

TALKING STICK

THE VOICE OF METTANOKIT



Summer 2009

Assessment of Now

I feel like sending everyone a little love today. A little juice. Like to shake your day with joy. So. Here's some good news for a change. Well. A new analysis anyway. An assessment of our times and our place in them. A re-evaluation of what we are looking at here.

We are a lot in emergency mode these days. Disaster mode. Code orange, getting redder. And that's appropriate. A lot of folks haven't heard all the news yet about the state of our planet, and most others are blocking it – too depressing.

Or they don't realize that their big national priorities, religious priorities, personal priorities, are all trumped by our need to get together to cooperate and devote all our attention to saving our lives and the lives of all future generations of humankind.

Until we have gotten that alert out to all the human beings we need to keep this situation in our focus. However. There's more to say about this emergency.

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This is the most exciting and wonderful time to be alive and be human in all the history of our species. It is the time of greatest danger, when we could blow it for the human experiment here. But. It is also the time of the greatest promise in our evolution.

There is a greater, wider, deeper consciousness than ever before in the development of human knowledge. There are more people and a much higher percentage of the population who are knowledgeable, who understand the problems we face environmentally and socially, than there have ever been before.

For the first time a very large and growing number of people believe that it is possible to eliminate war and deadly violence from the world. Forever. This last war in Iraq was the first war in history to have been protested by millions of people before it started. Organizations continue to form and grow and foster the belief that all war and all violations to human rights can be ended.

More people now understand the causes of war and violence, of oppression and injustice, of isolation and powerlessness, of exploitations of people and of nature. There are many organizations around the world teaching and working at ending all those things.

For the first time there is a large number of us who understand human goodness, and how it becomes twisted by mistreatment at an early age, who have found better ways of living with our children so they flourish as the loving,



caring, thoughtful and creative beings that are fundamental to our nature.

The truth is everyone wants to live in peace in a healthy world, everyone wants to be close to other people, everyone wants to be helpful, everyone wants to do something useful and creative, and to have fun at it all.

The economic crisis is helping people see how shabby and destructive are the materialist values of capitalism and communism, as they have been instituted among the nations. That playing with your children has more joy and fulfillment for your life than stressing for the bank account, the house, the cars, and all the gadgets and toys. We traded love and closeness for stuff and junk and not only messed up our happiness but bid fair to destroy our beautiful Earth.



But now we finally understand that liberty, equality and familyhood are not achieved by revolution or declaration. They are achieved by our getting close to each other, discharging all the barriers to our being completely close, to our understanding and supporting and working with and loving each other.

Using this new knowledge of our social, emotional, creative, spiritual human natures we will have to outgrow and change the systems and institutions that we have set up to isolate us from each other, turn us into economic pawns, and inure us to a society of a few obscenely rich and a mass of desperately poor, with inequality and injustice bred by the systems, the economy, the education, the media, the very religions that promote oppression, sexism, racism, ageism, nationalism and so on.

I'm delighted we got to this point and

are starting to come together and learn from and support each other more. But. As I complete my 80th year I find myself hoping I get to see and participate and live in a real change that we can make with our new knowledge.

I participated in a small successful experiment with the Mettanokit community of the 80s, but now I want more. In my lifetime. I want to begin to build a Circle Way Village which can be a model to the world and a place where Ellika and I, who are getting a bit tired, can settle and let folks come to us while we get to play with the grandchildren and help promote the dream to the world.

Who wants to come play with us, and start to build a village and a world now?

Come to camp or email me. Let's get to work on it. I want us to live together.



Birch Cottage

My romantic name for this odd little
House, home-grown, hand-made
With a lot of help from my friends,
Built room by room into the woods,
Birch embracing southwest, west, north,
Ash southeast, dark pine to the east.

I love this grove of birch huddling here,
Seeking sanctuary, protection from attack
By the distant army of human busy-ness
That blows its pollution on the wind,
Acid in the rain, affecting these most
supple,
Yet most fragile and infirm of trees.

Trees that were sacred to my ancestor's
here,
Whose dancing spirits gestured prayers
From Mother's soil to Father's soul.
The clearing was here before the house,
And here we circled for ceremonies
Celebrating the forest and all us children.

Twenty-five years ago I began
Joyously to extend and dismantle
The trailer I wore like a hermit crab,
And now I waken beside my beloved
And watch through the skylight gentle
Fingertips of the sun entwining the top

Fingers of the birches as they sway, then
Through our windows southwest and
west

Follow that caress down the white trunks,
The birds and squirrels darting, pausing,
Accepting the forest limits of life
In ceaseless search for nourishment.

