

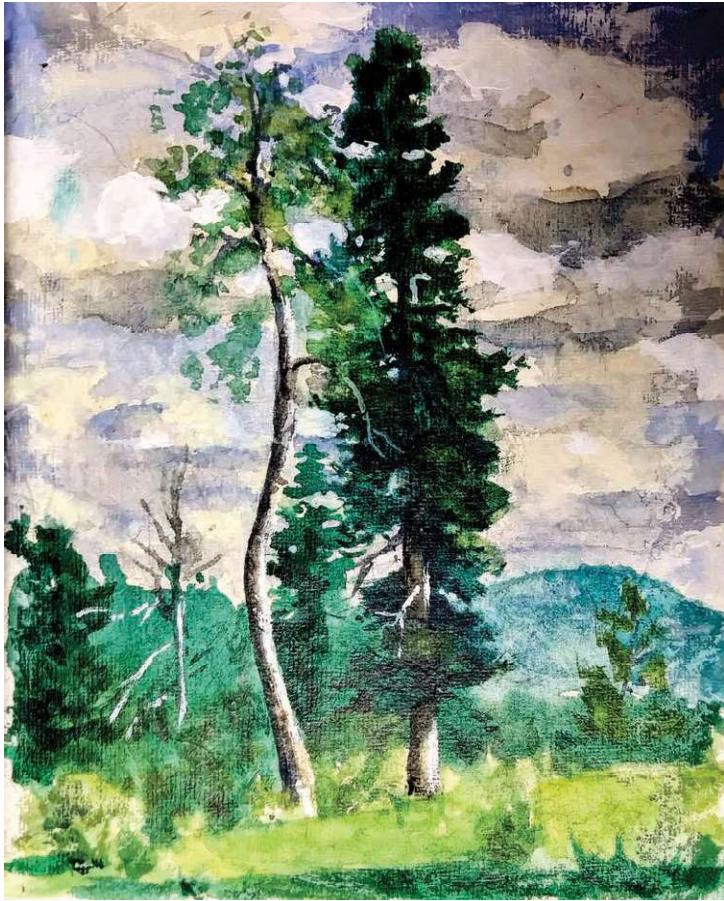


# SACRED MOUNTAIN, SACRED HOME

*Taking the Mountain Home with  
Gratitude, Forgiveness, and Love*

The Transcendent Wisdom  
of the Gathering of Circles  
Told Through the Stories of Many  
Whose Lives It Transformed

Bob and Wanda Mama Uma Wade



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by





May I be still in this stillness  
And may I be still in this illusion of agitation  
May I be peaceful in this peace  
And may I be peaceful in this illusion of disturbance  
May I be one in this oneness  
And may I be one in the illusion of many  
May I be love in this love,  
And may I be love in the illusion of not love.

– Bob



## *Foreward*

### **How this Book Began**

The formal ceremony ended, the Pipe separated, and the Gathering of Circles dispersed for 2019. Bob and I headed down the mountain for home. Deciding to stop just outside the boundaries of the gathering, we set up camp for a few more days. Once there, the plan was to complete and assimilate the experience of the gathering. As we began to see more clearly, we wondered how those who had to plunge right back into daily life managed to keep this sacred mountain experience alive and flourishing. This was the beginning of, and the inspiration for *Sacred Mountain, Sacred Home*.

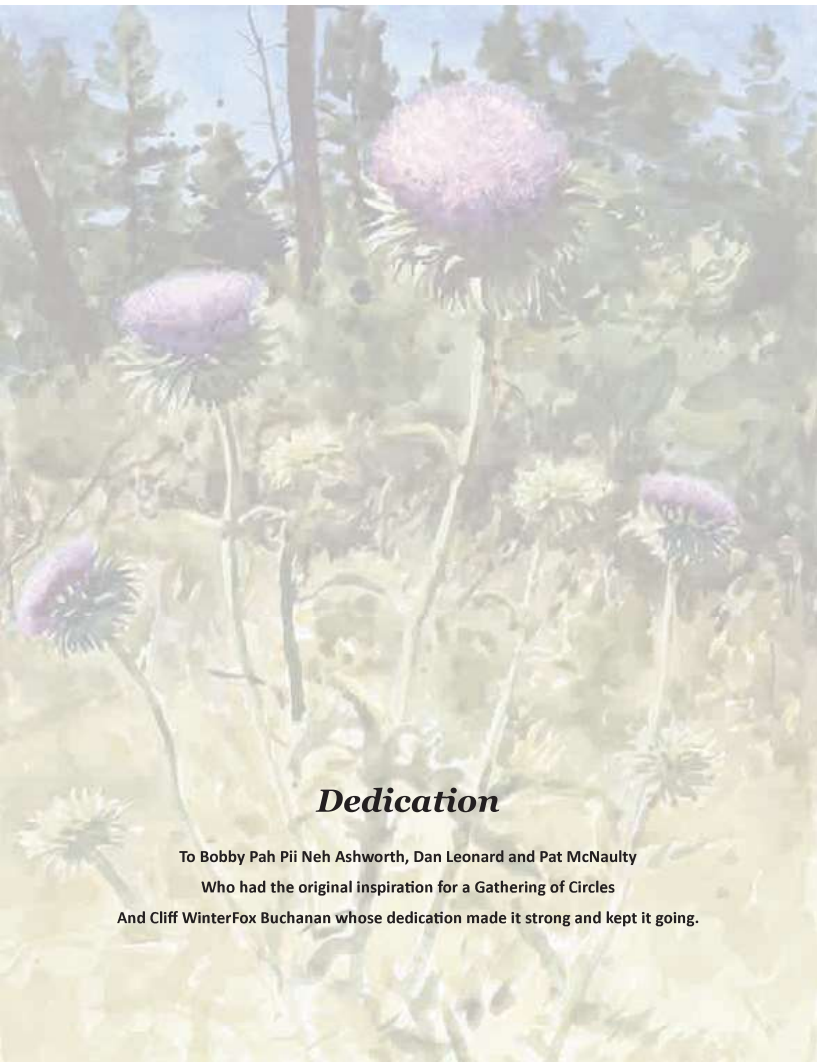
When the Gathering of Circles comes together on the mountain above Cloudcroft, New Mexico, we join in ceremony. This ceremony ultimately opens the door for deep spiritual growth and healing.

*Sacred Mountain, Sacred Home* is a gift of guidance from elders and teachers of the gathering.

This book will guide and inspire a daily practice of gratitude, forgiveness, love, and continual ceremony.

The mountain becomes our home. Our home becomes the mountain.

**Wanda Mama Uma and Bob Wade**



***Dedication***

To Bobby Pah Pii Neh Ashworth, Dan Leonard and Pat McNaulty

Who had the original inspiration for a Gathering of Circles

And Cliff WinterFox Buchanan whose dedication made it strong and kept it going.

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## Introduction

by Bobby Pah Pii Neh Ashworth

I am humbled and honored by the invitation to offer an introduction to Bob and Wanda Wade's publication on "Taking the Mountain Home," an effort to share how to take a sometimes "magical" experience and incorporate it into everyday lives, not losing it in the trappings of our, sometimes mundane, world. Having been privileged to be a small part of the Gathering of Circles, since its inception, it is truly one of the great honors of my life to have been a part of an event which has risen, for some, to be "life changing." Part of the "magic" of the GOC has been that, for some, and perhaps many, it has been an introduction to the possibility of living a life that is based on "Spiritual consciousness" and learning rituals and ceremonies that create "Sacred Space." It is also an introduction to individuals who seem to have found a way to live by Spiritual principles and practice them in all their affairs. They present as a wonderful example of living this loving and healing lifestyle and are often the catalysts and role models that inspire both newcomers and old-timers to become "all that they can be." Very few, if any, maintain anything like Spiritual perfection to these principles, but most will claim Spiritual progress, as we trudge the road to happy destiny and are willing to be role models.



