

# Sacred Path - Call to Adventure Newsletter



March 2007 – vol. 3 no. 1

## Welcome to the Call to Adventure Newsletter



Hello

Fellow Brothers... We are seven weeks away (April 19-22, 2007) from our next Call to Adventure (CTA) Spring 2007 Retreat at Gindling Hilltop Camp in Malibu, CA. This will be our 6<sup>th</sup> CTA retreat; as a result we are expecting it to sell out fast. Dr. Stephen Johnson (Dr. J) and the men of the Wisdom Council (WC) have planned an exceptional retreat dedicating the entire mountain top to the Call to Adventure format. As one who has attended every one of the CTA retreats, the camaraderie with such men as Dr. J, Timothy “Whispering Eagle” Aguilar, Steve Branker, David “Strong Bear” Myers, Andrew “Walking Buffalo” Soliz, Christo “Master Percussionist” Pellani, Ed “The Music Man” Munter, Fred “The Movement Man” Sugerma, Tim Cook, and the other men of the WC make the CTA a safe and powerful weekend. The opportunity to have “mindful talks”, share humor, and experience deep

fellowship within large and small group formats enables us to get to the root of key issues that young men and older men alike face today.

We have had many young men attend the CTA retreat with their fathers and/or mentors over the years, and now the young men are coming back to help mentor the individuals who are new to the CTA experience. One of the best ways to embrace the teachings and feelings of the CTA experience is to come back and help others. Many of the long time Sacred Path attendees have also expressed much happiness and peace of mind when sharing their knowledge and experiences with other young men who are trying to find a better way to understand their path in life.

This issue of the CTA newsletter is dedicated to the prior teachings and experiences from the Call to Adventure. As you read, ask yourself the question; “*What can I do to use the teachings and experiences obtained from the CTA retreats to better my life?*” You may even feel the adrenaline flowing and your heart pounding as if you were back on the mountain. It is good for us to remember and reflect on our past experiences. This is what helps us move

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forward on our path. We hope to see you on the mountain in April for the next Call to Adventure...

### Featured Story

#### Lessons from Previous Call to Adventure Retreats, by Dan Stanton

The first Call to Adventure retreat was held during the summer of 2000 in the mountains just outside Ojai, California. Walter Atkinson, Tim Cook, and Dan Stanton were greeting and welcoming the young men as they walked up the dirt path from the parking area to obtain their cabin numbers, weekend instructions, and name badges. Everything about the first Call to Adventure was new; the location of the retreat, the CTA format, the use of the ropes course, the sweat lodge, the use of an outside container (meeting place), the dome cabins, the incredible meals provided during the weekend, and so forth. Walter, Tim Cook, Timothy "Whispering Eagle" Aguilar, and Dr. Stephen Johnson (Dr. J) had spent months planning and preparing for this first retreat, so there was a sense of excitement and anticipation for a powerful weekend.

The group consisted of about 25 men and boys, which enabled us to build close camaraderie quickly amongst each other. Everyone had time to speak from the heart with the talking stick during community time, as well as drum, share stories, explore, and enjoy the team events. Everyone looked after each other's backs, especially when a rattlesnake made a brief appearance near the old oak tree where we were meeting on Saturday morning. Needless to say, the weekend was a huge success, and seven years later we're preparing for our sixth Call to Adventure.

During the years, special activities have been used to help mold and shape the overall experience of the Call to Adventure weekend. These activities help us move quickly into the process or spirit of the retreat as well as provide a means to reflect on the experience once we left the mountain. The activities included the Talking Stick, Drumming, the Ropes Course, the Sweat Lodge, and the Bridge to Manhood. Each activity has both a physical and spiritual element behind it, as well as lessons that can be used to help us along our path in life. Enjoy reflecting on your own experience as you read through some of the interesting background and history of the activities used at the Call to Adventure...

#### The Talking Stick



The first CTA tool that we will review is the "Talking Stick". The Talking Stick used at the Sacred Path Call to Adventure is a wood staff made from the soft wood of the Colorado Aspen tree. It was carved by an old wood carver from Evergreen, Colorado during the mid 1990's. The top of the shaft has the head of a bear. Some people say it's the head of a polar bear, because it is white in color. The ears, eyes, nose, and teeth feel soft to the touch and can be enjoyed even more when you hold it with your eyes closed. Over the years men have added their tribe bandanas to the neck of the staff as an offering for having held it.

