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The One Who Stands Within

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Because of who we proclaim to be and the position we hold as “helpers” on this earth, we have a sacred and delicate responsibility to care for those entrusted to us. At Anasazi - The Making of A Walking, we have determined that this sacred responsibility cannot be carried out with effectiveness unless the ingredient called love is found in our hearts. Love is what keeps us awake during dark hours of the night asking for light to give others. Love makes sacrifice a worthwhile guest.

During his last days upon Mother Earth, Chief Dan George pleaded:

My friends, how desperately do we need to be loved and to love. Love is something you and I must have. We must have it because our spirit feeds upon it. We must have it because without it we become weak and faint. Without love our self-esteem weakens. Without it our courage fails. Without love we can no longer look out confidently at the world. We turn inward and begin to feed upon our own personalities, and little by little we destroy ourselves.

With it we are creative. With it we march tirelessly. With it, and with it alone, we are able to sacrifice for others.

(Tobern & Mengelkoch, 1991; George, 1989)

From out of the blue, to you and me, the cry for help comes from all directions. At times when the cry from others is pressing upon my soul, I reach into my heart searching.

When I finally emerge, the conclusion is the same. I rediscover the principle that my soul is interwoven with the souls of those I associate. We are in this together. How I came to this conclusion has been an ongoing process of a lifetime. The learning to sacrifice for others did not come easy.

It was in Texas when I first heard the following quote of John Greenleaf Whittier from Carlos E. Asay, who was to become my mentor and truest friend: “Me lift thee and thee lift me, and we will both ascend together” (Whittier, 1992). I soon learned that Carlos Asay lived what he taught. It didn’t take long for this simple quote to also become a part of my life. This quote best describes what Anasazi - The Making Of A Walking, is striving to do in Arizona. Today, time permits me to relate only a part of the teachings I discovered along the wilderness trail and in the wilderness of the world, teachings which Larry Olsen and I call the Anasazi Way.

Difficult Learnings Along the Trail

My mind can quickly unlock memories, which at times come muddled in the remembering. But memories of difficult learning that have found their way into the sacred pouch of my heart come in distinct remembrance. I recall one incident in my early helping and lifting of others where night found me wet and shivering with nothing but a ponderosa tree to shield me from the wall of pouring rain, the pine boughs serv-
ing as the only protection from the cold wind. My search for a Brigham Young University survival group who had taken the wrong trail had begun earlier that day. But darkness and its companions, rain and wind, caught me unprepared and alone on top of Boulder Mountain with only my solemn thoughts and a growling empty stomach.

Fatigue and want of bread can do funny things to both mind and body. Through the long hours of that night, many critical thoughts worked overtime in my already exhausted body. When morning finally came, the welcomed sun dried not only my clothes but its rays banished the dark discouraging thoughts of my mind. Or so I thought. I have since learned that discouraging thoughts need to be replaced with good thoughts; otherwise they lie dormant waiting for the next opportunity to show their ugly heads. A day later I came across the lost group.

A following summer in southeastern Utah, hiking with raw blisters within the walls of Horse Canyon, the dark thoughts began to emerge again, this time in broad daylight. The complaining of the students had been constant throughout the morning. The noonday sun that before had been a welcome relief on Boulder Mountain would this time intensify the ordeal by heating the floor and the red walls of the canyon, making it a sandstone oven. The intense heat boiled my faultfinding to perfection and the "whys" kept finding their way into my heart.

But I kept coming back for more as I continued to assist Larry Olsen in the development of the BYU Survival Course at Provo, Utah. In an article titled "Red Circle Cliffs," I wrote about the challenge a group of survivalists and I had coming off the Circle Cliffs:

It had been a rough and stretching five days trying to find a way down the red Circle Cliffs area. The colorful sandstone hills seemed to go on forever. The high cliffs and deep crevices seemed to keep us from finding the final destination where Larry Olsen and Paul Newman and their groups would reunite with us. As the sun scorched our backs, the warning of the old cowboy outside Hall's store had echoed in my mind many times: "If you think to hike the Circle Cliffs area, you're in for a rough go. The last time one of use went in there, he had a heck of a time coming out. I wouldn't go if I was you." He spat tobacco juice on the ground and looked at me with his steel gray eyes. Then he walked away. Those words, which at that time challenged me, now seemed prophetic. (Sanchez, 1996)

By late afternoon of the second day we pushed our weary bodies over hills of loose sand, hoping we might run across water if we kept going. Open murmuring began to be manifested among the group. The subject of water was on everyone's lips. Accusations and finger pointing followed throughout the night. Next morning we all humbled ourselves on our knees upon Mother Earth and took turns praying. To everyone's surprise, rain came from some small clouds, which appeared in the clear blue sky. We ran around digging holes in the sand and laying our ponchos in them to catch the water.