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I was having lunch with Pat McNulty (a Long Dancer) and Dan Leonard when the concept of a Gathering of Circles (GOC) emerged from the conversation. We invited area Sweat Lodge circles to meet and bring their "Sweet Medicine" (anything that heals) to a free gathering in Cloudcroft, NM. With his already established mailing list and computer skills, we engaged Cliff Buchanan and his group, Drumsong. The Gathering of Circles was born. I am proud to have played a small role in the inception of this healing and ongoing event.

In the 25 years the Gathering of Circles has met on that mountain top in Cloudcroft, New Mexico, literally thousands of people from all parts of the world have attended. Some have been "one and done," but many have found it to be an experience that merits repeating. Many long to return to the mountain, to see old, familiar faces, to hear the beat of the drum and the songs of the heart, to sit in the circle and bask in the love and unconditional acceptance that abounds! Over the years, the GOC has been the vehicle that has introduced and started many on a road of Spiritual awareness and reinforced that it is a sustainable lifestyle, not just an annual event or retreat to be experienced fully on the mountain, and to be abandoned when returning to the "real world." It is truly one of the challenges of this lifestyle, "walking the Red Road," to incorporate into everyday life, the practices and principles that are consistent and modeled in a variety of ways by the marvelous and awakened individuals that one will encounter at a Gathering of Circles.



Bobby Pah Pii Neh Ashworth and Dan Leonard

The Gathering of Circles, the people who are attracted to it, and the consistency by which it has sustained itself over all these years, has been seen, by some, as a marker that change is possible for the world today.

In this everchanging and chaotic world, the GOC is a beacon of Hope that there are like-minded individuals and a sustainable lifestyle, epitomized by Edwin Markham, a 16th century philosopher's words,

"They drew the circle that left him out - heretic, rebel, deviant - a thing to flaunt....  
But Love and I had the wit to win - we drew the circle that took him in."

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## Acknowledgements



**BearHeart**

In 1998, BearHeart (Marcellus Williams) was the first person to be the GOC Speaker and returned as a Speaker in 2004 when all five of the past Speakers were featured as the program for that year. However, he attended the GOC in the intervening years because he enjoyed being on the mountain, camping with his wife, Reginah Waterspirit, and his grandchildren.

His book, "The Wind Is My Mother," is a popular introduction to BearHeart around the world. It was translated into 12 different languages. Those of us at the GOC had an opportunity to hear him speak and to sit around the campfire with him. As a superb teacher and a source of great love, he was (and is) a profound influence on us.

He passed at the age of 90 in August 2008.

Mike Three Bears Andrews



**Brett Windrunner Messer**

Brett is the Pipe Carrier for the Gathering of Circles. The Pipe (Chanupa) is the beginning ceremony of all of our gatherings and the most sacred. This ceremony heightens our awareness of Spiritual presence. When we are "Under the Pipe" it is a time of profound awareness, prayerfulness, and a time of extraordinary compassion toward ourselves and others.

*The Mountain is a powerful place, and for twenty-eight years now I have witnessed many magical events. I feel the energy from hundreds of hearts that have opened to a love so powerful that it can't be explained, only experienced. We all carry this in our hearts, yet life has a way of fading this love into the background. The Mountain is my refuge and I am replenished by going there in my mind on a regular basis. Whenever I am feeling out of sorts or in need of energy, I close my eyes and bring to mind the trees, flowers, our family, and the mountain.*

*One of the most important things we can do, especially when we are in need of rejuvenation, is to close our eyes and picture the mountain, breathe it in, smell the smell, feel the feeling of our GOC family around us. Picture the dance circle filled with dancers, feel the drum, be there in your mind, and reconnect with your family. Meditate and open your heart and mind to that feeling of love without judgment or conditions. We all have the ability to reconnect to this energy of love.*

*There are many more ways you can nurture this connection and seek out what works for you and always know that we are with you in Spirit.*

*You all have my Love and a place in my Heart, Windrunner*





## *Invocation*

by Bobby Pah Pii Neh Ashworth

Grandmothers and Grandfathers, Spirit Guardians, Great Mystery, God, Goddess, Tungashula, Eloheim, Wannawalona (Beautiful Something), and all the names, known and unknown, that have been used throughout time to describe you, we acknowledge you and call you in to be with us. We give thanks for the Wheel, which teaches us that life moves on. We give thanks for the Circle, which teaches us about completion. We give thanks for the Inipi, which teaches us about Prayer and Determination. And we give thanks for The Dance and the Dancers, which teach us about living life full out!

We give thanks for watching over us and our families. We ask for strength to do the things we need to do today. Stay in contact with Spirit in all that we do. To do your will, not ours. Ask for strength to be gentle with ourselves and gentle with others. To have an attitude of gratitude and look for what's right instead of what's wrong. To see the cup as half full instead of half empty. We give thanks for abundance in our lives, for your willingness to pour from your cup of abundance into our Hearts and Minds. We ask for strength to not sit in judgement of others, but truly to seek the truth. Thank you, Grandmother for being in our lives, for watching over us. You are the one, the only one! You've always been the one, and we know it!

Thank you, Grandmother, for this book and the heartfelt attempt of Bob and Wanda Wade to help people to extend their experience at the Gathering of Circles to their everyday lives. To take their experiences on the mountain and to translate and transform them in a manner which brings and enhances a "Spiritual consciousness" in all areas of their lives.

May they become a part of the Rainbow Bridge Clan and advocate total and unconditional acceptance, love, and forgiveness as a manner, and example, of living life on life's terms. Help us each to be the example of the Love and healing we have received at the GOC and to bring it off the mountain and offer it as the "New Hope" of living and striving in the world we are faced with today. For All My Relations!

Mitakuye Oyasin! Aho!





*Cliff*  
*WinterFox*  
*Buchanan*

Cliff Buchanan, or WinterFox, who might be named for his white beard and white hair, was born in Big Spring, Texas on September 22, 1941. He was married to June Wolf Grandmother Cares For All Buchanan on August 8, 2014. Cliff WinterFox has received many honors as an Elder and leader, particularly on the Red Road. As sole proprietor of ISI Software since 1974, he currently supports over 100 clients remotely through the internet as a hardware/software consultant. He earned a BA degree from Texas Tech in 1967.

"A man becomes what he dreams.  
 WinterFox, you have dreamed well."  
 Adapted from the movie "Grey Owl."

In the Gathering of Circles (GOC), he helped convene the first Gathering in 1995 and was the Leader, or Grandfather, until 2017, when he became the Webmaster and Steve Lake was selected to lead the GOC Council that plans this annual event. His commitment to the GOC over the many years laid the foundation for what it is today. He offered Shamanic Journey workshops both at the GOC and at his church for many years. His commitment to and support of the GOC have been integral to this event and the people attending it. The word that best describes him is "beloved."

The Long Dance sponsored by Dick Coyote Prosapio initiated Cliff to Native American Spirituality. In that first sweat lodge, he found the Spirit that he had been searching for all his life. As a result, WinterFox has been involved in Native American Ceremonies and practices since that first sweat: leading, and attending sweat lodges in many different traditions; attending Native American Church Ceremonies; participating in ayahuasca Ceremonies; and in many Vision Quests. He was co-leader, starting in 2004, of the BearHeart Vision Quests. Vision Quests enable participants to experience Nature and the Divine directly as they sit out without food, water, or distractions. He was responsible for handling the many logistical aspects of the quests.

