

Wellbriety Movement



Recovery Services Coaches A Guide of Roles and Responsibilities

This guide provides additional information for peers in the recovery movement. The guide will help these peers to function as Recovery Services Coaches. Recovery Services Coaches provide recovery support services as peers to others in recovery. Their primary function is to provide emotional, social, instrumental, and community referral support to reduce the occurrence of relapse or “slips.” This document outlines the roles, responsibilities, code of ethics, and information for peers in the Native American recovery community to assist others in their recovery journey.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
www.samhsa.gov

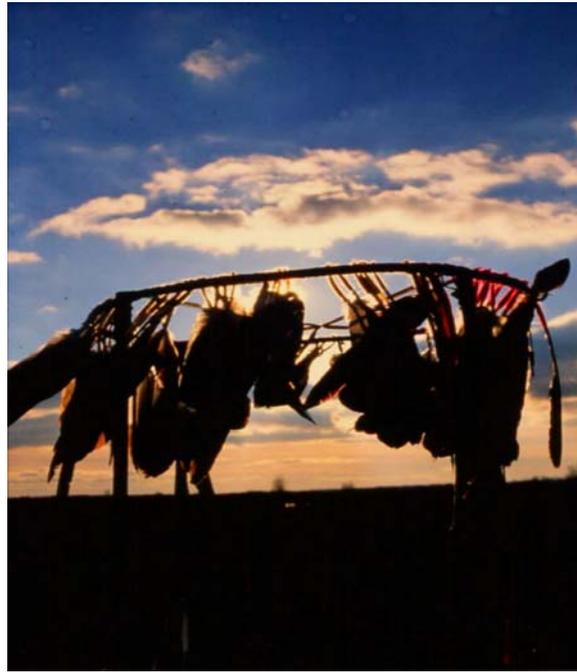
The Recovery Services Coaching program to prevent relapse is supported in part through the Recovery Community Support Program III grant from the Centers for Substance Abuse Treatment (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration).



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Where have the elders gone?...Where are they, the people who are supposed to be leading us? Annabelle Eagle, Ute



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I realized who I was, where I came from and that I would return to my people. Regis Pecos, Cochita Pueblo





Preventing Relapse through Recovery Support Services

Relapse Prevention and Recovery Support

Relapse prevention is an important aspect of recovery support. One of the roles of the Firestarters is to provide assistance to those who slip and to help create a system of ongoing social, emotional and spiritual support as individuals, especially those just returning from treatment or incarceration. Some of the research being done on relapse support and pathways to recovery point to the need for a variety of support needs on the part of individuals in recovery. Bill White, Senior Researcher from the Chestnut Health Systems in Bloomington, Illinois provides the following list:

We are finding that the keys to enhancing post-treatment / post-incarceration recovery outcomes are the following:

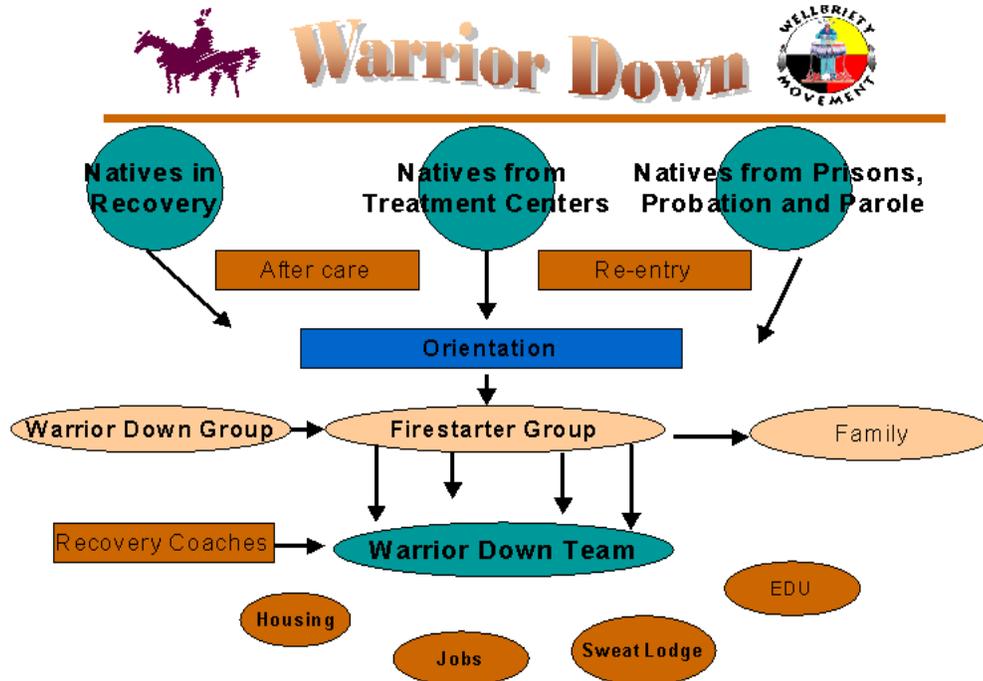
- 1) “Continuity of contact and support:” What that means is that there is a single person or team of people who establish a relationship with the individual while he or she is in treatment or incarcerated and then follow them out into the community and remain with them through the transitions into the community and into recovery.
- 2) High intensity monitoring during the first 90 days following discharge/release (the period of highest risk of relapse)
- 3) Sustained monitoring with phased down intensity with good functioning, but increased intensity in face of any early warning signs of lapse.
- 4) Early re-intervention to prevent high risk situations or lapses from escalating to full relapses.
- 5) Responsibility for contact is with the recovery coach, not the person leaving treatment or jail (we refer to this as “assertive continuing care”).
- 6) Critical recovery coach functions seem to be monitoring, support and encouragement, stage-appropriate recovery education and guidance, assertive linkage to local communities of recovery... linkage to indigenous healers/Elders, consultation on problems in sober living, and early re-intervention.

From the perspective of the Wellbriety Movement, it is important to address the issue of relapse prevention and to develop a response system. There are two aspects of the response system that has been developed: The Warrior Down program and the expansion of the Firestarter role to include recovery services coaching.



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Overview of the Warrior Down Program:

Warrior Down is a relapse prevention program designed for Native Americans who are currently in recovery, who have recently been released from treatment or who have been recently released from prison or jail. It is our experience, that many of these individuals need additional recovery support, social services and other community resources when they re-enter the community.

One of the functions of “Warrior Down” is that it will be a part of pre-release from prison and/treatment centers. In other words, the group will have a Warrior Down “Messenger” who will visit the prison or treatment center. In this way, information about the program will be available before individuals are released. Our view is that “every person is gold.” This means that we need to do everything possible to help individuals re-enter the community as sober and healthy contributors. We understand the challenges of recovery, and the issues involved in “slipping.” If a person is in danger of “slipping,” the members of the Warrior Down support team go find them and help them get back on track. The person who has slipped is the Warrior Down. The Warrior Down team are the specially trained Recovery Services Coaches that help them.

Once individuals arrive in the community, they are invited to a Warrior Down orientation which will explain the education programs, referral network, social and emotional support network provided by the Recovery Services Coaches. Each person will be assigned community members (others in recovery) to be their support team. This could include an Elder, if they have no car, someone who will take them to the sweat lodge, someone to call them everyday, or someone to take them to meetings, a sponsor (see the list of support services on the chart on page X). The main purpose is to show there is someone in the community who cares. Another aspect of the Warrior Down program is to hold a formal re-entry ceremony. Those in the Warrior Down group will be invited to a ceremony where they will receive a new Indian name.



The Role of the Recovery Services Coach

Recovery Services Coaches play an important advocacy and support role in the Recovery Support system. A Recovery Services Coach is someone who has agreed to assist others in their recovery journey and help them avoid relapses, or help them get back on track after a slip. Recovery Services Coaches are “peers.” This means that they have “been there.” They have experienced the, struggles, successes, joys, and hope of the recovery process. These individuals know how important it is to have a support system that includes emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual support. They know how important it is that friends and family know what the person in recovery is going through so that they can help in the process. These individuals also know that recovery is not a short term process. It takes time. There are critical incidents at anytime of the day or night. The willingness of these Recovery Services Coaches to be available can mean the difference between someone’s successful re-entry into healthy and sober community life, or a return to the prison of addiction.

Recovery Services Coaches are not professional counselors. This means that they only speak from their strength, experience and hope. They do not provide therapy. However, they do help the individual in recovery find the mental health services that might be important. Coaches help the individual to create a supportive web that might include a spiritual elder, contact information for social and family services, mental health, medical services, vocational training, transportation, child care, professional growth education, and information about local sweat lodge ceremonies.

