

SACRED SPEECH
THE WAY OF TRUTHSPEAKING

by Tamarack Song

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To find out more about Tamarack and his writings, visit
www.tamaracksong.org.

About Teaching Drum Outdoor School

Founded in 1987 by the author, the Teaching Drum offers instruction in the full range of wilderness and emergency survival skills. They are taught the way Tamarack learned them years ago from the Woodland Indians.

Teaching Drum Outdoor School is not for everybody, as it is truly an *outdoor* school. The classroom is the wilderness, where all courses are held. Here is a survival school in the ultimate sense, as students learn how to not only stay alive, but thrive, even if they are caught without gear or equipment.

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Learn more about the Teaching Drum—the only school of its kind—at www.teachingdrum.org.

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Dedication

It is a rare person in this day who is in touch with his or her personal Truth. We are Born Truthspeakers, yet we flounder at it after we learn the games of deception that we call “hiding your feelings,” “getting your needs met,” and “not rocking the boat.”

My reawakening to Truthspeaking had to wait until I could realize how unconscious I was to my own Truth. Sure, I had heard a little bit about Truthspeaking—even fantasized what it might be like—yet I was young and needed an example to make it real for me.

Ode Makwa (a.k.a. Janice Schreiber) provided that example. She was one of those rare People who were still able to speak her Truth—so clearly, in fact, that it shook me out of my slumber. For that, and for the many other unexpected gifts, she remains a cherished friend from a long-ago enchanted time.

Twenty years after meeting her, I found myself still stumbling when I tried expressing my Truth. Old habits die hard—I had awareness and example; I needed inspiration! It came, quite by surprise, from my clan sister, Gegekwe (who most know as Debi Johnson). She mirrored my habits so well that I had only to get past my reactiveness (That couldn't be me!) to begin hearing my Truth—my Heartvoice. Gegekwe will ever have a kind place in my Heart.

I wish to honor these esteemed Women of Wisdom by dedicating this book to them. May their healing ways touch others as magically as they have me.

Foreword

Truthspeaking is a term found in many Native languages. To Truthspeak is to state clearly and simply what one thinks and feels. There is no judgment or expectation, no disguise of humor or force of anger. This manner of speech is sacred, because it wells up from the soul of our being rather than from our self-absorbed ego.

Forms of Truthspeaking are practiced in numerous civilized cultures. The Germans, for example, call it “auspacken,” which literally translates as *unpack*. When a German person wishes to connect with someone on a deeper level, she may ask for an auspacken (unpacking) session, or when someone in authority such as a police officer wants to cut to the quick, he might say, “Auspacken!”

There is no substitute for Truthspeaking. It occupies such a unique niche in our personal ecology that external replacements such as belief systems, counseling, or behavioral disciplines, serve merely as band-aids.

Truthspeaking is currently on the Endangered Speech List. Once common to all inhabited areas, Truthspeaking is now rarely heard outside of remote regions where the Old Ways of living are still practiced

The Web of Life is so connected that the fate and fortune of one strand becomes the fate and fortune of the next. When the Buffalo disappeared, so did the Buffalo Wolf. This is also the way of the Web of Sacred Speech—meaningful relationship, trust and tolerance will go extinct along with Truthspeaking.

If we were to exterminate Truthspeaking, we would probably survive. At least for a while. Perhaps we would be around long enough to realize what we had done. It might then not be too late, because—unlike other extinctions by the hand of our species—Truthspeaking can be resurrected.

Yet it is easier to keep something alive than to begin anew. Immeasurably easier. Ask anyone who has experience with campfires in wet weather. For that reason I offer this field guide to identification and habitat restoration for the rare and beautiful speech known as Truthspeaking.

Introduction

The Soul of this Book *These words spring from timeless Wisdom.*

Words are like strands of Spider silk—we often weave our words into a sticky web, then walk into it and become entangled. Another option would be to step back and take note of the striking, intricate pattern our word-strands have formed, then look through the potential snare to the clarity beyond. This book is a guide to realizing the power of our word-web, and to using that power to free our thoughts and feelings rather than being victimized by them.

One reason our words become entrapping is that we use too many of them. The more words, the tougher the web, and the harder it is to see through it. Native People will tell us that we talk too much. To them, communication is feeling, movement and intuition, along with words.

Realizing the power of words, a Native will often choose them wisely. Small-talk and gossip are avoided. The Native will connect with her inner Truth, and with outer perspective, before speaking. She will do the same when listening to the words of others. This respectful way with words is what some of my Elders call Truthspeaking. H

There was no one particular grandmother who sat me down and said, "OK Tamarack, I am now going to teach you about Truthspeaking." If someone had done that, it would probably not have been Truthspeaking I was learning, because it is more a way of being than a way of doing. It is our biologically-programmed way of communicating, which naturally comes alive when we live it. I grew as a Truthspeaker by default, primarily because of my immersion in a culture of Truthspeakers.

In this day, few of us have the option of living for a decade or two with Native Truthspeakers. Besides, we need help *now*.

Fortunately, there is another option. Our Truthspeaking ability can renew itself if we break the habits and patterns that have suppressed Truthspeaking. We can then begin practicing it, first with ourselves, and then with those close to us. It will then gradually become our habitual—and naturally preferred—way of communicating.

To help and support that process I have distilled the essence of Truthspeaking, identified its major impediments, and molded the two together

into this book. My intent here is not to teach you Truthspeaking per se

because, as I have mentioned, you already know it. Neither is my intent to present it as a practice, such as an anger management technique or a method for improving intimate relationship. Trying to present Truthspeaking as another such skill would be creating a phony construct. This book is intended to bring you the reawakening experience that would probably naturally occur if you were living with Truthspeakers.

I have relearned Truthspeaking from many Natives, some of whom I have spent as little as a day with and some of whom I have studied with for a decade or more. Many of their names I never knew or have long forgotten. Others I could never forget. For my reawakening to the ways of Truthspeaking, I need to credit virtually all of the Natives I have had the honor of knowing and being with.

Yet there is one special grandmother I wish to recognize, because her way with Truthspeaking was unique from the others. And because I grew up with her.

Judging by the number of People who claim Cherokee grandmothers, there must have been quite a surplus of young Cherokee women at one time. I have been tempted to claim similar Native ancestry, as it would make my involvement with Native Ways much easier to explain. I might even have just cause, as my maternal grandmother, Helena Dordel, is rumored to have been either Menominee or Winnebago.

I didn't find that out until long after she died, as her ancestry was a guarded secret even within the family. When she grew up in the early 20th century, it was common for Natives to pass themselves off as "dark Germans" or "dark Irish" if they could. It often meant the difference between being able to attend school or not, having a job or not, living in town or not. Along with perhaps being Native, Grandma was born out of wedlock to a Catholic family, which gave all the more reason to hide her past.

The silence around her origins meant that what I learned from her of Native Ways was largely through example. There never was an "Indian" label attached to the Earth skills and ways of honor and respect that she practiced.

I am comfortable with that, and with her shrouded origins. I don't feel cheated, and I don't want more from her, such as claim to her lineage. The reason is that two wise Ojibwa Elders, Keewaydinoquay and Giizsomakwa, helped me to realize that Native ways are Human ways. They would talk about how all of our Ancestors, regardless of color or origin, once wore skins and furs, foraged and hunted, and lived in clan groups with the Drum at their center. We all still carry those ancestral memories, the two Elders would say.

The perceived differences between "Natives" and "non-Natives" are primarily the number of generations since we have been conquered and forced to live the Civilized Way. I wish to share this awareness of our intrinsic Nateness through the example of my life, rather than have People look to me because I have what is called "Native blood."

Because of my Civilized upbringing and family taboos, It wasn't until I was a young adult on my Journey of self-discovery that I actually heard mention of Truthspeaking. I was blessed to find Native Elders in the backwaters of this continent where the traditional Truthspeaking ways persisted. That was 35 years ago, and most of those Elders are no longer alive. Even though time has blurred by memory of dates and times and which Elder said or did exactly what, their guidance and encouragement continues to echo within me. "*Weweni dibaajimon*"—Speak your Truth," was sometimes whispered so softly that I wasn't sure whether it was coming from their lips or through our psychic connection.

These Elders may have been some of the last to remember the time when the Truth of one's Heart flowed as freely and clearly as Snowmelt over Water-polished Rock. Back then, all voices were Truthspeaking voices. Now, like the voice of Truth, the guidance of the Elders who have left us is hard to hear. To make their guidance again audible is why I have been asked to write this book.