Cliff WinterFox was selected as volunteer of the year with Shawna Mitchell-Hayhurst for their work with the Native American Spirituality program in the Texas State Prisons. One of over 14,200 volunteers, Cliff WinterFox served for 12 years.



For the last 30 years Cliff WinterFox has attended the Unitarian Universalist Church of Odessa. On the first Sunday of each month he presents a Native American-based program. His spiritual practices included a major commitment to Holotropic Breathwork sessions with Jackie Small of Austin; over 30 years of Men's Meetings with the Clan of the Frog Pond men; and work with Vogel Crystals. WinterFox defines his spirituality in one word: SERVICE! He is honored and humbled to be of service in his daily work of computer support as well as being of service to the GOC throughout the year.

How to keep the magic experienced on the mountain alive and take it home with you? This is a question I have been asked by many over the past 25 years. Some have never returned to GOC just because it was so painful to lose that blissful experience upon returning to normal everyday life. Others have vowed not to leave the mountain at the finish of the GOC even though fall and winter approached and it would be completely illogical to stay. So, it is an important question.

I have had to deal with this personally. Over the years it has become increasingly easier to stay in Spirit, but it didn't just happen, I have had to work at it. Probably the most important influence on keeping the experience alive has been the many teachers. Jackie Small introduced me to Stanislof Grof's breathworks technique. In addition, I did many shamanic drummings with a Texas Tech psychologist. I earned a certificate as a registered hypnotherapist where I did a number of past life regressions. These experiences prepared me for an introduction to Native American Spirituality.

My first sweat lodge was in my first Long Dance, which my wife at the time, Carol Dawn, had recommended because the experience would be good for me. Well, no way was I going to do anything she suggested, as we



were in the throes of divorcing; however, as it turned out, it became the most important event of my life. As soon as I sat on the bare cold ground in the lodge, I knew I had "been there, done that." As I began to learn the teachings of the "Red Road," I knew that my true beliefs had always aligned to the Red Road. "We are all equal," even the animals, plants, and rocks are sentient beings with feelings and energy and life to be respected and appreciated. But not worshiped as some would like to attribute to the Earth-based religions. I learned to say, "All my relations," as I entered the sacred sweat lodge recognizing that I am not above or below any other sentient being. I remember the GOC where Serge Martel, our speaker that year, taught me with divining rods first hand that the trees have an energy that reflects our own energy. And he also gave me a technique to receive that energy at will from the trees.

Bear Heart, our first GOC speaker, said at the beginning of his talk that we probably expected him to say something very profound! And then he proceeded to do exactly that, at least to me. He said that there is no greater honor that can be bestowed upon a person than that of helping another human being. He said to get down on your knees, if need be, to help another. I realized at that moment that this was the center of my spirituality. It was not sweat lodges, or sweet medicine dances, or smudging, or vision quests, although these are practices I hold dear. I realized I am most happy just "helping." I am fortunate and blessed to be able to do that in my work life as well as my spiritual life. I have been "helping" people for fifty years, although I have not framed it in my mind that way. I was a computer systems analyst. I looked at accounting systems mostly and interpreted those needs to be programmed into a computer in order to "help" people do their jobs. I never forgot Bear Heart's teaching and most importantly, still remember the realization of how his words related directly to me.

I am probably not nearly as "spiritual" as many of you think I am. For example, I do not offer thanks before every meal; I don't pray every day especially out loud. I am not comfortable praying out loud in front of a group. One of the things I do regularly is White Bison Wellbriety meditations, which I receive every day. Sometimes I forget to read them for a few days and then I have to catch up, but it only takes one minute to read them, a minute to reflect on how it applies to my life. I suggest that you at least try it for a while to help keep the mountain magic alive.

You can sign up at: <https://whitebison.org/DailyMeditations.aspx>

In addition, I suggest that you try to think of EVERY other human being not so much as a person but rather as a sacred spirit expressing itself as a human being! I'm talking not only of your family and friends but ALL the people you encounter. The person next to you at the grocery in line; even those who cut you off from that coveted parking space; this is a hard one: your boss, and so on. By doing so, this will help bring the magic from the mountain to your home. Of course, remember that your spirituality is not so much about you as it is about the people you serve. Finally, ask what you can do for others. Volunteer for a soup line, for a GOC volunteer job, at your church, and so on. You get the idea.

One of the things we tend to forget is the help that is always available to everyone. I remember the teachings of my ancestors: Bear Heart, Serge Martel, Carol Dawn, Dan Leonard, to name a few. I have a photo framed in my bedroom of Bear Heart and his wife Reginah Waterspirit. Frequently, upon rising in the morning, I think of him and Reginah. When the wind blows, I think of Bear Heart and his book *The Wind is My Mother*. I have various medicine items: a medicine bundle given to me from Bear Heart at my first Bear Heart Vision Quest, stones I carry in my pocket sometimes, a talking stick, and other art and items placed in my home. All these things help to keep me connected to Spirit.

It has been my honor and privilege to have served the Gathering of Circles (GOC) for the last 25 years. It is the legacy of my life and what I am most proud of. The creation and robust functioning of the GOC Council in the last few years leads me to believe that it will continue for at least the next 25 years and far beyond my lifetime.

My gratitude!  
Cliff WinterFox Buchanan



## Bobby Pah Pii Neh Ashworth

Born and raised in El Paso, TX, I have lived in El Paso most of my life, married for 43 years to Pam and we have two children, Melissa (40) and AJ (38). I have two grandkids, Julian (3) and Faye (1), who live in Irving, Texas, with Melissa and Stephen (husband). I retired after 30+ years as a Drug and Alcohol Counselor, working mostly "in the trenches," in primary treatment where detoxification and mental health stabilization begin the road to recovery. I also taught at El Paso Community College for seven years in the Substance Abuse Counseling degree program and for five years in the Texas Ethnic Minority Substance Abuse Training Institute.

I was introduced to the "Red Road" by a therapist, Dick Prosapio, MSW, who had a Sweat Lodge in the Hueco Mountains, outside of El Paso. I, ultimately, took over this Lodge when Dick moved to Albuquerque, NM, and I ran it with monthly sweats for the next 10 or 12 years. During this time, I attended and became a presenter for the Long Dance (a 3-day transformational process that Dick took over from Charles Lawrence and Jean Houston), the Shadow Dance, and Vision Quests, which Dick facilitated under the name of Spirit Path of New Mexico. I continue to facilitate the opening workshop for the Long Dance annually.

Many newcomers to the GOC have a misperception that people who have practiced the ceremonies or led the workshops or events at the GOC, or other events, for long periods of time (decades, in some cases), automatically take that Spirituality home with them and practice it in all their affairs. I am here to state, unequivocally, that this is not necessarily the case! Length of time associated with these practices or knowledge of ceremonies that create sacred space provide no guarantee that any person will "live" by the principles or practices that are used. In fact, it is very easy to "forget" these principles in the course of everyday life. That's why in the opening pipe ceremony, participants are "lifted off the earth plane" to be fully focused and available to participate in the activities and ceremonies that are offered during the event. It is also why in the closing pipe ceremony participants are "returned to the earth plane" because they must leave the mountain or event and return to their lives and responsibilities, many of which bear little or no resemblance to the magic they just experienced.



