

Spiritual Manifesto
Of
Dancing To Eagle Spirit Society



WRITTEN BY SANDRA LAFRAMBOISE

&

EDITED BY: DYLAN RICHARDS, VINCE RECKZIN- LLOYD
PRITCHARD AND MARCO ADAMOVIC



Our ancestors had a profoundly different relationship to Nature, the Earth, and to the realm of the Spirit and prayers compared with those of us who grew up in the western, industrialized world.

This is especially evident from the oral history of the Native American Tribes.

Today, due to colonialism, most Native American people have lost this way of life – but simultaneously there is an awakening of this old way and many are reclaiming it in some form or another.

The Oral Traditions about the Native spiritual way of life were transferred from generation to generation, and state that it is a gift based on Seven Sacred Teachings that must be respected and honoured. Many Tribes have used different versions of the Seven Sacred Teachings. Some call it the Seven Sacred Laws; others the Seven Sacred Prophecies.

It is in the spirit of this proud historical heritage and practice that this Manifesto is written; a recollection and a “how-to” of what we do and why we exist. It stands as a companion to our Spiritual Tenets which employ the Seven Sacred Teachings of some of the Eastern Tribes that are part of the Great Iroquois Confederacy, like the Algonquians and the Ojibwa.

It is both a reclamation of our past and a movement towards the future: reclamation of our past by re-enacting the old ceremonies to the best of our capabilities; and a concerted movement towards the future by having the Dancing To Eagle Spirit Society (DTESS) recognized as a religious body not elsewhere classified; thus creating a modern Religious – Spiritual body of the old traditions of the Native Americans for the Two Spirited People/friends and allies.

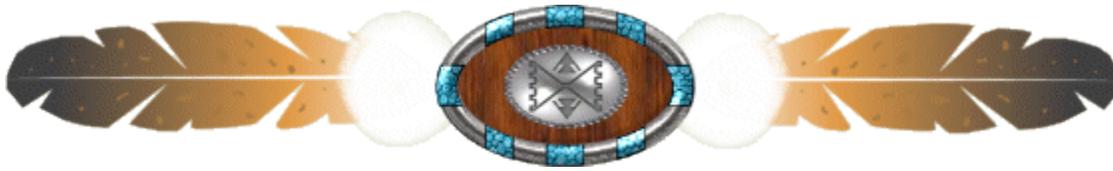
This Manifesto is a four-fold guide to help us in our practice: strengthening our faith in Creator by promoting a sense of belonging to a spiritual community with a common practice and belief of Two Spirited people/friends and allies; helping us to practice our Spirituality in seeking out a greater purpose of life; finding a source for spiritual fulfillment within ourselves and our community; and seeking communion with the greater forces of life.

The spiritual foundation of the DTESS is grounded in a firm belief in the Great Spirit and the understanding that all living beings on Mother Earth have a spirit which together comprise the essence of the life force of the Great Spirit. One’s purpose is made clearer and strengthened by having a close relationship with the Great Spirit.

This relationship is achieved through many practices of ceremony such as: the Sundance; Sweat Lodge; Vision Quest; Pipe ceremonies; Feasts; Giveaways; Sacred teaching lodges; and many more. Through regular sacred practices broadly based on the Native North American People, one learns of the importance of spirituality in life. Spiritual understanding helps us identify our human purpose in this world.



THE SEVEN SACRED TEACHINGS AND VIRTUES OF DANCING TO EAGLE SPIRIT SOCIETY



The traditional concepts of respect and sharing of the Native American Spiritual way of life are built around the fundamental laws of nature. This observance of life and interconnectedness are called sacred teachings. Each teaching honours one of the basic virtues intrinsic to a full, healthy, spiritually-fulfilled, and humble life.

Each member of the DTESS strives to achieve perfect harmony with these virtues to the extent that all actions and decisions made by us are manifested with love on a physical plain but based in communion with all of our spirit.

The stories and legends of our ancestors about the animal world have taught us how to live close to the Earth. Through traditional practice, this established connection between both animal and human worlds has instilled a way of life and a respect for all life in those who followed the traditional Native American way.