That Guidance is the soul of the book. The words I lay on these pages are as close to those of the Old Ones as I am able to recall. My hope is that I do those valued words justice enough that, like me, you will be able to hear them and have the privilege of their touch.

To give substance to the soul of the book, I have added a body—the awarenesses, stories and exercises that I use in teaching Truthspeaking. My academic training in psychology, anthropology, philosophy and animal behavior, along with my counseling career (relationship, individual, academic, military) and my education from Native People and Wolves, have provided fertile ground for my personal Journey back to Truthspeaking. I pray that some of my stories of struggle and discovery will find resonance with you.

*Italicized non-English words in the text are in the Algonquian language of my area, which is spoken by some of my Elders.

My Truth Story *My Journey into the realm of Truthspeaking is a very personal one. That makes this book partly autobiographical. Because of that, I think that beginning with my story will help give context and*

meaning to what we will be exploring together.

I know a place where there are no lies; where gossip is just a meaningless word. There, People naturally speak with Respect. The Air is not fouled by cursing, and there is no shame or judgment. The expression of feelings—all feelings—is welcomed. Even anger and fear are regarded as Gifts.

In this place, one can trust the word of another. Even without a person speaking, you can feel the Truth of his Heart. There are no doctrines, because each person knows her own Truth. Each and every person's Truth is held sacred; it does not need to be sweetened with humor or masked with doublespeak. Everyone's Truth may be heard, because listening is cherished as much as talking. They call this, their cherished way of communicating, Truthspeaking.

I would like to take you to this place, but I can't. You must go there alone, because it dwells within you. Only you can find the way back to your Heart-center.

Yet perhaps I can help by telling you my story. Even though we might seem so different on the surface, we probably share some of each other's stories. We have common needs and desires, and many of us have some parallels in our personal and family histories. Even if that were not the case, we could still gain support and inspiration from each other just as we do when hearing stories of far-off People leading far-different lives than us.

If you are like some I know, you grow confused at times, and perhaps even frustrated, over why you often feel flat and uninspired. You don't have real passion for anything. Distractions come along that easily divert your attention and sap your vital energy. Sometimes you end up feeling victimized or powerless. You begin to wonder if you really know yourself.

If you are like others I know, you are full of energy and enthused with life. Things happen for you. Yet you know that something is missing. Although you are successful, although you are surrounded by loving People, you don't feel deeply fulfilled. You begin to wonder if you really know yourself.

There are still others I know who are acting out other scenarios. They all boil down to the same doubting about whether they are connected with who they really are.

Why does this happen? As with me when I was in my fog, you may have an inkling of understanding. And as with me, you might come up with some good-sounding excuses that push a solid chunk of the responsibility off on others.

In retrospect, I see that I was dragging my past and my future into the Now. Like uninvited guests, past and future were draining my energy, leaving

me none to devote to the Present. I was so preoccupied with memories, resentments and utopian dreams, that they often drained me to the point that I felt weak and spiritless. I wasn't sure why I was doing what I was doing. Sometimes it seemed as though I spent my days walking through some kind of fuzzy dreamland.

I struggled in relationships. Those close to me perceived me as distant, in my head, preoccupied. And I was. My life drifted in the shadows of unresolved memories and escapist fantasies. I wasn't there—I was trapped between the walls of past and future. I had trouble getting in touch with my feelings and inner guidance. It seemed as though I was not living—I was merely existing.

I was a hard nut to crack; it took nearly two decades and a river of tears before the healing power of Truthspeaking could soften my shell. Part of my seeming hard-headedness was because I didn't set out to become a Truthspeaker. Had I known that I was being guided to be a Truthspeaker, I probably would have resisted all the more. Apparently realizing this, my Elders, in an almost imperceptible way (which I don't fully understand to this day), gently stripped me of my defenses. It was often so painless that I wasn't aware it was happening. And—strangest of all—it seemed as though some of my Elders, who didn't even know each other, were working in cahoots with one another to help find my way.

My first breakthrough on the path of Truthspeaking was the realization that I had been substituting illusion for Truth. I had trapped myself in a self-perpetuating Circle of my own illusions! Instead of being with a lover because I felt love, I was with a lover out of need, which just created more need. Instead of feeling passion toward another, I shamed myself into getting involved, which created more shame. Instead of feeling genuinely good about myself, I fed my feel-good-for-the-moment addictions, which just created stronger cravings. Recognizing these illusions was a step toward new freedom.

My second breakthrough came more easily! My illusions as to what love, passion, and so much else was, didn't fool my Elders; they could clearly see that I was not in touch with the Truth of the Moment. By surreptitiously luring me back into the Moment, they set the stage for the Moment to work its natural magic and strip me, one-by-one, of my illusions, until my biggest illusion stood naked before me—latching on to a vision of the future in order to fill the void that was created by not speaking my Truth. It was only in the Truth of the Present—the Right Now—that I could connect with life's vital energy and feel fully alive, fully sensitized to the energy of others.

Once this "Big Illusion" was exposed, I began emerging from my cocoon.

At times I could feel energy and presence flowing back into my body! It was as though the self-perpetuating Circle that had trapped me, now transformed itself into an expanding Circle that was liberating me. The more in touch I became with my thoughts, feelings, likes and dislikes, the easier it became to express them. The more I could recognize my self-destructive patterns and hurtful behaviors, the easier I could work on replacing them with healthy ways of being.

Did I say, “*work* on replacing them?” In reality, after the initial agony of leaving the familiar behind, the work became fun! The more I experienced Truthspeaking as healing, the more motivated I was to speak my Truth. When that motivation faltered—and occasionally it did—I would remind myself that without embracing my Truth, little healing would be possible.

My Past dramas and future fantasies did not disappear, as I assumed they would. Instead I learned what vital roles they played in my life. What changed was my relationship with them—they become a small part of the Now, rather than the Now being lost within a small part of them.

Truthspeaking was my way out of the “fuzzy dreamland”; I pray that this book will help Truthspeaking become your way out also. It will show you how to be honest, forthright and respectful with your thoughts, feelings, memories and projections. That will help you not only accept, but embrace, who and how you are. You will then be more able to face your illusions and transform them into doorways to healing.

As you will probably discover, Truthspeaking is nothing new for you. It is an age-old way of communicating that is just as relevant today. It is the way you are designed to communicate—it is imprinted in your genes and you can recall it from your ancestral memory. As soon as you give your Truth an opening, it will begin pouring forth from you like a bubbling spring that has just been cleaned of choking debris.

Truthspeaking is practiced by nearly all of life. The only exceptions I know of are Civilized Humans and domesticated Plants and Animals. This glitch was brought to my awareness by the Wolves I once had the honor of living with. When my words were not my Truth, the Wolves ignored them and listened instead to the Voice of my Heart. They could hear it because their communication did not rely upon words.

They knew that the Heartvoice spoke nothing but Truth—they could read me like a book! The pups and I would play games of chase and stalk (their training for the hunt), and they would easily outsmart me when I would slip out of the Now. They quickly picked up on my lack of presence and took advantage of it—or I should say, of me!

Even without my lapses of presence, they were usually clever enough to get the edge on me. Yet, those lapses showed me that if I were on an actual hunt, I would probably either go hungry or end up being someone's meal. Obviously, dwelling in the voice of the Now—Truthspeaking—was the way of Life.

(For more on Wolves, see my article *Wolves at My Door* at <http://www.teachingdrum.org/Wolves/> and find *Wolf* in the Index of my other books.)

My Writing Style *On the power of words and how I maneuver our language to help it convey matters of Heart. In other words, what you say is how you say it*

Even though I practiced Truthspeaking in my daily life and taught it to others, I did not come up with the idea to write a book on the subject. My normal writing topics were Native spirituality and lifeway skills, which I also taught at a small school. My mate, the Woman of the Four Colors, asked if I would put together a three or four page handout that we could use to introduce new staff and students to our way of speaking clearly and truthfully.

Two things happened: I quickly realized that I could not present Truthspeaking in just a few pages—it grew into a booklet. And then People began asking for additional copies to send to family and friends. Obviously more thorough coverage of the topic would be needed for those who were not immersed in our Truthspeaking community. The material would also have to be self-guided. That meant something the size of a book.

Writing the book turned out to be quite a challenge, because I had to convey the soul of Truthspeaking with everyday English. It does not lend itself well to nonlinear expression, such as matters of the Heart. Truthspeaking is clearly a matter of the Heart. Let me share some perspective on language, and then I will explain what I did to our language in order to give it some Heart.