The Talking Stick is a tool used during community time when talking within a circle of men. The symbolic meaning of the Talking Stick is to recognize the person holding it so that the other men

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can respectfully give that person their undivided attention. The person holding the Talking Stick then speaks from the heart as he shares with the other men. It is a similar practice used by The Native American people when they hold council.



In the “real world” we rarely are given the opportunity to truly speak from the heart and to be heard. Our parents, teachers, sisters, brothers, and friends are usually too busy or are too distracted doing other things to truly give us their undivided attention. It’s a beautiful and powerful tool that can be used throughout your life to help improve communication and to ensure that you are heard.

### Drumming



Christo Pellani “*Master percussionist, sound healer and insightful teacher of inspirational modalities for personal growth, expression and well being*” has been leading our CTA

retreats since their inception. Christo uses the African Djembe and Djun-Djun drums which have been part of the African tradition for thousands of years. They are usually made from Lenke wood, which is only found in sub-Sahara Africa. Every culture throughout time

from every continent has used the drum as part of its culture. The drumming provides a wonderful way for people to come together and to get connected. It has been said that the basic drum beat of “*bum-bum, bum-bum*” is the universal sound of the heartbeat, and that if everyone in the world were to play a drum at the same time, eventually everyone would be drumming the same “*bum-bum, bum-bum*” heartbeat.



Christo teaches us how to respect the drum so that we can produce the beautiful sounds that lift our souls, move

our feet, and allow us to put our whole body into playing and enjoying the drums. The entire experience allows us to be present and connected, so that all other distractions leave us in that moment. It’s what enables us to truly be connected as men in our community circle. The drum can also provide us this connection wherever we are, or whatever we are going through in our lives.

### The Sweat Lodge



Andrew Soliz “*Lakota Water Pourer & Healer*” provides to the CTA two of the Lakota’s “Seven Sacred Rites” known as the *Inipi* or “*Sweat Lodge*” and the *chununpa* or “*Sacred*

Pipe”. The Sweat Lodge is a “Rite of Purification Ceremony” that was given to the Lakota people from *Ptesan Wi*, also known as the “*White Buffalo Calf Woman*”. The Sweat Lodge ceremony teaches how to “**let go**” of the unwanted things in our life as represented by the

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“Tree People” and how to “ask” for things from the wisdom of the “Rock People” or grandfathers.

The ceremony goes through four rounds in which we sing, pray, and reflect on the spirits as we sit in a circle amongst the red-hot lava rocks. Water is then poured on the hot rocks which releases the energy from them, so that it can purify our bodies.

Andrew teaches us how to understand and respect traditions, let go of the



unwanted things in our lives, and how to ask for those things that will improve our lives. The Inipi

ceremony is then concluded with the chununpa, which provides the link between man and the Great Spirit above. Andrew suggests that men participate in Sweat Lodges on a regular basis, since men do not go through a monthly cleanse such as our female counterparts. Andrew conducts monthly Sweat Lodges in Ojai, CA, or as men ask for them...

### The Ropes Course



The High Ropes Course is an event that challenges an individual's fears and promotes team work. Beginning the climb up a 30-

foot ladder with a hard hat and harness may feel secure from the ground, but once you begin to climb the ladder and walk on a wood pole or on a tightrope, the adrenaline begins to flow, the hands sweat, the knees shake, and then you realize you are out of your comfort zone. This is what the high ropes course is all about.

Over the years we have seen some significant accomplishments occur on the ropes course. We've seen young and older men work through their fears, we've hear the works “I can't” become “I did”, we've seen young men encouraging other men to move forward one more step, and have even seen a blind man complete the course. Everyone comes away from the Ropes Course a WINNER...

Some interesting dynamics that the ropes course present are the individual challenges, like the wood pole walk to the big swing, or the climb up to the crow's nest to the trapeze bar; and the team challenges, like the dual tight wire event where you and your partner hold each other's hands as the tight wires becomes farther and farther apart, or the series of hanging ropes on a tight wire that has one partner blindfolded while the other provides instruction on where to look for the next rope. Both the individual and team challenges require working through your fears and being encouraged or coached by others.