So, what's the key to being able to "take the mountain home after the GOC?" Just like anything else, one has to "practice" what one wants to keep or improve! For example, many people enjoy being "smudged" as part of a cleansing or clearing ceremony at the GOC or a workshop. They love the smell of the sage and the loving words of the person who is smudging them, but the only time they experience it is when they

attend a ceremony or event where it is offered. This means that they have to "learn" to do it for themselves and others and procure the means to facilitate it. It could be as simple as buying a smudge stick or taking it upon themselves to go harvest some indigenous sage (and learn to offer Prayer and tobacco) and give thanks to Mother Earth for the use of her resources, securing some feathers or a wing to make a wand, and practicing smudging with self, family, or friends until doing it gets comfortable. It is helpful to volunteer in these ceremonies when they are offered at events like the GOC. So, part of being able to "take the mountain home" is to get involved, actively participate on the mountain, observe how other people do it, and develop some confidence and your own style, which might be a hodgepodge of what you have seen from others! The point here is that you, and others, can only benefit from what you are willing to do!

Another aspect of "taking the mountain home" is to begin to learn more and incorporate what you have learned into your daily life. For example, create Spiritual practices if you want to live or have a more Spiritual life! If you learn about the Medicine Wheel or Meditation practices on the mountain, you'll have to implement them and create a practice to use them in your everyday life. None of us receive any benefit from Spiritual practices that we will not use, and they work better if used in everyday life and not just on special occasions or when our pants are on fire!! So, setting up to use a Medicine Wheel or Meditative practice means we have to learn something about it, but more importantly, we have to practice it with regularity and begin to develop a trust in the process and not just focus on the outcome.

A Spiritual mentor told me many years ago that when I ask Spirit or Creator for something, I can expect one of three answers – Yes, No, or Wait! Needless to say, Waiting is one of the hardest options when self-will is involved!! I can tell you without hesitation, or reservation, that without an ongoing Spiritual practice (Prayer, ceremony, etc.), most of us are very likely to revert to "self will run riot," as the saying goes, and in spite of our "Spiritual status" among others will find ourselves beset with the same misery endured by those who forsake Spiritual practices in favor of self-willed manipulation to get "what we want!"

My final recommendation in being able to "Take the Mountain Home" is to develop and maintain relationships with those you have met on the mountain and appreciate the Spiritual practices you have observed or participated in with those persons. Most people who have a "Spiritual Practice" in their lives have or will make time to chat with or share what they know with others who are questing to know more or develop their own Spiritual awareness. Spirituality requires your active participation!

You don't get it by osmosis!! Being willing to explore local activities can increase your exposure and contact within your local community.

Following websites like the GOC can help you network with others in that community, as well as keep you informed of workshops, events, and opportunities that are available. Find yourself some Spiritual "running buddies" that might be willing to explore and accompany you to some of the events that you discover. In short, "Taking the Mountain Home" requires your interest, effort, and willingness to use and develop resources that develop and enhance your Spiritual path.



***Shawna***  
***Fire***  
***Badgerwoman***  
***Mitchell-***  
***Hayhurst***

Shawna Mitchell-Hayhurst was born September 9, 1966 in Santa Barbara, California. Shawna and her husband Tony Hayhurst have three children, Kelsey Leigh Densman, Icie Mae Mitchell, and Skyler Hayhurst. She has owned and operated *Cassy's Multicultural Gifts & Healing Centre* in Abilene, Texas since 1993, providing metaphysical/spiritual/healing tools, retreat weekends, workshops, sacred ceremonies, drummings, and events. She has attended the Gathering of Circles for 17 years and was chosen to be the 2017 GOC Guest Speaker. She currently serves on the GOC Council.

Shawna is a Practitioner/Master Teacher of Usui, Karuna and Tera Mai Reiki as well as various other Energy Modalities and Practices. She is certified through White Bison, a non-profit Native American organization, as a Medicine Wheel 12 Step Wellbriety Firestarter and a Mending Broken Hearts facilitator. Shawna's heart was touched by the Red Road at a very young age and she has become familiar with many different religious and spiritual paths.

In 2004 she was gifted a sacred Chanupa and received the blessing of BearHeart to carry the Pipe for the People. She has been ordained through Golden Eagle Ministries International since 2005, and established Golden Eagle Ministries Texas shortly thereafter. She studied under the Ministry's founder, R. Serge "Runningwolf" Martel, continuing to facilitate and teach Serge's Natural Healing Modality, *Shaman's Touch Healing*.

Shawna spent 14 years as a Texas Department of Criminal Justice Native American Volunteer and eight years as a TDCJ contract Native American Chaplain, where she facilitated Ceremony and education for thousands of incarcerated men and women.

In 2019, following in the footsteps of her Mother and Uncle, she was initiated into membership of *Church on a Sacred Journey* and awarded the privilege to serve as Iyalorisha in Osun Logun Ede' Worship.



She is Grateful to Creator, her Ancestors and Mentors for teaching her the power of Ancestral Healing and the Blessings of sharing that gift with others.

She is grateful for her husband Tony, their children, family, and spiritual community as well as all her fur babies and winged ones.



My idea of the word "home" has evolved and expanded as I've grown and expanded.

The first 12 years of my life "home" was often represented by a tent, a car, a relative's house, a camper, a motel, or an apartment with dark rooms and dingy walls. These were all physical places that lacked a feeling of comfort, security, and stability.

At the age of 13 my life and perception of what the word "home" represented changed dramatically. Home became a small adobe house in New Mexico. It contained a kitchen filled with warmth from a wood cook stove. Unending Love, laughter, tears, and joy filled that space—and my heart—changing my life and perceptions forever. At 13, "home" showed me what sacredness felt like. Although I left home at 17 and have established many "homes" of my own, 40 years later it still remains the most sacred place that exists in my world. I return again and again physically as well as in my mind's eye or dreamtime to rest, regenerate, heal, and reconnect with all that is sacred to me.

For 17 years the Gathering of Circles has become another Sacred place for me and my family to rest, heal, regenerate, and reconnect to what we each feel is sacred to us, each other, and our extended spiritual family on the mountain. For me personally, the mountain is always a time and place of heightened personal and spiritual growth. The GOC allows an energy of openness and reconnection to All that Is. For me, this is the perfect opportunity for expansion if I am open to it. I have stopped trying to predict what my yearly "growth" will be and have learned to trust that I always receive exactly what I need at that time. Sometimes it is exhilarating on many levels, and sometimes it is painful on many levels. Regardless, it ALWAYS results in elevation.

When I am on the mountain, I feel the sacredness that I equate to "home." For one week out of the year it IS my family's home. I feel safe, secure, and cradled in the Mother Earth as well as with my spiritual family and community. A community that is open, loving, and supportive. A place, and space, I can totally open my spirit and do the work to become who I truly am and who I came into this lifetime to be. To me, it's like a big family reunion of our spirits. We are all coming together in the physical, seeking something to heal, grow, elevate, and expand us. Does it always look and feel perfect and orderly? Of course not!

Number one: It's a Family Reunion—that in and of itself should tell us what we may be in for, LoL!

Number two: We are all Healing on some level, whether we recognize it at the time or not. I have been side swiped by and received numerous "healings" on the mountain I didn't even know or think I needed. Healing is beautiful, yet the process can be painful, messy, and leave us raw and rough around the edges. I ALWAYS try to remember this for myself and others and do my best not to take anything personally. I also try my best to recognize if someone's spirit is being of service to me by physically being my mirror for my own personal/spiritual growth and healing.

Number three: We are intentionally engaging in Sacred Ceremony. Not only are we opening ourselves up to each other on the mountain, we are more engaged and open to Creator and Higher vibrational energies working with us and through us. We may experience healing and de-tox on many levels: synchronicities, deeper connections to ourselves and All that Is, information from dreams, visions and downloads that take time to process and understand, a change or elevation in our own vibrational energies, and a deep sense of peace, gratitude and well-being unlike anything we have ever experienced.