I concluded the "Red Circle Cliffs" story with the following words:

Through five days of challenging experiences, my life had become interwoven with their lives. As I looked at the group gathered around the fire, the faces of those I had walked with stood out in the dark. Their lives had found a way into my heart. I knew then that my view of life's obstacles would never be the same. As difficult as it had been, I felt this was not the last group I would lead into the Circle Cliffs area. Turning to the northeast, I remembered searching for the dark outline of the Circle Cliffs. In my mind's eye I could see small white clouds filling up the sandstone pockets with rainwater once more. (Sanchez, 1996)

Then, as a second thought, I attached the following postscript to the "Red Circle Cliffs" story:

I did return to the Circle Cliffs with other groups. The difficult obstacles were still there waiting for us. One day someone asked me that if I already knew the difficulty of the Circle Cliffs, why did I go? What the person didn't understand was that I didn't go because I loved to torture myself but to drink of the spiritual walking again and again. (Sanchez, 1996)

With each walking into the wilderness I found awakenings taking place within my soul, though I have to admit that sometimes I couldn't make heads or tails of the feelings within my heart. All I knew was that I wanted to walk with others. For a long time it seemed that's all I did - always walking in the capacity of a helper.

**Putting Others First**

As time went on, other helpers joined Larry Olsen and me (Olsen & Sanchez, 1999). One of those remarkable individuals was a young man by the name of L. Paul Newman.
Years later, as I joined Larry in the open deserts of Arizona, this principle of putting others first was to become a significant part of the Anasazi Way. These self-evident truths and teaching still come line upon line, precept upon precept [see Isaiah 28:10]. For instance, the understanding that stepping into the hearts of those we teach is sacred ground came through several ways. I now know individuals are sacred beings because I have read the book in my heart. Today we need more than ever to look past the outward appearance and strive to see the greatness of these children.

In 1976 I attended a funeral of an old traditional Navajo man in Lukachukai, Arizona. Afterwards at the graveside services, a beautiful horse was shot and laid to rest in the grave with the body of the deceased. The elderly Navajos said he would need the horse to ride in the next world. Earlier, in the chapel viewing of the open casket, I had seen beautiful jewelry and fine blankets folded neatly with the body.

Navajo tradition is that the spirit in man will continue to live beyond the grave. My wonderful wife, Pauline, taught me that in her Navajo tongue the spirit in man is referred to as “Ni-hi-yi-si-zi-nii” or the “One Who Stands Within.”

About nine years ago on a cold wintry day when Red Creek empties into the Verde River, I shared the idea of the “One Who Stands Within” with a Young Walker [Editor’s note: “Young Walkers” is the title given the teenagers who walk the Anasazi trail in order to improve themselves] who would not be home for Christmas. His immediate response was, “that's awesome!” That reply warmed my chilled bones. After that exclamation he remained silent. Then he excused himself and came back a bit later with an armful of wood. While he placed pieces of wood in the fire, he did the Making Of An Asking: “Could it be that before we came to earth we knew each other?” he asked.

Now it was my turn to be silent. As he waited for an answer, I thought, “Out of millions of people on this planet, what if this Young Walker is someone I deeply love, who has been sent my way?” As I dwelled upon this, another thought came which continues to form the basis of my belief about the Young Walkers and their parents. This new thought filled my heart with emotion that cold winter day: “It is said that when men’s paths cross, it is not by accident. It is the Creator bringing two old friends together.”

As new insight found its way into my heart, my eyes filled with tears but not from the whirling smoke of the mesquite flames. Leaning forward I touched his shoulder and stared deeply into the eyes of this wonderful Young Walker. For a while time stood still. Then, like rushing water it came. Without speaking a word we both sensed it was not by accident our paths had crossed.