The main lesson that the ropes course teaches us is that we “can” work through our fears to reach our goal and that we “can” accomplish much more in our lives with the help of others.

Note: The Ropes Course will not be part of the 2007 Spring CTA Retreat. The men of the Wisdom Council have planned some exciting team activities that will be used instead.

### The Bridge to Manhood

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The “Bridge to Manhood” was the idea and invention of one of the founders of the CTA, Walter Atkinson. Walter’s dream was to build a bridge that young men or even older men could cross at the end of the CTA weekend to symbolically acknowledge the crossing from boyhood to manhood. The idea was that one side of the bridge would have a flimsy rope ladder that would be used to climb to the top of the bridge. This flimsy ladder symbolized the awkwardness of youth as the boys climbed to the top. The bridge itself was a rope bridge that had uneven wood planks tied to it with rope railings to help stabilize the individual as he walked across. The walk across was to be difficult, but not impossible, requiring some effort, control, and concentration to cross. Once on the other side, the plank that the initiates descend after crossing the bridge is really more of a narrow rail that represents Occam's razor of life quests.

Once on the other side of the bridge, the men and elders who had crossed the bridge previously in their lives welcome the young men to the community of men. Dr. J reflects on the experience this way, *“One must be deft in coming down the rail. I think that signifies that the tests continue even after crossing the bridge. And we need to Man up to them. We will have tests throughout our lives that will assist us to stay on the path and keep us moving toward the light. In this life we're to master truth, love and simplicity. Basic, subtle and yet the most profound lessons in the curriculum. The ultimate goal is to become as compassionate as possible. Understanding is the bridge to compassion. We are all in the process of*

*learning from experiences and lessons that can teach us how to incorporate more compassion, kindness and love into our lives. I believe that we comprise the body of Christ on earth. We are the corporal spirit of God Awareness manifesting in how we relate to ourselves and each other through our expanding consciousness. Essentially, we are the many connected to the ONE. We feel that most profoundly when we live in and express from the heart of our compassionate mindfulness. And that is the true nature and purpose of spiritual community.”*

### Wise Words to Ponder

“Success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.”

*Winston Churchill*

“Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.”

*T. S. Elliot*

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.”

*Found in a Fortune Cookie*

“A ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”

*Found in a Fortune Cookie*

“You’re never a loser until you quit trying.”

*Found in a Fortune Cookie*

“What we do for ourselves dies with us, what we do for others is immortal.”

*Albert Pike*

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“If we continue to do what we’ve always done, we’ll continue to get what we’ve always got.”

*W. Edwards Demming*

“The value of achievement lies in the achieving.”

*Albert Einstein*

### Upcoming Events

**April 19-22, 2007**

The Twentieth Annual Spring  
Sacred Path Retreat

“Call to Adventure – A Rite of  
Passage for Men & Boys”

To obtain the CTA Flyer and registration information, please click the link below.

[http://www.menscenterlosangeles.com/Call\\_To\\_Adventure\\_2007.pdf](http://www.menscenterlosangeles.com/Call_To_Adventure_2007.pdf)

To watch a video from a recent CTA Retreat, please click the link below.

<http://www.menscenterlosangeles.com/alltoadventure4.html>

### Web Links

Los Angeles Men’s Center

[www.menscenterlosangeles.com](http://www.menscenterlosangeles.com)

Albert Marrewa’s Web Site

[www.albertmarrewa.com](http://www.albertmarrewa.com)

Andrew Soliz’s Web Site

[www.sacred-ways.org](http://www.sacred-ways.org)

Christo Pellani’s Web Site (Drumming)

[www.soundformation.com](http://www.soundformation.com)

Ed Munter’s Web Site

[www.innerpathproductions.org](http://www.innerpathproductions.org)

### Share Your Stories/Pictures

Please send your stories, pictures, questions, thoughts, quotes, and wisdom to Dan Stanton so we can include them in future newsletters.

Namaste...

[dstanton@amgen.com](mailto:dstanton@amgen.com)



*The Call to Adventure Retreat  
Join the Adventure...*