The DTESS seeks to establish these values and teachings - in their entirety - by providing and creating spiritual space to gather and share ceremony together; by teaching daily rituals; by providing spiritual support when necessary; and by promoting the divine male and female in all that we do.



Truth: It is said that there are 3 truths: your truth, your neighbour's truth, and the collective truth. In Native American tradition, we say the truth irrelevant of the consequences, or actions and reactions of others because we believe that the truth will transcend everything and heal all. This is one of our fundamental spiritual realities and the foundation of wellbeing of our community.

Always seek the truth within your heart and not within your mind. The truth lives in spirit. Be mindful that your truth may not be the truth of your neighbours and that collectively we possess the truth of spirit manifested in us.

To know the truth of your heart is to know and understand that all has been given to us by the Creator. We strive to remain faithful to this truth as best as we can. The Elders say that if you can live out these ways, you will know TRUTH, thus develop a strong and healthy life. With the knowledge of this truth, one will then know truth as the truth will always become prevalent.

We are role models for everyone around us. It is our choice as to the kind of role model we wish to be. When we live our truth, we serve as a positive role model for others to follow.

Being truthful at all times and under all conditions requires vigorous honesty and strength. To know truth is to know and understand all of the original teachings as given by the Creator – and to remain faithful to them. These Seven Sacred Teachings (Respect, Honesty, Humility, Love, Courage/Bravery, Truth and Wisdom), are easy to learn in the mind but to put them in practice and truly live them in today's world is a very difficult task. However, as with all that is right, the truth will always prevail. **Always seek truth; living the truth is living the Seven Sacred Teachings.**



Wisdom: To live in Wisdom is to have gathered a lot of knowledge and to know and understand how to use it for the Great Spirit. Simultaneously, we also recognize that everyone has a special gift. When we understand how to use our gifts for the betterment of ourselves and others, we become an instrument of the Great Spirit, helping to bring peace to the world. Exercising Wisdom is using your gifts to build a peaceful and healthy family and community and supporting the community in using their gifts.

At DTESS, this is manifested through the many talking circles in ceremonies, at gatherings, and at Tribal council as we believe that Wisdom of the people in council or in gatherings - for the purpose of celebrating or sharing ideas - helps the whole of the community to develop a sense of direction and spiritual fulfillment that is to be respected. Once you give an idea to a council or a meeting, it no longer belongs to you. The idea now belongs to the people – thus, Collective Wisdom. The wisdom of our teachings directs us to listen intently to the ideas of others in council and that you/we do not insist that our idea is the best or that it should prevail above others. We accept that the Collective wisdom is the strongest of all, therefore, once we have arrived at a general consensus we trust that the decision is the right one even if we don't agree with it. The Elder's role in this instance is to guide us through the collective decisions and to help us stay focused for the betterment of the community. **Everyone has a special gift. Show wisdom by using your gift to build a peaceful community and by listening to your brothers and sisters.**



Honesty:

The Elders say that when you are honest and have nothing to hide or be ashamed of, your spirit is the size of the *Sabe*. When you lie or do something bad and hide it from the people, it affects your spirit, by limiting its growth and strength. It does not feel good when you know you have done wrong and hidden it. When one does this, it eats away at your spirit (conscience), by suppressing it and not allowing it to grow strong. So, in order to have a strong spirit we must be honest to ourselves and to others. To be truly honest was to keep the promises one made to the Creator, to others, and to oneself. Long ago, in the Ojibwa legends, there was a giant called *Kitch-Sabe*. *Kitch-Sabe* walked among the people to remind them to be honest to the ways of the Creator and honest with each other. The highest honour that could be given to an individual was the saying "there walks an honest person. He/she can be trusted." To be truly honest was to keep the promises one made to the Creator, to others, and to oneself. The Elders would say, "never try to be someone else; live true to your spirit, be honest to yourself and accept who you are the way the Creator made you."

Honesty is pure innocence free from other influences. Honesty meant that being an honourable person is being free from fraud or deceptions. Honesty meant a refusal to lie; whether a lie by omission or just a plain conscious decision to lie, steal, or deceive in any way.