What is my Practice on the Mountain "Home" during this big "Family Reunion?"

- I find or create a quiet, Sacred Space that I can retreat to—a "Tiny Home" of my very own on the mountain where I can retreat to rest, breathe, process, heal, Be, listen to my Higher Intuitive Self, Ancestors, Guides, and Creator.
- I Practice Personal Prayer, Meditation, and Ceremony.
- I am aware of how I am feeling Physically, Mentally, Emotionally, and Spiritually.
- I practice Self Care.
- I Trust there is a reason for everything and actively ask, "What did I learn?"
- I express Gratitude.
- I honor and trust my Higher Intuitive Feelings and live my Personal Truths.
- I practice Unconditional Love with Boundaries.
- I recognize the value and importance of being of service.

What is my Practice when I come down the Mountain to my everyday "Home" and life where people aren't as loving, accepting, and supportive, when I don't always feel I can be open and vulnerable, ceremony isn't readily available to me, and I have day to day obligations?

The same as they are on the Mountain.

From my experience, I believe that no matter what your living situation, job, family, obligations, or aspirations are, it is PARAMOUNT that you create a physical Sacred Space that FEELS like "Home" to you in which you feel safe to rest, regenerate, heal, meditate, create personal ceremony, pray, listen to Creator, your Ancestors, Guides and Higher Self, and just BE. Keep it Cleansed. Elevate its Energy and Protect it from Negativity. DO NOT feel any guilt for creating and setting boundaries within your "Sacred Home." Your Personal Sacred Space is the springboard for EVERYTHING you are and do for yourself, others, and the world.

It is the place which will enable you to close your eyes and Journey back to the Mountain or any other Sacred Place your spirit has ever been that fills you with Unending Love and Deep Peace.

It is the place that will remind you to go within and experience the Sacred Home inside yourself.



**Mike**

***Three Bears,  
Two Bears,  
The Waterfall,  
Eagle Eye,  
Walks in the Light***

**Andrews**

Born December 11, 1945 in Fresno, California, Mike Three Bears considers himself a Ceremonialist who sometimes leads Ceremonies and sometimes participates in Ceremonies, with a VERY inclusive definition of "Ceremonies" that includes Breath work, Shamanic Drumming Journeys, Pipe Prayer Ceremonies, Prayer and Healing Circles, Vision Quests, Purification/ Sweat Lodges, Workshops, Drumming Circles, Crystal Skull Ceremonies, Forgiveness Ceremonies, Sun Dances, Yuwipis, QiGong, Shaktipat initiation in Kundalini Maha Yoga with Anandi Ma, and Darshan with Ammachi and Mother Meera.

We can give our biographies based on our lineages, our teachers, and those who have helped make us who we are:

Elizabeth Anne Beth Hin, Marcellus BearHeart Williams and Reginah Waterspirit, Adyashanti, Basil and Charlotte Braveheart, Flordemayo, the GOC and the GOC council, the Canoncito Band of the Dine (Alvira Secatero Yazzie), the SEED Institute (Glenn Aparicio Parry and the SEED Board Members), Cliff and June Buchanan, the Taos Lakota Tiospayes and ceremonial communities, Starfire Sundance community, the Taos City of Light community, and the many people who have attended the BearHeart Vision Quests.

I have lived in the Taos, NM area for 22 years and the Midland, Texas area for 14 years, so I am at least 36 years old. I have a BS and MS in Chemical Engineering from New Mexico State University, started a PhD program in Chemistry at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and earned a Certificate to teach Secondary Science from the University of Texas Permian Basin.





How do you relate to That Which Is Greater Than You, whether you call It/Him/Her: Creator, The Divine, Great Spirit, Great Mystery, God, The Holy Ones, or the other 18 billion names? **Apache:** It makes no difference as to the name of the God, as Love is the real God of all the world.

You might relate through Prayer, Rituals and Ceremonies, Burning Candles and Incense, Sacred Fires, Malas, Crosses, Medicine Wheels, Medicine Bags and Bundles, Sacred Service, Healing, Herbs and Plants, Meditation, Drums, Dance, Postures and Mudras, Churches, Altars, People (such as Priests, Ministers, Medicine Men, Road Men, Intercessors, Pastors, Rabbis, or Imams).

What if they all have a piece of the answer, both/and, rather than either/or? The GOC is not quite that all-inclusive, but it allows many different "circles" to be part of the Gathering. It is about participant-driven activities, where people can volunteer to do workshops, lead Ceremonies, be a Coordinator or helper, or to do nothing and just "BE" on the mountain.

There are many Paths up the Mountain, spiritually, but we have to be on the mountain to participate in the annual GOC. I think it is important, in Native American terms, to "know what is our Medicine," and, conversely, "what is not our medicine," what "feeds us," and what is not for us. Early on in my spiritual walk, I said I didn't want ANYONE between me and the Divine: not a Minister, Medicine Man, Guru, or Teacher. I have had superb Teachers and known outstanding Medicine Men, but they haven't tried to place themselves between me and the Divine (or if they did, I was out of there). Basil Braveheart puts it in contemporary terms: "Don't outsource your Spirituality."

I have found for me that "plant medicines," such as peyote and Ayahuasca, are not my medicines. I have had only beautiful experiences with them, but they take me to the same place I go without them, so I don't feel called to use them.

Prayer, ceremony, and service ARE my medicine, especially the Pipe ceremony and Vision Quest, both for me personally and for me to be of service and leading others as they Quest. I have done Ceremonies in many different traditions, including New Age, some take me beyond words into the presence of the Divine.

What is important or essential for me is "THE EXPERIENCE," the ceremony needs to be experiential. There may be words associated with the Ceremony, either before or after, but what has the greatest impact on me is my direct experience of the Divine, the touch of that which is greater than me, that I can't put into words or adequately describe to someone else, but since it is MY experience, I don't need to describe it: I want the other people to have their own experience, even if it is different than mine. Words without emotion or energy are like affirmations written on Post-It Notes, very few will be manifested.

The GOC was my pathway into different aspects of myself that I hadn't accessed prior to attending the GOC. I have always liked to say: "The GOC allows us to try new, different behaviors," as that is what it has done for me; for example, pouring water for sweat lodges, presenting workshops, doing Pipe Ceremonies, finding Speakers, being Workshop Coordinator and Sweat Lodge Coordinator, and Leading Vision Quests in BearHeart's tradition.

People sometimes talk about leaving the GOC and going into "the real world" and someone will say that the GOC IS the "real world." To me, "No difference;" the world at Wal-Mart is the same as the world at the GOC, so it is essential that what we practice after leaving the GOC is what we learned on the mountain.



So, what do I do when I am not on the mountain? I attend 2-4 Sweat Lodges each month for prayers, some Apache and some Lakota (the Taos area has something like 20 different Lodges). Reginah WaterSpirit called for an Apache Lodge last weekend and I attended that, and will attend the Apache Lodge this weekend. I do Pipe Ceremonies to pray for people when asked (I have to be asked to pray by someone before I can pray for them). I lead the BearHeart Vision Quests on the mountain, but infrequently do Vision Quests for people elsewhere (We have started discussions on doing one in Germany.). Because I don't have the infrastructure supporting me away from the BearHeart Vision Quest, it is draining. October 1, 2, and 3, I attended the New Year's Ceremony (my sixth time) with the Canoncito Band of the Dine, which is held at the most sacred place I have ever been, and is the highlight of my ceremonial year. I will attend a reactivation of the Taos City of Light (which might be called a New Age ceremony) this weekend. Monday, October 14, I will receive Darshan from Mother Meera in Santa Fe. I infrequently listen to Adyashanti's broadcasts. I attend the Taos chapter of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, which used to be every two weeks, but is now monthly, and led one Dialogue Circle and did one Shamanic Drumming Journey for the group. Flordemayo made me a crystal skull carrier and I will work with one of the six skulls I have. I was recently blessed with a Cintamani Stone, which in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions is known as "The Wish Fulfillment Jewel," and I am exploring it. I attended eight Forgiveness Ceremonies, leading six of them, and the third bear in my name is for "Forgiveness."

