



Wellbriety!

White Bison's Online Magazine

Volume 4, Number 11



The Allegany Indian Community of the Seneca Nation

May 7, 2003



(Left to right) Franky Brown, Nick Chamas, Jacob Dowdy, and Ryan Abrams with the Hoop at the Faithkeepers School. A word in the Seneca language on the Wellbriety 2003 Tee shirts means "contented" or having a Good Mind. The tree is the Tree of Peace




Published by White Bison, Inc.
Colorado Springs, CO



White Bison Speaks

Honoring Handsome Lake in Allegany

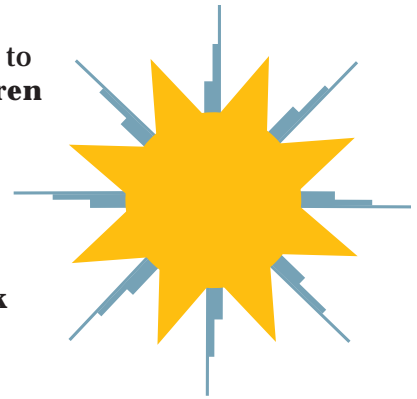


About one-hundred people gathered at the Faithkeepers School, waiting patiently for the arrival of the Sacred Hoop. We were welcomed to the Allegany Indian Community of the Seneca Nation in western New York state with warm smiles. How surprised we were to see both children and adults dressed in Wellbriety 2003 Tee shirts!!! Community member Clayton Logan gave an opening prayer and smudged the Hoop Carriers as we came in. It was the beginning of a wonderful day!

Other children carried a community banner on the walk to the Community Building. Many community members also walked with the Sacred Hoop and the Children. All who held out their hands indicating their desire to be smudged or blessed with the cleansing smoke of the Medicine were taken care of by Clayton Logan in a good way. There was no mistaking the community spirit for this morning's walk to the Seneca Allegany Community Building over two miles away. There were police escorts, an ambulance with flashing lights, and an officer utilizing a 4-Wheeler to ensure the safety of the children who were there to provide a traditional opening and blessing for the Sacred Hoop and the Wellbriety Movement. Those who didn't walk drove the two miles to the building. But many stopped along the roadside to take pictures, capturing the sight on film and in the memory of their hearts.

At the Community Center they were waiting, watching, listening for the drum beat. As the Walkers made their way around the last curve and came into sight, the people began clapping, trilling, just beaming with pride. The doors to the large auditorium were held open as the Walkers filed past, carrying the Sacred Hoop thru the waiting crowd and placing it on it's stand in the center of today's Gathering. By the time the Walkers arrived at the Community Building with the Sacred Hoop there were another 50--75 people waiting for them. All told there were about 175 people at this Wellbriety Gathering.

Arriving inside, we were greeted by a table full of purple WELLBRIETY 2003 Tee shirts, printed and given away by Human Services. The shirts were stacked up by sizes at the reception tables and were offered to everyone who walked and attended. VERY NICE, and thank you to Human Services: **Karen Isaman, Karla Button, Kathleen Kennedy, Barb Erick, Wenona Scott, Sue Wisniewski, Chuck Struble, and Emile Wilkinson.**



The Sacred Hoop is carried from the Faithkeepers School to the Seneca Allegany Community Building.

The Singers voices and the beat of the hand drums were crisp and clear; like the morning air. The sound echoed across the valley and around the bends in the road. You could "hear" them coming from a distance. And you could "feel" them coming even when you couldn't see them.



White Bison Speaks

Honoring Handsome Lake in Allegany



Maureen Redeye picks up her Wellbriety 2003 Tee Shirt during the Health Services Give-Away!

Richard F. Kettle, and Adrian Stevens, SNI Health Director, welcomed everyone to the community. Following the Welcoming, Don Coyhis gave a presentation on the Story of the Sacred Hoop and the Four Journeys that have taken place since the Wellbriety Movement began in 1999. This was followed by a showing of the video of Hoop Journey III. Then there was a potluck lunch served by the Cold Spring Longhouse. It was delicious and the fellowship was remarkable.

Honoring Handsome Lake

Our visit to the Seneca Allegany community today had a special purpose. White Bison's new Wellbriety book **The Red Road to Wellbriety--In the Native American Way** is dedicated to Handsome Lake, a Seneca who lived right in this community about the year 1800. Even in those days Handsome Lake struggled with alcohol. But through a great spiritual blessing he overcame it. **The Red Road to Wellbriety** book is dedicated to Handsome Lake—and what better place to dedicate the book than in his home

country and close to the Cold Spring Longhouse, the spiritual center of Handsome Lake's people.

