

Editorial



The Aged And The Young

By Rick Runningbear

In any society we have the aged and the young. There are the elders and the youth. Many times it seems these two different age brackets have little in common with each other. The elders find the young too loud and frivolous. The young find the elders too indolent and boring. This is true among the Native community just as much as in the non-Native society.

One of the greatest needs I see in our Native community is to connect the youth with the elders. Too soon, our present day elders will be gone and the youth of today will be well on their way to becoming elders themselves. But when the youth become our elders, if there was no teaching from the elders or learning from the youth, how can these "emerging elders" take hold of the torch and carry on the

traditions, the ceremonies, the stories and legends, and the spirituality of the "Real People"?



What is needed now by our tribe is willing apprentices to learn to take on roles of leadership. Many of our current leaders are getting old. With advancing age there is more illness and the struggle to continue carrying on the responsibilities becomes increasingly more difficult. When the elders cross over, who will pick up the fallen torch and carry the standard high and proud and lead our people on? Who will teach us to walk the Red Road, to walk in balance and beauty? Or will the "old ways" fade into the past through complacency or through the distractions that modern society presents before our youth?

In ancient times, our ancestors had special time during the cold moons, when the young people

would sit at the feet of the elders, and learn the legends and traditions. Also, medicine people would have apprentices who would sit at their feet and learn ceremonies, incantations, and healing medicines for the people.

Our traditions are rich. There is power in the traditional ceremonies. Where are the emerging ceremonial leaders, fire keepers, writers, leaders of the youth? Who will step forward and grasp the torch from the falling trembling hands of the elders. Who will carry on the old ways and teach them to the people?



Let us now be alert for any signs in our young people that they seek to be apprentices. Let us encourage them to seek out the elders, With gifts of tobacco they may become an apprentice and learn "The Way". There is a real danger, that our traditional ways will perish in the fog of apathy unless we act now to create and nurture our future leaders. The elders are with us but a

short time longer. Let us learn from them. May the elders make known to others their knowledge and their wisdom. Let there be no more artificial separation between the young and the aged.

The challenge before us is to teach the youth how to live in two worlds. The modern technological society, and the rich culture of our ancestors with all its spirituality and power.

Are we equal to this challenge?

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