The way we speak and write, guides—and limits—the way we perceive our world. Our way of speaking is shaped by our culture, and the differences in cultural ways of speaking can be profound. Imagine how you might respond if I told you “The Deer gave herself to me,” rather than, “I killed a Deer.” What would you think if I were to refer to a Rock or a Dragonfly as “she” or “he” rather than “it,” or if I were to describe the Bird I saw and you couldn't tell from my speech whether I was referring to a single Bird or a flock of Birds?

Initially I tried to present Truthspeaking in a linear way, because most people are accustomed to a 1-2-3 thought progression. Even though I was guided in the Old Ways almost exclusively by Natives (who would keep circling

back to a topic as my understanding grew) I thought I could reinterpret their teachings in a more straightforward fashion. It didn't work; my effort read like a technical manual. I went back to writing in the circular, honorific way a Native perceives and speaks. The text not only flowed better, it felt good to write it, because it fit with the way I had lived most of my life.

The limitations our language imposes upon Native expression, also reflected in the above examples, don't slow me down. I take liberties with grammar and punctuation, and invent words when necessary (Please read the Glossary to familiarize yourself with these words before starting the book). You will notice that I capitalize words to convey Honor. My unorthodox switching between first-person (I-we) and second person (you) would give any composition teacher conniptions! To make room for your personal Truth, which is the basis of Truthspeaking, I avoid absolutes and directives. Instead I will use words like "perhaps" and "could".

In order to dull the line between singular and plural and encourage the feeling of the *collective I*, I use "we" and "ourselves" (an invented word) together in the same sentence. Some of you may already be familiar with this concept of the *collective I* from your exposure to Eastern-Buddhist as well as Native consciousness.

Our use of language reflects our culture's assertive, authoritarian approach to life. "There is a Fox," leaves no question as to what I saw; "There is an Animal I call Fox," allows for other possibilities. It honors the awareness that there are no absolutes and that everyone has their own perception, their own Truth. It reflects the Native way of remaining open by continually "being as a question". You will find this awareness reflected in my writing.

I sometimes use passive tense and object-first sentence structure, in order to place emphasis on what is being spoken of rather than on the speaker. For example, I'll say "The ball was thrown by me," instead of, "I threw the ball." This is a common characteristic of Native speech.

These differences of expression can cause someone from another culture to take a Native's speech as being vague, or as though he were speaking in riddles. A Native Elder or Guide can reinforce that perception by deliberately speaking in riddles. She will sometimes do this in order to challenge the Seeker to think and explore. In this way the Seeker finds the Truth within himself.

You may find yourself challenged as well, because I use riddles to help create space in this book for you to seek your own Truth. The most obvious riddles are the legends. For example, the *Woman and the Talking Feathers* legend in the Gossip section is styled to help one step outside of himself and see himself with perspective. I suggest that you take your time with the

legends, and with similar areas in the text, so that their delivery does not confuse you, and in order to give yourself room to meet the challenge of Truthspeaking.

In the text I use *Native*, *Ancestral*, and *Old Way* in reference to the clan-centered lifeway common to all foraging-hunting Peoples, past and present. The definition does not fit most contemporary People commonly referred to as Native. *Native* could refer also to the intrinsic you, who are asleep beneath your civilized conditioning. *Civilized* denotes the relatively recent agriculturally-based, town-centered lifeway which has evolved over the past 5000 or so years.

From greater perspective, there are no dividing lines, so the distinction between Civilized and Old Way cultures and People is seldom as clear as the above definitions might suggest. Yet I often use the terms as defined, in order to provide a basis of comparison.

All of these grammatical alterations raised some concern with my editors. After reviewing the first draft of the book, they felt that my writing style diverged enough from the "American norm" that some People could find it hard to read. This, they concluded, might cause some individuals who could really be helped by the book, to shy away from it.

That made sense to me, so we worked together to make changes. Yet I would only go so far—I agreed on improving readability, however not at the expense of the book's unique format and style. Together we crafted a book that I feel good about—it maintains the Heart of Truthspeaking and at the same time it is able to touch Hearts. For this accomplishment I would in particular like to thank my dear friend and editor Leslie Foxfire Stager. The final review by Asha Stager (Foxfire's Mother) gave the book its finishing touch. My mate, the Woman of the Four Colors, nurtured this project through the entire creation process. We are honored to give you this—our humble contribution to Sacred Speech.

Some People are designed more for listening than reading. Others prefer to listen along as they read (which I often recommend, because more than one sensory input tends to increase comprehension). Still others like to listen while being involved in some other activity, such as driving. Then there are those like me, who simply enjoy being read to! An audio version of this book is available.

Chapter One

How Bear-Heart Woman Brought Truth Back to the People

Wherever Folks gather, whether it be around campfire, table or bed, stories will likely be told. They are universal to all cultures and times. Most of us learn best by example, and stories give us characters and situations we can learn from without having to experience everything ourselves. This is why, in many traditions, a teaching will start with a story. In this story of Bear-Heart Woman, we are given a feel for life with, and without, Truthspeaking. The story comes from the Dreamline—the spirit-realm where the Ancestors dwell. Occasionally they have me come and spend time with them. This telling is in Honor of my soul sister, Ode Makwa.

In the time of the First People, all that was spoken was Truth. Whether it was the sound of Wind, the chatter of Squirrel, or the word of Human, it was the voice of Truth. The voices rang with joy and pain, with need and giving. They arose as spontaneously as a whim, and flowed as freely and clearly as a Mountain Stream. They were the Moment's Truth, and they were personal Truth, because there was only the Moment, and only Truth could dwell in the Moment.

This was the way of all life. Each person of the Leafed Ones and the Furred Ones and the Rock Ones, and all of the other relations, dwelled together in a resplendent web of sharing. It was as though they were dancing together, each in her own way, to her own music. And yet there was synchronicity to their movement—there was Giving and Receiving, there was Honor and Respect, there was good life and good death. There was Balance (the state of natural harmony).

The People called this personal Truth, *Debwewin*, which literally means “voice of the Heart-of-Hearts.” It is there, in the Heart-of-Hearts, that the individual voices of the Ancestors, the senses, intuition, feelings, and the mind, come together to form one's personal Truth.

Once, in this long-ago time, the People began to wonder what it would be like if they left the Moment and wandered into the past or future. They started

to dwell on old hurts and things they hadn't gotten accomplished.

"What if the next White Season brings deep Snows?" some would say.

"And what if the Fish do not come up our Stream to spawn when the Snows melt," would be heard from others.

The People grew confused. When they dwelled on the past, old feelings clouded their feelings of the Moment. When they dwelled in the future, the voices of worry overpowered the voices of intuition. They were losing touch with their personal Truths.

"What should we do?" exclaimed one after the other.

"Let us go to the Relations—our Animal and Plant sisters and brothers," suggested a young man named Cloud on the Hill. "They have been ever kind to us when we have sought their guidance."

In those days, as now, the Relations would sometimes give guidance by coming in a Dream, or by leaving a sign. Oftentimes the guidance was given through an example in their lives; this, the People regarded as a great teacher. Yet no matter how the guidance came, it was cherished because it was *Debwewin*—the voice of one Heart meeting the voice of another Heart. The People would wait patiently and respectfully for the Relations to speak their Truth.

They trusted in the voice of the Relations, realizing that if they did not know what they, the People, needed, they could not know what to ask their Relations for. Rather than assume that they knew best what they needed, the People would instead develop their Awareness and Attunement skills so that they could better receive whatever might be given.

To empower that awareness, they would place an offering of the sacred herb, Kinnikinick (also known as Bearberry), on the bosom of their cherished Mother, The Earth. This practice of Giving created the opening for them to Receive. They would then place their trust in the ancestral Heartvoices to speak in their chosen way and time.

However, this time the People were confused and desperate—they could not wait. Without their personal *Debwewin* to Guide them, they were not Walking in Balance. They struggled to find enough food. Their children and Elders grew weak and gaunt. Often they were cold and wet, because they had forgotten how to live with the turnings of the seasons. More and more they fought amongst themselves, because they spoke from their heads instead of their Hearts.

In their desperation, they forgot about their traditional ways. Freezing nights and screaming bellies drove them to find something—anything—that might relieve their misery.

They went to Forest and Lake and Cliffside to ask their Relations for help. This time they didn't go to quietly to fast and wait for a voice; instead they went to beg and plead. They were *sure* they knew what they needed. They were hungry—they needed food. They were cold—they needed dry wood. They were fighting amongst themselves—they needed weapons for defense.

Some of them went to Otter, who lived in the Lake. "Otter," they implored, "we are starving; will you help us?"

