

RED ROAD SPRING MESSAGE 2024



Once again, I refer to Richard Wagamese's earlier version of his thoughts in *EMBERS* 2016; that were still so very focused on the *spirit*; often referred to as the *Breath of life*...in our various nations...

ONE WINDY DAY in summer, many summers ago, a hawk hurled straight down at me. Ten feet above my head, she spread her wings and stopped in mid-dive.. I heard the whoosh of her wings against the sound of the wind and the exhalation of my own breath. Three things collided in an instant. Wind, hawk, breath. There was no separation. We were connected.

Joined by air. In the flash of that sacred moment. I understood what it is to be alive: to be connected, to be aware of that connection, to be grateful for it. To breathe, is to take in the wind of all breath. To exhale slowly is to open myself and glide over everything I feel.

-----Richard Wagamese, *EMBERS*

Some of our Elders say that our little breath is tied to the little whirlwind, to the 4 direction wind, to the solar winds between the Earth and the Sun; and ultimately to the motion, big wind, that turns our galaxy.

Wind brings change. Lord knows we have had lots of that in this past year. Most of it *great* change; change that has been in the works for years; finally at a state of fruition. As Red Road continues to grow and evolve...change is the constant; *daily*...exhilarating exciting and EXHAUSTING...however, we have ceremony to adjust our resilience thermometer; as we propel ourselves into a new day for our buffalo people, our buffalo nation; pte oyate or tatanka oyate – celebrating, *adjusting* to this new degree of evolution; as the buffalo herd gains momentum and purpose; beyond the gate; beyond the restrictions of the colonial world!! Out to the pastures of freedom and revitalization; to be everything the Creator of the Universe meant our people to be; where the deer and the antelope play; WHERE SELDOM IS HEARD A DISCOURAGING WORD.....and skies...you get the picture...exciting times indeed...prophetic times...where belief, spirit and energy collide as Richard Wagamese states above...

Taku wakan skan skan....something holy moving...Mitakuye Oyasin...we are all related...plant animal, people, purpose, thought...to meld...to bring holiness back to our everyday life...ODAT

Simultaneously, the Earth and Creator have the last say with respect to everything!! Like THE WEATHER !!!

Something we could predict at one time...accept the things you cannot change...

Who knew we would have -40 C (with and without wind chill) for 10 days mid January 2024. Red Road was flooded with emergency calls. Even staff had furnaces go out. Vehicles would not start! Continual worry and concern about those families with little children -our restoring home fires initiative took on a whole new direction.



Joanne was struggling!!! (Till she got back to prayer!! LOL)

HOWEVER; we did initiate our tipi village out at Maskwacis; with Elders George and Celina Saddleback and Adrian Whitford. Our youth have come to understand the values necessary in acquiring and putting together a tipi, a home. They have come to know through a number of sharing circles with Elders; the power of prayer. Our next venture after creating space for tipi village, workshops and security needs; is to go out and get poles next weekend; and then bring them to the site and start peeling. This is truly *exciting, exhilarating, and exhausting in a good way!!* Joanne lived in a tipi for a winter near Rocky; cutting and hauling chinook kill pine into fence posts for Rocky Mountain Wood Preservers. She often refers to as her birthplace; as nothing made sense in her life until then...one of the many displaced aspects of generational trauma.



This village is for those Indigenous homeless folks:
who are committed to their sobriety;
who are ready willing and able to rekindle their relationship to Mother Earth;
who want to learn ceremony, and, share with Elders;
and, who in turn are dedicated to helping others onto that good red road.
In other words, those folks who wish to become true Akicita, Oskapewis.

The goal here is to create sustainability for our Indigenous folks lost in the big cities. This pilot has been kindly funded by the Archdiocese of Edmonton.

We've also resurrected our Moon Gatherings this year in our tipi on the first floor. This has been wonderful for our First Nation, Metis and Inuit women enrolled at YTCEP; our staff and those referred from other agencies in The Orange Hub TOH; and across the city; especially if they are already living in the west end.

On a lighter note, in January alone, we had a number of folks with birthdays; so we treated them to a dinner that helped everyone get a break from the weather, and concentrate on next steps.

We received more dollars for our Restoring Home Fires initiative; hence, we can be a little more creative moving forward.



Meetings for the 4th TRG are in place and the poster should be available the beginning of May 2024.

There were a series of medical issues with some of our staff; however, thankfully everyone is okay.

Our kids have been more involved this year on Thursday afternoons (when they have that afternoon off at their respective schools) with Elders and sharing circles, vision boards and co-creating the tipi village.

Pro bono legal work continues, and a number of folks have had notarization and advice on legal matters for free.

We arranged a Keeping and Releasing of the Soul through Arvol Looking Horse for our late Elder Clifford George Pompana at Standing Buffalo; since the Keeper of our sacred pipe would be there for their commemoration on their first year of self governance. Many of these ceremonies are not up here- so we are slowly schooling those that do not know. Very powerful for us at Red Road. Clifford's mother was from Standing Buffalo; so it was fitting that the ceremony should take place there.



Children Services, the ministry, came to see us in action! We toured the whole HUB and the Black Canadian Women in Action (upstairs from us) totally embraced Red Road; with their comradery, and discussion; of how our summer programs are shared with each others teachings!! AND what will we do this year together! So great working with those gals; a natural mind meld. No promotive plan about us meeting that day; however, automatic understanding of what needs to be shared and discussed going forward. What a treat!!

Our website is sorely lacking; however, I have been reassured it will be better.



AND we have our funding that was cut last year; restored and increased this year. I have stopped trying to figure all of this out. Our part is to be accountable for the funds we do receive. Thanks to our new financial folks on board now...this is very achievable.

Finally, we have developed a number of new initiatives this past year; specifically, for men by men. These are growing beautifully! Please look at our website towards the end of May, 2024 for updates.

I love this poem though by a colonial...it seems to apply to our Indigenous fighting the good fight for our dignity, integrity beauty strength and courage...Judy Dench recites it in SKYFALL, one of my favorite Bond movie: I think we can Indigenize; that is , we have many tired warriors; however, when we gather *for the purpose of a good life* for our generations to come, we seem to surface with the direction, guidance, knowledge and wisdom that we need to keep moving forward....

*We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven,
that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate,
but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

Tennyson