When Recovery Services Coaches elect to become certified as Firestarters, they also facilitate Medicine Wheel and 12 Step curriculum in their communities for men, for women and for adult children of alcoholics. Some also facilitate this curriculum for Al-Anon members.

During the first year of the project, Recovery Services Coaches (Firestarters) are encouraged to participate in the Government Program Reporting Act (GPRA) data collection procedure. The following activities are included in this procedure: (1) completion of a GPRA consent form; (2) Completion data collection tool, Targeted Capacity Expansion Client Level GPRA Tool at the completion of the training; (3) Participation in the 6 month follow up survey; (4) Participation in the 12 month follow-up survey. (Participation in this data collection process is essential for the funding of this project).



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Tasks for Recovery Services Coaches

- ◆ Share personal story with individual/family
- ◆ Inspire confidence in the individual's ability to change
- ◆ Help to find resources to solve immediate problems
- ◆ Help family to learn about the experience their loved one is going through in their recovery journey.
- ◆ Help the individual to create a circle of support (family members, Elders, therapist, social worker, physician, friends, etc.)
- ◆ Assist the individual and family in developing a plan for recovery
- ◆ Provide referral to appropriate resources and education at various stages of recovery
- ◆ Assist individual with acquiring appropriate documents such as driver's license, food stamps etc.
- ◆ Identify sobriety based social activities in the community
- ◆ Locate culturally appropriate recovery activities such as sweat lodge, sober drum groups, special ceremonies
- ◆ Monitor individual and family members using a schedule of face-to-face, telephone, or email contact.
- ◆ Provide regular feedback, encouragement and support to individual and family members
- ◆ Provide early intervention to help individual overcome the urge to relapse
- ◆ Assist individual in getting back on track when "slips" occur.
- ◆ Provide reassurance and support to family members when "slips" occur.
- ◆ Encourage the individual to reach out to others in recovery and to provide encouragement and support to others



Creating a Circle of Care



- ◆ Encourage the individual to participate in culturally appropriate support programs and traditional ceremonies to assist with recovery
- ◆ Encourage individual and his or her family to create a spiritual support system.
- ◆ Participate in community efforts to develop sober activities
- ◆ Participate in community efforts to create an awareness of the importance of Wellbriety and wellness
- ◆ Participate in the community to develop recovery support groups and mentors in local workplaces, community centers, and schools.

For those who are also Firestarters, the following are important functions:

- ◆ Implement local Circles of Recovery community centers, churches, probation offices, half-way houses, after-school programs, mental health centers, treatment centers, women's shelters, libraries, wellness centers, on college campuses, in family service centers throughout the community.
- ◆ Register local Circles of Recovery and Circles of Tradition on the White Bison Inc. website (www.whitebison.org).
- ◆ Develop a listing of local contacts for counseling, medical services, crisis centers, law enforcement, treatment and recovery support.
- ◆ Assist peers in developing a personal support network to assist them in their recovery journey.
- ◆ Identify, coordinate, and provide emotional, informational, instrumental and companionship support services for individuals in recovery and their family members.
- ◆ Participate with other peers in creating partnerships, coordinating local services and developing community based events that celebrate recovery and help to change community norms and attitudes about the success of treatment and recovery.
- ◆ Conduct themselves according to the Ethics of the Wellbriety Movement
- ◆ Monitor activities to ensure that participant protection and confidentiality are observed.
- ◆ Peers are expected to develop their coaching, mentoring and facilitation skills by participating in the weekly online talking circles or discussion boards, communicating with White Bison by phone or email, and by attending yearly conferences.



