



Wellbriety!

White Bison's Online Magazine

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Medicine Seeds

Chicago Wellbriety Day

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It's about relationships—working together to figure out how we can get along together and heal together.

Don Coyhis, 2003

Hoop Carriers in Chicago with Don Coyhis of White Bison.



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Chicago Wellbriety Day

The children of the Chicago Indian community created a special Hoop for their Wellbriety Day gathering. They asked if they could bring in their Hoop along with the Sacred Hoop of 100 Eagle Feathers during the opening Ceremony. *“Sure they can...”* was the reply from Don Coyhis of White Bison. *“We would be honored to have their Hoop with us today.”* There were two sacred Hoops with us for our celebration in Chicago.

The Crickett Hill Drum (Ansel Dean • Mike Pamonicut • Robert Smith • John G. Coon • Jay Williams • and Warren Perlstein) were graced by the presence of one young woman who stood with the Drum to sing—Ellen M. Williams. The Drum sang an Honor Song as the two Hoops were brought in together to our Circle. Once the larger Hoop was tied securely to the stand, the Sacred Hoop created by the youth of the American Indian Center was carefully placed inside the larger Hoop.

The Coordinator of the Center’s Youth Program—Positive Paths—is Megan Bang. Megan shared with us that one of the Community Leaders, Julia Brown Wolf, had assisted Megan and the young people with the construction of their Hoop. Julia Brown Wolf told the children the meaning of the Hoop they were creating. She told them that in order for their Hoop to be sacred, they must treat it as sacred. Each feather must be blessed and tied onto their Hoop in a *good way*. Yes, we were honored to have the youth from this Center in Chicago bring in the Sacred Hoops today.

Sacred Hoop Carriers—Chicago American Indian Center

Negwes White
Lucent Blacksmith
Lenora White
Michael Blacksmith
Michael Podlasek
Brandon Cresmo



Steven Podlasek
Michael Pamonicut III

Our Day in Chicago

After the Opening Ceremony, Don Coyhis gave a presentation about White Bison and the Gifts

of the Sacred Hoop. He told of the Journeys, Conferences, and Gatherings as this Hoop has traveled from community to community. He shared about a community vision:

“Every Community needs to have a vision of wellness. You need to have this picture of the direction in which you want to move. We human beings move toward and become like that which we think about. Whether it’s good for you or not. So if that is true, is it important to think about what you’re thinking about? The first time I ever drank, it didn’t just happen. I was thinking about it. When I got sober, I started thinking about getting sober. You move towards and become like that which you think about. What is your Indian Center thinking about? Do you have a vision? Are you thinking about Wellness? Because how you are thinking today is how it will be six months from now. We must start to create these visions of wellness. For the babies, for the youth, for the adults, and for the Elders.”

After the presentation, Don showed the documentary video of the Third Journey, which focused on Healing Native Women and Children. Then the participants were invited to share what they felt about the people they had seen and the things they had heard on the video. Many of the fifty or so people who gathered here today took the opportunity to share with all of us at this time.

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(Left) Tara, (Right) Nancy Johnstone, (By the Stove) Mariel Blacksmith preparing the breakfast and lunch meals for today's Gathering! Thanks!

There had been many volunteers who brought food and assisted in the preparation and clean-up for the breakfast meal and the pot-luck lunch. There were also people from Indian Health Services who had set-up in an adjoining room and were checking blood pressure and doing other health testing throughout the day. During the lunch break many people took advantage of the offer and visited the Health Services for a check-up and information.

Youth Struggling for Survival

When we reconvened after our delicious feast, we were delighted to have a group of people share with us. *Youth Struggling for Survival* is the name of the group. The organization consists of dozens of youth between the ages of 14 and 25 in Illinois' two largest communities—Chicago and Aurora. The Executive Director, Tekpatzin Blazquez, shared with us about their mission:

"Youth Struggling for Survival is a youth empowerment organization working towards the goal of obtaining equality, justice, peace and power for all young people. Using our natural gifts of dance, poetry, music, and art we merge our spiritual, cul-

tural and social awareness to create a sanctuary for all young people—a place where their voices are heard and their contributions required to make our communities fuller and richer in spirit.

"In many ancient cultures, it was said that if boys and girls were not properly initiated into manhood and womanhood through the skills, teachings, and love of the elders, they would destroy the culture around them. Compounding the situation today in the 21st century is the lack of authentic elders that were once the centerpiece of the village make up. The lack of elder guidance forces many young people to prematurely assume adult and elder roles in this society.

"We use a combination of ancient rites of passage, mentoring, and community service programs and outreach to troubled youth to achieve our goal of developing young people into consciously awakened men and women who contribute to their families, to our communities, and to our world. We apply long standing indigenous traditions as well as modern leadership and skill development to strengthen the spiritual and physical well being of our youth."