That memorable December day, our lives became interwoven together forever. It was then I realized that I couldn't be caught up with outward appearances and exclude someone I might have known long ago. The “One Who Stands Within” is before me daily, clothed with flesh and bones and asking for a piece of sacred bread and for a drink of living water. As we lift others, we, too, are filled to overflowing. That wintry day on Red Creed, whose waters flow into the Verde River, my soul was filled with living water.

The True Path of Life

In my early search for learning, I came across a quote by Hugh B. Brown that has helped me see why the wilderness has such a profound effect on human beings, especially the children who walk the trail with us. Hugh B. Brown said,

Sometimes during solitude I hear truth spoken with clarity and freshness; uncolored and untranslated it speaks from within myself in a language original but inarticulate, unheard only with the soul, and I realize I brought it with me, was never taught it nor can I efficiently teach it to another. (Madsen, 1966; see also Kimball, 1972, chap. 18)

My experience, my friends, reveals there can be several places of solitude in which we can hear the “One Who Stands Within.” One special place is the home built upon love.
Another is within the walls of Holy Places. For some it is the silent majesty of nature, away from the distractions of the world. In his final Anasazi report, Star White Wolf shared this insight he discovered during his wilderness “Walking”:

Although life seemed much harder living without showers and stoves, I realized that I was actually blessed to be able to live in the most simple way. I was able to see nature in the best possible way; I was a powerful part of the sacred circle of life. I lived only to see the most beautiful moment. I longed to see a gorgeous sunrise, or a solemn sunset. There were no hectic noises to distract my thoughts from the powerful and triumphant sights of nature. Nature heals hearts and minds by providing a scenic solitude. This was the only place I could have gone to sort out the confusion in my life, to stop and see myself from the inside out, to see that I really do have purpose in my life. (Star White Wolf)

I believe that in our anxiety to be of help, we at times spread a dark cloud, which covers up truth spoken by the “One Who Stands Within.” We classify young people and label them instead. It is easy for many young people in distress to start believing their man-made labels. A number of Young Walkers come into the Anasazi program describing themselves as “a-sad-and-so, because my doctor [or my teacher, or my parents, or my counselor, etc.] told me; therefore, there’s not much I can do about it except cope with it the rest of my life.”

Children who come to us burdened with man-made ideas of “coping” soon discover they don’t have to live with those doctrines. They learn they can drop their burdens and have a new beginning. This deep change is evident on the Anasazi trail. It is the awakening of the “One Who Stands Within.” Red Arrow Hawk, a former Young Walker, described his experience in the following words:

My Rabbitstick week, I had my awakening. I was sitting on top of a mountain and was thinking about my past mistakes. As I began to pray, for the first time in years, I asked God back into my life. It was then I knew He had never left my life! He was always there for me, and always would be. I had this feeling come over me that I can’t describe — except to say it was wonderful. I cried for hours after that, with happiness and regret. (Red Arrow Hawk)

Do we see the Young Walkers — or your own children, or those you work with or teach — as the Great Spirit sees them [1 Samuel 16:7], with potential to succeed, having greatness within them? At times, I too have added to the clutter and commotion in the hearts of those whom I should be helping. Consider Wise Red Owl’s moving declaration:

When we were hiking down a really big and very steep mountain I slipped and fell on a century plant. When I fell on it we all were at the beginning of the hike and the poison in the leaves made it very painful. Every time I took a step it hurt. When we got to where we were going to camp for the night I was hurting so bad that I got down on my knees under a tree and asked God to take the pain away. Before I was even done saying the prayer the pain was gone. That was when my testimony really started to grow and be strong. I remember that day so very well. I could describe that place that I kneeled in prayer perfectly. (Wise Red Owl)

Would you and I (knowing all the bad things this Young Walker had done to his parents and others) have come to his aid immediately? The opportunity to respond to this child’s pleading was immediate. By asking, the Young Walker reinforced the spiritual knowledge, which he brought with him, the sure knowledge that help is there whenever we need it.