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Recovery Support Services Provided by Recovery Services Coaches (Firestarters)

Emotional	Informational	Instrumental	Companionship
Wellbriety Sweat lodges and other ceremonial support	Facilitate the process and content of weekly Circles of Recovery (Medicine Wheel and 12 Steps and Native American Children of Alcoholics) and Circles of Tradition (SOT, DOT, Family Series)	Create carpools and arrange for transportation to meetings/to treatment;	Social events that go around the clock during holidays normally associated with alcohol: New Years, Thanksgiving, Christmas
Elders and other spiritual leaders as a local resource for recovery support	Coordinate the creation of lending libraries for Recovery Support and parenting resources.	Coordinate volunteers to provide childcare for meetings and events	Coordinate volunteers to provide childcare for meetings and events
Weekly Talking circles (these can focus around any topic that the group needs: reinforce relapse and slipping prevention, family support, recovery support, personal growth support, self-esteem support, youth support)	Web site support from Center for Wellbriety at www.whitebison.org (includes Wellbriety Online magazine, Firestarter -RSC support pamphlets, online store, discussion board, weekly online talking circles)	Personal Support Networks to encourage people to attend Circle meetings; treatment sessions; and to remind other peers about important health prevention screenings	Tournaments and sports events; such as Wellbriety Runs, relays, picnics, horseshoes, basketball, hockey
Personal support networks to encourage and support individual recovery efforts	Study groups around Red Road to Wellbriety Book and other recovery resource materials (i.e. Wellbriety Online Magazine, or Well Nations magazine)	Connections with local faith based and community organizations to encourage people to participate;	Wellbriety Feasts (weekly or monthly to maintain connections)
Create a Sobriety Drum	Local potlucks and events with Recovery Speakers	Identification of local services and resources for prevention, treatment, intervention, and recovery.	Wellbriety Christmas Tree celebration (includes Wellbriety walk)



Participant Protection Policies RCSP III 2004-2008

1. Privacy and confidentiality: “What is said in the circle stays in the circle.” The confidentiality of all participants (especially those who participate in Circle meetings) is to be protected at all times. Only first names are to be used. Membership of Circles is not to be published or shared. Only the name of the Circle, city (community location), and contact information is posted on the website when Circles are registered. No additional data is to be collected or maintained, unless agreed to by each member of the Circle.

2. Lack of Coercion: Participation in all Wellbriety activities is voluntary. The trainings that are a part of the RCSP III to develop the skills of peers to serve as Recovery Services Coaches and those that are designed to develop the skills of the stakeholders are strictly voluntary. Recovery Services Coaches make a personal commitment to serve in that role for four years.

3. Fair selection of participants: All of those who wish to learn the Medicine Wheel and 12 Step process are welcome in the Circles of Recovery. No one is to be excluded because of race, ethnicity, disability, recovery method, stage, approach, language, cultural approach, spiritual or faith-based approach, age, gender or sexual orientation. Those who wish to focus on specific issues may create a Circle that addresses those issues.

4. Adequate consent procedures: Consent forms or release forms must be obtained before any pictures, or interview data can be published for promotional purposes. All youth who participate in the Daughters of Tradition, Sons of Tradition, or Children of Alcoholics programs will be required to complete a parental consent form (these are included with each of the program materials).

5. Notification of Risks/Benefits: Recovery Services Coaches will inform participants in the Circles of Recovery of the risks and the benefits of participation. They will also inform participants of the methods used to reduce the risk, such as privacy and confidentiality, use of release forms and the development of personal support networks. In addition, Recovery Services Coaches will ensure that a list of recovery support resources (such as faith-based, community-based, or spiritual counseling; local shelters, local resources for recovery support, mental health, medical services, and grassroots resources to assist with recovery)

6. Protection of Recovery Services Coaches (Firestarters) and Circle Participants from Risk: Recovery Services Coaches (Firestarters) and Circle participants will use only their first names and last initials for identification. Introductions will be made in the following manner: “Hello, my name is Mary, and I work the 12 Steps.”

7. Data Collection: Any data that is collected by the Circles of Recovery must be agreed upon by the members of that group and steps must be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the information and the privacy of the individual and their families.





