



Wellbriety!

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Tuscarora Indian Nation Near Niagara Falls

May 8, 2003



Police escort for the Children, Parents, Community Members, and all those who joined us this day to celebrate Wellbriety and the Healing of Native Men and Children.



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White Bison Speaks

Walk in Beauty, Pray in Beauty, Dream in Beauty

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Thursday, May 8, began with a Sunrise Prayer Ceremony at Niagara Falls' Terrapin Point, just a few miles from the Tuscarora Indian Nation. Our Wellbriety Day at Tuscarora had begun. After a breakfast served by the 7-Clan AA group of the Tuscarora Nation, more than 75 people gathered at the Nation School about two miles from the 7-Clan Grounds. Throughout the day Jill Clause-Hamby the Site Coordinator, and Valerie Staats, Native American Program Coordinator of Freedom Way (Enkatatewenniiohake) for the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, along with numerous volunteers and supporters, served nourishment, guidance, and enthusiastic support for everyone who came to the event.

The children and the men who would lead the Ceremonial Walk from the Nation School to the meeting place of the 7 Clan were standing in front of the school awaiting the Sacred Hoop. Don Coyhis told the Story of the Hoop and the Four Gifts of the Hoop—Healing, Unity, Hope, and the Power to Forgive the Unforgivable. As Don offered the cleansing smoke from the Medicine plants to those who would make the long walk today, others prepared the Host Drum—the Fireside Drum from Canada—on the back of a trailer so that they could sing for the people as they walked. Drum Members for the Tuscarora event include **Roger LaFurme**, Keeper of the Drum, as well as **Sid Davis • Don McCauley • Bert Hill • Joe, Paul • and Barry Lickers**. There were also several women with hand drums with us at Tuscarora today. Together, these men and women reflected back to us the heartbeat of the mother earth.



Don Coyhis smudges the children who will participate in the Ceremonial Walk from Nation School to 7-Clan for today's event.

There was a police escort to ensure the safety of all those who were walking today. Leading with the Sacred Hoop were also many carrying Eagle Staffs. The Drumming and Singing continued during the entire Walk. When the Walkers and escorts arrived at 7-Clan, the men and children were welcomed back into the circle by the women.

These women were singing, drumming, and trilling as they welcomed the men and children back. Joining the women in this welcoming were another 75 people

who did not walk this day. So our numbers swelled to 150 for today's Wellbriety Day Gathering.



As we arrived at 7-Clan, everyone gathered to hear the "Ganonyok" - Thanksgiving Address from the Children.

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The Children led the Opening Ceremony with Ganonyok, the traditional Iroquois Thanksgiving Address. Here is a part of the Ganonyok, which was recited that morning:

"Whenever we are gathered, it is always good to remember all of our relations, to remember our place in creation. We do this by acknowledging and giving thanks to all the Creator's Creation. Beginning by humbling the self and by asking everyone's forgiveness and pity of all the imperfections that we may forget to acknowledge.

"We continue to raise our heads towards the heavens and we acknowledge Grandmother Moon, Grandfather Sun, and the stars. They continue to fulfill their duties and for this we are grateful. We acknowledge the Four Messengers. They brought the message of peace to all the world to tell us that we are to be peaceful people to live in a peaceful world. For them, we are grateful. And now we give thanks to the Creator for all of Creation, that we may walk in beauty, pray in beauty, and dream in beauty. We now bring our hearts and minds together to give thanks for this life that we've been given."

Following this Blessing and Opening Ceremony, the Sacred Hoop was taken into the lodge where the 7-Clan members and supporters had kept a Sacred Fire going for several days. The Hoop was set up inside that Lodge so that throughout the day people could go and have individual time with the Hoop and with one another. After everyone had an opportunity to have some water or other refreshments, we gathered under a large awning near the Lodge. Don Coyhis then shared about the Wellbriety Movement

and this Journey—**Healing Native Men and Children**. Afterwards, we viewed the documentary video of the Third Journey—**Healing Native Women and Children**. This was followed by an 'open mic' where many people shared their feelings.



Valerie Staats is presented with a replica of the Sacred Hoop by Jill Clause-Hamby on behalf of White Bison.

Many thanks for sharing. You spoke from your hearts. You're part of the

healing, and we were blessed to be here today are grateful to each of you: **Jay Claus • Jill Clause-Hamby • Sid Davis • Harry Jay Hill • Mark Porter • Jason E. Hamby • Jane Palmer-Poole • Brandi Garbinsky • Valerie Staats • Reggie Crouse • James Porter • Cheryl A. Harms • and Michelle Frys**

The 7-Clan was honored for their 27th year AA Anniversary. This group holds and facilitates Talking Circles for Children and for Adults, Sweat Lodge Ceremonies, and Culturally Relevant Teachings, including Drumming and Singing. Several People who spoke here today told us how much they had

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received from utilizing the White Bison **Medicine Wheel and 12 Steps** Program in their Recovery. A few were aware of the **Daughters of Tradition** Program and expressed great interest in the announcement of the soon to be released Sons of Tradition Program.

Prior to the Closing Ceremony, we all gathered out in the open grassy area and the Sacred Hoop was brought out of the Lodge and into the center of our Circle. Don Coyhis demonstrated the connectedness of individuals, families, communities, and nations with the yarn exercise. Once the connectedness had been visualized with the use of the yarn, the women and children were asked to come into the center of the circle and the role of the men in our families and communities was visibly demonstrated by the circle of protection they formed for the women and children of this community.

circle was collapsed in a good way so that each person had the opportunity to shake the hands of everyone else in the circle.

It was a good day. One of those days where you're tired, but it's a good kind of tired. We made many new friends. And were thrilled to have old friends join up with us as well. The White Bison "Hoop Crew" this year is made up of Don, Vette and Amanda. For Amanda and myself, it was an especially wonderful reunion with our friends from Tonawanda—Deanna Homer, Jeannie Taradena and Nancy Potter. They had somehow found the time to make it to all three events in the Buffalo area: Tonawanda, Allegany Seneca, and now here they were in Tuscarora. At the previous events these women had brought many children with them. Today they were on their own.

We found a few minutes during the day to go together into the Lodge and spend some time with



After an honoring and give-away by community members, we were all offered the opportunity to place some tobacco into the Sacred Hoop. This tobacco offering symbolizes our prayers. Some pray for themselves, others for family members or friends. Some prayed for their communities, nations, mother earth, and our global community. Some offered a song for their prayers. After the prayer ceremony, the

the Sacred Fire and the Sacred Hoop. These Journeys and the gatherings are such strong experiences—physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually—that many of the friendships formed during these events are as close as some


*The Circle of Protection
Men participate in the yarn exercise
circle at Tuscarora. Next, women and
children entered the circle*

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relationships that take years to form. We offered our prayers to the Fire and to the Hoop and we gave thanks for the gifts of one another. We couldn't say good-bye. Instead, we used an old way of walking away—on our separate paths at the end of the day.



—*These good feelings, these tears, these smiles....*
—*All that we have shared together this day,*
—*I will keep in my heart until I see you again.*



*Vette Middleton
Richard Simonelli*

