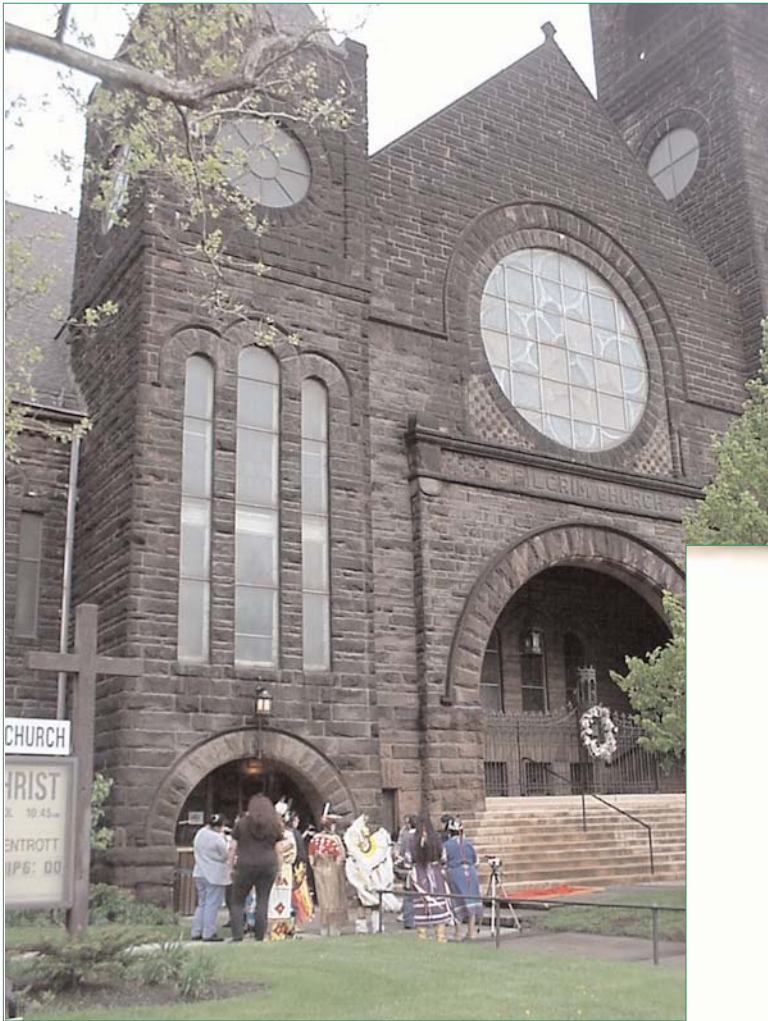




Wellbriety!

White Bison's Online Magazine

Volume 4, Number 13



HONORING Pfc
Lori PIESTEWA
CLEVELAND, OHIO
MAY 10, 2003



The Sacred Hoop Carriers and the Cleveland Native American Dancers outside the Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ. They listen to Don Coyhis share about the Gifts of the Hoop prior to the smudging ceremony and entrance to begin today's Wellbriety Day.

**Honoring Pfc Lori Piestewa
This Hopi/Hispanic Warrior was honored at
the Cleveland Sacred Hoop Gathering**



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White Bison Speaks

Intertribal Cleveland Cleveland's Hoop Journey Visit



Cleveland is like many of the large urban centers where Natives gather. It is Inter-Tribal.

People who shared during the day were from Oklahoma, New Mexico, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Minnesota, and even Alaska. They were from Tribes all over Turtle Island. There were 75 representatives from the Four Directions gathered at the Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ for a day of Wellbriety and Fellowship. And since this was an Inter-Tribal gathering, each with their own culture, traditions and ways, many of the people commented about how much they appreciated the cultural information on the agenda, entitled Native American Ways.

Native American Ways

Sage is burned to purify the mind, body, and spirit before praying.

It is also used to purify sacred items such as pipes and eagle feathers.

Sweetgrass is burned to bring the good spirits.

Both are burned to bring our prayers to Wakan (The Great Spirit/Creator)

Tobacco Ties are used to send prayers to Wakan.

Honor—To pay respect, support and appreciation to a loved one.

The Sacred Hoop arrived in its own Grand Entry ceremony. It was then placed on its stand, followed by an Honor Song for Pfc Lori Piestewa, the

Hopi/Hispanic woman who lost her life during the War in Iraq.