Otter was never before approached in so direct a way—it caused him to be wary. He stayed out from the shore, a safe distance from the Humans. Yet he had compassion for his two-legged Relations, so he said to them, "In the days when you dwelled in Balance, we learned from each other. We have not spoken our Truths to each other for a while now. Yet I feel for you. Perhaps my example will help you; perhaps if you watch me find food, you too will be able to eat."

Otter dove down into the cold depths of the Lake. Everybody watched and waited.

"Where is Otter?" someone asked. "He's been down there a long time!"

Soon they all grew anxious—their hunger left them little patience.

Finally Otter emerged and pulled himself up on a floating log. The People were awed by the beautiful golden Trout he brought up with him! Otter Gave Thanks to Trout Spirit for the Gift of food, and then quietly and reverently ate.

"This is what we shall do!" exclaimed the People. "Otter is fat, and we are thin. We shall hunt in the depths of the Lake, like Otter. Then we too, shall be fat!"

They dove into the Water and reached for the black depths where the gilded Trout lay.

After a short time, the Humans surfaced one by one, gasping for breath. They dragged themselves up on the shore, exclaiming, "The Trout swam so fast that I could not grab one!"

"The Water was so cold that I now feel more miserable than ever!"

They looked around and soon realized that several of their kin were missing. Some of those who dove had not made it back up from the murky depths.

A great wailing rose from the throats of the People. Mothers who lost children, and mates who would now sleep alone, burnt off their hair and blackened their faces with charcoal.

Many of the People turned to Otter and cursed him:

"You are a Trickster—you spoke a contrary Truth (the opposite of what it

appears to be) to deceive us! We will turn our backs to you and find a *real* Truthspeaker amongst the other Relations!”

“But who shall we go to?” they asked each other.

There was no consensus. They began to argue amongst themselves. Soon, fighting broke out. In no time, blood and bruises covered their faces, clumps of hair lay on the Ground, and cries of pain pierced the Air.

As vicious as it was, the fight did not last for long, because they had little energy.

While they lay there catching their breaths, one of the young men, known as Fire Ant, got up and passionately proclaimed, “We are a miserable lot! We have no food and it hurts us more when we try to get food. Our speech is no longer sacred, and it hurts us more when we try to talk. I must take care of myself and protect myself from you. I am going to Eagle, the Mighty Lone Hunter, and she will tell me how to stand strong and take care of myself!”

One by one, others proclaimed their independence.

“Yes, you are all fools! I will go to Heron, who stands alone in the Marsh and stabs all the Fish he wants with his sword. He will show me how to grow fat, while you all starve!”

Another said, “I will go to Thornapple Tree. She stands alone in the Meadow, green and lush, laden with fruit, because no one can get close to her. I will learn how to stand alone and be fat like her. With you People I am miserable—I am no more than bones and hide!”

They each went in a different direction to learn the way of the Relation whom they were sure would help them. Before long, there were People wandering alone throughout the land, trying to survive on the scant bits of knowledge they managed to learn from the Relations they had sought out.

When someone who carried a sword beak like Heron’s, met up with one of his estranged kin with a claw knife like Eagle’s, they would often fight. Fighting came easy, because they were embittered and mistrustful. Only now, fighting cost them more than a bit of blood and hair. The Power of Eagle or Wolf in the hands of someone who was out of Balance, only magnified the imbalance.

They were in a pitiful way. They could no longer hear their own Truths, so they were trying to live the Truths of the Relations. But their Truths didn’t fit—they couldn’t fit—because each person’s Truth fits only him. Yet, in desperation, they tried to live what they thought were the Truths of others. Even if it could have worked, the People were unable to hear anyone else’s Truth clearly enough to live it. Instead of serving each other and honoring the Relations, they became self-possessed and greedy. Enough was no longer

enough—their hunger was insatiable. They craved more food than they could possibly eat; they coveted a bigger lodge than they could ever fill; they demanded more firewood than they would ever burn. If it did not come easy, they would plunder it with the help of their new sword beaks and claw knives.

Not all of the People found ways to survive. A small girl wandered alone, deep in the Forest. She sobbed endlessly, because she had lost her mother, and her swollen belly burned continuously from ceaseless hunger. Aimlessly she wandered, barely keeping alive by catching Bugs and chewing on leaves and crawling under uprooted Trees at night.

Over time, she forgot her name—she no longer knew herself, because she did not know her People. Her Hoop of Relations was broken. The Sun and the Bird are nothing when they do not dwell in the Balance of the Hoop of Life, along with the River and the Sand and all the other Relations. And so it was with this child.

Until one day when she heard the sound of crunching leaves. She spun around, took one frightful look at a brown furry figure, clenched her eyes shut and screamed. But there were no sharp claws, no ravaging teeth to harm her. Instead of being eaten by a Bear, she found herself cradled in a warm, comfortable lap, gently but securely held in soft, dark, furry arms.

“There, there, *abinoozhiinh* (little one), you are safe now. I am *Ode'imin Makwakwe* — Bear-Heart Woman. You and I are sisters. The Relations have chosen me to find you because you are one of the few remaining of your People who has not been taken over by your mind. You are yet with Heart.”

Ode'imin Makwakwe took the girl to a lush Meadow, where they feasted on ripe berries and the succulent shoots of Fern and Violet. They gathered Clams and Duck eggs, and they swam in the healing Waters of the Beaver Pond. In a short while, roundness returned to the younger sister's cheeks, and her hair again shone like the sleek coat of Beaver.

“It is now time,” said older sister, Bear-Heart Woman, one day, “for you to return to your People. You are blessed to be so young, because in youth the voice of Heart holds strong. For this reason, you have been chosen to guide the People back to the Truthspeaking Way. My Gift is that I carry the knowledge of the voice of Heart. I have been chosen by the Relations to give you back the Heart teachings that your People have lost, so that you may take these teachings back to them.

“Your People have been looking for Truth so that they may again have it guide them. That is good. However, they have been looking for Truth outside

themselves. They forgot that they each carry their own Truth. The Truth of one will not necessarily work for another. Do you remember when they tried to Walk the Truth of Otter into their own lives? And then the Truth of Eagle, Heron and others?

“I will ask you to remind them of these things. They already know them deep inside, because they have experienced them. What they no longer remember is their Heartvoice.

“We will spend this coming Mooncycle in the Meadow, listening to our Relations who dwell there—Blackbird, Iris and Butterfly. They are all Truthspeakers—that is all they know. After one Moon of knowing Truthspeaking with them, you will be able to gift it back to your People. They will then be able to embrace their speech as sacred once again.

“But they will not listen to me!” the girl said tearfully. “They are drunk with anger and lust, and their hungers are never satisfied. I fear them.”

“I will give you a sign to take to them,” said Older Sister. “They will know the sign, because it will speak directly to their Hearts. They will then have no desire to harm you.”

With that, she picked up a piece of broken clamshell laying at her feet. With its sharp edge she cut her left hand, so that it would drip blood. (In the ways of Native People, one gives with the left hand, because it is closest to the Heart, and one receives with the right hand). Then she walked through the Meadow in a large Circle, leaving a trail of blood behind her.

All of life lives the Circle Way, where dawn becomes dusk and then again dawn, where birth becomes death and then again birth, where Giving becomes Receiving and then again Giving. The People had forgotten the Circle Way. *Ode'imín Makwakwe* was creating the Circle for the child to take back to her People.

The child, drawn by a pleasing essence, looked down to where the first drops of older sister's crimson Heart-Blood had fallen. There, in place of the blood, were small red Heart-shaped berries. She tasted one and found it to be most sweet and flavorful! Then she looked out over the Meadow and found that there were Heartberries growing wherever older sister's blood had dripped.

“They shall be known as *Ode'imín* (Strawberry)” said older sister. “They bring a teaching: they are red and shaped like a Heart, and they are sweet and inviting, as is the voice of Heart. Notice how they lay gently and close upon the bosom of The Mother, just as we too are intended to do.”

Then a solemn look cloaked her face and she began to speak in the formal way of not directly referring to oneself and not directly addressing others. This is done in order to honor and address all the involved Relations.

“This woman asks if her younger sister will gather a basket of them, and share them with her People.

“When they see her with laden basket, they will come to her out of greed and lust. Be not afraid—let them take a Heartberry—because when they see it, their Hearts will remind them that they are not living the Way of Heart. When they smell and taste it, their old memories of the sweetness of Truthspeaking will come back. And when they eat it, their Heart will again feel the fullness of Communion with another Heart.

