

The
Brier Rabbit
Papers

by
Oliver Loveday

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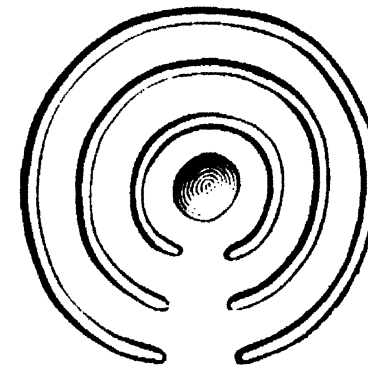
The Brier Rabbit Papers is based on the opinions and experiences of the author on such issues as intertribal culture of the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island and does not represent any one tribal culture. This book is intended for general educational purposes in a manner that might assist an individual or a group in achieving a better understanding of respect for all their relations so that greater harmony might be arrived at in those relations. This book does not address any issue from an authoritative position and should be applied to one's life with the greatest of caution. Laugh at your own risk.

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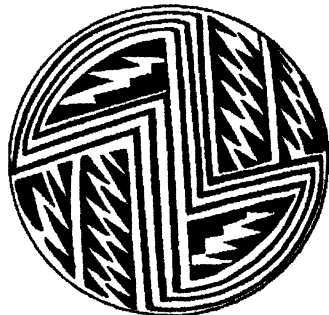
Preface

In the summer of 1989 I took part in a tour of the northwestern part of the United States with a good friend. While on the trip I knew that someone would ask me what I learned on the trip, so I worked on a quick joke to the question. The joke I came up with was, "People have an attention span of five seconds and mostly talk about themselves." Funny thing was, no one asked me that question, and while talking about the trip, I noticed that the joke was mostly true.

During the same period in my life, give or take a few years, I was giving talks at a wilderness retreat for teenagers in recovery from alcohol and drug addictions and related behavior problems. In the talks I would be sharing information about taking responsibility for one's own life and actions based upon the warrior's ways of inter-tribal cultures. At times I would include a few jokes to lighten things up a bit. I found that the only safe topic to joke about that didn't target any one race, sex, age, culture, religion, etc., the politically correct joke, was to joke about myself. Fortunately, the jokes went well because I have some really good material to work from.

While writing the Briar Rabbit Papers, I wanted to share information that would relate to as many tribal cultures as possible without using too many names or labels. I wanted to give examples so the information would move from being abstract philosophy to applied knowledge. Once again I mostly talk about myself. This isn't because I am special or better than anyone else, it is because it is safe. When publishing information about tribal culture, the most difficult aspect is to do this without alienating one's self from any given group, individual, or tribe. So with consideration given to this exercise in harmony, I wanted to make the reader aware of my attitude so it doesn't appear like I am aware of any other reality other than my own. If I have failed in any way, I would ask the reader to forgive, and if possible, bring any shortcomings they might find to my attention. This would certainly be taken into consideration in future writings and possibly any future editions of this publication. Yes. Wadough.

Oliver Loveday, October 26, 1996, Full Moon



The Briar Rabbit Papers #1: The Red Road Isn't A Race

There is a lot of debate these days about American Indian spirituality and who has a right to participate in it. Part of the focus in this country is blood quotas and color of skin. Often I am asked if I am a full blood. I enjoy replying that I am not sure, that I need to check because I might be a pint low. People ask me if I am a card carrying Indian, so I keep the Queen of Spades with me to show them what I think of that attitude. These issues are a way of creating division amongst the People. Often times I hear people saying that it isn't the color of a person's skin that counts, but what is in their heart, but I seldom hear that person saying what is in their heart. American Indian spirituality is sometimes referred to as the Red Road. There is a reason for this. It isn't a reference to the color of one's skin. We all bleed red. The Red Road is the path of the heart. It is what is in one's heart that truly makes a difference in this world. Having a card doesn't make me more Indian, yet I must carry one if I am to identify myself as an Indian artist or craft person or to possess sacred objects such as Eagle feathers in order to carry out a spiritual practice. The Red Road is the only "religion" and the Native Americans are the only race in this country where one must be able to identify one's self as having the right to honor their spiritual beliefs as if they are an alien in a foreign country. The Founding Fathers of the United States of America designed the Constitution so that a person could practice their religious or spiritual beliefs without persecution, yet one can go to prison for praying with an Eagle feather if they don't have a card.