Woodland creatures accept my cottage
As part of their habitat. We hear
Strange gnawing in the walls, and mice
Scatter their droppings in drawers and
shelves.

Flying squirrels blink from closets, red
Squirrels eat into our food cabinets.

One winter a raccoon had two babies
In the attic (sometimes I had to climb
To ask for quiet while I wrote), wasps
Build homes under the eaves.
A porcupine couple made a baby
Under our bedroom, left him to us.
We fed him that spring until he left home.

Deer watch quietly at dusk behind the
trees,
A partridge shoos us fiercely from her
nest,
We hear geese bark from their resting
On the pond below the hill where
beavers

Work and otters play, and the hunting
Cries of owls and wildcats nightly.

Building a snug fire with deadfall,
We watch a moonlight pavanne of
birches:

Above the aspiring ghostly trees
The stately procession of the stars.
Into the vast legend of the universe
We praise our home - Birch Cottage.



SCHEDULE 2009 MANITONQUAT & ELLIKA

Date	Place	Contact
May		
1-3	Wampanoag Spring Moon ceremonies	
15-17	Ellika Women's, Kiel	(49) 431-561541
18-24	Damp Camp, Germany	(49) 4352-956257
27-28	Circle Way Village planning and	
29-July 6	Bavarian Camp, Germany	(49) 8145 80 90
June		
12-14	Celleno, Italy	(39) 276 22808
19-21	Torup, Denmark	(45) 2589 0877
July		
1-7	Rainbow Gathering, NM	
11	Birthday celebration, Wampanoag Rez	
12	Birthday celebration, Salem, MA	
17	Birthday celebration, Mundekulla, Sweden	
18-19	Sustainable Living, Mundekulla, Sweden	
19-24	Swedish Camp, Mundekulla	(46) 471 50450
25-31	Danish Camp, Bornholm	(45) 5648 4882
August		
1-8	German Camp	(49) 2151 39 59 46
14-16	Trieste, Italy	
17-23	Italian Camp	(39) 389 4333 150
25-3 Sept.	Austrian Camp	(43) 3117 261927
September		
4-6	Workshop Heckenbeck	(49) 5563 999554
11-13	Workshop, Braunschweig	(49) 176 24243437
15	Storytelling in Mölln, Germany	
18-20	Workshop near Kiel, Germany	
25-27	Darlarna, Sweden	
October		
2-4	Women's (Ellika) Mundekulla	(46) 471 50450



2008 Year End Report

2008 was a tough year for everyone economically, but we had good travels and close connections, wonderful camps and workshops, and America chose Obama and change and hope!

The prison circles are all thriving, sweats there are healing, and powerful changes keep coming for all these men. I am so grateful for the devotion to those circles of my dear brother Raven, who keeps them all together while we are away for months in Europe every year, and for his wonderful partner Lydia who assists him.



We did have a bit of a disaster here. On December 11 it rained heavily at night and froze a lot of water in the trees, we heard them crash to ground in the night and when we woke in the morning all our biggest most beautiful birch trees lay on the ground! It was a miracle that none of them hit the house, the yurt, any of our tool houses, or the car and we were safe. We had no power for two weeks. The trees that fell across our drive were cleared by my bother in three days so we were able finally to get out and bring in food and water. It was cozy with firewood and candles.

Here is a poem about the event:



DISASTER

Our sacred birch grove laid low
In the night by weight of water, ice
Layering ice, embracing clinging,
Encasing every twig and limb
Until the heaviest and tallest succumbed
And one by one, the soil and roots
Unable to bear them longer, the noble
White giants toppled and sank to earth.

We heard the cracks like gunshot
Exploding above us all night long,
My beloved and I, clinging together
In apprehensive wonder, waking
To find our cottage surrounded, embraced
By our familiar guardians fallen
Faithful upon their last battleground,
Lying still beside us entombed in ice.

The lowering sun now ignites
Thousands of tiny gleaming sparks
On the frozen limbs that weave
Around the windows, a crystal forest
World freezing the time to memory.
I am frozen too, bewildered, numb,
Unfeeling, stunned, groping for what
May let me enter this alien world.

I envy my beloved wife, who sat up
And screamed at the first sight and wept
Wringing, copious tears and wailing
Our shattered woods, the lovely cadavers
Of white trunks and branches lying
Tangled helpless about the house,
Grateful too that she can weep,
Shedding tears enough for both of us.

Having been nurtured by the birches,
The decimation of the grove strikes us
Vitality, paralyzing the normal function

Of my brain, I wait the return of reason,
Wishing meanwhile I had the poetic power
Of a Milton, a Hardy, a Yeats, a Frost,
To convey the range of this disaster
But sing I must for our sake as friends.