Don Coyhis began the honoring talks about Handsome Lake with a few words about the book. *"The first 5,000 copies went in 120 days," he said. "We are honored that everyone who will read this book will know where it started and will know the one who originally started the Wellbriety Movement. The one who originally created the resistance to alcohol among our people was Handsome Lake, a Seneca man who worked to abolish alcoholism and to save his people."*

Don then introduced Ozzie Williamson of the Blackfoot Nation of Montana. Ozzie traveled a great distance from Billings, Montana to be at the dedication of the book to Handsome Lake. We consider Ozzie a Wellbriety Elder because he pointed the way to sobriety using AA and the 12 Steps, just as contained in the book. We thank him for his great inspiration and help in making the **Red Road to Wellbriety** book a reality.



Ozzie Williamson (with mic) talks about the dedication of the Red Road to Wellbriety book to Handsome Lake at the gathering in the Allegany Seneca Nation.

Honoring Handsome Lake in Allegany

After Don and Ozzie completed the formal dedication of the Book to Handsome Lake Clayton Logan was introduced and he began to speak. As he began, the room became quiet. He spoke slowly and deliberately about Handsome Lake.

Clayton Logan Honors Handsome Lake

"I've been honored to share with some of the words and teachings of Handsome Lake, that some of us around here follow as a way of life," he said. "Handsome Lake was involved with alcohol for a number of years and he was bed-ridden," Clayton went on. "He was unable to get about. Finally it came the day that he could rise and walk about again. Again he turned to alcohol. A lot of us don't learn. And it happened to him."

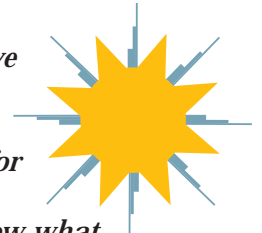
"Again he was bed ridden. Each night as he would turn in he would give thanks for the day and thru the smoke hole in his lodge he could see the universe—the movement—and he thought, 'There has to be someone greater and more powerful to be directing this movement'. So he began to repent his wrong-doings and he continued to follow this path day after day. And our Father, our Creator, had been watching him. And Creator told his Messengers to go down and see this individual that is repenting, this individual that wants to make a change within himself."

Clayton continued the story of how Handsome Lake was visited by three Messengers, just as the Traditional Handsome Lake Way of the Seneca country teaches. He told us that the complete telling of this story takes four days in the Longhouse. He told more of the Handsome Lake teachings. Then he said, *"I believe that this is the first time I have heard that another area of our people have acknowledged the teachings of Handsome Lake. It's quite an honor that the Sacred Hoop has come to our territory."*

Please Moms--Don't Drink Alcohol..

With Clayton's words and the awe and wonder of the teachings that were given to Handsome Lake by the Messengers still filling our thoughts, a small boy, Tyler Whitcomb and his Mother, Cindy Whitcomb, were introduced. The boy was much smaller than the podium. The microphone was removed from the stand and mom held it close as Tyler read his words from a letter he had composed for this event.

"Hi, I'm Tyler Whitcomb and I'm about to tell you about myself. I have F.A.S. FAS means Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and it is hard for me. Some of those things that are hard for me are math and social studies because I sometimes just do not know what



Clayton Logan at the podium.

150 people listened intently as he shared about Handsome Lake and the teachings he was given by the Messengers.

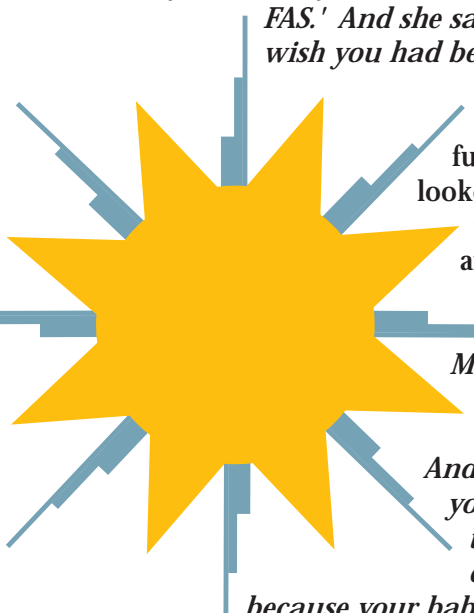
White Bison Speaks

Honoring Handsome Lake in Allegany

to do. I have to take a pill to calm myself down. If I don't take my pill I will just over-react and be unfocused"

"I like to draw pictures and play on my mattress. I have a special mattress in the living room that I can jump on and get out my extra energy. I wrestle with my dad on the mattress. It's fun to play on the mattress. School is a very fun thing this year because I can learn lots of stuff. My favorite thing to do at school is play outside. I like to play computer games a lot. I feel good when I play them. I like to study about ancient Rome and other ancient things. I like Knights a lot because they wear armor and they are really kewl."

"I like to read because there are a lot of mysteries to find out. My favorite animal is a jaguar because it goes over 40 miles an a hour. I like parrots and cats for pets. God helps me in many ways when I need help. He lets me know what is right and not right. I feel regular when I think about my FAS. I am the way I am and that is normal. FAS doesn't make me feel sad or mad. A long time ago I told my (adopted) Mom 'Mom.. I wish I was made in your tummy and then I wouldn't have FAS.' And she said 'I know Tyler. I wish you had been, too'."