The Red Road is a spiritual journey with no exits or turn arounds. There are many stories around the world that warn about the dangers when entering the spiritual world, but perhaps the story of Pandora's box is a good one to use here. When you open Pandora's box you can never close it so you had better know what you are doing. This comes through discipline. You must be impeccable to walk the Red Road. Someone recently asked me what impeccable meant. I told them, "No deceit". Deceit is a way of covering up fear. To be impeccable, one must face their fear and strive to balance their mistakes. The spiritual world is full of good and evil and one must have the discipline of impeccability to know the difference between the two. To be impeccable means you must know your heart. That can be a very scary proposition for knowing your heart means you know the truth within you.

The Red Road isn't easy. To walk it one must be willing to honor all their relations in this world. This means more than saying a prayer at Sunrise. One must strive for harmony and balance with all that exists in this world. One doesn't need a Sacred Pipe or drum or all the other articles that have become so important in the commercial world around the American Indian culture. If you feel the need to have something material as a part of your prayers, a simple pebble is a good place to start. Pebbles can be found almost everywhere. It will help you find your heart. Ho!

The Briar Rabbit Papers #2: Tradition Isn't Static

In these times the traditional People use the things that are around them to continue a relationship with Spirit. It is impossible to live the way the tribal people did 500 years ago, and we weren't meant to. The warrior responds to the world they live in each day. That is what separates American Indian spirituality from established religion that looks at the world through abstract concepts that were established many life-times ago. So instead of shield makers, we have artists that paint with oil on canvas. Instead of Runners, we have folks travelling by car or plane to meetings and gatherings across the country or around the planet. Or we pick up the phone and make plans that would have taken a week to deal with a long time ago. There are drawbacks to this world we live in today, but the traditional people use what is available with consideration to how it will effect the next seven generations, the same as they did 500 hundred years ago. Tradition is in transformation just like the moon goes through the various phases of cycles. In the old days there were other names for someone of vision, but today, one of those names is the poet. I leave you with a poem. Yes.

Night Mares Against A Night Sky

Horses pounding through this dream
and I am awake
I have awaken
the streets throb with fear beneath an angry sky
the government arrests those that shoot rockets in their skin,
 while spending billions of dollars to shoot rockets
 through the skin of the sky

The horses are pawing the night sky
riders with black capes and hoods peer into the hearts
 of those asleep below
sleep is disturbed
dreams are disturbed
the riders know the ones in charge of killing the innocent people
the horses know
their eyes burn in the night

We are the ones that pray to the night sky
We are the ones that pray to the horses
We are the ones the riders seek to help
We are the ones that wake up in the night
 and remember the dreams

I raise my hand up into the sky
Eagles are coming
Ho!

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The Briar Rabbit Papers #3: This Wind, It Is Talking

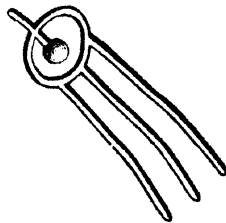
The reason that I have chosen to call this collection of articles The Briar Rabbit Papers is in honor of the traditional trickster of the Cherokee Indians. The trickster is an important character amongst Indigenous Peoples all over the world, and serves as an example of some of the pitfalls of the ego, as well as the use of irrational solutions to situations. In the Uncle Remus stories many of the stories are from the Cherokee. In them one will find one of the important characters, Miss Meadow. Miss Meadow is a place as well as a person, but this is a point that is missed by many. In American Indian tradition, it is important to pay attention to events around one and know when something significant is occurring. When one makes this leap in conscienceness, then the wind can talk to them and tell them of events that are taking place from a great distance or in the past or future. The Earth and all that is on it, in it, and beyond it is alive. That is the beauty of this world.

As people are finding that something is missing in their life and start to identify this emptiness and how to fulfill this need in their life, many are starting to turn to the traditions of the American Indian to satisfy this spiritual hunger. These traditions offer a new awareness of the world around them, but it comes with a responsibility. For someone that has grown up in a traditional community, the workings of this spiritual awareness are ingrained within them as children. They have learned the boundaries of correct action and know the consequences of crossing these boundaries. For others, whether of Native descent or from another race, these boundaries must be learned as an important part of the initial step towards a deeper understanding of this spiritual journey. Some of this information can be learned through books, but the American Indian traditions are an experiential reality. One must experience this knowledge first hand before it can go beyond an intellectual process. One needs a teacher, or person of knowledge, to guide them through this process of opening up to the subtle aspects of reality. That is why it is so difficult for someone to jump into the middle of a traditional community or their ceremonies.