I have had daily practices of meditation, chanting a mantra, physical exercise (such as running, biking, sports, exercise classes), but I now believe that the only daily practice that I consider important is "LIFE," where the spiritual rubber meets the road. Can I manifest in my life the lessons I have learned from my spiritual activities?

I think it is too easy to confuse "the practice" with LIFE, whether it is meditation or attending church Sunday morning. In my opinion, the purpose of meditation is NOT to become a "better and better" meditator and to say I have been meditating for 20, 30, or 40 years.

It is useful to try different daily practices, to see what "is our medicine," what works for each of us.



## *Kathy*

### *Two Hawks Heals with Light Woman*

Kathy was born in Fort Collins, Colorado on August 18, 1947 and currently lives in Glendale, Arizona with her wife, Ann Blacketer, niece, Jenny Montgomery, and Jenny's two boys, Kameron and William. Kathy and Ann's daughter, Katie Blacketer, and her husband, Todd Betz, and their son Kevin Blacketer, and his family, also live in the Phoenix area.

Kathy Two Hawks is a trained Lakota Herb Woman. She was trained as a Pejuta Win by her grandmother and great grandmother in the traditional use of herbs and healing ceremonies.

Kathy has worked with other medicine men and women in Colorado, California, Nebraska, Florida, New Mexico, and Arizona. Kathy is a master herbalist and uses her training and education to help those that come to her for alternative healing. Kathy has been a guest speaker at many events and has taught herbal and healing classes in several cities.

Kathy is a master leather smith and an accomplished drum maker. She has taken classes at White Bison in Colorado Springs, Colorado and currently teaches Mending Broken Hearts several times a year to help those struggling with intergenerational trauma. Kathy has used her training in coaching, healing, and counseling to help seekers to realize their potential and purpose in life.

Kathy offers seekers an opportunity for healing at a Vision Quest held in Arizona in March for individual healing.

For more information, you can contact Kathy through email [ladytwohawks@cox.net](mailto:ladytwohawks@cox.net) or by calling 602-989-8468.

Some days I like to reflect on how we keep our lives organized and focused enough to honor Spirit and walk our daily path on this Mother Earth. This is not an easy task for any of us. How do we carry and balance all the ups and downs and challenges of work, family, friends, good days and bad days, health and sickness and not quit, or lose our faith and drive as healers on this Mother Earth?

The answer comes from the Universe and all directions of the Earth, the teachings of Elders, here and gone, through meditation, prayers, friends, all my relations, and keeping ourselves in balance.



There are many ways to achieve and keep our balance and we all benefit from practicing these small things daily: prayer, meditation, music, reflection, and conversations with all my relations. I find that teaching is one way I keep my spirituality and humanness balanced. Passing teachings on to others through classes, spiritual gatherings, meditations, ceremony, fellowship, and friendship are the most effective, and healthy for all of us. It helps us to stand tall, walk our walk, and talk our talk every day.

How do I carry all of this throughout the year, every day, every month? I do this by keeping my close circle of family known as the Gathering of Circles in Spirit. As I move through my days and either look forward to seeing them at the next Gathering or remembering lessons, conversations or ceremonies shared on the Sacred Mountain many years together, I find inspiration, help for myself and others and ideas to share. I can draw strength from the many ceremonies and especially from the Sweet Medicine Dance, where we dance our dance of life with friends, family, and ancestors. Together we dance the dance of Gratitude, Life, and Honor for all that is, and all that will be for Seven Generations and beyond.

Grandfather, Great Spirit, I come humbly to you in prayer for Mother Earth and all human beings. I ask that you guide us to see that all life and all things move in the shape of the sacred circle. Show them the true path to walk on the red road. Many people and our leaders are following instead, the paths of greed and deceit causing chaos within many hearts.

I pray, Creator, that all human beings wake up and return to the sacred ways.

Aho Mitakue Oyasin ... We are all related!





## Mike Kelley



Mike is a retired Licensed Clinical Social Worker and therapist, who has worked over 40 years with addiction, mental illness, and criminal justice issues in community and private practice. Now he spends his time cycling, running, and planning workshops and study groups. He has led men's groups and retreats, Native American sweat lodges, workshops, and presentations on racial issues, prayer, detachment, and other faith issues. He has been a follower of the Baha'i Faith for 50 years and involved in promoting Interfaith activities. He has presented numerous times for Interfaith organizations in Lubbock and Abilene and conducted workshops and sweat lodges at the Gathering of Circles since its inception.

The few days of the GOC each year are unique. At only a few other places and events have I experienced the same love, unity, respect, and attention to other people's stories. I value the various workshops on different subjects, the sharing in the circle and in small groups, the visiting in each other's camps. Listening to each person's comments during the give-away is inspiring, and witnessing their sacrifice of something of value is always a lesson, especially when it is shown by a child practicing generosity and detachment.

Prepping and packing for the GOC is always a challenge. I become stressed in packing up all the equipment, food, etc. and rushing to get there on schedule. But when I enter that forest, settle into the land, renew friendships with people whom I may see only once per year but I consider old friends, I am renewed, energized, accepted, loved, and valued. The people of GOC are not afraid of intimacy. It is a rare capacity for someone to be able to look you in the eye, and there are many people of capacity whom you encounter on the mountain.

As far as practice, I primarily use written prayers of the Baha'i Faith, reciting these every morning and evening, and with breakfast I will read some spiritual writings every morning, which center me for the day. On the mountain I will carry a prayer rug as a way to set a sacred space, and I keep a similar space at home for prayer and meditation. Occasionally, but not daily, I will smoke a personal pipe (now, one purchased from a roadside Dine' seller near the Grand Canyon), a mixture of tobacco, sage, and other herbs. And I will carry a pouch with tobacco to spread in an offering of prayer when travelling to any new place that I want to bless. I will smudge myself with the Kinnikinnick occasionally, but in daily prayer I at least go through the motions of smudging myself, even if not lighting the pipe or tobacco, to cleanse my soul.



With friends, we have built a sweat lodge in my backyard and offered the space for those wanting the experience, but this has been only on occasion. I participate regularly in study groups, devotional meetings, and am always working on some workshop to present on different subjects of spiritual practice, which hold my interest at the time. Keeping in touch with friends every week, at breakfast or lunch, attending a Men's Group, all keep me centered and sociable when I tend to isolate too much.

Daily I will meditate, which always evolves into prayer for myself and others, using prayer beads to recite a mantra of "Allah-u-Abha" (God is Most Glorious) 95 times, once per day. I depend on yoga, running, and cycling to help my body stay centered and balanced... and to hold off old age! Occasionally I'll use the drum and Shamanic journey work to seek guidance on some issue.

In all, I see no conflict in combining the practices on the mountain with my core beliefs and practices. All are ways of trying to become close to the Great Spirit, trying to recognize what that is, and trying to practice those positive attributes which bring me closer to the Great Being.

Advice? Find your own personal practice: create your own ceremony by combining traditional worship, borrowing from other practices, adjusting it to meet your own needs...and then practicing daily. Maintain a circle of friends, your personal support group, and stay in touch. Use any and all these as a way of centering, as a reminder of what makes you a better human being. And get back to the GOC every year!