People who are honest are very trustworthy. Being honest makes your life simple and pure. To be honest with yourself is to live in the spirit of how you were created. Never lie or gossip about each other, about what is right or wrong, about the affairs of your neighbours, the DTESS, or any others. The more honest you are, the bigger you become as a person, and the more connected to your spirit you will feel.

Therefore, in order to have a strong spirit we must be honest to ourselves, to others, and to our community. To be truly honest is to feel spiritually fulfilled by keeping the promises one made to the Creator, to others, and to oneself. **Never lie or gossip. Be honest with yourself and others. Speak from your heart. Be true to your word.**



Humility:

In the natural world, some animals were the hunters, some were the protectors, some were the nurturers, and others were the pups that followed, learned, and grew. Each animal was not - and till this day is not - more important than the others as each animal must perform its role for the survival and betterment of the pack, the clan, the flock, and the environment. It can be said that human behaviours in the old ways were based on this type of natural and instinctual respect for the laws of nature and observance of the animal world. There was a sense of taking care of the clan, the pack, and each other. Each animal within the clan or the pack is very important, and serves a unique purpose. No one is better than the other. The act of sharing from one animal to another was for the survival of the pack/clan and it is said through

legends and stories that this was intrinsic in the Native American ways; for the survival of the Tribesmen and certain animal behaviours were re-enacted in our spiritual ceremonies.

The lack of arrogance, dissolving of one's ego, and respect for the whole of our community is a hard lesson to learn, but integral in the Aboriginal ways of Dancing To Eagle Spirit Society.

Humility is accepting ourselves as we really are before the Creator and as seen through the eyes of our community. We cannot begin to experience humility in any other relationship until we accept this truth and check our attitude towards the Creator and the community of DTESS.

Once we begin to accept ourselves as we really are before Creator and the community, we continue the expression of this humility through the consideration of others before ourselves, for the betterment of our Community.

Humility is one of the foundational teachings for having a growing and fruitful Spiritual life. In a real sense, humility holds the secret for growth, wisdom, perseverance, blessing, and wonderful relationships.

Recognizing and acknowledging that we are part of a greater community, and that all of our actions have a cause and effect on our community is to possess the God-consciousness steeped in our heart. If the heart is merciful then one is blessed with abiding humility.

To express deference to the Creator when we say "All My Relations" is to accept that all beings are equal; embodying the spirit of humility. **Think of others before yourself; humble yourself to the Great Spirit by being thankful for all that you have.**



Love: Everyone needs and seeks the love of others in order to validate themselves as human beings and to have a feeling of belonging. As we grow, most of us have the love of a parent, a grandparent, of siblings, as well as other family members and friends; thus having a sense of belonging. In our Native ways, this heart-felt love should be returned to others as well. If one is not loved and does not give love back then that person can be said to be truly alone. However, one is truly not alone if that individual can love oneself and loves Creator. At DTESS, we strive to enjoy ourselves as individuals in order to be able to return love to others; thus, we will have become our own best friends.

To feel true love is to know Creator. At DTESS, we strive to first love the Great Spirit. He is considered the father and mother of all children; the giver of the life enjoyed by a human being. Love expressed and given to the Great Spirit is shown by loving oneself in the way the Great Spirit made you. Only then can we truly love others. This is especially true for the Two-Spirited

people. We are made just as we are and are loved for who we are. Children are to be loved and cherished, for children are the gifts from the Creator. To have children is to be truly blessed. They are a privilege and not a right; therefore, they need to be loved unconditionally whether born to you, in surrogacy, adopted, or in foster care.

Unconditional love is considered to be the greatest and most powerful medicine. However, it is very difficult to achieve and live in a world that does not acknowledge the importance of Spirituality. Love is the easiest to explain and the most important teaching one can learn as everyone needs to love and to be loved simultaneously. Love all people and all creatures of the world and this love will be returned to you.

Always act in love. No matter what is happening in the world and in your life always love the Creator. Love the Earth. Love yourself, your family, your fellow human beings, and all other sentient beings. Pray for everyone.



