

Recovery in Native America William L. White

There are two new resources about alcoholism recovery within Native American communities provide a fascinating window into the history and resolution of alcohol problems. The first, *The Red Road to Wellbriety* (278 pages, \$15), is what many will see as a Native adaptation of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The first half of *The Red Road to Wellbriety* culturally reframes the Twelve Steps, integrating such things as Medicine Wheel teachings into the Steps. The second half of the book contains seventeen wonderfully told Native American recovery stories.

The second, just-released book, *Alcohol Problems in Native America: The Untold Story of Resistance and Recovery—The Truth about the Lie* (258 pages, \$18.95), is co-authored by Don Coyhis, Founder and President of White Bison Inc, an American Indian non profit organization that works to spread recovery support groups within Indian communities across North America, and the author of this column. Don and I spent five years researching the history of alcoholism and alcoholism recovery among Native Americans, and we draw what will for many be surprising conclusions from this research.

First, we discovered the pervasive presence of “Firewater Myths” that portray Native Americans as racially hypersensitive to alcohol and biologically prone to alcoholism, and that portray the historical relationship between Native Americans and alcohol as one of instant devastation. We use the latest scientific studies and our historical research to debunk such mistruths. What readers of *Recover Magazine* may find most interesting is the long and rich history of recovery within Native tribes. We discovered “recovery circles” that existed more than 200 years before the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous. Recounted in detail are the Delaware Prophet Movements, the Handsome Lake Movement (the Longhouse Religion), the Shawnee and Kickapoo Prophet Movements, the Indian Temperance Movement, the Indian Shaker Church, the Native American Church, the “Indianization of A.A.” and the current Wellbriety Movement.

The essential message of *Alcohol Problems in Native America* is that recovery from alcohol problems and alcoholism is a living reality in Native American communities and has been for more than 250 years. *Alcohol Problems in Native America* is more than anything else a celebration of the vibrant recovery that is again spreading through Indian communities all over North America. We invite you to share in this celebration. We invite you to explore what are simultaneously new and old ways of recovering from alcoholism—the Native Way.

Copies of *The Red Road to Wellbriety* and *Alcohol Problems in Native America* can be obtained by contacting White Bison at www.whitebison.org (719-548-1000 or 1-877-871-1495). All proceeds from the sale of these books support White Bison and the Native Wellbriety Movement.

About the Author: William White (bwhite@chestnut.org) is a Senior Research Consultant at Chestnut Health Systems, Bloomington, IL, and author of *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America*.