The traditional ways of the American Indian, the Red Path, is a path of knowledge, and with this knowledge comes responsibility and power. To use this knowledge incorrectly can cause harm and even death to the user and/or members of the community. The Briar Rabbit stories offer examples of the consequences of taking things too casual. One must earn the trust of a teacher as well as learn to trust their teacher and their own inner instincts so they will know what is significant to them from the experiences of the world around them. It is human to make mistakes and to learn from these mistakes as part of the growing experience. As one learns the Old Ways, one might find that the wind is one of their helpers. The wind will talk to them. The wind is one of the oldest things in this universe. There is no charge or price placed on the Old Way, but it doesn't come for free, and it isn't easy. Paying attention to and respect for all things is the most important price. One must also be willing to help out in ways that they can. This means finding their place within the community and serving the People with a good atti-

tude. For some this may mean chopping fire wood or cooking. Simple things like this that need to be done makes it easier on the community so that there is more time to share some of the Old Ways with you. Health and happiness are the rewards. This is no small thing. If you are happy then you are more likely to be healthy or to become healthy. There is no conflict of religion or race in the Old Way. Each of us has a purpose to fulfill in this world. But to seek knowledge from someone who is steeped in the ways of the Red Path while insisting on using this knowledge from the attitudes of the Industrial Culture creates a conflict within that person. Many of the spiritual leaders of the American Indian community are seeking ways to help bridge the gap between the Old Way and the Industrial Culture to help those that seek to cross over, but this is a very difficult job and they can't do all of the work. So it is important for each person seeking ways to satisfy their spiritual needs to be willing to share in this work. As I have told many people, you will always be welcomed at an inter-tribal gathering or ceremony if you are willing to work, and you will always be asked back if you conduct yourself in a respectful manner while helping out.

I hope these few words have helped some to understand the need to be patient as they seek spiritual nourishment from the Old Ways. You will always get out of the experience what you put into it. There is always time for fun, joking around, and feasting along the way. One of my favorite sayings, that I made up myself, is that the first one after ceremony is really good. This means that it is from the sacrifices that we make during a spiritual ceremony that we grow in appreciation of the life that we have here. Yes. Wadough.



The Briar Rabbit Papers #4: Spiritual Warriors

Like many words found in the English language today, warrior is a word that was originally two words, war yore. Yore is one of those old words we don't hear very often. It means craft or practice of a craft. To practice the craft of war, one must have discipline. It sounds a little crazy to combine the word, spiritual, with anything to do with war until one examines the craft of war. In the spiritual sense, all wars are internal within the person as well as external. While working on a music and sound tape for a modern dance company in 1988, I was asked to do an interview as part of the advance publicity. The piece was titled Spiritual Warrior, and I knew that I was going to be asked what a spiritual warrior was during the interview. In modern media one needs to have a catchy response that is very simple and only lasts for one sentence. I started researching everything that I could find to supply me with my answer. I found nothing. So I waited until the question came, took in a deep breath, and let it happen. "A Spiritual Warrior is someone who chooses a discipline, and uses that discipline to control fear rather than letting fear control them." That answer was worth all the work that I put into the project. One saying from the Southwest tribes is, "Does your talk grow corn?" That saying grows a lot of corn for me.

In the Old Way, a warrior must respect all of life before they can serve the People in a balanced manner. For men, the best way to learn respect for all of life is to do a vision quest ceremony, or rite of passage, in their mid to late teens. This is where all the traditional teachings will come to focus and the young man will learn to control fear. The best example of a warrior functioning with fear, but in spite of it, in the face of great mystery, is a woman in child birth. The young women learn their ways in the moon lodge from the traditional Grandmothers who have been given the role of teaching them by the Creator. To respect all of life the warrior must be in touch with their heart and all their emotions. The Industrial Culture is based on denial of feelings in order to accumulate material gain. Denial of feelings is done through addictions. In order to make things work for the Industrial Culture the Grandmothers had to be oppressed, the women of childbearing age had to be stopped from going to the moon lodge, and men had to be kept in fear by not allowing them to do vision quest. Most of the diseases we have today will fade when women start observing moon time and men start doing vision quest. This includes cancer, heart disease, and deaths from drunk driving. The three biggest killers in this country today.