The hours pass, the day passes.
The night releases us, covers the tragedy.
A blink in the sky wobbles – that is
No star, no plane – now there are more:
They are sparkles of ice drops lit
By the full moon, the dark wind
In trees above our skylight waving
Back at pale clouds racing the night

Now it is morning, the second morning
Of a new, strange, inchoate world.
Nothing has changed, time still frozen
Sunlight strikes to blinding brilliance
The millions of crystal drops blazing
The forest grove, colors flash within
Death's beauty with irresistible radiance,
Piercing all with the splendor of now.

I am, we are all, here to learn -
What do I take from this unexpected
Cataclysm that has torn out the
Heart of woods thirty years my home?
Only the giants fell, the ones that grew
Too tall for the soil to support – the lesson:
The higher we aspire to heaven, the
deeper
Must we thrust our roots into the Earth.

How am I to comprehend this deluge of
ice?
As custodian of the woods where lies my
task?
It is to realize the logic and rightness of
death,

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Rebirth and renewal – new woods from old.
 With gratitude in mourning we must care now
 For our vanquished elders, restore the grove
 To new life and the hope of seeds,
 Seedlings and saplings, reaching to the sun.

I was deeply depressed at the loss of my sacred birch grove and living among these dozens of fallen old friends, and perhaps that weakened me so that I was more than unusually overwhelmed by a fever for two weeks. But I'm back to speed again, grateful for all your prayers and good wishes. And I realize the felling of the trees was only the forest doing what it needed to heal itself – in spring a new forest begins!

Looking back over 2008, the highlights all have to do with you who have supported Ellika and me so well and have stayed close. Many of you have called and it's always good to hear you.

And here is an excerpt from a letter to me by our dear Miriam in Berlin who has stood by us so many years and raised my spirits with these thoughts that I am happy to know are shared by many:

"Thanks for sharing the facts the problem and the required solution, thanks for sharing your feelings! But never believe you failed any of your dreams; what you have done in each of the three is much more than one could expect from anybody in only one life time!!!

"For a quarter of a century, you have

brought hope and life to hundreds of prisoners, have showed them that Another World Is Possible, that will never be lost!!

"The Nature School existed and still exists - anchored on earth and in reality!

"The vision of circle way villages you have already spread into the minds of hundreds or thousands of people, it grows and breeds until it'll break through its eggshell of visualization to be materialized, there's no doubt about that!

"Its OK to feel you failed, as long that you remember that ITS ONLY FEELING AND HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH REALITY!!! You succeeded so much, you won, and we all won and still win with you - Thank You for all your love and your efforts!"

* * * * *

I was very sad to lose a very dear friend of maybe 40 years - the great singer Odetta, whose soul was as big as the world, and also to lose my dearest cousin Douglas whom I have known all my life and often visited to talk philosophy and art and music. I miss then both already so much.

But it was a joy to reconnect with my old Army buddy George Ruditz and his family and catch up on the years, and very specially to visit with Toshi and Pete Seeger in their home overlooking the Hudson River where they have lived for sixty years! It was so nice to sit and trade stories again with him, he is doing really well at 90, and she is still very sharp but her legs are giving her trouble now. He said he had been reading Obama and a phrase stuck with him that came back in a

dream to write a song "We are the people we have been waiting for." I have not traced the source, but some years ago I got a message from the Hopi elders that ended with that phrase.

I had a wonderful trip to New Mexico, chauffeured there by our old friend Damacio Lopez, tireless fighter against Depleted Uranium for 23 years. Jaya Bear organized a nice circle for me in Taos, and Steven McFadden created a fine night for me to present in Santa Fe. It was also great to connect with my very dear friend Garrick Beck, co-creator of the Rainbow Gatherings.

Ellika and I, together with Cynthia Hajjar of the Nature School, went to Hawaii, a week on Maui hosted by Cathrin Hoepken for three events, and a week-long camp on the Big Island hosted by Camilla and Kalle from Mundekulla (so with many Swedes, four Germans, and a few Americans). Wonderful that Hubert came all the way from Singapore to confer

with us about our financial troubles with the Nature School and our homes. Great to connect with old friend Fantuzzi, who hosted an elders panel where I spoke, with a lovely Hawaiian native auntie I fell in love with – all the natives I met felt just like the families of my own people. So many old Rainbows I haven't seen in 20-30 years came to say hello. Great to be in a state whose license plate says love! (Aloha)

I guess that gets us up to date. We now have my new book of stories that I illustrated, WAMPANOAG MORNING, about Wampanoag life before the Europeans, and it looks very nice. The new edition of RETURN TO CREATION is out now, and THE ORIGINAL INSTRUCTIONS is finished and will be out in the spring.

