



# Wellbriety!

*White Bison's Online Magazine*

Volume 4, Number 10

## **Tonawanda Nation Seneca Indian Community**



Warren Skye, Sr. (right) blessed the Sacred Hoop with an opening prayer at the boundary of the Tonawanda Seneca land. Foreground, Jamie Jacobs (in vest). Pictured with the Hoop are community members as well as participants in the local GCASA alcohol and drug prevention after school programs.



Published by White Bison, Inc.  
Colorado Springs, CO



## White Bison Speaks

# Tonawanda Seneca Visit

**T**he Hoop Journey visit to "Buffalo, NY" on May 8 turned into a visit to three separate locations. One of these is the Tonawanda Indian Nation, located about 30 miles northeast of Buffalo. The Tonawanda Seneca Indian Community Center was not a scheduled site on the Fourth Journey of the Sacred Hoop but we're here today because of a letter from Deanna Homer. Deanna has been working as a prevention worker for an alcohol and drug agency named GCASA. As part of this work, for three years she led an after school program with Seneca children ages 5 years through 15 years. Prior to our arrival on the land of the Tonawanda Seneca People, we heard from Deanna that the Daughters of Tradition Program was being utilized in the after school program. She said, *"The boys keep asking for a program for themselves and I am waiting for the completion of the Sons of Tradition program."*

The letter was so compelling that of course we had to find time to bring the Sacred Hoop to the people, the community, and especially to the children that Deanna's letter so lovingly spoke about. It's people like Deanna and her co-coordinators Jean Taradena and Nancy Potter, working at the grass-roots, who are the ones effecting change in their communities—one child, one person at a time.

There was a strong wind and rain the night before

we were to meet with community members at the boundary line of their land. By day break the sky had cleared and the Sacred Hoop was taken out and smudged as part of the preparation for a Walk toward the Community Center of this Nation. Warren Skye, Sr. arrived to

say a prayer for his people in his Native tongue. Deanna, Jean, and Nancy arrived with several children and community members.

A few men came out to serve as escorts and to ensure the safety of the 25 people who were participating in the Blessing Ceremony and the Walk. Thank you to the Warriors who came out to protect and serve the children of your community. You are an inspiration. We need more role models like you!



*(Left to right) Deanna Homer, Jean Taradena and Nancy Potter shown in front of the Tonawanda Indian Community Center.*

When we arrived at the Community Center there was a large awning set up on the lawn. Plenty of fresh water was made available by the organizers with the assistance and support of business-

es and community members. There were 30 community members already at the center awaiting the arrival of the Sacred Hoop and the people who had walked with it. They were seated in chairs underneath the tent and overflowing out onto the lawn

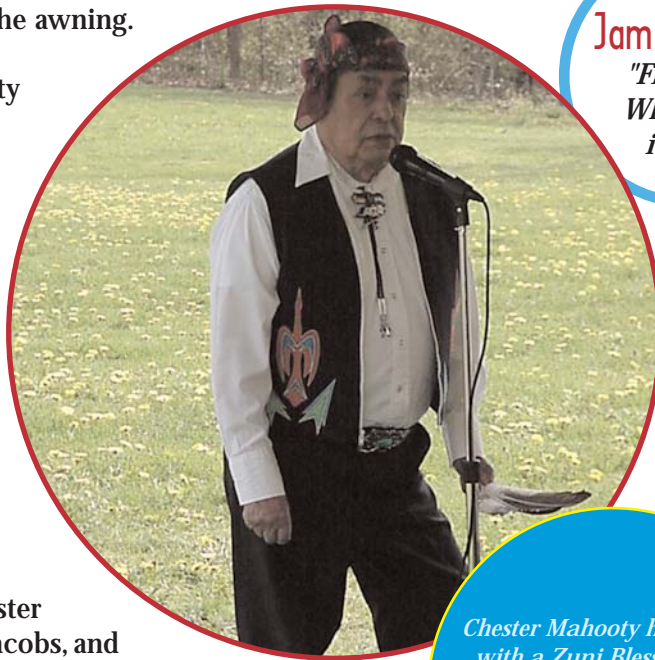
# White Bison Speaks

## Tonawanda Seneca Visit

that surrounded the awning.

Chester Mahooty greeted the Community Members and the Walkers. He offered the Blessing of a Zuni Prayer Song for the Sacred Hoop and for all of us at the gathering. After the opening prayers we heard good words from Warren Skye Sr., Ester Sundown, Jamie Jacobs, and Valerie Staats, coordinator of the Buffalo, NY visit. Thank you for sharing from your hearts. Vette Middleton, Hoop Journey documenter, shared with those present about the Four Gifts of the Sacred Hoop and the history of the three previous Journeys, as well as the programs and resources of White Bison. Nancy Potter created a presentation of White Bison materials used in her work and did a wonderful job describing the purpose of the White Bison organization to all.

Teenager Jamie Jacobs (please see the cover photo) expressed the Hoop Journey theme of Healing Native Men and Children with heartfelt words before the open mic during our visit. Jamie spoke words that touched our hearts and reminded us of what the Ancestors said about "young people with old spirits."



### Jamie Jacobs

*"First of all, I want to thank my family. When I was little my family taught what it meant to be a real human being. They taught me respect. And love. So out of respect for them, I listened to every word they told me. I knew the strength I would need to grow up and be somebody, to be a human being, came from them. When I was little, I dreamed about something like this because this world is made up of a lot more than what we see.*

*Chester Mahooty honored us with a Zuni Blessing Song when the Sacred Hoop arrived. And again he sang a beautiful song during our closing ceremony. Beautiful!*

*We're all children from the same Creator. I was always friends with, and loved everybody no matter who they were or where they came from because we all come from the same place. My friends are my family. Everyone is my family. So I treated everyone with respect, as if they were my brother or my sister, or my cousin, or any relative. I always made sure that they were happy."*

*"There are a lot of things in this world that put problems in our face so I did everything I could to turn that around. I tried to make my family proud. I just wanted them to know that that's who I was. There is no 'just myself'. Whenever I pray or talk about people I never mention just myself. Because there is not just 'me' in this world—there's everybody. And that's another lesson my family taught me. So no matter where I go, I look at everyone as being a relative in some way. It doesn't matter to me whether they're different. To me, they're not. I hold my head high to let everyone know that I'm their friend. Being this way, I find that no matter where I go that is the way people treat me."*

## White Bison Speaks

# Tonawanda Seneca Visit

*"I thank everyone who has given me the chance to be their friend and for teaching me. For teaching me that there's a lot more to life than feeling bad or our troubles. I'd like to thank my family, my Grandmother, and all of you here because all of you are my friends and my family. I'd like to thank Creator for all of you. I hope that the gift of UNITY will heal everyone in this world. I'd like to thank Creator for giving me a chance and believing in me."*

YES!

Tonawanda, you are richly blessed and we were honored to bring the Sacred Hoop to your community. We, too, are very proud of Jamie and all of the

other Young People with Old Spirits!

Our time with the Tonawanda Seneca People was brief, but with great impact on the White Bison Hoop Journey Crew as well as the community members who were present. We were very honored to spend this time with you today. Thank you for welcoming us into your hearts and into to your community in such a good way. It is wonderful to hear about the Firestarter Circle, the Daughters of Tradition program, and the desire for Sons of Tradition and other resources. We'll stay in touch! ✚

*Vette Middleton  
Richard Simonelli*