*Lois*  
*Rainbow Girl*  
*Colbridge*

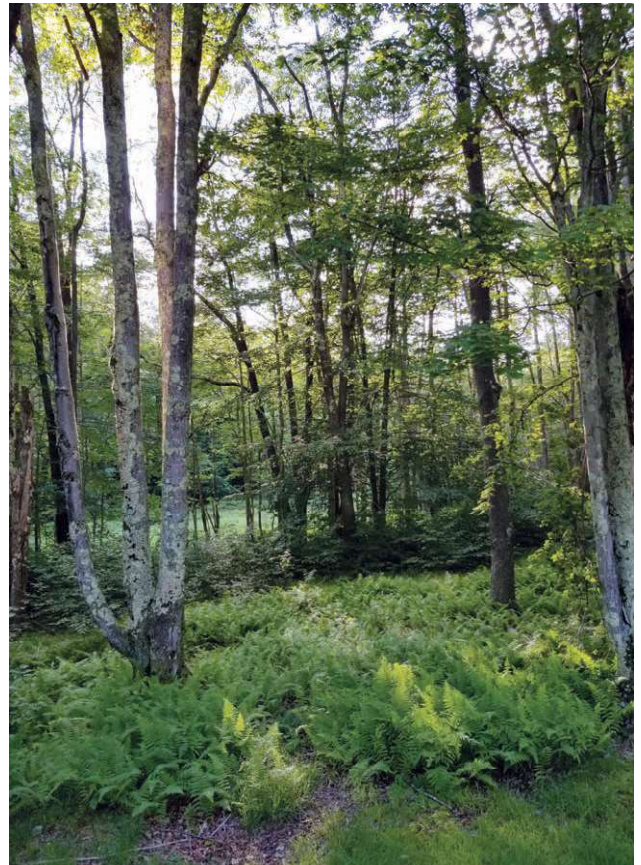
Lois Colbridge is a member of the Council for the Gathering of Circles. She began attending the Gathering of Circles in 1997. She lives in Virginia. She was introduced to the Gathering when she lived in New Mexico and participated in ceremonies with a circle in El Paso. Although she had no idea what to expect, from that first year she knew that the Gathering was an important part of her spiritual path. Lois worked as an elementary school counselor until her retirement in June 2019. She continues to seek and welcome opportunities for spiritual growth and for being of service to others, young and old alike.

My favorite time of every year is the week that I spend on the mountain at the Gathering of Circles. Three aspects of this time are what make it so special for me:

1. Being in a community of people who love each other and who make a point of saying that they love each other. This lifts my spirit and warms my heart, both in the giving and in the receiving. Yes, we have our formal ceremonies on the mountain, but for me the most important ceremony is this exchange of loving appreciation.
2. The formal ceremonies that we engage in every year. The rituals that take me immediately to a place of peace and love.
3. The presentation and workshops where we learn from each other.

When I'm "back home," off the mountain, these are three aspects that I maintain in order to keep ceremony alive in my daily life:

1. Surrounding myself with loving, supportive people and being loving and supportive in return. Helping others whenever I can and receiving help from others, which often can be more difficult for me to do. Making sure that I let others in my life know how much I appreciate them and how much I value our relationship.





2. Participating in ceremonies as often as possible. Among these are Full Moon and New Moon meditation, where I also assist with sound healing. Meditating leads me to new insights and facilitates growth.
3. Learning in workshops and retreats. Recently I have had the opportunity to attend a retreat with several of the members of the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, as well as A Women's Healing Journey with Grandmother Mona Polacca.

For me, it feels very easy to access opportunities for ceremony while I'm on the mountain. It's more challenging when I'm back home, not surrounded by like-minded, like-hearted people. I have to seek out ceremony. I have to leave my comfortable home and travel to places where ceremony is happening. Although I always feel uplifted and inspired after ceremony, I often have to overcome inertia to get myself to the location.

Another challenge arises because there are so many ways of doing ceremony. Sometimes when I begin participating with people whom I haven't known before, I find that their practices do not resonate with me. I sometimes find myself feeling frustrated and judgmental ("This is not how we do it on the mountain.") When this happens, I do my best to benefit from what does work for me, while choosing not to continue participating in ceremonies that I don't feel are facilitating my spiritual growth.

For example, a couple years after I moved to Virginia, I went to a sweat lodge where the leader was quite controlling. I was used to lodges where the leaders were gentle and supportive. I was having problems in my marriage at the time. Rather than helping me find my own way and guiding me to my answers, the leader placed blame on me for the problems (of which she knew very little) and gave me directions about what to do. For days after the lodge, I talked with friends, processing the experience. I came to understand that the lesson for me was to listen to my own heart and my own wisdom. I never returned to sweat with that leader.

I also have a personality that fluctuates between introversion and extraversion, leaning more toward the introverted side. Years ago, I heard someone refer to "slow-to-warm-up" babies, those who are uneasy or cautious in new situations or with unfamiliar people. Yep, that's me.

I've learned to accept—almost to love—this about myself. And I understand the choice I face: to head into new, unfamiliar situations or to stunt my personal and spiritual growth.

Often when I sit in circle, I question what I have to say, thinking that it won't be understood or received well by others. I still do this, even though over the years I have learned that the things that I may be most reluctant to give voice to are generally the things that resonate most with others.

Overcoming my inertia and introversion have led to the most wonderful experiences. I have become a Turtle Sister with the Grandmother Mona Polacca's Turtle Island Project. I have been asked to participate in leadership positions in spiritual communities. Each month, I help prepare food for children and adults who are food insecure because of homelessness or financial struggles.

These "back home" practices help to keep ceremony alive in my daily life, until I return to the mountain again each summer.



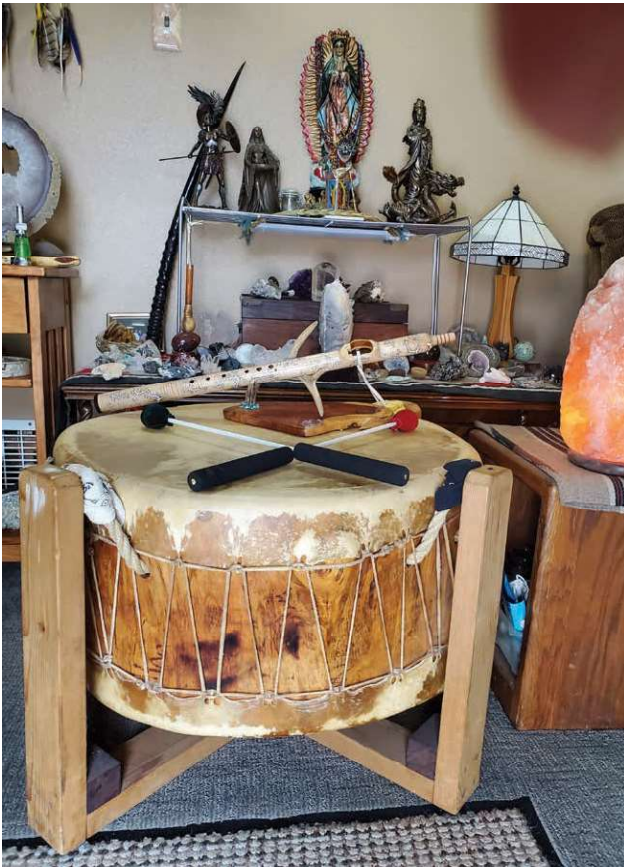
*Virginia*  
*Virgie*  
*Ravenhawk*  
*Villarreal*

Born October 3, 1946, Virginia Villarreal is a retired Master Sergeant from the United States Army. She currently spends her days creating sacred tools for ceremony or everyday use and teaching those who come looking for opportunities to engage in lessons of Spirit. She is a sacred pipe maker as well. Virgie is the co-facilitator of two drum circles that have gathered for sixteen years. They meet every third Saturday, and the last Saturday of every month at Unlimited Thoughts Book Store in San Antonio, Texas. She has also been a Sweat Lodge Leader and a Vision Quest Leader. She is a flutist, from Wichita and Aztec descent, and has produced many CD's and gives flute lessons, as well.