*Pfc Lori Piestewa
For All Our Relations*

The Cleveland Native American Dancers walked in with the Hoop Carriers and also danced at times throughout the day-long gathering. Whenever there was a break in the agenda, they danced! The Drum sang many songs and the Dancers never seemed to tire. It was an Inter-Tribal affair. Everyone was welcome to participate and everyone did at one time or another.



Celebrating Wellbriety with an Inter-Tribal Dance!


White Bison Speaks

Cleveland Sacred Hoop by Tara Makoce Weber

Many of the People who gathered here today mentioned that their first experience in getting back in touch with their heritage was at the Dayton PowWow. Several of them mentioned that their very first knowledge of White Bison, The Sacred Hoop, and programs such as Firestarters occurred when they visited a booth manned by Ron Bryant, a Dayton Ohio Firestarter who has been a long time supporter of White Bison Journeys and Conferences. Ron, we thank you for your dedication!

Special!

Today we have a special treat in our story of the Wellbriety Day gathering in Cleveland, Ohio. We are deeply honored to have our Cleveland coordinator for the Hoop Journey visit, Tara Makoce Weber, tell the story in her own way and in her own words. So settle back and enjoy the Cleveland story-within-a-story from a community member who was in on the visit from the start.

 Cleveland, Ohio holds a powerful history for American Indians dating back thirty-five years to when the first Indian center was born there, as well as to the early gatherings of the American Indian Movement (AIM) that took place in Cleveland.

The Indian center and AIM brought hope, healing, and empowerment to the Indian Community back in that day. Many are still here continuing the fight for racial justice and change, but now the Eagle Staff has been passed to the next generation in hopes of bringing back unity and healing. The next generation worked hard and waited anxiously for the Wellbriety Movement to arrive.

The Cleveland Sacred Hoop Journey was held at Pilgrim Congregational-United Church of Christ just blocks away from the first Indian center. It is an enormous, beautiful black stone church that welcomes you with its powerful presence of spirituality.

Start of the Day

The opening ceremony began outside the church on a warm, bright day. The sunshine surrounded the Hoop and the children as they entered the church, creating a strong spiritual beginning to the day. The Dakotah Travelers, six men and three boys, played

beautifully in sync as the drum welcomed the Hoop into their community.



*Cleveland Drum:
The Dakotah Travelers*

The Travelers continued with an Honor Song for slain Hopi soldier, Pfc Lori Piestewa who was killed in the Iraqi war. Don Coyhis encouraged strong prayers for her and her family in their time of grief, especially

Cleveland Sacred Hoop

by Tara Makoce Weber

including her two small children. He explained that her spirit had returned home in the Hopi way—in the form of moisture. It snowed in Arizona the day the Hopi Nation honored her. According to Don, "This was a sign that her spirit had returned to her home land."

Piestewa's picture hung on the wall in the large room where this Wellbriety Gathering was held today. Under the picture was a child's crayoned words "TODAY WE HONOR." Her picture hung with several others that included the NASA's Shuttle Columbia Astronauts killed recently, Uncis (grandmothers), Otyaes (fathers), Inas, (mothers), Kolas (friends), and Canku Wakan (those who have gone to the Spirit World). Luke Ghost Bear's picture, a Hunkpapa/Oglala who recently had been killed by a Rapid City Police Officer, was also among the photos. Luke was only 21 years of age. His first child was born two weeks after his death.

With many not knowing quite what to expect from the day's events, folks sat very quietly, soaking in the words as Don spoke about the Wellbriety Movement and his own journey. His honesty and passion opened the door for others to share their pain and suffering.

Sharing

One Lakota man shared his loneliness about being raised by his grandparents and never learning about his culture. He felt lost in this world—away from his people. As he wept, his three young sons circled him trying themselves not to cry. The room seemed to feel his pain as he continued to speak about his journey to find himself. He finished by sharing that he now sits at a drum and will raise his children knowing about their culture, knowing who they are and where they come from.

Tara Weber, Coordinator of the Cleveland Hoop Journey Gathering, walked up and put her hand on

his shoulder and said,

"This gentlemen's pain is the reason why I chose to do this event. Our men have so much suffering and pain. It is time they heal so they can be the protective warriors of their people like it used to be.

My son's father was raised on the Pine Ridge Reservation. I was not. I was adopted out by a non-native family. I was spared the poverty, alcoholism, and violence. I had lots of opportunities and role models.

When I went to the rez I was traumatized by the way my people exist and all the pain and suffering that goes on. It made me want to help others in their healing.

