



# Wellbriety!

*White Bison's Online Magazine*

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## **Introducing... The 6th Annual White Bison Wellbriety Movement Conference**

*The Wellbriety Movement in Motion!*

**Youth, Families and Suicide Prevention**

**Coming to... Denver, Colorado October 27-29, 2006**



*Feather Down* by Sam English

The dark universe has images of various figures of animals and humans, sometimes used in our clan systems. Sometimes we pray to them, as to the eagle, who takes our prayers up into the sky and releases those prayers to the creator or spiritual figure. The feather down figure is simply seeking consolation from the creator to account for his suicide. The dancers at the bottom surrounding the feather down depict how we honor the passing of one who makes his or her journey to the spirit world. We humans are not judges, we are a people of spirituality, we believe that our ceremonies, prayers and sacrifices for death are a good way to grieve and honor the passing of a spirit.

---Sam English

***Feather Down***, a painting by Ojibwe artist Sam English done to inaugurate the ***No More Fallen Feathers Youth Suicide Prevention Program*** to be introduced at the 6th Annual White Bison Wellbriety Movement conference to be held in Denver, CO, October 27-29, 2006



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# The Wellbriety Movement in Motion

Protective Factors point the way at the 6th Annual White Bison Conference  
October 27-29, 2006 in Denver, Colorado

**W**hat's the vision behind White Bison's 6th Annual Wellbriety Movement conference coming just two months from now to Denver in late October? In a word, protective factors, and to be even more precise, *cultural protective factors*.

We talked with Don Coyhis, founder and president of White Bison, Inc. to learn how cultural protective factors can help youth and families stay clear of risky behavior that might lead to suicide. Here's what he said:

*"At the conference we will make participants aware of what protective factors are, and what culturally-based protective factors are. Sometimes we call these prevention factors. In the Discovery Circles we will have participants identify what their cultural protective factors are. As a person grows, what you see is what you get. You could look at yourself as just being bad and all screwed up. But if someone starts to tell you you're not all screwed up, that there are many good things about you, then there's a way to go forward. Until somebody shifts your awareness and you start to realize there's been good there all along, you might be at risk for hurtful behaviors, even suicide. But if we realize we have a lot of strengths in our community already, and if we focus on those strengths instead of focusing on the fear factors, then risks can be reduced. What we want to show in this conference is that prevention of suicide for us as Native people is going to come from focusing on the strengths that we already have and to develop some of them a little bit further. It's going to come when we start producing knowledge about what enhances protective factors for individuals before they are at-risk."*

## **Cultural Protective Factors**

Protective factors often begin with family and community role models in the earliest years of growing up. Don goes on to say, *"In the family some come from the mom, some come from the dad, some come from the relatives. And some come from the community. You are a product of you're environment in a way. We always hear, 'I had this Auntie...' or 'I had this grandpa...' or 'I had this teacher...' or 'I had this person who believed in me...' Prevention of suicide can come from the extended family."*

**WHAT WE WANT TO SHOW IN THIS CONFERENCE IS THAT PREVENTION OF SUICIDE FOR US AS NATIVE PEOPLE IS GOING TO COME FROM FOCUSING ON THE STRENGTHS THAT WE ALREADY HAVE AND TO DEVELOP SOME OF THEM A LITTLE BIT FURTHER.**

Cultural prevention factors can come from a community that is in touch with and practicing its tribal culture. They come from Elders who talk to the children long before they might get in trouble. They can come from a community school system that teaches language and culture from the earliest grades, right alongside the skills children need when they interact with the wider society. Prevention factors include educational opportunities as well as the community economic opportunities that lend stability to the community in the first place.

Brief Interventions are a new kind of protective factor that will be presented at the conference. Brief interventions are a kind of short-term counseling that can help youth get back on the right road if they are starting to get lost. *"If you do an intervention early enough, the odds are very good that you'll stop or turn around drug use,"* says White Bison's founder. *"If you are able to recognize suicidal thoughts, recognize depression and depressive behavior, you can actually do an intervention there and stop that kid from continuing the thinking that produces suicide."* It will be up to the grassroots community to create cultural Brief Interventions that fit the needs of each and every tribal culture. Please see the page on **Brief Interventions** in this issue for an introduction.

## **Preventing Suicide**

Don makes a distinction between *suicide prevention* and *prevention of suicide*. Suicide prevention refers to helping youth who are already at risk for suicide. They may be expressing suicidal thoughts and feelings, or acting out in ways that say, "please help me now." The community needs to have people and programs in place to intervene right away with a youth who is showing suicidal tendencies. It is the community that puts into place a Brief Interventions counselor for suicide prevention.



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The *prevention of suicide* is more like creating a healthy climate in the family and the community so that youth never become risks for suicide in the first place. Prevention of suicide is primarily the family's task. Prevention of suicide watches the thinking of children as they grow up and makes changes right in early childhood and in the pre-teen years if necessary. The prevention of suicide requires that moms and dads, aunts and uncles, grandpas and grandmas all be walking their own Red Road healing journey. That's the way to help the kids.