“This will give them a hunger for more—a hunger that will reopen their Hearts to the Hearts of others. And then younger sister will no longer be alone. She must bring those who have tasted *Ode'imin* back with her to this Meadow, so that they may gather the Heartberry and share it with the People they meet. Then soon, younger sister’s People will all have returned to *Debwewin*.

“From this day on, the first Moon of the Green Season shall be called *Ode'imin Giizis*, the Heartberry Moon. This sacred food, *Ode'imin*, will now be the first fruit of the season, to remind the People of the time when they lost their voice of Heart. If they remember the misery, they will remember the teaching.

“When the first *Ode'imin* ripen, hold a Feast in honor of those who Walked in misery and gave their lives for the teaching. Begin by laying an Offering of the First Fruit of *Ode'imin* on the Sacred Fire. Its sweet essence will rise up to honor the Relations who ever guide them in the ways of Truthspeaking. Then retell the legend of how *Ode'imin* brought the voice of Truth back to the People.

“The Teaching is now complete, brave sister. This woman honors her younger sister for her courage, and for the sacred calling that she has been chosen to Walk.

“There is yet one more Gift—this one for younger sister. In honor of her service to her People, she shall be known as *Ode'iminikwe*, Heartberry Woman. Until her last breath, she will have the Respect of her People. Every time they give voice to her name, they will be honoring both Heartberry and her for the Pathway back to Truthspeaking that she has gifted them.

“Aho.”

This story has familiarized you with the major themes of this book—personal Truth/*Debwewin*, the Heart-of-Hearts, the Circle Way, Giving is Receiving, and Honoring. You may also have gained more of a feel for Native perspective and lifeway. I suggest that you read the story another time or two,

as familiarity with these views and themes will help in your understanding of Truthspeaking.

Chapter Two **Our Forgotten Heritage**

All living Beings—except Civilized Humans—dwell in the Now. Because of that, they are naturally and spontaneously honest. Their secret? It is simply that they have no secrets. This is the essence of Truthspeaking.

Are we Lord or Brother? *Perhaps it is a matter of intelligence.*

When we Humans became civilized, we distinguished ourselves from our Animal kin. Probably ever since then, we have wondered just what it is that sets us apart from them. Is it intelligence? Is it the ability to use tools? Is it language?

We are coming to realize that some of the so-called “lower” Animals may well match us in intelligence. Many Animals have been found to use tools, and every day we are learning more about the complex language of Wolf, Whale, Raven, and many other of our Relations.

I wonder what the point of all this exploration is, because there are many, many Animals (and Plants, for that matter) who can do myriads of things that we *cannot* do. In fact, probably every form of life can accomplish something that is beyond our capacity. Are we really that egocentric that we must compare and rate all of life next to ourselves?

Imagine if a Goose had a superiority complex similar to ours! We'd look pretty inept to her with our inability to get off the Ground, much less not having it within us to navigate a simple migration route!

Perhaps the only real difference between us and the rest of creation is that we are able to keep secrets. This is the result of clinging to our past. When we are not fully present, fully in the Now, we don't completely live out what is happening in the Now. We end up carrying that unfulfilledness around with us like accumulated dirty laundry that we keep putting off doing.

The dirt? Secrets. Secrets we keep from ourselves—unexpressed guilt, shame, feelings of inadequacy. Secrets we keep from others—unshared feelings, unmet needs, resentments, jealousy.

With the exception of the civilized and domesticated, all of life dwells in the Now. Because the Now continually speaks its Truth, there is neither room

nor inclination for those in the Now to harbor dirty laundry. Therefore there are no secrets—everything is naturally and spontaneously honest.

That’s the essence of Truthspeaking—being naturally and spontaneously honest. We of the Civilized Way have a tremendous challenge before us if we are to return to Truthspeaking. Perhaps our most monumental task is breaking down the wall of secrets that keeps us isolated from the rest of life. And from ourselves.

Some Hopi Elders are asking us to return to Truthspeaking in this critical time of change. They, and many other Wisdomkeepers, are concerned that if we do not return to the personal Balance of knowing and speaking our Truth, we will continue marching toward the prophesied Cleansing, right along with the rest of our civilization. (Native legends foretell of The Earth Mother ridding Herself of the destructive forces of civilization, perhaps through earthquakes, flooding, or climatic change. For more information, direct an Internet search engine or library research to “Native Prophecies.”)

Why this Blind Path to Oblivion? *When we grow blind to our Truth, we lose the vision to guide our culture.*

You could hear quite a variety of answers for why we walk on this path to oblivion, depending upon the profession or belief system of the person speaking. Underlying them all, I find two core reasons:

1. We have grown accustomed to watering down our personal Truth before we speak in order to be accepted.
2. We are not cherished for who we are or for the personal Truth we speak, but rather for how well we speak the “party line.”

The upshot is that every time we dilute our personal Truth, we make it harder to *ever* fully speak our Truth. The reason is that whatever we feed, grows, and whatever we ignore, withers. We are creatures of habit and pattern; the more we repeat a behavior, the more we reinforce it.

Along with that, we are setting examples for others, making it all the harder for them to be Truthspeakers. Our example further entrenches the “secrets” way of our culture. This drives the culture even further away from being honest about its relationship with the Natural Realm. This lack of honesty is what allows the civilized cultures to continue the subjugation and slaughter of the Natural Realm in the guise of progress and necessity.

What is the way out? The most sure way is the way we got in. We can each begin where it begins—with me, and with you. We can stop being afraid of our mate, friend or parent, and start speaking what we think and feel, when

we are thinking and feeling it. We can begin Truthspeaking.

That simple act, which is so easy and yet so hard, is probably the single most magical thing we could do to open the door for growth in our relationships. The magic is that Truthspeaking also creates the door! Without Truthspeaking, there could probably be no growth in relationship.

Truthspeaking eliminates the stress inherent in holding secrets. With stress being perhaps the underlying cause of virtually all disease, it is little wonder that Truthspeakers tend to be healthier and may live longer than the average person. And, Truthspeakers have more fun! When we can express ourselves and live in the fullness of the Moment, we find the bliss in everyday life.

Oh yes, there is one more touch of magic: Every being, every thing, is in relationship. When we open the door of spontaneity and feeling with those close to us, we open the door to spontaneity and feeling with *All* of our Relations, including those who swim and hop and fly and crawl, and those who root in The Mother and unfurl their leaves to The Father, and those who are of Vapor and Rock and Landscape.

Chapter Three

The Wellsprings of Truthspeaking

When we speak respectfully, avoid negatives, express our anger, and detach ourselves from the outcome, we open windows to clarity and avoid the illusions of the ego that can easily mask our Truth.

Respectful Speaking *We are naturally respectful in our speech, and language is naturally honorific.*

Telling the Truth is our natural way. It is the lubricant that smooths our social interactions. Listen to any young child—she does it spontaneously—until she is taught differently. Under the guise of learning how to get along in a non-Truthspeaking world, she is conditioned to speak for reasons other than expressing her Truth. In order to get her needs met, and perhaps even to protect herself, she learns to say what others want to hear. Or what she wants others to hear.

She learns how to be polite and ‘paint the Truth’ with sugarcoating and selective memory. Perhaps deception and cursing are taught to round out her repertoire. If she is well tutored, she will also be trained in the use of perhaps the most Truth-suppressing tool—ego-centered and ego-charged statements. When she feels vulnerable and doesn’t want to show her deeper feelings, her reactive ego might throw out something like “I’m mad at you!” or “You hurt my feelings,” as a self-protective shield.

If it works, she has succeeded in doing two things—bouncing the ball back in the other person’s court and triggering defensiveness. This takes the attention off of her and puts someone else in the hot seat. Bottom line: she doesn’t have to get in touch with or express her Truth.

Like it or not, that is our legacy. To change it, we each need to take the responsibility upon ourself to renew our intrinsic Truthspeaking way.

A good part of exercising that responsibility is carefully choosing words and mannerisms to express our feelings. In this culture we often do the opposite—we choose our words to elicit a desired feeling from another. In other words, we manipulate. A common example that I see is statements like “I love

you,” or “I’m mad at you,” being said to trigger a response rather than to Truthspeak.

To speak Truth is one thing—that takes courage. To do so with Respect is another thing—that takes skill.

Language is naturally honorific. Whether or not it manifests that characteristic has to do with the way we use it. You may be familiar with the regardful ways of the Japanese People, for example. Along with the custom of bowing when greeting her guest, a Japanese person will address her guest in a way that makes the Guest feel honored. This is common practice with Native and Traditional Peoples.

In less-structured Western cultures, language can be honorific also. By choice of words (slang vs. conventional, technical vs. general), it is usually possible to ascertain the class, educational level, and status of both speaker and addressee. This information is conveyed primarily not by what is said, but by how it is said.

