



# Wellbriety!

*White Bison's Online Magazine*

Volume 4, Number 17

*Sharing Family Healing in Milwaukee*  
*May 18 2003*



***It's a Family Affair!***

**A Family Carries in the Sacred Hoop. Left to right: (Auntie) Vikki Rank; (Daughter/Niece) Natasha Edwards; (Mom) Angie Shegonee; (Dad) Brian Edwards.**



Published by White Bison, Inc.  
Colorado Springs, CO

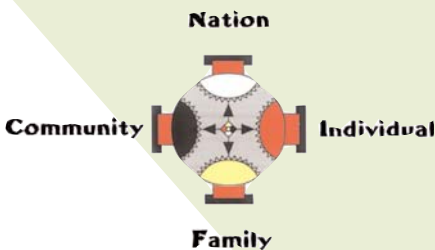


# White Bison Speaks

## Sharing Family Healing

**T**he Entrance of the Sacred Hoop at today's event was a family affair. The Hoop was carried by Mom, Dad, Daughter, and Auntie. Everyone gathered around to watch them bring in the Hoop and tie it carefully on the stand in the center of the room. About twenty of us formed a circle with our chairs to begin Wellbriety Day in Milwaukee by hearing from Don Coyhis, Founder of White Bison, Inc.

*"We have a council of Elders that helps us with everything that we do," he said. "They told us that we could not heal a community all at once. You have to go to the Medicine Wheel Teachings. The Elders said, 'In the East is the Individual. In the South is the Family. In the West is the Community. In the North is the Nation. If you want to heal a community, it must begin by individuals healing themselves. Once an individual heals, then a family can heal, then the community, then the nation. It must go in this order,' they said."*



**The Order of Healing**

*Don paused and seemed to think for a while. Then he continued. "I think that is true. I remember that when I first got sober, our family didn't heal just because I got sober. My wife at that time was in Al-Anon. I didn't even know what Al-Anon was. But I remember the weekend that she started going to Al-Anon. My whole world changed!! (\*laughter\*) I didn't know what was going on, but when she put herself into healing, that's what started it. That's what started our family healing. Over a period of time we got into healing."*

### **The Wellbriety Tree of Hope**

White Bison gets a lot of its ideas from the grass-roots. The Tree of Hope is an example of that. Don

shared about how the idea for the Wellbriety Tree of Hope came about.

*"We got this idea from a child at one of our conferences. What she talked about was making a 'tree of hope.' We made these little White Bison ornaments, and her idea was that every Christmas you put up a Tree and you write your name on one side, and how long you're in recovery on the other side. Then the community would walk just one mile the first year. Then the 2nd year put up a tree and walk 2 miles. The 3rd year, walk 3 miles, and so on. This would be a visible way to see how a community is working on their wellness. We have 25,000 of those ornaments to give away. So be sure to pick up a packet of those ornaments for your community. You can also call our office to receive a packet of these ornaments if you're willing to do something like this for your community." (Call toll-free 1-877-871-1495)*



## White Bison Speaks

# Sharing Family Healing

Don continued to share with the circle about the Vision of the Sacred Hoop of 100 Eagle Feathers and about the Journeys the Hoop has taken over the years. He shared about how White Bison has held Recovery Conferences each year in September during National Recovery/Wellbriety Month. This year's conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico from **September 18-21** will be the fourth conference. We also heard about the creation and distribution of the **Red Road to Wellbriety** book that is now available. Don said, *"We felt it was very important that we had our own Native Recovery Stories. So in the back of the **Red Road to Wellbriety** book you will find Native Recovery Stories that deal with domestic violence, sexual abuse, boarding school experiences, and incest. We also have stories in there about the Two-Spirited. Some call them gay, but we call them Two-Spirits. We have their stories in there because that's our real world. All of that stuff is real in our families and communities. We felt it was important to have our stories in there. We tried to make it as 'real world' as we could, so that if someone read it they would see that recovery is possible."*



*The Circle gathered to hear about White Bison, The Wellbriety Movement, and the Journeys of the Sacred Hoop.*

Just as we were getting hungry and ready for a break, the smell of great chili and fry bread filled the auditorium where we were gathered. We took time out for lunch and socializing. It was a beautiful campus where we had gathered, so several of us took the opportunity for a quick stroll around the campus of the Indian Community School before returning to our circle. Once we had gathered back into our circle, Don Coyhis introduced the next segment of the event, the documentary video.



*With the Wisconsin Tribal Nations on a map in the background, Don shares about the packets of information, posters, videos, and other products available thru White Bison.*

After we watched the video, **Healing Native Women and Children**, which documented the 3rd Journey in 2002, Don shared with us about the Gifts of the Circle. He told us that we can have these Circles in our families and that family Circles are based on growing thru conflict—conflict is a friend, not an enemy. He encouraged the people in Milwaukee to form Talking Circles within their families and communities: Circles of Recovery and Circles of Healing. Then he asked if anyone had anything they would like to share openly.