Occasionally in our desire to help, we complicate the awakenings. Perhaps because somewhere along life’s path we have been introduced to some traditions which keep others and us from walking on the True Path of Life. Every place I go, in the supermarkets, at church, movie theaters, parent-teacher nights, or shopping malls, etc., worried parents share terrifying stories of their children and caution each other about the “terrible two’s.” What should be regarded as the greatest adventure in a child’s life is treated as an undesirable burden. “I can’t wait until he’s out of his terrible two’s,” is echoed in parting. To the traditional Navajo, the “little ones” are sacred gifts.

My wonderful wife Pauline and I determined that the tradition of the “terrible two’s” would not be a part of our family life.

As the “terrible two’s” are left behind, the world trembles in fear awaiting the arrival of the “terrible teenage” years. Through years of involvement with families, I have found that some young people will act well their “labels.” During a Shadow Sitting [Editor’s note: “Shadow Sittings” is the title given counseling sessions; “Shadows” are the counselors, who are the inter-
mediaries between the Young Walkers and their parents], a Young Walker leaned against a mesquite tree and shared with me what she considered a normal and expected part of her life. She said when her parents would sorrow and weep over her wrong choices, she would cry out in her mind, “What's wrong with you. I'm supposed to be this way! Don't you know I'm going through my terrible teenage years?”

All around us the world is tripping over itself to establish tighter rules and contrived consequences for the children they have labeled “troubled youth.” It is my observation that rules to control behavior only serve as the means for children to lose their self-identity and self-worth. This identity confusion is being manifested more and more in the wilderness walking. My soul is saddened by the endless cry of Young Walkers who continue to question their identity. Listen to the following quote:

Who am I, was the question I asked myself over and over before I left home last January. I was lost, stuck down some road, always running from my problems only running backwards and making my life and those around me more miserable. I couldn't breathe, I didn't listen, didn't see. (Morning Dove)

As I stand here tonight my friends, I want to tell everyone within the sound of my voice that there is an answer to this heart-rending question. Many Young Walkers, after walking through the catclaw bushes and prickly pear cactus can write again:

I was lost, now I'm found. I opened my heart and mind. Why wouldn't I see my pain before; I fought a war inside, my heart and mind raged and screamed – soon I destroyed who I was fighting for; I left all those who I loved behind. I fought and constantly cried. But God took my hand and walked by my side. Now my heart sings with joy and happiness, the war has ceased, I am found; I know who I am, my heart will sing its peaceful song. (Morning Dove)

The prologue in the Anasazi video recounts the story that in the 1880's a prominent eastern journalist made a visit to Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce Tribe [see Nerburn, 1999, pp. 148-188]. In the course of this visit, he noticed that the Indian children in the camp seemed to be robust, obedient and purposeful in their daily lives. The story says that arrangements were made for the journalist's own son to spend a summer in the tipi of Chief Joseph, in hopes of helping the boy gain some of those same virtues. When the boy returned home in the fall, his father was pleased and astounded by the growth and insights the boy exemplified.

Yellow Wolf, a Nez Pierce warrior, explained:

I was a boy of about thirteen snows when my parents sent me away into the hills. It was to find my Wajuk (Spiritual helper) ... Gave me one blanket, but no food. I might go fifteen, maybe twenty, suns with nothing to eat. But could drink water aplenty. Only trees for shelter, and fir brush to sleep on. I might stay in one place three nights, maybe five nights, then go somewhere else. Nobody around, just myself. No weapons, for nothing would hurt me. No children ever get hurt when out on such business. (McWhorter, 1984, p. 27)

These accounts of Chief Joseph and Yellow Wolf form the guiding base of the Anasazi program. We are taking the young people back to nature, so they can hear the singing in the valleys, and find their Wajuk, or their spiritual helper. In order to make it romantic and less threatening for the children who are entrusted to us, the trail experience is centered around true principles utilizing primitive skills. Anasazi uses Indian lore and culture as the vehicle to touch the Young Walkers' hearts. This allows the Trail Walkers [staff] to be creative as teaching moments arise on the trail (Sanchez, 1994). The far-reaching effects of true principle teachings are found in the following story of a Young Walker called Walking Bear:

I had many opportunities to start over at Anasazi in a ceremony called a blanket stepping. In the stepping, I laid out all my belongings and I was asked to leave behind anything that might prevent me from completing the program, such as drugs or cigarettes. In this ritual, I left my bad habits behind and took only what I needed with me. (Walking Bear)

This clear and direct approach gives the Young Walker an opportunity to apply this principle to his way of life both on and off the trail. Walking Bear continues:

Throughout my life, I can move on by losing bad habits, by getting rid of things I really don't need to survive. It's not only physical things but things like grudges that can hold me back from moving forward in my life ... Now that I'm home, I have the opportunity to use what I
learned at Anasazi. There are always warning signs that tell you that it’s a bad situation, such as a rattle on a rattlesnake that warns you to stay away. When I hear about a party and I know there will be drugs or alcohol there, in my heart I hear the rattle – and stay away. That reminds me of a story I read out in the wilderness about a young Brave who set out on his Walking to find out who he was. In his Walking he hiked atop a huge peak. At his feet he saw a rattlesnake and it said to him, “Pick me up and put me under your clothing and take me down to the valley because it is too cold for me up here.” The young Brave said, “You are a rattlesnake. If I pick you up and take you down, you’ll bite me at the bottom.” The snake said, “Oh, I promise I won’t bite you.” So the Brave cautiously picked it up. When the brave set the snake down at the bottom, it coiled and struck. The brave said, “But you promised.” The snake then said, “You knew what I was when you picked me up.” It’s the same way with drugs. I know what it’s going to do to me when I pick [it] up, but it’s my choice to stay away. (Walking Bear)

In today’s present predicament, we must not beat around the bush. We are in a real battle for their lives! In a very evil and subtle way, children of all ages are being set up in a vicious faultfinding circle that separates them from their parents, spiritual leaders, and their Creator. They are cleverly led astray into dark shadows where they lose their way.

Listen to the voice of a former Young Walker, Running Red Fox:

I must have been twelve or thirteen the first time I ever used drugs. It was my favorite thing to do. Every weekend, every day; every excuse. My use continued at a rapid pace for the next three years, ever worsening into bigger amounts and harder drugs. By my sophomore year, as suddenly as a brick wall, things started to crash down on top of me. (Running Red Fox)

So I ask you where were the “friends” of Running Red Fox when the brick wall came crashing down? Why didn’t they come to his rescue?

No wonder Black Elk prays:

Great Spirit, Great Spirit, my Grandfather – all over the earth the faces of living things are alike. With tenderness have these come up out of the ground. Look upon these faces of children without number and with children in their arms, that they may face the winds and walk the good road to the day of quiet. This is my prayer; hear me! The voice I have sent is weak, yet with earnestness I have sent it. Hear me! (Black Elk, 1988, p. 6)

Are the children the only ones which are targeted? You and I have not gone unnoticed. Nor are we ignored. Somewhere along life’s path we come across the “mid-life crisis.” This sinister idea is appealing to the carnal desire in men. Its goal is to destroy the relationship between spouses. One day the man gets up and looks at his wife and thinks she is unattractive. He goes out and buys a motorcycle and a black leather jacket and starts chasing his secretary. When his wife, the mother of his wonderful children, inquires regarding his strange behavior, he hollers, “don’t bother me, don’t you know I’m going through my mid-life crisis?”

It has been my experience that the more I desire to be an answer to someone’s prayer, the more intense the pulling away by invisible hands becomes. Because we have chosen to be helpers at the noonday hour, we have to withstand the heat as the temperature rises. Our children and those whom we work with depend on it; our wonderful spouses and others expect it. Our ears must not tune in to the dark whispering of the “Invisible One Without.” Our task is to expose the poisonous counterfeit of truth and show a way out of drugs and life-shattering choices.

At Anasazi, the children come first. We come second. To free themselves from worldly cares, I counsel our people to “drop their burdens at the gate” and tend to the needs of the Young Walkers on the trail. We strive to remind ourselves that the Anasazi way is not to change the behavior of the Young Walker or their parents, but to provide opportunities for the heart to be touched, so the change can come willingly from the “One Who Stands Without.” Then the change, like clear water, will flow without compulsion.