The spiritual warrior is disciplined and therefore not controlled by fear. In the Old Way, we ask or suggest that a person do something out of respect for them. We never demand of them. This offers them the freedom of choice and us the freedom of acceptance. This is how we work together for the good of all our Relations. Ho!

The Brier Rabbit Papers #5: Grandmother Wisdom

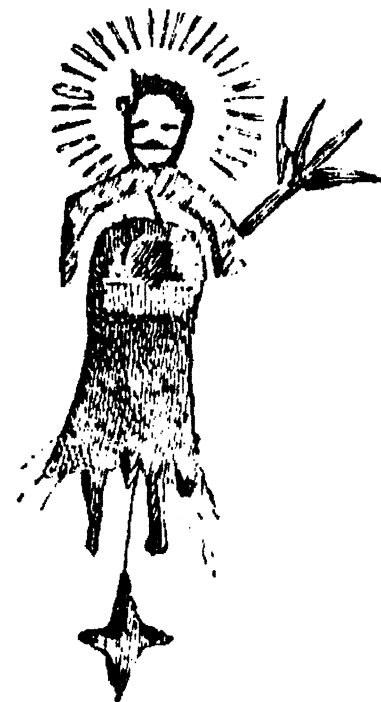
I started writing the Brier Rabbit Papers for a newsletter because I felt like there were some things that needed to be said that weren't getting said. There is an old saying that anytime you see a problem, you also see the solution, or are responsible for finding it. The answer to a question is found within the question. So I took myself to task to try and write these words to offer some insight into what I see isn't being said in the circles I have been a part of where there were folks trying to learn the Old Ways. There hasn't been a lot written about the women's side of things in the Old Way, and I will explain a little about this as latter in the article. There has been even less written by a man that is of any merit and I humbly offer this article with respect to all women and acknowledge that I am way out of my territory here, but do it because, if for no other reason, it offers the men some idea of the importance of respect for women and the traditional ways they might choose to follow that men don't.

Women generally go through their moon cycle at the same time when working or living in close proximity. In the old days a war party could tell if the women of an enemy tribe or village were going through moon time and go around it, or come back later. No defense was needed against a war party while the women were going through their cycle. When the USA army started attacking villages, they had no knowledge on this level and would attack a village with no resistance met during such times. That is a part of moon time that men can talk about today.

Moon time is a part of the great mystery, but the Old Ways are based on thousands of years of observation on what works and what doesn't. As people seek to reconnect with their tribal heritage or seek an understanding of the Old Ways through other tribal teachings, as we all came from a tribal background somewhere back there, moon time is something that's difficult to come to terms with. As a man, I do not tell a woman that she can not do certain things during her moon time. I relate to her that she has great power during that time and can make other people ill and will block the energy of others if she joins the circle during ceremony. If she still chooses to join the circle then I leave. It has been my experience that when women are acknowledge as being special during moon time and have a moon lodge or a quite place to sit that is close enough to stay connected to the circle, they are happy to comply. They are asked to let others do the cooking for feast and have a plate of food brought to them. As long as a person is made to feel comfortable and feels respected, no matter what their situation, they are generally going to respond to what they are asked to do in a positive manner and treat others the same way they get treated when the opportunity arises. This honors the cycles of life and the Circle.

It is better if the women teach each other about moon time, but it is important for the dialogue to go both ways the best that it can so that the men can get some understanding of it and also be able to show their respect to the women. When anthropologist first started interviewing the American Indians, it was a field made up of men for the most part. Am. Indian women would not talk to men about

the teachings from the Grandmothers and that pattern has continued to the large extent. Alice Fletcher was one of the first women to break the pattern and her writings offer some excellent insights into these teachings. It is still very difficult to get Grandmothers to offer teachings beyond private settings and for a very good reason. The Grandmother's wisdom is the most powerful of all teachings. I tell folks, "Keep the Grandmothers happy and you will have a better life." Or to be more honest, "Keep the Grandmothers happy and you will eat good." That is my favorite saying on the topic. Several of the Grandmothers in my circle like my other variation. "Keep the Grandmothers happy and you might live to eat again." They is some strong women. A-ho



The Brier Rabbit Papers #6: The Bad Medicine Blues

There is a good group of folks that come around to the events that take place in this area. We all come from different backgrounds, some from deeply religious Christian upbringing, others from families that drank a lot, and others that had exposure to the Native Ways early on, and some that had all of this and others that fall into the cracks somewhere in between. That is the beauty of a circle like this. Some of us studied many different religions on our path to this Old Way and others studied psychology or Wall Street or some other school of thought that could be called a religion in its own rites as well. One thing that we all appreciate about the Old Way is the balance between the physical and the abstract. An eagle can represent many things or it can be just an eagle. A person can attend a ceremony and as they are leaving they are gifted with a rock. Long after they forget the words or physical sensations in the ceremony, they still have that rock to remind them of what they felt in their heart. We can physically touch some part of The Old Way. We have the Pipe to make our prayers stronger and we can watch the smoke rise up and know that our prayers are being lifted by it.