2008 was a tumultuous year, but we are alive, Obama is in, hope is reborn, and 2009 will be great!

Manitonquat



TOSHI AND PETE SEEGER WITH STORY AND ELLIKA



Thoughts From Changing The World

For the first time in its more than four billion year existence the delicately balanced relationship between the earth and its sun is being interfered with by its own denizens. We are so ignorant and so arrogant in our ignorance that we think this is all right. It isn't. We think we know what we are doing. We don't.

But as human beings we have inherited an evolving consciousness that not only has devised the pervasive destruction of life and the cruel and bewildering attacks upon the body, mind, heart and soul of all suffering humanity, we have also evolved our consciousness to where we now begin to realize our responsibility for that suffering. With that consciousness we are also able to devise solutions, to heal and change the relationships we have to each other, to other beings, to the Earth, to the Sun, and to the future evolution of our consciousness.

We need to be asking ourselves and each other, "What is the Good Life? What fulfills you? What is your joy?" I'm sure most people want the same things. We all want peace, safety, freedom from fear, we want our children to be safe and happy and healthy, we want to be able to love and show our love, to be with people who are supportive and appreciative of us, we want to be able to devote ourselves to some creative activity that absorbs us, we want to play and have fun, and we want to be surrounded by a

beautiful and healthy environment and draw from nature sustenance for our souls.

From CHANGING THE WORLD:

"But that was exactly what the founding mothers and fathers of the Circle Way movement knew was most essential. So as they gathered in their early conferences and camps to explore how to live together the Circle Way, they began to share their spiritual feelings, experiences, ideas, yearnings and expressions with each other in their circles. They observed what was arising among them as common understands and values, and they began to create new ceremonies, new songs, new dances, and new stories that grew from these feelings and values. What was felt to be universal and true in the old religions could be honored and incorporated, but the new expressions need not become fixed and might continually evolve and change. Even as human beings are continually evolving and changing, and more quickly now, as our consciousness expands into new and higher realms of understanding together with our growing knowledge of the universe."

"The Circle Way is derived from the social systems of equality and interdependence that developed and were utilized and improved upon over more than two million years for human evolution. All

our ancestors at one time lived in such a system of mutual care and cooperation peacefully and contentedly until the system was wrested from them by force and violence. The change from cooperation and caring to domination and exploitation began slowly in certain areas of the world around ten thousand years ago, before the invention of writing and written history.

"The camps, which we continue to hold in the summer at many Circle Way Villages like this one, give everyone the experience of closeness in clans, the building of a new culture and a new social system based on our common tribal heritage, interrupted for millennia. At the end of every camp people could only express their reluctance to return to life under the old system, the rat race and the stress, and their longing for the next summer's camp. It wasn't long before some of them got bold enough to acquire land for a new village that functioned as the camps in the Circle Way."



The Talking Circle

by *Manitonquat*

How can we re-learn respect, understand the gifts of creation, and break the cycle of violence? In prisons, a Native American democratic tradition brings healing and new possibilities.

In the 1960s I joined the protests against the war and for the rights of women, Native people, and African Americans. But I wondered more and more what was the cause of all this oppression and violence. Study of history, psychology, philosophy, and the world's religious and mystical traditions gave no answers that satisfied me. I returned to the elders of my own Native traditions and asked them what had gone wrong with this society. They said that human beings have forgotten their instructions. Black Elk said, "In the old days, when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came from the sacred hoop of the nation, and as long as that hoop remained unbroken, the people flourished." Now many of our people are seeking to mend that hoop and return to the ways that worked for us and made us happy.

For me this mending began in 1974 when I visited the Brotherhood of American Indians incarcerated in a federal prison. Here I discovered a group of dear and valuable Native men who had been torn from their families and left to rot forgotten in this white man's dungeon. I reflected on the reasons for their trans-

gressions, the alcohol and the conquerors' destruction of the sacred hoop. Before they came, our people had no need for cages for human beings.

I made a commitment to bring the way of the circle to people in the prisons. When my friend Slow Turtle first set up prison circles in New England 20 years ago, he stipulated that, as our elders taught, these are human being ways, not Indian ways, so all people should have access to our circles.

I now go to 10 circles in New England prisons and have witnessed their healing power. Here the men have found the only time in their week where they are treated like human beings, treated with respect, which we teach is not something that must be earned but should be accorded to all equally. Respect is the first of the Original Instructions for human beings. We are told to respect all of Creation, the Earth, and all beings on it. To respect the elders, the young, the women, the men, and all people no matter what their differences, and to respect ourselves. When that instruction is adhered to, the circle works miracles. When it is not, the circle may break down.