Wellbriety Code of Ethics

1. Focus on service: We are here to serve. Those whom we serve deserve our best attention and our best consideration. For this reason we listen to their needs.
2. Facilitating growth and development: Each training program, product, and recovery resource is designed to enhance the individual's growth and development. Each opportunity to interact with others enables those individuals to share their experience, hope and strength. This process is extended to the family and to the community.
3. Importance of Self-determination: We respect the culture, rights and autonomy of each individual and each community. We provide support for the changes that individuals, families and communities request.
4. A focus on processes, principles, and strategies: We provide principles and guidelines that peers can implement for themselves within their own communities and cultures. We explore and develop strategies that address the spiritual basis of individual, family and community change. We provide the opportunity for the Native American recovery community to make their needs and wishes known through an ongoing dialogue that takes place in person, through the mail, by phone and by electronic means.
5. Peer delivery and peer led: All products, services, trainings, and resources are designed and developed by peers in the Native American recovery community. Thus they are designed to share the strength, experience, and hope of those who have found their own recovery journey to bring health, positive change, and a sense of profound joy. The core of the "peer" delivery, "peer" led orientation is that there are no "experts" and there are no authorities to detract from the individual's dignity and self-reliance. Participants have the opportunity to change, adapt and develop the resources to fit their own stage of recovery and their own cultural needs.
6. Respect, Safety, Trust and Confidentiality: All facilitators, volunteers, and staff are trained to honor and respect the individuality, safety and confidentiality of those who participate in the Wellbriety movement. "What is said in the circle stays in the circle" is a key theme for the Circles of Recovery. We recognize that participants bring their own knowledge, experience and expertise concerning their recovery needs and their situation.



7. Inclusion and interconnectedness: The Medicine Wheel and 12 Step program is open to people in all stages of recovery and who are recovering from any type of addictive process. Individual members of Circles of Recovery introduce themselves by demonstrating how they are in the process of recovery: “Hello, my name is Sam T. and I work the 12 Steps.” No person is to be excluded because of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, language, age, sexual orientation, faith, or recovery approach or issue. However, members of a Circle may define the focus of their Circle to address specific issues.

8. Confidentiality: Because of the stigma associated with alcoholism, substance abuse and even recovery and Wellbriety (in some cases), it is the practice and the policy of all programs and trainings conducted on behalf of the Circles of Recovery and the Wellbriety Movement to keep the names and contact information of the peer participants confidential. These are not shared with any organization. Facilitators and participants in the Circles of Recovery maintain a sense of anonymity by using their first name and last initial as part of their introduction. In addition, participant applications are kept confidential and secure. Information about participants in the Circles of Recovery program is not shared with others outside the organization.

9. Neutrality: It is the policy and the practice of all White Bison staff , when working with communities, to remain neutral in relation to local tribal politics and national political events and trends.



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Risk Identification and Participant Protection

Risks Associated with Participating as a Recovery Services Coach:

The individual participating as a Recovery Services Coach could be exposed to the following risks:

- Participant's issues/problems beyond expertise of peer provider
- Potential for mental anguish and/or reoccurrence of a mental condition (e.g., PTSD).
- Potential for relapse and/or destabilization.
- Public disclosure may expose program participants/volunteers to stigma & discrimination.
- Understanding that the peers in this project do not provide professional counseling or therapy services.
- Exclusion from program and/or services based on physical ability, gender, sexuality, age, race/ethnicity.
- Unfair "targeting" of population for participation based on physical ability, gender, sexuality, age, race/ethnicity.

Efforts to reduce and mediate these risks:

The following resources and instructions are available to assist Recovery Services Coaches and Firestarter facilitators to reduce or prevent those risks from occurring:

- Providing risk prevention and participant protection information during specific trainings in order to address ethics, participant protection, confidentiality, risks and protective factors.
- Providing ongoing mentoring will be provided by Peer Trainers/WB Staff through phone contact, email, online discussion board, chat room, weekly online talking circles at www.whitebison.org.
- Providing a Recovery Services Coach a list of functions and ideas for developing resources for a local support and referral network.
- Recommendations for ensuring confidentiality for self and others.
- Every effort is being made to include members of the recovery community regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, recovery approach, treatment approach, relationship to person in recovery, personal growth needs, recovery issue or stage of recovery.
- Implement a "Do No Harm" approach.
- Provide training for project staff/volunteers on nature and boundaries of peer services.
- Have an ethics policy and plan, and train project staff/volunteers in ethics for peer services.
- Provide training for project staff on referral to other community (peer and professional) services.
- Develop and communicate guidelines for individuals who are both peers and professionals.





History of Native American Approaches to Treatment and Resistance to Alcohol

Excerpts from a Presentation by
William L. White (September 2003)*



We also had the emergence of Native methods of treating alcoholism, using many of the traditional methods, including plant-based medicines. One of these include hot tea, which is the first evidence we have in history of somebody actually conceptualizing an anti-craving agent for alcoholism, which, as many of you know, is the current rage in biomedical research.