Respect: Native people were true conservationists for they lived in a sustainable relationship with the buffalo and many other great herds of animal. We believed that we were the true caretakers of the great herds. Through this special relationship the true spirit of Respect was understood.

Through the act of giving its life and sharing every part of it's being, the buffalo took care of the people by providing food, shelter, and clothing. Therefore, in this sense it showed the deep respect it had for the people. No animal was more important to the existence of North American Native families than this animal. This sustainable and reciprocal understanding with the buffalo resulted in a relationship that was a true expression of respect.

From this spirit of respect, Native people developed and showed respect towards all life because we understood the interconnectedness to all life. We saw very clearly our dependence on the land. Therefore, the land and its resources were to be given absolute respect.

It is important to respect all life on Mother Earth. Respect not only Elders but people of all races. The essence of respect is to give. Respect should not be expected but earned. Respect is also reciprocal in that once it is given it is returned.



Courage: Courage for DTESS is about facing our daily problems and challenges with strength of character. It is standing up to protect our values and being truthful in the face of

ignorance especially when it comes to Two-Spirited Spirituality. Courage is that which enables each person to seek out the greater good for a higher purpose.

To have courage is to have the mental and moral strength to listen to our heart. It takes courage to do what is morally right. Native people were told by the Elders to be proud of who they were and never to deny the way of life the Great Spirit gave them. It is with Courage that we at DTESS reclaim our rightful place in the circle of life and the right to honour the Great Spirit and pray for all as Two-Spirited people.

When we are having a hard time in life, whether it be something we're going through or a decision that we have to make in our lives, and we are afraid, we call on the Great Spirit to help us have the courage and strength to do the right thing in our lives.

To have bravery and to overcome the fears that prevent us from accepting our true spirit as human beings is a great challenge to all of us. Yet, we need to find the courage within us to overcome this challenge. **Listen to your heart; it takes courage to do what is right and your heart will always be right. Trust yourself. You have all the answers within you once you let go of your ego.**



THE MANIFESTATION OF THESE SACRED TEACHINGS



Spiritual practices connect us with our true selves, our neighbours, our world, and to Great Spirit. In order to feel this sense of connection to Great Spirit, we as human beings often seek and develop ritual practices to serve and strengthen that feeling of inner connectedness to ourselves and the Great Spirit.

In Native American traditions, these ritualistic practices varied from tribe to tribe. However, there were some common elements, such as ritual preparation and several practices based on the natural cycle of life.

At DTESS, we believe in the Divine Father and the Divine Mother. This belief is accentuated by the tenet that each person is the decider of their own spiritual path. In this light, DTESS believes that rituals can be - if you wish it so - traditional and follow the strictest of codes. But for us at DTESS, it is not necessary to do this as we strive to promote a sense of community based on gentle Rituals that are focused on helping you get in touch with your spirit. Furthermore, these rituals are meant to support and guide you in defining your practice and embracing your spirituality based on our tenets and our Manifesto; thus sharing in your enhanced connection to Great Spirit in the Native American ways of DTESS. We strive to support you in all of your experience and in order to do so we do away with many forms of the old strict codes like the restrictions imposed on women and their moon time, always walking clockwise and so on..... We believe that the natural world and the ethereal world know our hearts exactly. They know where we are and what our hearts are supposed to do, therefore respecting your communion to Creator within our community practices.

However, we have developed several steps to strengthen our sense of a spiritual community. This stems from a commonality of practice, and we pray that each member/devotee will endeavour to follow these to the best of their capabilities with the understanding that these are guidelines to help us be part of a broader community of intentional and mindful prayers for the healing of all based in the Native American Way.

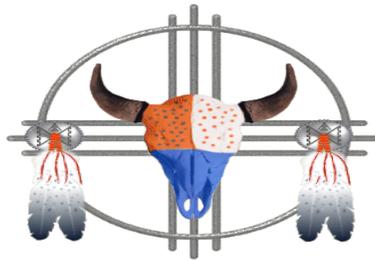
In other words, the outer form that your rituals take is not nearly as important as the spirit in which they are done. Always be pure of heart, respectful of the community and of yourself.