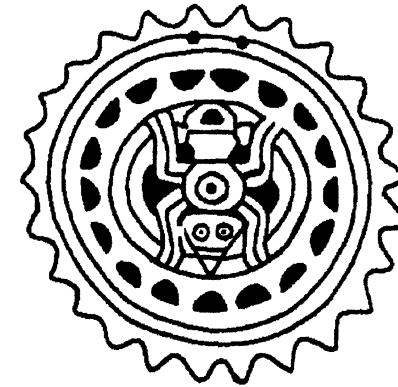
One thing that we never assume is that someone is going to use the Old Way for the good of everyone. Many times one can see a stick or staff that has a fork at one end used as part of a ceremony. The fork shows that there is good and bad in all things and each person has to choose how they will use what they get from the ceremony. Any thing that can be used for the good of the people can be used just as easily for the sole good of one person. Praying for good to come to one's self at the expense of others is what I consider to be the root of all bad medicine. It is the person's intent that focuses the prayer.

Whenever a person starts to learn "medicine", they learn the bad with the good. It is impossible to do otherwise. A good teacher will offer a little knowledge and then wait and see how it will be used. If the person takes this little knowledge and starts to charge for it or use it in the wrong way, that is the end of the teaching until they have corrected their ways and rebuilt the bridge of trust between them and the People. In the martial arts, one of the first things that a person must learn is how to fall down without getting hurt and how to use the fall to their advantage. The same is true with learning Medicine. One must learn that it is real, that it can do great harm or much good, depending on the intent, and it always returns to the sender. One learns how to clean up bad medicine and how to recognize its effects on one's self and others. Just having bad thoughts or sending negative emotional energy toward someone can cause them to get sick. A negative attitude towards a marriage relationship can cause the couple to fight or break up. That is why it is so important to watch our thoughts on a daily basis. It is even more important to watch our thoughts when we pray with the pipe or during any other ceremony because these rituals make our thoughts stronger.

One of the reasons that the "Trickster" stories are so important to the American Indians is because they can demonstrate the effects of trying to get an advantage over someone else through bad thoughts. The Brier Rabbit Stores and

the Coyote Stories are two examples of the many "Trickster" stories one can find in our oral traditions. Bad medicine can cause sickness or other serious harmful effects on others and can even kill, but it always comes back. What goes round comes round. We live this. When we know someone is doing bad medicine, we pray for them. They suffer the hardest disease of all, aloneness. They have put themselves apart from everyone else in order to come to the place where they can justify their actions. They need prayers.

Many years ago I wrote a beautiful poem about the experience of living in harmony with the earth. I don't remember much about the poem, but I do remember this line. "out here, when we pray, we mean it." Make each breath a prayer. Ho!



As the warm days of summer give way to the winter moons, the activities of the tribes of the Woodlands would shift in harmony with the seasons. Stories could be told in the evenings around the fire that could only be told after the snakes and frogs had gone into hibernation and the frost and snows would coat the ground and trees. The thunders had gone south with the birds. There was a reason for reserving this time for telling certain stories. These stories were the models for how life came to be the way it was. In these modern times many story tellers have learned their stories from books that don't include the teachings about the proper time to tell the stories, so the stories are told to meet the schedules of the public school or the other opportunities given to story telling. The stories were originally told in such a way that there was information for the adults sitting around listening as well as the children, so that there was interest in the stories by all age groups. Today, the best story tellers continue this method rather than talk down to the children with a style that leaves little interest in the story for the adults accompanying the children.

