanding the thought process is also a contribution of the Medicine Wheel and the 12 Steps found in the Wellbriety for Prisons Program. One way of doing this is through the use of mind maps. A mind map is a picture of what is

going on with our thoughts and feelings. Getting our heart and mind out on paper in a visual way helps us not to be stuck in words and concepts. A mind map brings life to words and concepts so that we feel what we are talking about. Please see the Prison Mind Map drawing.



Mind Mapping a Way Through Prison

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Wellbriety for Prisons combines the well-known 12 Step approach with cognitive change learning, and knowledge of the criminal mind.

Another part of the cognitive self change approach contained right within the Medicine Wheel and the 12 Steps Program is understanding self talk. Self-talk is that conversation which we are having with ourselves right at this moment. But do we really know what we are saying to ourselves? We can learn to pay attention to how we are talking to ourselves and to not fall prey to our own negative self-talk. We can then replace negative self-talk with positive, helpful self-talk. Negative self talk is like a predator who is stalking us and waiting for our own negative instructions to ourselves to become harmful behavior. It's just a matter of time. These voices are also called "super ego voices" because they are designed to protect our own egotism and keep it going. The cognitive self change component of the Prisons program shows how to replace harmful self talk with healing self talk.

How it works

Blaine Wood talks about the cognitive learning experience in the Prisons program. He says, *"If you have the right facilitator it's very exciting to start discovering stuff that you really didn't know about yourself. Depending on how it is delivered, I think cognitive self change can be very helpful. If its delivered with pictures and kinesthetic learning then I can change. If I help you see a problem with you two things could happen. You could develop a resentment of me, or you could get excited. The automatic thing that will happen is the motivation to want to change it. And that comes from God."*

Understanding the criminal mind is a part of

the Prisons program that has great potential for helping people break the logjams that often come up in ordinary 12 Step programs. Most 12 Step work doesn't include knowledge about how our beliefs, attitudes, and mindsets make it difficult for us to take a look at ourselves.

"When you go into a prison there are mindsets, beliefs and attitudes towards treatment, treatment providers, and staff," explains Wood. "The 12 Steps are about reducing and removing resentment. In the criminal mind a set pattern that is not worked on makes it harder, and sometimes even impossible to remove a resentment. You can write that 4th Step inventory all you want, but if you don't discover that you have a belief, mindset and attitude, you won't understand why you are trying to remove a resentment. And so it won't happen," he says.

When we feel the eagle take our blockages and resistance away, and when we see and smell the smoke releasing our harm up towards the Great Spirit, then we can get down to the business of taking a look at ourselves much more easily.

An example of this is the belief or mindset that "All cops are out to get me." It comes from years of being in trouble. It's been proven over and over again that this belief is true, because when I got in trouble they *did* get me. So what happens?

An attitude toward authority figures of all kinds develops. Every time there is a person of authority talking to me I stop listening. I dismiss any merit they might have for me to help myself. I place a treatment provider, or even a person from my own Reservation or community who came into the prison with a visi-

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Change is permanent and lasting if we start at the generation level. We are the generation to change the next generation. We have to do it. At the generation level we can stop alcoholism, drug addiction, and crime.

tors pass to offer assistance, into that same category. Why? Because I have never examined my own attitude towards authority. I can't get help because I have a thinking error that I never looked at.

The Wellbriety for Prisons Program offers learning experiences in the culturally-based 12 Steps, cognitive self change tools, and knowledge of the criminal mind.

Healing the Generations

The Wellbriety for prisons program is part of a series of programs offered by White Bison in order to make the Healing Forest come alive with new, healthy roots in Native American communities. What's a Healing Forest? Suppose there is a forest with sick trees. Those trees might find wellness on a one-by-one basis by leaving the forest and getting help. But what happens when they return to the sick forest? They get sick once again.

In order to heal the forests, which are our neighborhoods, communities and Reservations, there must be help in place right at home. The help that serves the entire community is contained in these programs:

- 1 Medicine Wheel and the 12 Steps for men
- 2 Medicine Wheel and the 12 Steps for women
- 3 Daughters of Tradition
- 4 Sons of Tradition
- 5 Firestarters Family Series
- 6 Firestarters for friends and family
- 7 Children of Alcoholics

It is up to grassroots people right out in the neighborhoods, communities and on Reservations to reach out and bring one or more of these healing activities into their own "forests." Contact White Bison to learn more about the Healing Forest Model for Community Wellbriety.

Blaine Wood is looking forward to the first-ever training session of the Wellbriety for Prisons Program to take place in Boise, on January 23-26 of 2003. What takes place in Boise will provide something for Native Americans who leave prison and don't want to go back. It's also a step to keeping the youth out of prison. How?

"Do you know who these kids are listening to? Ex convicts?" says Wood. "They are listening to ex convicts because their first picture is often 'I could be somebody if I go to jail.' If they envy someone who's been there, and that person's message is, 'You don't want to go there, I screwed up, and this is how you not end up there,' then real positive change can take place."

"Change is permanent and lasting if we start at the generation level," he continues. "We are the generation to change the next generation. We have to do it. At the generation level we can stop alcoholism, drug addiction, and crime. But we have to be the change agent. In other words, we have to do the changing so the next generation can see it. We can't just tell them not to smoke cigarettes, not to smoke pot or drink liquor. We have to not do it."

Contact White Bison to get more information on the Wellbriety for Prisons program and sign up for the January Boise Training or the ones after that. Be the change you want to see in your community. ✦

Richard Simonelli