The circle begins with thanksgivings to Mother Earth, to all our relations here on Earth and in the great circle of the universe, and to the Creator. The elder then takes the talking stick and speaks on what is on his mind, and then the stick passes around for each to reflect on what

has been said, or to speak from his heart about his life, his thoughts and feelings. As the prisoners hear each other, they feel connected through similar experiences. They open up as they feel the bond that grows among them, and they reach out and support each other. They begin to remember their childhood and to understand the forces that brought them to prison. They learn that they are good men contending with bad circumstances, and this helps them to deal with that on the outside. They learn that everyone is suffering, and this changes how they understand other prisoners, prison staff, relatives, and others outside.

I have seen wonderful changes in the men who have stayed in our circles. Through the circle they became human beings again, learning to trust and love, to seek their gifts and make their give-

aways. They are so grateful that they say the circle has saved their lives and they want to give back. They want to start circles themselves in the prisons and on the streets and in schools to keep young people from the same traps. More than 100 men I worked with have left prison, and I am aware of only six who returned—all but one for minor parole violations, not crimes.

So my proposition is simple. Too simple? I don't think so, of course. I see that this Creation is complex, but the laws that govern it everywhere are simple. And if all we are doing is not working to give us a life that is truly human, should we not consider the ways that did work for us, the ways of our ancestors passed to us through the oral traditions of the elders—the Original Instructions?

(this article first appeared in Yes magazine)





Mettanokit Order Form



Books



Changing the World

Medicine Story
Story Stone Publishing
Paperback (152 pgs.) (adult)
Healing ourselves, our families, our communities, our earth. A vision for achieving freedom, peace, happiness and love, and a truly human society.



Wampanoag Morning

Medicine Story
AuthorHouse
Paperback (104 pgs.) (all ages)
[ISBN 978-1-4389-0010-0]
Stories from the land of the people of the first light before the English invasion.



Grandfather Speaks

Medicine Story
Story Stone Publishing
Paperback (104 pgs.) (adult, poetry)
A book of verse by Manitonquat.



The Granddaughter of the Moon

Medicine Story • Story Stone Publishing
Paperback (32 pgs.) (all ages)
An illustrated story based on a remnant of an old legend.



Return to Creation

Medicine Story
Bear Tribe Publishers
Paperback (175 pgs.) (gr. 7 - adult)
[ISBN 943404-20-7]

Using the history, traditions and prophecies of his Wampanoag ancestors and other native peoples, Medicine Story illustrates common human values and offers solutions to the problems confronting people today of all ages and cultures.



The Original Instructions

Medicine Story
AuthorHouse
Paperback (188 pgs.) (adult)
Reflections of an Elder on the Teachings of the Elders



Ending Violent Crime

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Story Stone Publishing
Paperback (71 pgs.) (adult)
A concise report on working prison program circles which focus on a violence-free society.



The Circle Way

Medicine Story
Story Stone Publishing
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A manual of how to start and enhance circles of any kind.



Other Publications

Talking Stick

Newsletter of Mettanokit Outreach. Yearly, with articles and schedules of Mettanokit and Medicine Story's writings, workshops and other events.



Heritage

Medicine Story Editor, Rational Island Publishers
A Re-Evaluation Counseling Journal for Native Liberation.

Books

- _____ Changing the World (\$15)
- _____ Wampanoag Morning (\$12)
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- _____ The Granddaughter of the Moon (\$15)
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- _____ Talking Stick (\$2)
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Shipping and Handling: add \$2.50 for 1st item and \$1 for each additional item. Prices for products are listed above. Make checks out to: Mettanokit. Mail order form to: 167 Merriam Hill Road, Greenville, NH 03048

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Mettanokit is a non-profit learning center which is dedicated to healing ourselves and our world. Programs and services respectfully incorporate the ancestral wisdom of Native Americans and others who honor harmonious living with Mother Earth and spiritual connections with Creation.

Arson on the Reservation

The Wampanoag Community House, built and maintained by the Assonet Band on the Reservation in Assonet, Mass., was burned to the ground some time after midnight June 20. A reward of \$5000 is being offered for information leading to the apprehension of the arsonist. All our library, artworks and kitchen appliances in the building were destroyed. A fund for donations to replace them and rebuild has been started by Medicine Story and his brother Raven.

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CHIEF KEN ALVES AND CLAN MOTHER SUE BLAKE VIEW THE ASHES OF THE COMMUNITY HOUSE.

