

positive loving rehabilitation. We will promote a model of care that encourages treatment for those with mental illness and addictions. We will recognize the effects of trauma and what is needed for recovery. We will encourage appropriate education and training for released prisoners trying to re-enter the workforce, and we will embrace them as they re-enter our community. As we do this, it will serve us to remember the vision of personal transformation fostered by early Friends.

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[Complete history of ICOPA, by Friend Ruth Morris:
http://www.justiceaction.org.au/ICOPA/icopa_hist.html]

An Elder Talks of Bringing Sacred Bundle Into Prison

Edith Miller

Around the time the American Indian Movement was formed in the mid-1970s in the United States, Nishnawbe Spiritual Teacher, Art Solomon, was bringing traditional Aboriginal ceremonies into Canadian prisons. After about 15 years Art was finally given chaplain status, but ceremonies with sweet grass and tobacco were not always permitted.

In the 1980s the World Council of Churches recognized Native Spirituality as a legitimate religion. Rather than separating religious ceremony and counselling from non-religious rehabilitation such as psychological counselling and Alcoholics Anonymous, Native Spirituality was allowed. This is thought to be more holistic and relevant to Native prisoners.

It was at a 1987 Quaker gathering at the Stonehouse, (Friend, David Artiss' Nova Scotia shore-front home) where I interviewed Natives and Friends, along with others in solidarity with Natives. Mi'kmaq elder Sam Bald Eagle Augustine was there.

Here is what Sam told me: *I'm involved with the four institutions in the Maritimes: Westmorland, Dorchester, Springhill, and Renous, as a spiritual advisor to our Native prisoners. It's all on a voluntary basis. Sometimes I get money, sometimes I don't. But it's very satisfying*

work. They know there's somebody who cares out there. The Brothers in the Institutions realize there's somebody out there who really cares, so that's my involvement there. We're preparing people for the day when they'll go out, and we're trying to find ways and means so that they will not be going back again [to prison]. We try to find out the reasons why they were there in the first place. We're hoping we will find these places for them to go to get the strength to live in society, to live among their people, like in the old days, the old ways. (Sam and his wife Barbara brought buckets of fresh capelin to the gathering, and he told of re-introducing the hand grinding of corn to retain its nutrition.) That's what we're hoping to do: to have a place set aside, to have a quiet place, [outside] the prison system, so when they leave they'll continue their involvement in the Indian way. And hopefully, all of the people in the surrounding areas [will] perhaps even get the non-Indians involved in that kind of life.

For the last 300 to 400 years this system we're under is not working for us, so we have to go back to the old spiritual way of living: sweat lodges, chanting, drumming, spiritual talks, and a lot of encouragement. And we give our people their basic roots, what it is to be Native on this continent called Turtle Island. It gives them a chance to realize they are unique, they can be good people like their ancestors, [and] can use their energies in ...productive ways, rather than destructive [ways].

This is my vision of what we're trying to do. Hopefully, we'll get our people to go back and practise their way of worship. It's very beautiful and fulfills our promises of old: that we will lead the rest of mankind back to spirituality. This is our goal, our destiny, and it has to come about that way, and this is the prophecy of our Creator, our prophets that came from time to time. We do have prophets on this continent, Glooscap for one...but when Christianity came to our country they ridiculed our prophet of God. And now today we have Glooscap Highway, Glooscap Beverage Room...and so on. It's just like if, on our reservation, we would have Jesus Christ Beverage Room...we would be ridiculing your messenger of God.

(I asked Sam to tell me about the time he went into Dorchester prison)

I'd been going through quite often. They understood what was in my sacred bundle. It was explained to the staff and the warden. This particular time there were about five or six guards, and the warden wanted to see my bundle and he said, "What do you have in the bundle?"

[I said] "This is my sacred pipe."