This point is crucial in restoring Balance to our communication, because in the long run, how honorable and respectful we are with someone will mean more to him than whatever we may have talked about. No matter how impressive our factual memory may be, it is still our feeling memory that we most rely upon. Facts fade, feelings linger.

Our task in returning to Respectful speaking is to learn how to communicate in ways that are not laden with guilt, expectation, or judgment. At the same time, we wish to be non-threatening and supportive of another’s Truth. That is a tall order, so many simply choose not to communicate rather than face the task.

That does not exonerate us of our responsibility, because when we do not communicate, we usually resort to making assumptions. By definition, assumptions are still communication, albeit communication by default. They dishonor an individual’s Truth, they deprive others of the experience of that Truth, and they inevitably lead to conflict in relationships.

If relationship matters to us, we need to speak as though it matters. When we choose not to speak our Truth, we have made the decision that our pride or fear is more important than the relationship. We have insulated ourselves from whatever strength and integrity our partner might be able to lend to the relationship.

When we speak our Truth, but do so disrespectfully, we speak from a place of ego. Our Truth then has trouble finding resonance with others. No matter what beauty our Truth might hold, disrespect gives it a sour taste.

Respect is like savory dressing on a salad; it has a way of engendering the trust and empathy that help make our Truth appetizing to others.

There are some who will use pseudo-Respect to manipulate, either by using it to sell half-Truths, or by using respectful words to try to create the illusion of genuine Respect. There are others who, because they have been dominated or abused, will speak with pseudo-Respect out of fear. They are making an effort either not to be hurtful or to protect themselves from being hurt more.

That is fearspeaking rather than Truthspeaking. Inevitably, it backfires. And backfire it must, because it is not real Respect, either for self or other. The feelings it generates don't go away—they fester and mutate, often behind the screen of disguise and repression. When they surface—and they will—it'll likely be in distorted and insidious forms that hardly resemble the initial feelings. It could be passive-aggressive behavior, judgmentalism, or any number of other abuses.

Whatever the case, they are almost guaranteed to cause hurt. With Respect-cradled Truthspeaking at the onset, there might well have been no hurt.

How can this downslide be avoided? There is a clear difference between genuine and sham Respect, and our Heart-of-Hearts can intuitively distinguish between them. Yet we have trouble recognizing the difference when we are not accustomed to Truthspeaking.

Because of that, my approach is to practice Respect, always. Then it doesn't matter whether I am able to discern between disrespect and Respect.

Respect tends to diffuse and transform disrespect. When we return Respect for disrespect:

- We acknowledge, but do not legitimize, the disrespect.
- We don't reinforce or encourage the one who is showing disrespect.
- We help protect ourself (and others) from the hurt that disrespect brings.
- We break the chain of disrespect and demonstrate the way of Respect.

For example, if someone is angry and swearing at me, and I respond in like manner, I'll probably feed his fury and he'll continue in the same vein. On the other hand, if I were to respond with kindness and understanding, some of his energy would be transformed. There is a chance he will respond differently. Instead of pouring gasoline on fiery coals, I have soothed them with Water.

Some straightforward ways to begin speaking respectfully:

- When in doubt of gender, use *she* and *he* equally.
- Refer to a Plant or Animal as *she* or *he* rather than *it*.
- Use *who* instead of *that*, as in “She is the person *who* made the stew” and “I think he is the Crow *who* woke me up this Morning.”
- Capitalize the spellings of all Animal and Plant Beings.
- Avoid absolutes like *never* and *always*, and use instead terms like *maybe* and *perhaps*. (Things are not always as they appear. Some Insects, rather than being trapped by Spider’s web, use it as a roost.)
- Refer to others before self, as in “Fox, Steve, and I Gathered Berries this Morning.”
- When stuck in ego, try referring to oneself as *this person* or *this woman/man* rather than *I*.
- Express rather than repress.
- Speak it now rather than later.
- Be brief and concise.
- Own your feelings — “I feel...” rather than “You make me feel...”
- Take thoughts and feelings about another directly to that person. Taking them to someone else is gossip.

These steps are natural doorways to recognizing and transforming contrary thought and speech patterns, such as saying “I’m not hurt” when I really am, or convincing myself that withholding my Truth is for someone else’s comfort rather than my own. It is helpful to remember that those patterns only half fill your bowl (your potential to be your fully realized self). The rest of the space is for the beautiful blessings and awarenesses that will come from the healing of those contrary patterns.

Detachment from Outcome *Truthspeaking is unconditional.*

“Everything affects everything, which makes our every action important—a matter of spirit. The breath I am now taking, sends a ripple that will travel to the farthest reaches of the universe and will take part in affecting all manner of occurrences.” This quote from my book, *Journey to the Ancestral Self*, expresses perhaps the most important reason I strive to Truthspeak. It is the most convincing argument I can come up with to encourage you to Truthspeak. After all, what else matters but relationship—the continual Giving and

Receiving that is the all of life?

I find it a most interesting paradox that we often choose not to Truthspeak out of fear of hurting a relationship, even though *not* Truthspeaking is what hurts a relationship. It is a civilized pattern; we use checks and balances—speculations, projections, plans, worries, fantasizings, savings, and spendings—in an effort to protect our future, even though it robs us of the Moment. We do the same with our speech—we choose whether to speak or not based on the reaction it might bring, even though doing so costs us the Truth of the Moment.

This choice attaches expectations to our Truthspeaking—in exchange for the Moment’s Truth, we bargain for a desired response. For example, I may feel sad, but I will wait to express it until a time when I think I will get the most sympathy.

That is not being a Truthspeaker, any more than worrying about the future is living in the Moment. Rather than speaking our Truth, we have tried to affect something. Plain and simple, this is manipulation—another twist of the blame-shame game under the guise of coming clean.

Truthspeaking is unconditional, with no attachment to outcome. We expose our true self, our real feelings, our pure thoughts, without planning for a specific reaction or outcome. At times we may risk judgment, rejection, and perhaps even worse—being unheard. Yet, speaking our Truth without attachment to outcome is the only way that we might be accepted, even cherished, for who we really are.

Truth in Attachment Examples

Attachment to outcome is so endemic in our culture that it can be hard to recognize. Often it masquerades as noble and virtuous actions. The following are several such examples, along with an explanation of their hidden attachment, and the non-attachment alternative.

Virtuous Action	Hidden Attachment Motivation	Non-attachment Alternative
Sympathy	Superiority. When I sympathize, I assume that I am more privileged.	Empathy
Forgiveness	Judgment. When I forgive, I come from a place of moral superiority.	Acceptance
Gift-giving	Control—if I have concern for use of a gift, or who possesses a gift.	Gifting with no strings attached

Advice	Conversion—if I am influencing someone to think or do as I would.	Listening, mirroring
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Expressing Anger *Repressed anger derails Truthspeaking.*

When Wolverine Awakens

This story came to me one day as I was reflecting on how anger has a life of its own. The inspiration for the story came from my clan sister, Gegekwe, and this telling is in her honor.

Not many Summers ago, a young girl named Blue Feather was being tormented by Wolverine (anger) because her younger brother could dive deeper down in the Lake than she could. She was not a particularly proud or competitive person; she only thought that she should be able to swim better than her brother because she was older than him.

Her People say that a Wolverine lives inside each of us. When we become angry, Wolverine awakens. We can go a long time without knowing he is there, because he is small and prefers to sleep almost constantly.

Wolverine is known by another name—Skunk Bear. When his sleep is disturbed he can be as vile as an irritated Skunk and as ill-tempered as a wounded Bear. He may be small enough to fit inside you, yet when he is awakened he can be ornery and famished enough to devour you.

"Father," said Blue Feather to Wanders the River, "Wolverine has awakened inside me. He has sprayed my eyes with his putrid musk, so that I can no longer see clearly. And he rips and tears at my Heart with his terrible claws. I can no longer think clearly or trust my feelings. He is greedy—he is swallowing all of my insides. I am afraid!"

Blue Feather loved and trusted Wanders the River. He was a good hunter and honored Guardian of his People. Although he was her uncle, she called him "father" because that was the way of her People. Aunts and uncles were often just as closely involved in raising the children as were parents.

"Daughter," responded Wanders the River, "I would like to tell you the story of when I was about your age. I was training to become a Guardian, and I would sometimes compare myself with others also in training. When I felt that I did not match up, I would sometimes feel Wolverine rousing from his sleep. When I got frustrated because of my lack of ability, Wolverine would growl and churn my stomach. If I did not feed him, he would feed on me. Before I knew it, Wolverine had consumed me—I became Wolverine."