This conference will demonstrate how the Healing Forest Model of the Wellbriety Movement works. Through the many different keynotes, workshop presentations and grassroots Discovery Circles, the gathering will show just how it takes an entire community in healing to give individuals a chance. One of those keynotes will be a presentation by Don Coyhis on the Healing Forest Model. Prevention of suicide is a multifaceted approach. If you just work with the little youth trees to help them stay healthy, without community cooperation you won't be as successful as when the community is in healing, too. But how can we know if a community is ready to enter its own healing journey? One way is through the Community Readiness Model.

### IF YOU DO AN INTERVENTION EARLY ENOUGH, THE ODDS ARE VERY GOOD THAT YOU'LL STOP OR TURN AROUND DRUG USE

There will be a Keynote address by Pamela Jumper-Thurman a co-creator of the Community Readiness Model. This measurement method assesses a community's readiness to make changes in any number of ways. It could be readiness to enter recovery from drugs and alcohol. It could also be readiness to take on its educational and economic development issues, so very vital to long-term community healing. The community readiness model can be applied to many different community issues. To get a glimpse of what it's about, please see the page on the Community Readiness Model in this issue. To take it back to your community and use it for healing, come to the conference and learn from one of its designers.

### HOW CAN WE KNOW IF A COMMUNITY IS READY TO ENTER ITS OWN HEALING JOURNEY? ONE WAY IS THROUGH THE COMMUNITY READINESS MODEL

This year's conference will introduce a new White Bison program that's aimed directly at youth suicide prevention. *No More Fallen Feathers* refers to the fact that when an eagle feather is accidentally dropped during a ceremony it's a cause for alarm—but not for panic. It's important to pick that feather back up and to do whatever it takes to see that there will be no more fallen feathers. A warrior lost to suicide is like a fallen eagle feather. Youth suicide is especially sad and that's what the No More Fallen Feathers youth suicide prevention program is about. This new program is another protective factor to debut at the conference.

### Other Prevention Factors

The prevention of underage drinking and drugging is still another protective factor participants will learn about at the conference. What does it take in the family, in the community, and at the level of tribal government to protect our youth from access to drugs and alcohol, or even the desire or perceived need to drink or drug? This prevention factor will be the focus of the Youth Track at the conference.

The October, 2006 conference will follow the effective and very popular format of the April, 2006 Wellbriety Movement meth conference (please see *Wellbriety! Magazine*, Volume 7, #3). In particular, many of the White Bison programs and other programs like Brief Interventions will be covered in a series of nine concurrent tracks that take place on both Friday morning and Friday afternoon. Then, on Saturday morning there will be five grassroots Discovery Circles at which you, the conference participants, are the experts. The Discovery Circle topics during this conference are: Focusing on culture as prevention of suicide.

The five circles will concentrate on 1) Individuals, 2) Peers, 3) Family, 4) School, and 5) Community. The

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work of the Discovery Circles on Saturday morning takes place in group discussion, which is then summarized in mind maps and special lists and tables. Each of the five Discovery Circles presents its findings to an exciting all-conference session on Saturday afternoon.

This is really just a quick look at some of what will happen at the conference. For more detailed information download the Conference Agenda and the Conference Promotional documents from the White Bison website at [www.whitebison.org](http://www.whitebison.org).

### WHAT IF THERE WERE A POSITIVE CULTURAL GAUNTLET IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND IN OUR LIVES? CAN WE TURN THE IMAGE OF THE GAUNTLET AROUND TO PROVIDE A VISION FOR HEALING?

#### **A Positive Cultural Gauntlet**

Life in our communities these days is difficult—especially for the youth. Now both youth and adults must run a gauntlet of so many different challenges. Imagine a traditional gauntlet consisting of two lines of people holding staffs and whips and other instruments of torture all aimed at the individuals who must pass through this line to receive the punishment. The instruments in this modern gauntlet are alcohol, many different kinds of drugs, domestic violence, gangs, guns, and other actual harming factors. The gauntlet also consists of less obvious challenges such as internalized oppression, low self-esteem, children of alcoholics (COA) behaviors, negative media messages, lack of educational and economic opportunities, and more. These are the fear factors and risk factors that are all around us.

But what if there were a different kind of gauntlet for ourselves and for the youth to run? A gauntlet made up of protective and prevention factors, supporting us rather than threatening and harming us? What if there were a **positive cultural gauntlet** in our communities and in our lives? Can we turn the image of the gauntlet around to provide a vision for healing? This is Don Coyhis's vision for Wellbriety in today's communities. He says, *"Instead of hitting them and wounding them, they won't be able to turn*

*around without seeing supportive information. Take a step and they'll find the Medicine wheel and the 12 Steps. Take another step and the Warrior Down program appears. Still another, and Sons and Daughters of Tradition are right there. The further a person runs down the Gauntlet, the more healing reinforcement will be available. This is a positive cultural gauntlet that we can make happen for our people. The schools will do it, the parents will be doing it, the community will do it, and Native leadership will offer these cultural protective factors to those who pick up the challenge of a cultural healing gauntlet."*

Why come to the 6th annual White Bison Wellbriety Movement conference in Denver, Colorado from October 27-29 this year? Here is what Larry Stillday of the Red Lake Nation said of the last White Bison Conference, the conference on meth that took place in Denver in April of 2006.