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My journey to the Gathering of Circles began in 2002. I went up the mountain with my only grandson, who is one of my greatest treasures in life. I had been attending the Healing Hearts Ceremony for a while and it was through them that I heard about the GOC.

Driving up the mountain to the spot where the GOC was being held was a moment of great anticipation. I had my grandson with me, and spending time in Creator's home was a blessing. When I drove into the area that the organizers had chosen for the Sacred Ceremony, my breath was taken away. I knew that I had fallen in love with the mountain, and each year that I return to the mountain my love just deepens.



I have had the distinct pleasure of watching how the mountain has transformed people's lives. When you step on the mountain you are greeted with the most beautiful landscapes that nature has to offer. There have been many teachings up on the mountain from nature itself as well as the organizers of the GOC.

Nature will tell you, "Watch where you walk!" because you never know when you might just step in a cow patty! Just like life, there is no guarantee what our next steps will be. Sometimes we think we have life all figured out and then Creator says, "Not yet, I have something coming for you."

In 2002, I met my wife Debbie. She is my rock, my breath, and one of the greatest gifts Creator gave me on the mountain. I'm not saying this is where you come to find a soulmate, but we must always be open to receiving the gifts from the mountain.

As an elder it has been difficult at times to get out of my own way, but I am always learning. The best lesson I can share is to come to the mountain with no expectations other than to be with the mountain and to be open-minded. As a card carrying Native American of Mexican descent, who is an urbanized native, I have learned that the language of Creation is of love and oneness. On the mountain there will be people of different traditions, different rituals and ceremonies, but the greatest lesson is to embrace all teachings without judgement and without fear. Learning to walk all the earth as a sacred place takes practice. When you come off the mountain you have to remember those moments of oneness you spent in ceremony. The spirit of the ceremony can carry you through those challenging, difficult moments of life. On the mountain the time is spent in Magical Bliss, but the real spirit of the mountain is to take that bliss wherever you go and "Walk in Beauty."

Ajo Virgie Ravenhawk



*Debbie*  
*Drumhawk*  
*Oliver*

Born October 14, 1955, Debbie Oliver retired from the phone company Southwestern Bell. Currently, she spends time supporting her wife Virgie Ravenhawk. She is a drum maker, along with rattles, pipe stems, and medicine boxes. She supports the drum circles and is keeper of the calendar for the Rainbow Drum Tribe. She plays a critical role in getting the family organized for the GOC.

I came to the mountain for the first time in 2000. I was invited by my friend Lynne Heilbuth. After my separation from my partner, Lynne became my spiritual teacher. I have always been called to spend time in nature. I was a hiker and lover of the outdoors. Nature is my first teacher of spirit. I have learned to be fully present in the outdoors. I spent a lot of time hiking in the Grand Canyon and other places. As Lynne began to teach me, she shared books that began to change the way I saw things. I began awakening to something greater than myself and focusing on learning about Spirit. My time outdoors has taught me to be flexible and observant, and, through the readings, I began to use these tools.

As I met people up on the mountain, I began to see the wonders of spirit and the magic of the mountain bringing us all together. The workshops and the speakers help me stretch my horizons and learn a new set of tools to apply to daily life. As a technician with the phone company, I was used to working with tools but never had I understood the tools of Spirit and how we have to create a sense of balance in our daily lives. The friendships that I make at the GOC are very special to me because we are all on this journey of life, and it's nice to meet fellow travelers on the road.

In 2002, I met my wife Virgie at the GOC. The mountain gave me a precious gift and I am so grateful that the mountain brought us together. Virgie runs a drum circle and many of the members of that circle have become part of our own small tribe. These people are committed to being of service and to model the loving kindness of all Creation. Each year we bring new family to the mountain, and every year we hear the stories of how the



mountain changed their lives. We have always supported the GOC and found it beautifully inspiring to gather with like-minded people to share teachings, ceremonies, and rituals. This vision is a catalyst that helps people find something that resonates with their spiritual growth.

My prayer for all is that we take the lessons from the mountain, and share them with others and help bring peace to all, regardless of race, color or gender. It is through this oneness that we can help our mother heal. The mountain is an example of how we can live in Spirit with our neighbors, but we need to learn how to step out of our EGO and embrace loving kindness for all.

As a dog lover I am so grateful to be able to take our four legged with us.

Without the Gathering of Circles, my life would not have taken the direction it has, and for that alone, I am so very grateful. My heart is full.

No one knows when they will plant a seed of hope in someone else and the GOC is a place where many Master Gardeners come together to work their crops. Many blessings to all who make this pilgrimage up the mountain, and to those who made this vision become a reality.



## Steve Lake



I was born in Nuremberg, Germany in 1965 to American parents. My father was career Army infantry, Special Forces, and a decorated combat veteran. My mother was a former Army nurse who continued her profession out of the Army as an ER nurse. I have one older sister by three years.

In my young life, moving as an Army child, my favorite place was Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where I was free to fish, explore, and play as long as I got home when the street lights came on. My hero was Geronimo: I visited his grave and learned of his courage in battle. I had his classic poster on my wall for years until replaced some years later by the iconic Farrah Fawcett poster as I grew into a teenager.

When my father retired, we settled in El Paso, Texas, a place where we had previously been stationed.

In love with the climate and the culture, El Paso truly felt like home.

Like many teenagers in El Paso at the time, desert parties, house parties, and "all night" drinking in Juarez were the standard social events.

I found my love of live music in high school and became a self-taught sound engineer. I worked late-nights in bars throughout my last two years of high school.

After a brief stint at Texas Tech, I went on the road with rock bands. More drinking and the accompanying debauchery planted the seeds for future personal battles. Traveling all over the USA, Canada, and Japan, I was young and having the time of my life or so I thought.

After the tours were over, the parties done, the glamour gone, I was left empty and lost at 28. Leaving Denver, which had been my home, I returned to my roots in El Paso, seeking to escape and outrun my own skin.

Finding work with a local sound company, I loved what I did and the people I worked with but still felt lost, looking for answers in another shot or another bump.



Years went by and I met my wonderful wife Lisa and along came our son Zach, but my demons were relentless and still I was lost. My answer came in my surrender to a Spiritual Solution and subsequent Spiritual Awakening. It had been there all along waiting for me to be ready. Today at almost a decade sober and 20 years clean, I enjoy my life, love myself and others, and am profoundly grateful for the Grace of Creator, for I am no longer lost but a seeker.



### How I Found the Sacred Mountain

My spiritual journey began, like many others with a traditional Catholic upbringing. The ceremonies, the rituals, and the doctrine seemed to overshadow the message or even the gospel for that matter. I enjoyed the sense that behind it all was a caring loving Creator. As a child I was exposed to the world of Spirit by many innocent experiences, joyful, unexplainable, and some even frightening.

By high school and early adulthood, gone for me was the Catholic church, and the spiritual experiences of childhood were relocated to memory. I still had faith but without a practice or works. Life was at hand and my separation from Spirit and all things spiritual were accelerated by an overabundance of the diversions of youth.