Tekpatzin Blazquez introduces the youth group from the Chicago/Aurora area. Standing and Seated to his left are Mentors Louise Blazquez & Alex Sunheart. Members are Tanee Blazquez, Chris Lim, Alma Montes, Chris Dino, Dolores Munoz, Edmundo Clarion. (See story for more details)

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On their website, www.youthstrugglingforsurvival.org, there is a quote from Fredrick Douglass, the African American abolitionist/editor who fought to end slavery in the U.S. in the decades prior to the Civil war. *“If there is no struggle, there is no progress,”* he said. We urge you to visit their site and to learn for yourselves the value of their teachings and traditions. We couldn’t help but be reminded of the words of a Lakota Elder, Bill Iron Moccasin,

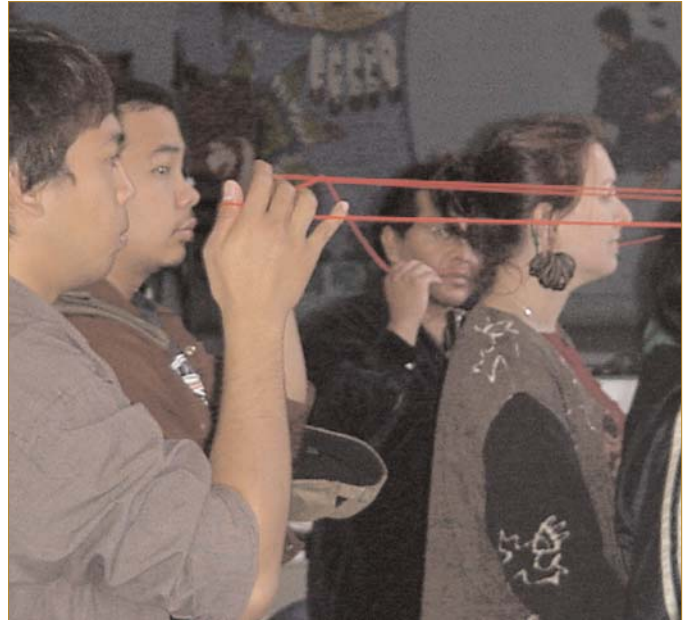
who shared with us this same sentiment during the first Journey of the Sacred Hoop in 1999:

Bill said, *“I want to apologize to the young people. We are responsible for this world you now live in. Your world is this way because we allowed it to be this way. We made choices that created this insanity and this world for you. I’m getting old now. It’s too late for me to clean up this mess. You will have to work hard to turn this around. I’m sorry. I will pray for you to have the strength to follow thru on what my generation has left undone. It’s all up to you now.”*

Youth Struggling for Survival—Participants in today’s Wellbriety Event

Chris Lim
Tanee Blazquez
Alma Montes
Dolores Munoz
Edmundo Clarion
Chris Dino
Tekpatzin Blazquez

Executive Director
Louise Blazquez—Mentor
Alex Sunheart—Mentor



After the yarn exercise to demonstrate the role of a warrior, the women are invited to come into the circle.

Chicago Yarn Exercise

After the yarn exercise to demonstrate the traditional role of men in our communities, Don Coyhis addressed those in the circle. *“The Elders always told us that the small circle can change the bigger circle, just by that small circle changing itself. So each time one of us makes one change in ourselves, the community changes. If you have a small circle of people who are working on themselves like the women’s circle who have been meeting here for 7 years now, when that happens, then others see that. The men here, they said that because of that women’s circle, they starting meeting and working on themselves. And maybe those circles come together. It’s about relationships—working together to figure out how we can get along together and heal together.”*

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Joe Podlasek, Coordinator of today's event, shows several members of the Crickett Hill Drum group the miniature replica of the Sacred Hoop that was presented to the American Indian Center of Chicago in appreciation of their support of the Wellbriety Movement.

The flyer urged people to volunteer by helping in the creation of this garden dedicated to the Spirit of the Plants. How fitting somehow, that there be a garden created from seeds here. That we hear so strongly from the youth here, young people with old spirits who are trying to grow in the garden in which they have been planted. It is the same way the Wellbriety Movement has grown: from the seeds planted during the Journeys and Conferences over the years. Wellbriety Seeds born of the Gifts of the Sacred Hoop—Hope, Unity, Healing, and Forgiving the Unforgivable.

Good luck to all the "seed planters." May your Gardens be richly blessed!!! ✚

*Vette Middleton
Richard Simonelli*

Medicine Seeds

Many seeds were planted in the minds and hearts of the people gathered for today's Wellbriety Day with the Sacred Hoop. After the closing ceremony and the offering of tobacco and prayers, we were packing away our belongings and saying our farewells to new friends when we noticed a flyer:

Native Medicine Garden • At the American Indian Center • Chicago

This is a community project dedicated to bringing the sacred and medicinal green nations, their stories, uses, and their relationships to humans, to the American Indian Community of Chicago