Long before anybody heard of the drug disulfone, or antabuse, there were Native tribes using a concoction from the roots of the Trumpet vine that created an aversive reaction to alcohol, not unlike antabuse. What saddens my heart is the other vague references to medicinal treatment of alcoholism—but we don't know what those were because those have been lost. It makes me wonder how many treatments for alcoholism may have been lost in the loss of traditional Native medicine rituals.
Native Revitalization Movements

One of the most significant responses among Native American tribes was the rise of culturally indigenous religious revitalization movements that are abstinence based. These movements constitute the first organized recovery mutual aid societies in the world. The very first mutual aid societies for recovery from alcoholism begin not in Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, or the Washingtonians, or in the reform clubs of the 19th Century, but begin in Native America a full century before then. The germinating conditions for these societies include the loss of Native lands, military defeat, epidemic disease, poverty and hunger, and cultural demoralization. It was in these conditions that we begin to see a dramatic increase of alcohol problems and what today we would call alcoholism. In that context, we had individuals who, within their traditions, began to isolate themselves, began to fast, began to go into the deserts and forests and mountains and plains, isolating themselves, having powerful visionary experiences, and sharing their visions with the people. Those visions became the soil out of which arose these new abstinence based recovery circles.



*Bill White was a keynote speaker at the 4th Annual Circles of Recovery Conference in Albuquerque, NM in September of 2003. His entire presentation printed Wellbriety Online! Magazine Summer 2003, Volume 4(23) and Summer 2003, Volume 4(24). Read the related article in *Counselor*:

Coyhis, D. and White, W.L. (2002) Addiction and Recovery in Native America: Lost History, Enduring Lessons. *Counselor*, October, 16-20



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The earliest recovery *circles*, and they were referred to as circles, were organized by a prophetess by the name of Wyoming Woman who began to castigate alcohol and began to articulate alcohol as a vehicle of destruction of Native cultures. She called on the Delaware to abstain from all alcohol and reject all other trappings of European culture.

That movement is followed very quickly by other prophets by the names of Papoonan, Wangomen, and perhaps most significantly, Neolin, in 1755. He probably has the most fully organized sobriety based support structure for people in recovery from alcoholism in this early period.

As we move forward we get to the late 1700's and perhaps a kind of archetype of these movements is that of the Handsome Lake movement. Handsome Lake was born in 1735 among the Turtle Clan of the Seneca Indians in what is now the State of New York. To be honest, he lived an absolute degenerate and debauched life. At the age of 65, in 1799, he is filled with bitterness and resentment towards his family and his tribe. He is in the midst of a long, extended binge on trade whiskey, like a thousand others that he's been through, and it seemed that at this point in time he had actually died. His body became cold and he stopped breathing. Hours later as the preparations were beginning for his funeral, he suddenly awoke and announced that he had died and gone to the Creator and that the Creator had instructed him and sent him back with a message for Native people.



This is a person being sent back who has no credibility within his tribe. This is a person sent back who has no history of leadership. And yet, when he awakes from this drunken binge, awakes from this death-like experience, and when he awakes, the message that he will give will take 125 pages to record when it is finally recorded in 1913.

I would like to give you a very brief piece of this. These are some of the first core words from what is going to become the Code of Handsome Lake that will be the first and probably one of the most fully organized abstinence-based frameworks of recovery—what will evolve into the Longhouse religion. Here are the words from the Code of Handsome Lake.

He says, "The first word is One'ga," which is really the term for whiskey or rum. "This word stands for a great and monstrous evil and has reared a high mound of bones. You lose your minds, and One'ga causes it all. Many are too fond of it, so all must say, I will use it nevermore as long as I live, as long as the number of my days is, I will never use it again. I now stop." That was in 1799 and Handsome Lake, to the best of all the records, will never take another drink. He will go on to promote the Code of Handsome Lake, organizing quarterly meetings, and quarterly recovery circles, where people come together for

dancing, singing, and fasting. We also have some hints of an early story style, a story style of sharing, that is a little bit different from our contemporary story style. This story style says, "This is the way it was, This is what Happened, and This is the Way it is." But this story style is not about an individual, it's about the tribe.





The story style says this is what our life was like in the tribe before One'ga came to the tribe. This is what One'ga did and what happened in the crisis that turned it around. And this is what life is like in the tribe, now that we've sworn to sobriety and a return to Native ways.