The important thing to remember is that DTESS strives to develop a sense of unity, by affirming our commonalities of being Two-Spirited and following the Spiritual practices of the Native American people.



Daily Practices:

- Every morning, from the moment of your awakening, be consciously thankful that the Great Spirit granted you another on this earth – repeat it out loud if it helps.
- At some point say a prayer and purify yourself with a smudging ritual of sacred herbs.
- Prepare your mind to be thankful, do good deeds, and pray for all.
- We recommend during the day to take one hour of silence in all that you do in order to help you become aware of your thoughts/distractions. This serves as a time to empty your mind and just pray in silence and continue doing whatever you do.
- Be of service to someone else if you can for that day, and act on it out of love. Try to think of how your actions can make the world a better place.
- At night-time, mentally review your day, pray, and be grateful to Creator for all your lessons of the day.
- If you wish and if possible do a smudging ritual.
- Create an altar in your home that serves as a spiritual point for you to either put things on or that you can go and sit and do prayer rituals.



Weekly Practices:

- Do weekly smudging rituals within your entire living environment. This will help dissipate negative energy and ground the house. To further this you can hang feathers above doorways. You can also use cedar bows wrapped with red cloth.
- Wash yourself with medicines such as cedar or sage. If you take a bath, it is easier to steep in it. If you take only showers, then take the cedar bows and just gently rub yourself of this.
- If you carry a personal pipe, smoke it at least once a week. Some people smoke it daily.
- If you carry a pipe for community, definitely smoke it once a week.
- Try to attend a spiritual gathering of likeminded people practicing the same type of rituals.

- Stay in touch with the Elders. Call them and see if they need support. Call them if you need support or answers.



Monthly Practices:

- Attend at least one - if not two - of the DTESS Sweat lodge ceremonies where possible. If you live in Athabasca/Edmonton area, then that would be the Whispering lodge; if you live elsewhere then you would try and find a sweat lodge in your area that is Two-Spirit Friendly.
- Volunteer to give time and help at any time during the month at the lodge, whether chopping wood, cleaning the grounds, building stairs, getting rocks or other things to help enhance the environment and the experience of others at these lodges. These actions will foster respect and humility within you and towards the grounds, as well as provide support for our Elders who are responsible for these ceremonies.
- Attend the monthly pipe and feast ceremonies that are organized by other members or friends.
- If possible, donate money to the Society/business side of things or to the Elder that is responsible for the lodge you attend. This helps for the overall need of operating the society and the lodges. Today's world unfortunately does work with green energy (meaning money) and without it, it is very difficult to acquire the things we need in this world of the microwave.

Seasonal Practices:

North American Native tribes had no real calendar. Usually, intervals of time were counted independently of one another.

The fact that a day had sun and night a moon was basically recognized by all tribes, but there is no record of aboriginal names for those days. Longer periods of time were usually counted by moons, and seasons which began with the New Moon, or a conjunction of the Sun and Moon.

Years were divided into four seasons - occasionally five seasons - and when one counted the years they were usually designated by one of the seasons, e.g., that a certain event had happened 10 winters ago and so on.

Among agricultural tribes, the cycle of the seasons was of great ritual importance. Storytelling and seasonal change played a large role in Native American Culture

- Celebrate the change of season by participating in a special ceremony and feasting this change, as each represents a different stage of life or state of being in accordance with the medicine wheel teachings. DTESS has different medicine wheel teachings and meanings of seasons: Spring is for planting what you want; Summer is for nurturing and growing what you planted in Spring; Fall is for harvesting what you have planted; Winter is the dormant time where you go inside and prepare and regenerate for the Spring time.