# Sharing Family Healing

### *Sharing From the Heart*

Some of the people who shared after viewing the video really touched our hearts. Here is a little of what they said—

#### **Richard**

*“Thru the different 12 Step programs and the Wellbriety Movement, they are showing us that where there is more than one, where there is a group, where there is a circle, so much more gets accomplished. Everything around me is still the same. How I deal with it is the change in my life. Without a program like this, I’m back to yesterday and there is no tomorrow. As long as I do what I’m supposed to do today, the wonder of tomorrow is still there. The beauty of tomorrow can happen. If I continue with my yesterdays, it is done, there would be no hope for tomorrow. So thanks a lot, I’m glad you came here.”*

#### **Maseline**

*“I didn’t know what I was getting into when I came here today. My friend told me this was going to be a Native American Healing Circle, and I’m always interested in that, so I came. I remember when I first went to meetings and I would think, ‘this isn’t for me.’ But they would just keep telling me to come back. Gradually, as I went to meetings, and my husband went to meetings, I learned that I cannot control the way other people live their lives. I learned how to live my life, not someone else’s life. My life. My family and I went to meetings together and we learned to live a life—a spiritual life. Not in the ‘religion’ way, but in a spiritual way, finding ourselves and finding peace. Not blaming my Mom and Dad for what they did. Not looking for someone to blame. We have control of our own lives. How empowering and freeing that was for me and for my family.”*

#### **Billy**

*“I thank my Higher Power and you for bringing this video to me. I could see myself up there on that*

*screen. I was one of the kids that was screaming and running and hiding in the closet when my Dad would come home, because I didn’t want to be found. I swore I would never be like him. And I don’t know how it’s happened, but to this day my children have not seen what I went thru. I’ve abused myself with alcohol and drugs, but never them. The fear is still there for me. It’s been a year that I’ve been sober. The fear is still there. There’s still a lot more growth. I thank you so much for bringing this to me today. I knew I was here for a reason. I’m just so grateful.”*

#### **Steve**

*“Watching that video was tough. I was the one they were calling the cops on. My kids were calling the cops. And it’s tough... it really is.” (There is silence as he shakes his head and then strokes the Eagle Feather he is holding to regain his composure and strength to continue) “My children are well adjusted, but for a 6 year old to be dialing 911 and saying, ‘my father is choking my mother,’ that’s not the way kids should grow up.”*

#### **Brian**

*“I grew up in an alcoholic family. I’ve seen the abuse—physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. I was asked if I ever hit a woman. When I was drinking, I don’t know if I just blocked it out or didn’t want to remember, but I would say ‘no.’ And I was corrected. There have been more than a couple of times that I have... I have hit a woman. It’s part of my past. It’s always going to be there. I’ve got to look ahead now and pray to Creator that forgiveness will be there. It’s hard to talk about anything like this. But it’s nice, too, to get it off my shoulders. And when I pray now I can say that I’m doing something about my life. There is still some stuff I haven’t been able to say to another person yet. A lot of stuff I still carry around. But at least this is a little step I guess. Now maybe I can move on to that next step of my recovery and it won’t be so hard now. When I saw that video, it hit that spot in me.*

# White Bison Speaks

## Sharing Family Healing

*Like people say, 'we're not alone in this.' I'm going to show that video to more than five people. It has that much impact on people. Maybe it could change a life. Who knows? I'm going to watch it again and share it. I appreciate you bringing it here."*

### Angie

*"I want to thank you for being here today. And it was good to see that video. It makes me think about how much more I have to do to work on myself and my family."*

### Roll the Credits!!

Thank you to all of the people in today's circle. What you shared with one another and with all of the people who will read your words in this story or listen to your words on some future video is what we need to heal ourselves, our families, our communities and our nations. You are all heroes today and you give us hope for tomorrow. We never quite know what the focus of an event will be until it is over. Without question, today's event began and ended with a focus on Family Healing.

Don Coyhis and Amanda Manbeck presented Tom Parker—the Coordinator of today's Wellbriety Event—with a miniature replica of the Sacred Hoop of 100

Eagle Feathers in appreciation of all of his work in getting this circle together. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Gerald L. Ignace, Indian Health Center, Inc. and Executive Director Jone

Stromberg and the Indian Community School. And as always we honor and recognize all of the volunteers who helped by bringing refreshments and cleaning up before and after the event.

There is a monthly Native American Newspaper called **Urban Circle of Voices** available in the Milwaukee area. We got a copy, in fact several copies while we were there. It's a great publication. You can contact their office at **414-643-5510** or by email at [urbanvoice@red-pride.com](mailto:urbanvoice@red-pride.com) On the inside of the cover page was an ad for the ONEIDA Sobriety Conference May 23 – 25th ! The Wellbriety Event is a part of that 3 day Conference and is scheduled for May 23rd. It was very nice to see it advertised in such a good way.

So now we are off to Oneida for our part in the sobriety conference. But before we go we want to say, **THANK YOU MILWAUKEE!!** for sharing your family healing with us. ✚

*Vette Middleton  
Richard Simonelli*



*Angie Shegonee (left) and Maseline Albring (right) check out the miniature replica of the Sacred Hoop that was presented by White Bison to Tom Parker (Coordinator of today's event) on behalf of the Indian Health Center, Inc.*



*Preparing for the closing ceremony in Milwaukee. Each participant could offer tobacco and prayers at the Hoop.*