Another thing that was typical of the Handsome Lake Movement that marked other movements, was that this movement was more than something that simply said stop drinking because it's destructive, it's a pattern of self-genocide if we continue. It is actually an extremely well-articulated moral code for living. In addition to

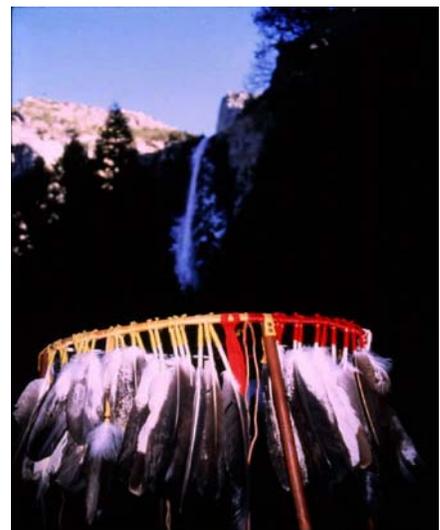
demanding abstinence, the Code also attacked vainness, boasting, gossip, gambling, sexual promiscuity, and violence towards women and children. At the same time, the Code extolled the virtue of living in community, caring for the elderly and the poor, and the value of generosity. Many of the following movements continued from that period to today.

Indian Preachers, Prophets, and Movements

Next in history we have a period of the Indian Preachers, Native Americans who converted to Christianity and then virtually became evangelists, carrying a message, not only of Christian conversion, but a message of alcoholism recovery based on they themselves having recovered through the vehicle of Christian conversion. They include Individuals like Samson Occom and William Apess in the late 1700's and the early 1830's. William Apess is perhaps significant because his autobiography, published in 1827, called *The Son of the Forest*, is the first Native American biography we have published, but it's also two things. It is the first Native American biography of alcoholism we have. Apess was raised by alcoholic grandparents. The vivid detail he portrays of his experience, and the chaos, and violence of this alcoholic family, probably marks the beginning of the Children of Alcoholism literature in America, if not the world.

Occom and Apess are going to become missionaries who travel from tribe to tribe, bringing this abstinence-based message framed within a Christian framework. As the American Temperance Movement rises, we will have temperance missionaries, and we will have Native American temperance societies. George Copway is an example. Copway spent much of his later life traveling from tribe to tribe organizing temperance societies. I have to admit that when I first read the details of his life I had to say, "That is what Don does these days!"

There was also the Cherokee Temperance Society that became very well known for their ability to sober up almost entire tribes for extended periods of time. Then those tribes came under physical and cultural assault and those societies collapsed.



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There are additional prophet movements. There is the Shawnee Prophet Movement that occurs between 1805 and 1811. This arose from a near-death experience in which someone appeared to have died, and 24 hours later awakes with the message. And the message is that Native people must reject alcohol and all other European trappings, returning to Native traditions. We have the Kickapoo prophet of the 1830's who sobered up not only a large number of the Kickapoo, but also a number of the surrounding tribes. After this, as we move into the late 1800's, we begin to get Nativist religious movements, including the Indian Shaker Church. We get the peyotism of the 1870's spreading from Mexico that formalizes in the organization of the Native American Church in 1918. We also see other movements and ceremonies specifically organized by someone out of a crisis of alcoholism that will play a role in initiating or strengthening sobriety for many. These include the Ghost Dance Movement, and traditions like the Sun Dance, Gourd Dance, and the Sweat lodge.



These movements and traditions provided a number of key things. They provided a Nativist rationale for radical abstinence from alcohol. They framed the context of abstinence not only in personal terms, but it was really about survival of the people. They framed the act of abstinence as a political as well as a personal act. They built in the fact that sobriety was a representation of Indianness. They built in rituals of grieving related to personal and tribal losses. They built in value systems like the Red Road, the Peyote Way, and the Code of Handsome Lake. They also built in models for community action and resistance against alcohol.

To summarize, alcohol recovery is a living reality in Native communities and has been for more than 250 years.

Become Visible in Recovery!

Now there is a larger recovery advocacy movement in the United States, and we, as that larger movement are saying that the ravages of alcoholism and addiction are unbelievably visible in all of our communities.