Yearly Practices:

Once a year get together with some close friends who practice in the same way as you do and honour all of your medicines and lessons of the year by feasting with your friends for this specific purpose. Follow this by participating in a ceremony to specifically honour this gratefulness

- At DTESS we honour Sacred Dances. Therefore, we encourage our members to participate in some sort of ritualistic prayerful dance of the Native Americans like the Naraya Dance, the Sun Dance, the Medicine Dance and so on.
- At least once in your lifetime we encourage our members to participate in a Vision Quest as done in the Native American ways. Some folks do it more than once and others do it every year.
- We encourage members to help support those who will participate in such ceremonies by gathering medicines for them and supporting the Elders by donating time and or money if one can.
- We at DTESS organize two main gatherings in the year: the Summer feasting, and the Winter celebrations.
- We also organize outings to teach people how to pick medicines.
- DTESS also organizes a few workshops during the year and all members are encouraged to participate in these and learn their ways.



Relationship/ Sex and Divorce: Historical trauma and its inter-generational effects have negatively affected the relationship skills and traditional Native

American values which make strong families. There is a long, well-documented history of cultural conflicts, oppression, and other disruptions to the traditional cultures, lifestyles, and relationships of many of our Native peoples. It needs to be noted that "Marriage" is not really a Native American term and was a less relevant cultural concept than family was. Not all tribes or clans have "wedding ceremonies" and the concept/definition of marriage was more locally-derived from other cultures. Therefore, very little research has been conducted on Native American marriages.

However, many tribes had - and continue to have - a clan system that is actively involved in childrearing and have elders who engage in family life, e.g., they educate children on their cultural history. Anthropologists found that sixty-two percent of Native Americans disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that having children was one of the main reasons to get married. This could be because of the communal responsibility of childrearing in some traditions. In the Navajo tribe, for example, grandparents and fellow clansmen - referred to as "brothers" and "sisters" - are considered part of the family and carry the responsibility of family members.

So, in a very general sense we can say that divorce, traditionally, was rare and at times many people had several wives or husbands depending on the Community structure or Clan - from a Western World view. When marriage was recognized and accepted in the tribe and, conversely, when there was a divorce or separation the Clan or Tribe, Elders would take a careful look at each instance in a fair way for all involved - with all the complexities of the community rituals and practices - to ensure that the communal tribal ways were respected.

In today's world people invest so much of themselves into the institution of marriage and other relationships that we forget that our main relationship is that of oneness with the Great Spirit. As a result, we live a world of permissiveness and instant gratification. We fall in and out of love as easily as putting a bag of popcorn in the microwave. Because of this we have seen an increase of divorce, broken family systems, and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases with the open multiple sex partners concept that is practiced and accepted within the wider Two Spirited Communities.

Divorce or separation of a long time relationship is one of the worst challenges a person can go through in their life. Once the separation or the divorce of two people in relationship begins, it usually ends up with one person feeling that they are being stripped of all of whom they are; and interpret this as a violation of something very sacred. Meanwhile, the other person may see this as an opportunity to seek out more profoundly who they really are. Either way, this is a spiritually-traumatic event that has an effect either directly or indirectly with all involved, including the community of DTESS.

At a terrible time like this, it is very easy to feel somewhat alone and powerless and to blame Creator for abandoning you. The Truth is that we are never alone. Seek support from your

brothers and sisters in the community of DTESS and elsewhere when necessary. The Elders will pray with you at all times. Ask for a pipe ceremony from all who carry pipes.

We at DTESS society take no position on these situations as we believe that each person is the decider of their own spiritual path.

The Elders of DTESS will continue to support, pray, and spiritually-nourish all members of divorces and those who are sexually permissive or in multiple relationships . We strive to role model healthy and loving relationships with ourselves, with the community and with the Creator at all times. If there are children in the marriage, we recommend that lawyers be involved and court judgments be made for the benefits of the children and not those of the adults. If there are no children, then our Elders can provide spiritual support and counselling to all involved. If psychological issues arise, our Elders can, and will recommend to the divorcees to go and get long-term psychological counselling.

The period of time after a divorce or a separation is like a cosmic interval. Take time for yourself and explore all things you wanted to do or could not do for whatever reasons. Surround yourself with positive-thinking people. Develop a daily stress-reduction routine. Take a spiritual retreat for yourself, perhaps including something you always wanted to do. This is the time to nurture and love yourself. Give yourself time to grieve. We recommend that people who are going through or have undergone a separation of a long-term relationship to take a year to themselves before considering entering into another relationship.