Then this beautiful young child looked up from the paper he is reading and said to each and every one of us, "*Please Moms—don't drink alcohol when you're pregnant. And Dad's—please let your wives know that it isn't good to drink alcohol because your baby can get FAS*".



Tyler Whitcomb sitting with his baby sister. They were both adopted by the Whitcombs. Tyler has FAS and his little sister has Downs Syndrome. They are all gifts to one another. Tyler's message is simple and earnest: "Please Mom's, don't drink alcohol when you are pregnant."

We honor the Whitcomb family for this day of sharing.

A Special Day

There were many other events that afternoon and we, at White Bison, want to extend our appreciation to the Coordinators and to all of the volunteers and supporters who made this possible this day of Celebration of Wellbriety.

Dinner was a FEAST provided by the Coldspring Longhouse. Following the dinner there was social dancing at the Longhouse. We had to leave to prepare for the following day on the land of the Tuscarora. But even as we drove out of the parking area, we could still hear the shuffle of feet on the wood floors and the beckoning sound of the shakers and the singers. If I close my eyes I can still hear them. I'm sure this will be one of those days and one of those memories that can be recalled over and over.


*Vette Middleton
Richard Simonelli*


White Bison Speaks

Clayton Logan Honors Handsome Lake

Allegany Community Center

May 7, 2003

An edited transcript of Mr. Logan's remarks

 I've been honored to share with you, briefly—because to tell the whole story in a good way takes 4 days—some of the words and teachings of Handsome Lake, which some of us around here follow as a way of life. If only the words that he had spoken were heard by more people, the numbers who would begin to stay away from drinking would be amazing. When our shores were invaded by Europeans they wanted to change what they saw here on this land. Our lands became filled with missionaries who came to change our people. But a lot of the people didn't want to change. Sadly, a lot of our people follow the white man's ways. And I'm included.

I want to share with you the words that we listen to, the words that Handsome Lake shared among his people. He was involved with alcohol for a number of years and he was bed-ridden and unable to get about. Finally a day came that that he could rise and walk about again. But again he turned to alcohol. A lot of us don't learn. And it happened to him. So again he became bed ridden. Each night as he would turn-in he would give thanks for the day, and thru the smoke hole in his lodge he could see the universe and the movement in

the skies above him. So he thought, "There has to be someone greater and more powerful to be directing this movement." So he began to repent his wrongdoings and he continued to follow this path day after day. And our Father, our Creator, had been watching him. Creator told his Messengers to go down and see this individual who was repenting and wanted to make a change within himself.

Handsome Lake was visited by three Messengers who passed down to him the information that our Father—Creator—would like for him to absorb so he could in turn pass the word on to his relatives, to his people. And he did follow the directions the messengers gave him. A number of people began to follow him and made their promise that they would resist alcohol and begin the journey of a life not being involved with alcohol. There are some that maintained their sobriety and there are some that would get to a point and turn back to drinking. But even among those who returned to the alcohol, some of them would come back to the teachings at a later time and continue to stay away from alcohol.

I share these words with you this afternoon. It usually takes four days to listen to the words that Handsome Lake was provided by these Messengers. At one point on the various journeys that they had taken him, he was told that there are three of us that you see, but one of these times you are going to meet a fourth Messenger. There are four of us. So on one of the journeys that he was escorted thru he could see a figure in the far distance approaching. And as they met they passed each other briefly and they all stopped. And the one who had been approaching turned to Handsome Lake and said, "How many are following the words that you have shared with them?" And Handsome Lake told him, "Half listened and half did not." The individual told him, "You are fortunate that some listened and accepted the words that you shared with them from our Father." The individual also told him, "I was sent by our Father across the waters and I delivered the message that you are

White Bison Speaks

Clayton Logan Honors Handsome Lake

delivering. No one accepted it." Then he showed his hands. He raised his hands so that you could see the wrist and hand, and said, "This is what they did to me." He showed his hands and it was evident from the marks that were left where he was nailed.

As I mentioned when I began sharing, I will not tell all because I'm unable to, partly because all the information that Handsome Lake shared with our People is not within me. Another part is, as I mentioned, it takes four days to tell it in a good way as it should be told, in a respectful way.

I believe that this is the first time I have heard that another area of our people has acknowledged the teachings of Handsome Lake. It's quite an honor that the Sacred Hoop has come to our territory. And to

acknowledge how and when this all originated amongst our people. I have been honored to share with you. I only wish that there would be more support from the administration in our alcohol program than what there is to help our people. Too many times there is resistance to provide help to achieve wellness, which is the theme of this Sacred Hoop—Wellbriety. Today as I walked with the community and the Hoop my thoughts took me back to over 32 years ago, back to when I was still using. I remember stopping by to see a friend one day and I said to him, "I'd walk a mile for a drink—maybe a 6-pack." And he said, "Wait a while, I'll go with you." (laughter!) And as I was invited to take part in this event today I walked two miles—for a Tee shirt! And I thank you... (Applause) ✨