"Oh no father! What happened to you?"

"I grew scared, my daughter, just as you are now. I had a wise uncle, so I went to him, and this is what he told me. 'When Wolverine awakens, it is because he is hungry. You must feed him, because if you do not, he will eat your insides. If you do feed him, you can choose his food. To feed him, welcome him as you would a respected guest to a Feast. Tell him you would be honored if he would sit with you and share his teachings. Then feed him your presence and your gratitude, and he will grow content, and fall back asleep.'"

"But Father, I do not want to feed him—he is nothing but an angry, smelly little Bear!"

"Blue Feather, you do not respect him; that is why he tears at your Heart. I ask you, does Wolverine help you to be a better diver?"

She grew silent and lost in thought. Then she spoke in a subdued tone. "Wolverine claws at my insides and wears me down so that I cannot dive even as well as normal."

"Does your Wolverine hurt your brother?"

"Well... no, my Father. It is as though the hurt that I wish upon him actually happens to me. My anger seems to turn around and come right back at me! How silly it now seems—I am actually stabbing myself, thinking that it will somehow hurt him! I am the one who suffers!"

"Migwaeg (Thank you) Father; I now see the teaching that Wolverine brings me. He is much more than a mad Bear. He rumbles and grumbles for a reason—so that I will listen to him. And he is stronger than me for a reason—to stop me from hurting others. He is my own medicine, which I must take in order to know how someone else would feel taking it."

"My Daughter, you are wise for your years. I am honored to know you. Now go and have fun diving with your brother."

Next to the fear of not being accepted, fear of anger is the most common reason People give for not Truthspeaking. Yet, many have learned to use anger as a way to be heard. Perhaps more respectful modes of speaking didn't work, so they revved up their delivery by injecting anger. Some have become so habituated to anger as a part of effective communication that they automatically employ it, whether or not it is needed.

This creates an over-reactive environment. To survive in such a climate, People often become hypersensitive, aggressive or judgmental. They cannot risk letting their guards down to connect, so they end up imposing distance between themselves and those they care for. Oftentimes the only People they can feel comfortable being close with are passive, apologetic enablers. For

example, if I am afflicted with chronic anger, I'll avoid People who challenge me and instead gravitate toward those who will tolerate my outbursts and perhaps even take responsibility for them.

Such a relationship sometimes seems to work, if we were to define a working relationship merely as one that holds together. Yet the People involved usually feel misunderstood and perennially lonely. A relationship that is not based on trust and sharing can hardly be fulfilling. When Truthspeaking is replaced with anger, it is probably the only kind of relationship that could evolve.

Those who employ anger to communicate are forcing others to deal with that which those who are angry have not dealt with. My Elders have shown me that the best time to deal with anger is *now*, and that the best way is to take it to those involved with the anger.

The problem is that, with the prevalence of rage and emotional abuse in our society, many of us are terrified of someone who expresses Anger. In response we may go into a high-stress state and respond with defensiveness, or we might even deny that the anger exists. Others will shut down, or revert to fight-or-flight mode (an instinctive response to stress). Fear of anger causes some of us to not express it, or when we do, to disguise it. Humor and sarcasm often carry undertones of anger. Many of us have been taught that anger is an emotion to be ashamed of. Some of us have even been punished

for getting angry. In response, some of us have learned to pretend that we are not angry. Along with that, we have become inept at expressing anger.

Yet the anger is still there, screaming for release. Many of us will then turn to culturally-accepted displacement/avoidance behaviors such as immersing ourselves in angry and violent dance and music, movies, video games and reading materials and sports (football, boxing, wrestling, martial arts, Bull, Dog and Cock fighting). Others turn to psychotherapy or religious practice. Some of us end up being haunted by violent dreams and fantasies.

When none of that works—and it often doesn't—the anger builds up

Primary (core) Emotions

Fear
Longing
Sadness
Joy

Secondary (reactive) Emotions

Anger
Guilt
Stress
Envy
Despair
Anxiety
Depression
Hopelessness
Loneliness
Despondency
Excitement
Jealousy
Terror
Panic
Euphoria

inside us to the point where we can't help but express it, and we vent it as rage. At that point, we have lost touch with the Truth of our anger—the feelings and thoughts behind it.

That Truth—usually feelings of fear, sorrow, and insecurity—is what would most likely be expressed if one were able to Truthspeak. One reason we express anger instead, is that we have learned to treat it as a primary emotion.

My experience is that primary emotions are core feelings, such as fear and joy. Anger, like guilt and anxiety, appears to me to be a secondary, or reactive, emotion, which surfaces when we do not Truthspeak our primary emotions. The role of these secondary emotions is to act as warning signs that draw our attention to the need for emotional expression. (The following insert gives a more complete feel for primary and secondary emotions.)

When we do not heed the sign of the secondary emotion, it takes over and assumes the role of a primary emotion. That's when we lose touch with the Truth behind our initial feeling and get it caught up in the secondary emotion.

In this case, we have learned to focus on the anger, which makes it hard to listen to what it is trying to tell us. This can cause us to grow even more angry, more frustrated. I call this "anger-gone-mad." The anger detaches itself from what it was attempting to warn us about, and takes on a life of its own. Because it is not rooted in Truth, it can grow out of proportion to the feeling that spawned it. And it can grow without regard for its debilitating effect.

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist Sage, suggests that we sit with our anger as we would with a crying baby—comforting it and listening to it. If we are attentive, a baby will tell us what she needs, and so will our anger. When we listen deeply to it, and honestly, we will usually be told what the real issue is.

Anger is a Gift. It is one of the guides to our inner Wisdom. The Honor Way with anger is to listen carefully to what it has to say, then thank it, bless it, and send it on its way. We are then ready to speak Truthfully what is in our Heart. The following is a technique to help you with that process.

Truth in Anger Exercise

When you catch yourself saying or thinking something like:	Ask yourself:
“I am shouting because I am angry.”	“Why do I feel that I am not being heard?”
“Why am I always angry?”	“What is the root of this habit?”
“Why does he always make me angry?”	“Why do I feel the need to create distance between him and me?”
“Why do I use an angry tone with her?”	“How am I feeling challenged by her?”
“I gave in to him because he got angry.”	“Why am I afraid of anger?”
“I suppress my angry feelings.”	“Why am I ashamed of my anger?”
“I forgot why I got angry.”	“What feeling did I not express before I got angry?”
“I’m angry because I’m late,” or, “I’m angry because I didn’t get this job finished on time.”	“What unrealistic expectations do I (or someone else) have of myself?”
“I am angry because I hurt myself.”	“Do I need to take responsibility for my actions?”

Never say Never *Negatives create a black hole where our Truth vanishes.*

When you say “No,” are you sure that’s what you really want to say? Imagine if you were in a mated relationship and the following scenario

unfolded:

You said: “Would you like to make love?”

Mate’s Response # 1 “No; I’m really tired, I need to go to sleep.”

Mate’s Response # 2 “Yes, I’d like to make love with you. Unfortunately, I’m really tired—I don’t think I could be as present with you as I’d like to be. How about if we get a good night’s sleep and perhaps make love in the morning?”

Which answer would you prefer? In essence they both say the same thing, yet each sends a different message—Response #1's is rejection and self-absorption, Response # 2's is sensitivity and accommodation.

When we express ourself with negatives (no, don’t, won’t, can’t, etc), we create distance between ourself and others. *Never*, the most extreme negative, is also the costliest one to use. *Never* is absolute—it leaves no options. Other than being unrealistic (as there really are no absolutes), the term can also easily alienate and hurt another.

As with the example above, we can better serve Truthspeaking, and at the same time engender rapport, by constructively expressing our thought or feeling. In that way, a statement like “I never want to see your brother again” becomes “Your brother’s smoke-filled apartment irritates my sinuses; could we invite him over here more often, and ask them to smoke outside?”

To soften a negative statement, some of us will use *but*: “I like your brother, but I don’t want to go over to his place anymore.” Using *but* sets up a good/bad, yes/no comparison, which means that what comes before the “but” is diminished by what follows it. Using *but* is like doing someone a favor, then turning around and kicking her. The contradiction can cause confusion, along with triggering strong emotional response.

Rather than using *but*, we would be more clear and cause less hurt by just expressing our feelings outright.

Negatives Awareness-raising Exercise

The truth is in the testing; get a better feel for the debilitating effect of negatives and the uplifting power of positive speech by practicing this exercise with someone close to you, such as your son, mother, mate or boss.