The reason for telling the stories in the appropriate season is because the stories have a power of creativity with each telling. Telling them at the wrong time will cause an unbalance in nature. Once again we have an example of how the lack of attention to detail can cause an unbalance. It seems that in these times we are relearning things that have been practiced for many thousands of years. The stories exist for more than just entertainment. They offer a deeper understanding of reality. As the stories were being told during tribal days, the story teller could point to a design on a piece of pottery or in a basket that was a visual example of the topic in the story. Many things in the village were decorated with designs that gave a connection in the everyday life of the people to the stories. In the modern world, there are very few examples of these things to help a person relate to the stories.

Many years ago I started to consider this lack of visual information to go with the stories. I started doing paintings or using the designs in pottery that would offer these designs so a person could bring them into their home. I knew that many of these designs came to the person who created them through dreams or visions. So I became concerned that perhaps these designs might be considered the property of the family of the person who brought them into the world. One night I had a dream where a design appeared to me and told me that the designs had heard my concerns. It told me that no one owned the designs. They belonged to themselves and chose who could use them and, by using them, would bring a good blessing to those that possessed them in the work that they appeared in. The design told me that the designs were very happy with my work and that I could use them without fear of offending anyone that had used them in the past. This dream made me very happy. Tell an old story this winter. Yes.

Some years back I went through a serious physical difficulty. After it was over, I knew that a few things could have been different, and I would not be here any longer. I also knew that it wasn't clear in my mind why I was still here, but there had to be a good reason. So when the time was right, I fasted and prayed for understanding of my purpose, vowing to do so until I had my answer. It took seven days. Not a long time by some standards, but for someone that loves to eat, it was long enough. When a person prays and receives a vision, it is treated with great respect. It isn't talked about in a casual manner and is seldom even mentioned. When it is, it is done in such a way that only a little is revealed because the heart of the vision is also the heart of the person. A person wishing to do harm to someone could do so if they knew their vision and how to use that to harm them. So a vision is treated with the deepest respect. But there is also something about a vision that can be shared with the People, because a vision must ultimately given to a person so they can help the People. So the part of that answer that I can share is that the Ice is coming back, and part of my work is to share what I can that will help the People to survive. An Ice Age is part of the Earth Mother's cycle that lasts 120,000 years, with the ice melting back for 20,000 of those years. We are at the end of the 20,000 years of that stage, and it is time for a new cycle to start.

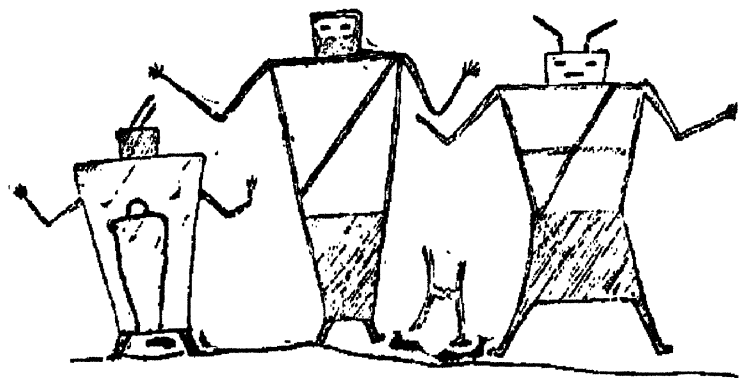
The hardest part of surviving as a People is working together. There are many people that know how to knap flint, make baskets, make pit-fired pottery, and do raw hide, leather, and wood work as well as many of the other related crafts that are a part of the survival skills of the "Stone Age". These can all be taught in a very short time. There are many that know the plants and animals of an area and how to use them. The Industrial Culture has done much to fragment the People and stop them from working together as a unit. Working together is part of a culture. The best time to see People working together is during a sacred ceremony or ritual. So that has been a lot of my focus, even before I did my fast.

Another thing that I got was that I need to do things in the Old Way as much as possible. So when I do prayer ties, I seldom use cotton cloth, but use animal skin instead, as cotton wasn't readily available in Tennessee until several hundred years ago. One of the things that I like about the Old Way is that all the things that came to the People came through vision. I hear a lot of people bemoaning the fact that so much has been lost in the ways of Native culture over the past 500 years, but I know that it all came from somewhere, and when we need it, it will come to us again.

