



# Wellbriety!

The Wellbriety Movement's Online Magazine

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Honoring!

Honoring Roberta Kitka  
and  
Honoring the Eagle Spirit Drum



Roberta Kitka of SEARHC (South East Alaska Regional Health Consortium) holds the **Theda New Breast Life Time achievement Award** (left) as well as the **President's Gumboot Award**, SEARHC's highest award. She was honored for her work as a drug and alcohol treatment specialist at SEARHC, as well as for chairing the project that resulted in the *Kootéeyaa Project Wellbriety totem pole*, which has the Tlingit name "Yeí éék kwa néix ("you are going to get well"). Roberta is a Wellbriety Movement Firestarter who brings many Wellbriety activities to southeast Alaska.

Yeí éék kwa néix--you are going to get well!



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## Roberta Kitka Honored in Sitka, Alaska and Denver, Colorado

Roberta Kitka (Tlingit) was awarded the **Theda New Breast Lifetime Achievement Award** at the start of White Bison's Sixth Annual Wellbriety Conference held Oct. 27-29 in Denver. The theme of the conference was *The Wellbriety Movement in Motion! Youth, Families and Suicide Prevention*. Here are some of the comments made by Don Coyhis, founder and president of White Bison, Inc., and Harry, of Sitka, Alaska when he accepted the award for Roberta.

### *Don Coyhis*

Last year we had the honor of establishing the Theda New Breast Lifetime Achievement Award. Theda's whole life has been dedicated to the wellness of our people. She is one of our elders and we have the greatest respect for her.

This year we were able to choose the first recipient of the Theda New Breast Lifetime Achievement Award. The person who was nominated was a woman from Alaska—her name is Roberta Kitka. She has done incredible work over many, many years and continues to do so. Because she was not able to be here this time, some of her relatives from her camp in Sitka are here to accept her award and to bring it back home to her. To honor her, we would like to show you a short video about the raising of the Wellbriety Totem Pole in Sitka, Alaska that Roberta had an important role in bringing about (*please see Wellbriety! Magazine, V7, #11 for the Totem Pole issue*). This Totem Pole is the only thing I've ever encountered in my personal, limited experience that is more powerful than the Sacred Hoop that is here in front of us today.

### *Harry Bradley* (accepting the award on behalf of Roberta)

Roberta did a lot of work on this project and she was tireless. It actually started five years ago. It took a lot of work to get this project done and to do it in the right way. The elders, the prayers, the songs—everything that we did was honoring and healing. There were negative energies that got in our way but we didn't let it stop us. She really, really deserves this.



Harry Bradley accepts the award for Roberta. Two other community members from Sitka and Don Coyhis (right) look on.

# Honoring... The Eagle Spirit Drum

## A Healing and Wellness Drum for the Wellbriety Movement

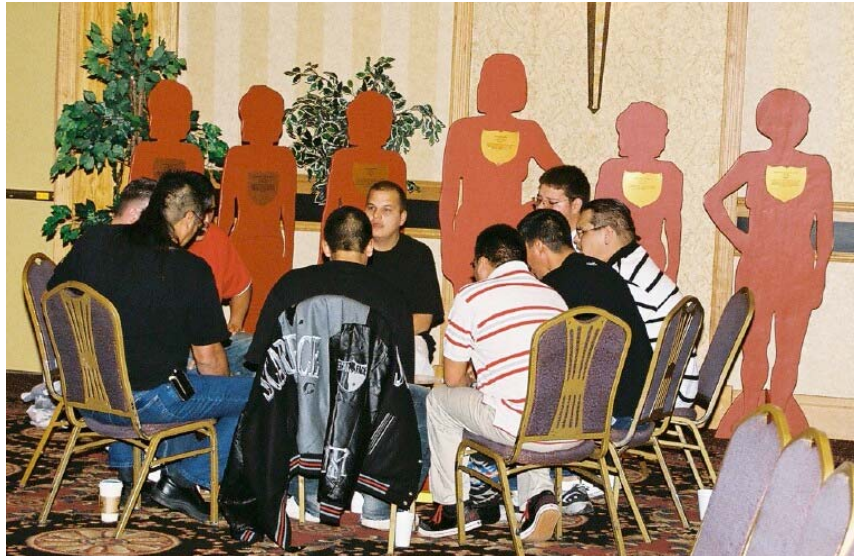
**T**he Eagle Spirit Drum became the official Wellbriety Movement drum during the 5<sup>th</sup> annual White Bison conference in Denver, Colorado in April of 2005. Since that inaugurating ceremony, the drum has sung at two more national Wellbriety Movement conferences and at numerous events, conferences, weddings, funerals, honoring ceremonies and schools closer to the drum's home.