The whole purpose of Anasazi is to help Young Walkers go home to their families with growth and insights from the Anasazi Wilderness Walking, to begin once again walking together as a family. In October 1986, F. Burton Howard said:

Some years ago it was fashionable in certain circles to hear the phrase, “you can never go home again.” That is simply not true. It is possible to return. It is possible for those who have ceased to pray, to pray again. It is possible for those who are lost to find their way through the dark and come home. And when they do, they will know, as I know, that the Lord is more concerned with what a man is than
with what he was; and with where he is than with where he has been. (Howard, 1986, p. 76)

This inspired declaration gives hope to me and the Anasazi helpers who at times need additional strength to continue reaching out. It gives us the confidence to assure both the parents and Young Walkers that “it is possible for those who are lost to find their way through the dark and come home” (Howard, 1986, p. 76).

As the Wilderness Walking concludes, Young Walkers are reunited with their parents in the Lone Walking camps for the Talking of the Heart. The wilderness setting gives the parents an opportunity to see their child and themselves from a different perspective. It allows the possibility of beginning a new relationship of trust and a foundation for a new beginning. A mother wrote about the insights which came to her during the “solo” experience with her son:

Our time on the trail with [our son] was a highlight of this experience. He was so eager to leave but he did a great job of caring for us in the wilderness. The hardest part was holding back and letting him be responsible and do all of the work and the caring. I think that time in the wilderness helped the lessons of Anasazi sink in, that we needed to let him be himself. We needed to lighten up and let him grow up and be responsible. He is an awesomely good and capable kid and worthy of all the love we can give. We had gotten distracted by a lot of rules and structure of parenting, and trying to control behaviors.

She then concluded with this wonderful understanding:

The most valuable lesson I learned from our Anasazi experience is that mostly [our son] needs to be loved. We need to want a lot of the everyday conflicts go: trying to be right, or the “good” parent isn’t the answer. I am thankful for the little things that indicate forward Walkings, and try to trust that now he will at least be bothered by backward Walkings, if not eliminating them. No matter what direction [he] goes in the future, we are so appreciative for this chance at a new beginning, without the old baggage. It is a fresh start for our family.

At Anasazi we are blessed to have Mother Nature as a Holy Place without walls. The question you might wonder is, “what would Anasazi do if the wilderness were to be removed? What approach would Anasazi use to reach the heart of the One Who Stands Within in an environment other than a wilderness setting?”

It has been my privilege to have been involved with human needs in places other than the wilderness. And I want to say to you today that the approach, whether we are in a wilderness setting or a plush air-conditioned office or home, does not change much. Distraction might be an obstacle to overcome but the principles of helping are the same.

The journey of discovery as a helper to young people has been long in the making for me. And I sense it will continue until I get it right. It has also taken mountains, deep canyons, and deserts for the thought that came from the “One Who Stands Within” to take a profound meaning in my life. This came to me as I was out walking in the desert thinking about the young people. This is the thought: “How sacred is the individual who walks the earth and whose path has crossed my way?” That thought gave me a different insight to the young people we work with.

An elderly Navajo best describes how I feel about those I walk with today. He said:

Our fathers used to be with your fathers in the long ago, but then we came to a division in the road with a great stone in the middle. We went one way and you went the other. We went around that big rock for a long time, but now we are back together and we will always walk together from now on. (Kimball, 1982, p. 594)

For me and these wonderful Young Walkers and parents whose paths have crossed my way, “the great stone in the middle” is no longer there, because “we are back together and we will always walk together from now on.”

But as long as I am mortal man with weaknesses to overcome, I have to remind myself that the principle of “ascending together” cannot be done unless I see others as our Creator sees us – with a seed of greatness and with potential to succeed.

I close with this thought: “Whereas, one who is able to stand forth and say ‘I know;’ testifies of himself because of the knowledge that is within him” (Talmage, 1912, p. 128).

Ezekiel C. Sanchez (aka “Good Buffalo Eagle”) is currently President and Chief Executive Officer of the ANASAZI Foundation, a non-profit, licensed wilderness youth treatment program located in Arizona. A Totonac Indian born in Mexico, he is the only one of 16 siblings to learn English. He attended Brigham Young University on an art scholarship, led wilderness survival courses with Dr. Larry D. Olsen, and eventually became a
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