My son's father cannot be here today but he is in the best place—treatment. Today I honor his Wellbriety Journey."

After the special time of healing that morning a wonderful feast was served. The choices included, Navajo tacos, beef & vegetarian soup, chicken, casseroles and endless desserts. After the feast, The Dakotah Travelers played and traditional dancers danced, welcoming all to round and intertribal dances.

The Afternoon

The afternoon began with two adult Lakota adoptees speaking about their lives in Cleveland. Two different Non-native families had adopted them at birth. One of those who shared was a 34-year-old Hunkpapa woman, and the other a 41-year-old Oglala man. Ironically these two looked like brother and sister.

White Bison Speaks

Cleveland Sacred Hoop

by Tara Makoce Weber

The Hunkpapa woman expressed that although having a good upbringing, she always felt different—like “a little chocolate chip in a sea of white.” Her feelings were so strong that she was compelled to journey out to Indian country to find her birth family and what now she knows as her Lakota Spirit. She found her birth family, and she was very hurt and sad to see how her siblings were raised and the hardships they faced. They had been raised on the rez and had suffered in many ways. Her journey was very painful, emotional, but also healing for her. She closed by saying, “This day is to also honor my parents, to thank them for giving me such a wonderful, special life,” as she presented them with a beautiful buckskin dream catcher.

The Oglala man always knew he was “Sioux,” and knew his birth mom’s name. But he did not know anything about his people. As an adult he met a Lakota man at a meeting in Cleveland who explained to him that he was an “Oglala Lakota” and that possibly he might know his family. The man left the room and returned a few minutes later to inform him that they shared the same grandmother. This meeting compelled him to know more about himself and his culture. He eventually found his birth mother living in Rapid City, SD and visited his birth family on the rez. Both continue their healing journey for the Indian child within, the lost Lakota spirit that was never able to be. Their journeys have helped them find out who they are and where they come from which has led them to becoming leaders and healers in the Cleveland Indian Community.

Later in the afternoon we had a men's panel. The men's panel presented their personal struggle with learning about their heritage. The people were attentive and the words shared were welcomed and received in a good way.

Later still, Navajo Elder Mary Jane Buckshot spoke about traditional Indian values and how a healthy upbringing like her own makes such a big difference



Don Coyhis presents the Coordinators, Tara Makoce Weber and Avis Hudson with a miniature Sacred Hoop in appreciation and recognition of all of the work they and the many volunteers and supporters had dedicated in order to make today's gathering such a success.

Thank you Cleveland!!!

in the way we live and treat others as adults. She emphasized that Indian people need to get back to these ways so we can be the strong nations that we once were.

As the day drew to a close, Juanita Helphrey from the United Church of Christ, Racial Justice & Witness Ministries, spoke about the Indian activist movement from the past and present day. She explained there had not been any overwhelming change over the years. That is why it is important to teach our youth about the past: so they can be the strong leaders of tomorrow. Juanita mentioned that Squaw Mountain in Arizona is being renamed to honor Lori Piestewa, the fallen American soldier, and that this is a step forward. We are all very happy that this mountain will now have a name of honor for women. So ended the special presentations in Cleveland as they began—by honoring Lori Piestewa and all those whose photos were among us today.

White Bison Speaks

Cleveland Sacred Hoop

by Tara Makoce Weber



*Left to right
Tara Makoce Weber, Don Coyhis, Avis Hudson, Emye
Benavage at the Cleveland, Ohio Wellbriety Day visit of the Sacred Hoop*

Lake Erie Native American
Council
North American Indian
Cultural Center
United Church of Christ
Justice & Witness
Ministries
Alcohol and Drug Abuse
Services
Somewhere West of Laramie

Sacred Hoop Planning Committee

Emye Benavage
Mary Jane Buckshot
Theresa Mejia-Johnson
Greg Johnson
Lon Sauer

Thank you Cleveland! ✚

*Vette Middleton
Tara Makoce Weber
Richard Simonelli*

We also honor...

Drum:

Dakotah Travelers
Keeper of the Drum: Roger Wells
Singers: Gordon Green • Ray Roach Sr. • Kenny
Standing Soldier • Sammy Standing Soldier • Irving
Standing Soldier • Kirk Standstraight • Joe Flurry •
Steve Anowlic

Special Thanks to:

Robert Romero • Carmen Marrero
NASA John H. Glenn Research Center
Freedom House
American Indian Center
American Indian Intertribal Association
Committee of 500 Years