The Eagle Spirit Drum, *Migizii Manido* in Ojibwe, is from the White Earth Nation in northern Minnesota. It sings intertribal songs, healing songs, eagle songs, honor songs, veteran's songs, a flag song and a grand entry song too. Its vision is to stand tall and to sing out for sobriety, addictions recovery and well living for tribal people everywhere.

At the Drum's dedication at the conference in 2005, drum keeper Henry Fox, Ojibwe, accepted the responsibility of the drum with the words, "*On behalf of the drum and as the drum keeper, it is a*

*great honor to accept this. We've had our obstacles, but it seems with the prayers from everybody that this drum goes on. It's a very great honor for me. This drum would have got here no matter what this year. Even if we had to walk it I'm sure all our fellow members would have walked and I'm sure some of you would have walked it too. We thank the Creator that it's here today and we will do our best.*

*We'll make it work! Ah Ho!"*



**The Eagle Spirit Drum sings at the White Bison, Inc. Wellbriety conference in Denver, CO in October, 2006. The Drum is backed by the red silhouettes of the Silent Witness Program against domestic violence.**

The drum's presence at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual White Bison conference in Denver in October, 2006 helped create powerful and moving ceremony throughout the four-day gathering. Its presence at numerous awards events,

Hoop ceremonies, elder's talks and at the Wellbriety powwow helped participants experience the spirit of the Wellbriety Movement.

Don Coyhis, founder and president of White Bison, Inc. honored the drum. He said, "*The Eagle Spirit Drum is the official Wellbriety Movement*

*Drum. As they grow, so do we. That drum is the heartbeat of the movement. Just like the earth cannot function without a heartbeat, the movement cannot function without a heartbeat. We know it is sometimes a sacrifice for them to drive that great distance and show up. We really appreciate that they drive through all kinds of weather, through snowstorms and the like to show up.”*



**Horace Axtell (left), Wellbriety Council of Elders member, and drum keeper Henry Fox at the start of the Veterans' honoring ceremony in Denver in October, 2006.**

Wellbriety elder Horace Axtell, Nez Perce Nation, has been present at each of the White Bison national Wellbriety conferences since 1999 and the Hoop Journeys, too. He visited with the drum at the October, 2006 conference and said, *“They are a young drum and they’re good.”*

*Wellbriety* means to be both sober and well. It signifies a life of balance—spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically. It takes recovery from alcohol and drug addictions further into healing and wellness for the individual, family, community and for whole nations. Many thousands of grassroots Native people have participated and continue to participate in Wellbriety Movement activities, Hoop

journeys, learning programs and gatherings since the movement’s birth in the mid-1990’s. The Eagle Spirit Drum is the first national Wellbriety drum. It points the way to the goal of having 100 Native communities in healing by the year 2010.

Henry Fox’s role as drum keeper has had a positive effect on his own life and wellness commitment. Over two years after the drum’s dedication he said, *“It was a privilege to become the drum keeper and to start learning about the drum, about what it is used for and what it takes to care for it. When we sing our healing songs, people have come back to us after a year or so and have told us that they have never felt so good as after we sang those songs.”*

Fox has been with the drum at three White Bison national conferences since 2005. At the October, 2006 conference in Denver, he and ten other veterans received an eagle feather in an honoring ceremony as the drum sang and elder Horace Axtell smudged the entire veteran’s group.

The drum has made a commitment to sing for the Wellbriety Movement at conferences and other events until 2010. This year’s members included Greg Blue, Estovon Dominiques, Henry Fox, Louis Fox, Lucas Hisgun, Frank Stetch, Moss Tibbetts, and Sonny Wadena.

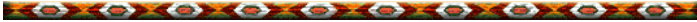
Membership in a Wellbriety drum offers the opportunity to support a local community on its healing journey. It is also a chance to grow as an individual. Fox says, *“When you form a drum, no matter what kind it is, all members have to be alcohol and drug free. It is a big responsibility. Everybody will be watching every move of that drum. All the persons on that drum will have to act and present themselves in a professional manner.”*

—Richard Simonelli



For more information about the Eagle Spirit Drum contact Henry Fox at 1-800-950-3248 ext. 1337, or by e mail at [henryf@whiteearth.com](mailto:henryf@whiteearth.com)

For information on White Bison, Inc., the Wellbriety Movement, or the goal of having 100 Native communities in healing by 2010 visit the website at [www.whitebison.org](http://www.whitebison.org).



**Drum members pose with elder Horace Axtell in October, 2006**