Unfortunately, recovery becomes virtually invisible. When people go back to jail for their umpteenth time, that is incredibly visible. The person who, through recovery and sobriety, drops out of that visibility and becomes unseen within the society, is invisible. One of the things that the recovery advocacy movement is saying to all of us is this: It is time that a vanguard of recovering people and their families stood up in this culture and announced our presence.



The movement is saying that everyone in this society knows somebody in recovery. The problem is, they don't know they are in recovery. For example, attitudes towards cancer and the kind of stigma attached to conditions like cancer did not change in this culture until we reached critical mass where everybody knew somebody in recovery from cancer. They knew somebody who survived cancer and had done so for five years. We are arguing out of this new recovery advocacy movement that the same is true for



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alcoholism. We need to begin to offer ourselves as living proof to this culture that there are permanent solutions to alcoholism and drug addiction. We need to do that, in particular, in Native communities where the story of resistance and the story of resilience and recovery has been suppressed for so long.

I think it is also time to give credit to Native communities where that credit is due. The very birth of the idea of the Wounded Healer, the notion that somebody has survived an experience or condition and who may offer something special in the healing of others experiencing that condition, comes from within Native culture. It's time we began to credit Native America for their role in the history of sobriety-based support structures.

This is not an aged, musty history. The history of recovery, the history of resilience, the history of the resistance I am describing is very much alive today. It is alive in the continuity of those earlier movements. It is alive in the Native American Church today, in the Indian Shaker Church, and in the Longhouse religions. It is vibrantly alive in the current Wellbriety Movement. It is evident with the rise of AA within Native communities following the Second World War, and the growing Indianization AA, NA and AI-Anon in those communities.

There are new recovery-based cultural and religious revitalization movements popping up around the country, with the Wellbriety Movement being the connecting tissue for those movements. The most effective and enduring solutions to Native alcohol problems have for more than 300 years come from within those communities. Efforts to solve these problems from outside Native communities have inadvertently contributed to the very hopelessness out of which alcohol problems in those communities thrive. Historically, the solutions emerge out of the very heart of Native culture. The community IS the treatment center. We will help heal those cultures so there is no space for alcohol and drug problems, nor interpersonal violence within those cultures. The history of resistance and recovery within Native American tribes is a testimony of cultural forces of prevention and healing that continue to constitute powerful but underutilized forces in the resolution of alcohol and other drug problems.



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THE CENTER FOR THE WELLBRIETY MOVEMENT

Recovery Resources for the Wellbriety Movement www.whitebison.org

Center for the Wellbriety Movement: The White Bison website at www.whitebison.org serves as a center for Wellbriety. At this location, individuals can apply to become Firestarters, find dates for upcoming trainings, purchase resources from the Online Store, keep informed about the Wellbriety Movement through the Wellbriety! Online Magazine, participate in weekly chat room conversations, post messages on the discussion board, or find links to resources for grant writing, recovery, treatment and prevention resources, and sign up for the daily Meditations with the Native American Elders.

National Native American Coalition for Wellbriety: As part of the expansion of the Wellbriety Movement, White Bison is inviting Native American organizations that provide treatment, prevention or recovery resources and services to become part of a coalition to create a VOICE for the Native American community. We believe that we would have more influence as a coalition than as individual organizations.

National Native American Wellbriety Month: Each September is National Native American Wellbriety Month. During this time, we ask that each community sign a proclamation recognizing the importance of recovery and Wellbriety as a part of its overall community policies and programs. We also encourage each community to implement activities such as Wellbriety Runs, powwows, panels, speakers, and potlucks in honor of Wellbriety.

Wellbriety Online! Magazine features interviews with Elders, stories of recovery, presentations from conferences and many other inspiring topics and themes to help you with your recovery journey. There are also stories about the Four Journeys of the Sacred Hoop in the *Wellbriety Online! Magazine*.

Online Store: Where you can purchase additional recovery resources including the following book: *Red Road to Wellbriety: In the Native American Way*. This culturally appropriate recovery book was designed and developed by peers in the Native American recovery community. It contains teachings that will help individuals implement their own journey to wellness and sobriety. Many use it as a textbook to accompany the Medicine Wheel and 12 Steps program.

Discussion Board and online Talking Circle: Stay connected! Share your story and your experiences with others by posting notes in the Discussion Board or by joining the weekly Talking Circle on line.



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Be sure to check the resources available at the
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