

Native Spirituality on Rise

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What is Native Spirituality?

It appears that recently this question has become the hot topic of discussion.

Native spirituality has continually been accused of having little merit by some. Let us not forget that Native spirituality has been with us forever. It once was the core of our strength as is all other beliefs. The U.S. was built on biblical scripture and Canada followed suit. Our laws were based on the Ten Commandments.

How sad that our Native beliefs were not considered, nor honored with the same respect that Native people respect the philosophies and beliefs of others.

The essences of human harmony is based on respect for others' historical belief systems.

Amid all this building of our country, the powers that be decided Native beliefs did not fit into the equation and thus began the legal process of banning most of our ceremonies. Labeled pagan and inappropriate, Native spirituality almost disappeared.

That the grandfathers that times have changed and we have begun to revive that which had made us strong and healthy people. Last year I attended a piercing Sundance and was in awe as I witnessed strength, commitment and determination from the dancers and the devotion of all participants. Some were completing their fourth and final year of a lifetime journey that lies before them. That journey is based on a life of becoming a role model. It didn't surprise me that half the participants were non-Native people from Europe and they, too, were sun dancers. This makes absolute sense as our belief includes all the four colors and directions. What an honor just to be there.

Last summer I have the privilege of hosting an event which featured my dear friend, a Tibetan monk. Having him here in Prince George and hearing his story of his life in Tibet and as equally important, the similarity of our beliefs was an awakening for me. He felt like he was at home as we hung a Buddhist prayer flag.

My monk friend believes we may well have come from the same places as our beliefs and rituals are so similar. Our colors are the same and there are so many other similarities. We have since become brothers, so to speak.

It begs the question: Is there a movement toward a more universal belief? Our medicine wheel has taught us that we are all united in a completion of the circle where all beliefs are welcome.

There are differences as to how each tribe performs ceremonies, but that's what makes us unique and establishes our culture.

One sweat lodge may differ from the next and the protocol may be different, but the intention is always the same. That intention is to bring together all races with one common goal and that is sharing and acceptance. How can we unite and forge ahead to a better place if we oppose things we dare not learn?

Have we finally come into an age of acceptance and understanding? Can we now practice our beliefs and not be opposed by some, including our own Elders?

We all have the right to worship whomever we choose as long as it results in healthy people.

The time is right for us to sit and talk about these issues and reach an understanding and acceptances of who we all are and no longer look upon each other with doubtful eyes.

Should you choose to respond to these comments, please do so with an open mind and join in our circle of friendship and brotherhood.

If you have a topic of interest you would like to see in Aboriginal Voices, contact the Aboriginal Business Development Centre at 562-6325 or e-mail an article to abdc@bcgroup.net.