The Native Community was saddened with the loss of one of its own in March, 1995. Tigre Perez had been living his vision for many years, and it was the day after the 7th Annual Songs of the Earth/Eagle Medicine Gathering, that he died of an heart attack in Laredo, Texas. His vision, as he shared with others, was to hold a gathering for four days and pray for unity and peace amongst the People, with the focus being on the Original People of the Americas, but open to all that were respectful of the Ancient Traditions. I was blessed to be able to attend the

second one in 1988 in Valley Center, California, and again in 1995. It was a beautiful thing to see people from many tribes from South America, Central America, and North America gather, pray, and share for those four days. Many lacked a common language, so talks moved slowly as translators helped bridge the language barrier. At many of the gatherings there were spiritual leaders from Tibet, Japan, and several European countries as well. This gathering will continue under the leadership of a Council of Elders, many of whom have worked closely with Tigre since the gatherings started. The gatherings will be held outside of Laredo in late March around the Spring Equinox. If anyone is interested in attending, I would strongly urge that they do so.

One of the reasons that it is so important to be able to attend these gatherings, or to be able to support a representative from your community when you can't attend, is because it is a blessing to be able to experience the sense of community and inter-tribal unity that comes about during a time when there is so much conflict within communities and between communities. As we go to these gatherings of spiritual unity and bring back the blessings and share them with other, the blessings are spread around and help in healing all the People. That is why a vision like this is so important and needs everyone's support. Thank you. wadough.



The Brier Rabbit Papers #9: A Winter Meditation

It was a nice warm, sunny day today. I was able to get out and gather some fire wood for the sweat lodge. The lodge is near a grove of trees with a lot of dead bottom limbs. There are also some dead trees that need to be cleared out. By trimming the trees and clearing out those that need to come out, I am doing something to improve the area so it isn't such a thicket, as well as doing something that will help the People. I like to keep a little firewood ahead in case it is needed when someone needs to do a sweat and may not be able to help out. I generally like for folks to do what they can, because one get out of something what they put into it. So when I am doing something extra like this, I like to be able to see that I am doing something for my family and I, and not just "The People". It is good to find the balance so I don't feel like a martyr. When you do something for the People, it is okay to consider yourself one of the People. That is what I like about the Old Way. So I was having a good time working, spending time with my daughter, thinking good thoughts, and thinking about what to write for this paper. I didn't know why, but I felt like I needed to make sure there was enough wood for a sweat. Around 10 o'clock this evening I go an idea about what might be going on. A friend called to say her mother-in-law had passed on and asked if I could do a sweat for some of the family if it worked out. Not a very good time to tell someone they would need to help provide the wood. It's times like this when the "rules" get to be about as broke as I am.

Interesting thing is, I got to tell my friend about a dream I had last week that her husband was in. He doesn't profess to have much in the way of spiritual beliefs. He finds comfort in nature and likes to take hiking trips in the mountains. I have a lot of respect for his views. I don't indulge in many beliefs myself. If you know something, you don't have to believe in it, so that is how I get away with the lack of a belief system. I really like being out in the woods more than being around people, but if you will bear with me, I will bear with you. That is part of the reason that I have respect and appreciation for this man. Actually he was on an extended hike in the Smokies when he felt the need to cut it short. When my friend went to pick him up, she had to tell him the bad news about his mother. But back to the dream. It was in this setting where there was a feast going on with a lot of folks I have known through the years. Everyone was visiting and having a good time. I had this "message" that I needed to share with everyone and was trying to get them into a circle. Not having much luck at getting everyone into one room on my own, this man started trying to help. We never got everyone together. They would not listen. The message was, "If you don't follow the teachings of the Old Way as presented in The Celestine Prophecies, you won't make it into the next millennium." A rather strange message, I thought, after I woke up. The Natives in South America call the information contained in the Celestine Prophecies the Indian Chronicles. I call the book, The Celestial Seasonings book, because it is as much about packaging as it is content. If you haven't read the book, it bears reading, but you have to keep the content separate from the author's personal stuff and the publisher's

packaging. Not an easy task, I admit, but a worthwhile exercise. A similar feat might be to read the King James version of the Bible to see what Jesus had to say about reincarnation. It is in there, in spite of all the rewrites, but you have to look for it.

As I have written in earlier Papers, I started out writing the Brier Rabbit Papers because I saw the need. I felt like there were a lot of people that were seeking their Indian heritage or were wanting to learn from Indian culture, and I could offer some insight that might help them find their way. I also felt that some folks that were practicing traditional ways could use some suggestions on how to respond to those coming to them. I hoped my writing might serve as a bridge between two very different worlds. Maybe it has. I really don't know. One thing that I got from my dream is that it is time to stop trying to pass on messages to those that aren't listening. So maybe it is time for me to take a break. Maybe it is time for someone else to offer their views on things. Or maybe it is time for folks to let me know that they appreciate the Papers. I don't know. I would like to think that when the time comes when I really need it, someone would be willing to gather firewood for me. It's nice to think that. I don't know if that would happen or not, though.