*"All of us had that excitement and anticipation of coming here. I did," he said. "And I felt that excitement, that joy, during the last two days. This is a place where I get rejuvenated. Where I get validated. It doesn't have to be spoken in words. You just feel it. I get embraced when I come here."*

Visit the White Bison website [www.whitebison.org](http://www.whitebison.org) to get more details about the conference. See you in Denver!




*Richard Simonelli  
Editor, Wellbriety! Magazine*



# *Brief Interventions Can Stop or Turn Around Alcohol and Other Drug Use*

## **What is Brief Intervention?**



**Brief Intervention** is a technique developed to address adolescent substance abuse. This process targets adolescents who are mild to moderate users who are receptive to self-guided behavior change strategies. Brief Intervention is a counseling-type intervention consisting of 2-4 sessions for adolescents who use alcohol and other drugs and-

- ✓ Experience relatively few problems with their use
- ✓ Have low levels of dependence
- ✓ Have a short history of use
- ✓ Are unsure or ambivalent about changing their use

This method of intervention combines several aspects of therapy including: **motivational interviewing**, **cognitive-behavior therapy**, and the **stages-of-change model**. It is intended to aid the adolescent in taking a more active role and responsibility for him or herself. Brief Intervention is a low-cost alternative to disease-oriented treatment approaches. This training is designed for professionals or paraprofessionals involved in schools, juvenile justice programs, and mental and primary healthcare who are seeking new and effective models for intervention with alcohol and other drug-involved youth.

## **Why Brief Interventions ?**

- ✓ The gap between treatment need and treatment availability is significantly increasing for adolescents
- ✓ There is a tightening of treatment eligibility criteria taking place
- ✓ Brief interventions have been shown to be as effective as stand-alone therapies
- ✓ Brief interventions make developmental sense, given that many drug-using youth are not "career" drug abusers
- ✓ Developmentally, young people are likely to be receptive to self-guided behavior change strategies, a cornerstone of brief interventions



*To learn how **Brief Interventions** can benefit your community, participate in the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual White Bison Wellbriety Movement Conference from October 27-29, 2006 in Denver, Colorado.*

# Is Your Community Ready to Make a Change?

## What is the Community Readiness Model?

Excerpted from the **Community Readiness Model Handbook**  
By Barbara A. Plested, Ruth W. Edwards and Pamela Jumper-Thurman



### The Community Readiness Model—

- ✓ Is a model for community change that integrates a community's culture, resources, and *level of readiness* to more effectively address an issue.
- ✓ Allows communities to define issues and strategies in their own contexts.
- ✓ Builds cooperation among systems and individuals.
- ✓ Increases community capacity for prevention and intervention.
- ✓ Encourages and enhances community investment in an issue.
- ✓ Can be applied in any community (geographic, issue-based, organizational, etc.).
- ✓ Can be used to address a wide range of issues.
- ✓ Is a guide to the complex process of community change.



### What Does “Readiness” Mean?

**Readiness** is the degree to which a community is prepared to take action on an issue.

#### Readiness...

- ✓ Is very issue-specific.
- ✓ Is measurable.
- ✓ Is measurable across multiple dimensions.
- ✓ May vary across dimensions.
- ✓ May vary across different segments of a community.
- ✓ Can be increased successfully.
- ✓ Is essential knowledge for the development of strategies and interventions.



### Why Use the Community Readiness Model?

- ✓ It conserves valuable resources (time, money, etc.) by guiding the selection of strategies that are most likely to be successful.



- ✓ It is an efficient, inexpensive, and easy-to-use tool.
- ✓ It promotes community ownership of the issue.
- ✓ Because of strong community ownership, it helps to ensure that strategies are culturally congruent and sustainable.
- ✓ It encourages the use of *local* experts and resources instead of reliance on outside experts and resources.
- ✓ The process of community change can be complex and challenging, but the model breaks down the process into a series of manageable steps.
- ✓ It creates a community vision for healthy change.



### ***What Should NOT be Expected from the Model?***

- ✓ The model can't make people do things they don't believe in.
- ✓ Although the model is a useful diagnostic tool, it doesn't prescribe the details of exactly what to do to meet your goals. The model defines types of strategies appropriate to each stage of readiness. Each community must then determine specific strategies consistent with their community's culture and level of readiness for each dimension.



*Matching an intervention to a community's level of readiness is absolutely essential for success. Interventions must be challenging enough to move a community forward in its level of readiness. However, efforts that are too ambitious are likely to fail because community members will not be ready or able to respond. To maximize chances for success, the Community Readiness Model offers tools to measure readiness and to develop stage-appropriate strategies.*



*To learn how the **Community Readiness Model** can benefit your community, participate in the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual White Bison Wellbriety Movement Conference from October 27-29, 2006 in Denver, Colorado.*