There is one thing that you could do though. If there is a spiritual leader, an elder, or a grandmother in your community, call them up or go by and see if there is anything you can do to help them out. They aren't going to call on you unless they really need help. I mean "life or death" help, and maybe not even then. One reason they don't ask for help is because it could compromise their position. When they ask for help, they are beholden to you. Then they can't be impartial when you ask them for guidance or council. If you ask for something for the wrong reason, and they owe you, it is real hard for them to say "no". So that is one reason they never ask for help. That is why so many of them suffer in silence. All you have to do is pay attention, make yourself available, and see that their physical needs are being met. They will be better able to see that your spiritual needs are met in return. That is the Old Way.

A few years ago I went to a gathering where the Grandmothers were suppose to talk about the Prophecies. They didn't talk about earthquakes, tornadoes, or the stock market crashing. They didn't talk about this vision someone had 800 years ago about the coming tribulations. They talked about family values, sharing, and working together as a community. They invited everyone to their camp for coffee. I learned a lot from those Grandmothers. I enjoyed some good coffee also. I left the gathering disappointed that my expectations weren't met. It took me a month to finally get it. They were talking about the part of the Prophecies no one else is talking about. How to survive the hard times. They know their teachings very well. They live them every day. A-ho!

(20/20 Hindsight: When I wrote this article, it really became my statement of resignation from writing articles for the Bare Wisdom newsletter, although that wasn't my intent. I got a few responses from 300+ readers. This wasn't an ego trip or power game on my part. I am a person that honors my dreams when practical. I still have some things to say, and will, but I can't give them away and get nothing back. I live on a two way street. A-ho!)

The Brier Rabbit Papers #10: The Give-Away

While writing these articles, I asked a few friends for feedback and suggestions as to topics I should write about. One request was for something on the practice of a give-away. The give-away is done to honor a person or event in the Old Way. There are many times and ways that this is done. Almost every ritual or ceremony includes a give-away. When a family member dies, a give-away is done to honor their life and to express grief. When a person acts in an heroic manner, they are honored with an eagle feather or some other article to show appreciation for their willingness to put their life on the line for the People. In the Old Way, the person that gives away the largest per cent of their belongings is held in the highest esteem rather than the person that accumulates the most material possessions.

Attend a few ceremonies and you will see why this topic is of some concern in modern times. In generations passed, the give-away consisted of articles that were of some practical use. Now days, after a ceremony, a blanket is placed in an area and folks put articles on it that are available for anyone to take. Many times the blanket looks like someone cleaned out their garage or attic of all the useless and wornout things they could no longer justify keeping. Part of the spirit of the give-away is to give away one's best or something that reflects their heart and the blessing that has come to them for having been a part of the ceremony. It isn't uncommon to hear the person who hosted a ceremony complain afterwards that they had to haul off a truck load of garbage that was left on the blanket. This is a reflection of how people are treating the spirit of the ceremony.

A few years ago I heard of a situation where a man brought his family from the Pine Ridge reservation to lead a ceremony for some folks in Ohio. When he got ready to leave they gave him \$50.00 to get home on. That barely covered his gas money to get across the state line. One of the cars broke down on the way home and he had to call everyone he knew, hoping someone would wire him some money. My response to that situation was to say that this showed that those people were spiritually bankrupt. Sometimes I think that people that attend ceremonies think that spiritual leaders get a check in the mail once a week just for being spiritual leaders.

I am a pipe smoker. Tobacco is one of the few "vices" that I indulge in. It must be in my DNA. Ha! A few years ago after a ceremony in South Dakota, I gave away my pipe to a friend that lives out there. It took several months before I found a new one to replace it. It was a well loved and well used pipe. The condition of the pipe wasn't the importance of the give-away. I gave up enjoying that pipe to express how good it felt to be there. I was giving away something that was dear to my heart. It is still being used and enjoyed. Now I have half a dozen pipes friends have given me. That is part of the blessing of a give-away. It comes back around. Give something close to your heart. Give something that you made. Give a little bit extra beyond the expected. Remember that ultimately, whatever you give away is what you will be getting back. And some folks wonder why they carry so much spiritual garbage around with them. Wadough.