1. Express something negatively (as in the example above).
2. Give a moment for the feeling to sink in.
3. Express the same thing positively (as above).
4. Ask your partner how the first statement felt in comparison with the second.

Then repeat the exercise by switching roles, so that you are on the receiving end of your partner’s statements. This way you will both be able to grow from the experience.

You may also practice with yourself, by constructing a box like the one below and recording in the left-hand column the negatively-phrased statements that you recall using. In the right-hand column, rewrite your statements as though you were Truthspeaking.

This exercise works because we, being creatures of habit, can quite easily change our way of speaking by repeatedly practicing another way.

The following is an example of how this exercise works. I left the last few statements untranslated, to give you an opportunity to begin practicing.

Truth in Negatives Exercise

What I usually say—Negative statement	What I could say—my Truth
“I like him a lot; I’d just rather be with someone else tonight.”	“I’m confused about my feelings for him.”
“Thanks for sharing your beliefs, but I wish you could have stated them more briefly.”	“Your beliefs scare me; I do not like hearing them.”
“No, I’m too stressed to go to a movie.”	“I like that movie; will you take me another time when I’m not so stressed?”
“I never have any time for myself.”	“I am feeling exploited.”
“Yes, I have money, but I have bills to pay.”	“I think you should earn your money.”
“I can’t believe you said that.”	“I feel hurt.”
“Why don’t you ever listen to me?”	
“I think I was the best runner, but I didn’t get first place.”	
“I don’t want to do the dishes.”	

Chapter Four The Danger of Words

Trying to share a feeling with words is like viewing a photo of a River and calling it a canoe trip. Yet words can help express feeling—if they are few and well-chosen.

Clarity of emotional sharing is vital to being a Truthspeaker. Yet the language of emotion is essentially non-verbal. So what is one to do?

Words are an often unnecessary, and sometimes dangerous, way of conveying feeling. They can be laden with stereotype and preconception, and they are subject to misinterpretation. Words are head-level; feeling is gut-level. Words draw their meaning from association with past times and experiences; feeling is here and now.

The sharing of feeling is spontaneous and direct. Its language is movement and touch and smell, which are too primal to be captured by words. Its sounds are too elemental to be shaped into words.

Because of physical distance, or because of the distance wrought by different histories, we often choose to use words to help convey feeling. Because words, by their nature, tend to depersonalize our emotions, the use of words can create even more distance. That makes it important to choose our words carefully, and use them sparsely. We need to remember that words are not the feeling; they can only help in sharing the feeling.

Some words that we associate with feeling, such as *love* and *upset*, have become so overused that they have lost their character. They have taken on nondescript, generic meanings that allow them to be attached to virtually anything. For example, we can love anything from someone's new dress, to God.

I usually choose words that are more descriptive of my feeling. If I love somebody, I want that person to know the quality and texture of that love. I'll tell him what is special about my love for him, and perhaps how it differs from my love for others. The same with *upset*; I want the person to know what I'm really feeling—perhaps I am I angry, frustrated, jealous, stressed, anxious, vengeful, disappointed.

We of the Civilized Way, who are Healing emotionally, are often encouraged by our mentors to express our feelings. We are given exercises and

techniques to help us get in touch with our feelings, and to give them voice. This process of connecting, releasing and sharing is usually verbally-based, because that is the Civilized Way.

Verbiage can convey only the surface, rational aspect of feeling. The Wolves I lived with, communicated a broad range of feelings with the aid of only a few basic sounds. Their emotional sharing seemed to be so effective and honest because it transcended the narrow band of sound and encompassed the whole spectrum of Communion. I had to pay attention to every nuance of their movements and energy emanations, and I needed to be sensitive to my intuitive impressions and ego filters, in order to fully read their feelings.

Not surprisingly, I find the same to be true of Human People. When I ask someone to describe his most profound emotional experience, he'll usually recall an event that was intensely kinetic and largely nonverbal.

Some of us will take advantage of words' ability to dance around feelings by using words to deliberately mask or misrepresent our feelings. It often works, because we are more accustomed to using words to describe a feeling, than to connecting directly with the feeling. As a culture, we give more credence to verbal language than to body language. We are not aware of the fact that body language is intrinsically honest and that it can be purely and fully expressive of feeling.

Feeling is now, body language is now, which means Truthspeaking is now. Only in the moment is our Truth pure and unadorned. Later it seldom comes out as clear. Clutter and fuzziness tend to accumulate around it—perceptions change, other thoughts and feelings get attached to it, and its fire, its original passion, usually dulls. Or it may simply be forgotten, or it might no longer apply. Every moment births its own Truth; let us not put off a birth.

When we are in the Now, feeling emanates from us as clearly as does the warmth and crackle of a campfire. At the same time, we can sense just as clearly the feelings of others who are in the Now. This is true emotional health—the lean, clean, and immediate flow of feeling. It leaves no pent-up or reactive feeling in its wake, and thereby no frustration, depression, or loss of self-esteem. There is no leftover garbage to tote into the next Moment, so there's nothing that needs to be vented or worked out later. Each Moment, each sharing, cleanses itself. That is dwelling fully in the Now—that is the soul of Truthspeaking.

Chapter Five

What Gets in the Way of Truthspeaking

Humor masks Truth, cursing distorts it, small talk avoids it, gossip creates a false Truth, and lies are actually a form of Truth. Here's how each can also be a doorway to Truth.

At times, virtually all of us use small talk, humor, gossip, lies, or cursing in the way a clown uses costume and makeup to disguise her true identity. It is sometimes hard to speak our Truth straight-up, and it is sometimes hard to take the Truth straight-up. To admit that to ourself, much less to others, can be just as hard. So we coat the Truth with honey or gruffness, or disguise it with a laugh or jab. Sometimes, when we can't even get that close to Truth, we'll masquerade a rumor or fantasy as Truth, even if it be at someone else's expense.

In doing so, we often imagine that we are either protecting ourself or others from the fallout of the naked Truth. In actuality, we are creating distance and breeding mistrust. Let's take a look at how that happens, and what we can do about it.

Cursing and Swearing *This is perhaps our most emphatic form of expression, and at the same time it is our most ambiguous.*

Why do we do it?

- We are an impatient People. We have come to expect immediate response, immediate gratification. When that is not possible, we get easily frustrated, we turn quick to anger. Enter a curse word.
- We are an assertive People. Sometimes we do not get heard unless we shout. So we swear to emphasize our point, to be heard above the commotion.
- We are a sometimes-inarticulate People. Swear words are good catch-alls that can be applied to just about anything.

- We are a People starved for emotional zest, so we appreciate the tweak a curse gives.
- We can be a lazy People. When we don't have the right word at hand, we might just grab a convenient curse word.
- We tend to be monkey-see, monkey-do People. If my *parents* peppered their speech with curse words, so might I.
- We are a People insecure with who we are, so it becomes important to fit in. If those I am with are swearing, I will probably swear also.
- We need a release for the frustrations of civilized living. We see swearing as a harmless vent.
- We are a People tormented by conformist pressure; we swear as a form of rebellion, especially if those around us do not swear. Many youth listen to angry music peppered with cursing.

In a nutshell, cursing is a part of Western culture. It is becoming more accepted and more practiced, which indicates that it is probably fulfilling a growing need for expression. I think it appeals to more of us because it gives us an ever more acceptable vent for feelings we aren't encouraged or allowed to express otherwise.

So then what's wrong with swearing? It is not Truthspeaking. It somehow gives us license to make exception to honoring and respectful expression. Repeat a few of the curse words you're familiar with and listen to what you're saying. When I do so, I hear externalizing and judging with some, and blaming or belittling with others. Most of them also tend to stereotype.

The Truth Behind Cursing

Externalizing (shirking personal involvement or responsibility)

“That fucking door won’t open!”

Lashing-out statements like “Go to hell,” “That sucks,” “God damn it!”

Blaming (faulting, finger-pointing)

“What the hell did you do that for?”

“Jesus Christ, what’s the matter with you?!”

Stereotyping (labeling or pigeonholing)

“What a pig!”

“Only a retard would do something like that!”

Judging (assuming authority to evaluate)

“They lost the game; what buttheads!”

“You whore—you’re not married!”

Belittling (degrading another)

“What an idiot (jackass, dickhead, etc.)!”

“He doesn’t know his ass from a hole in the ground!”

Does cursing work? The more common it becomes, the less it is noticed, and the more violent its expression must become in order to be heard.

Some Native Hawaiians have expressed their concern that cursing drains energy. Like other non-Truthspeaking expressions, cursing also takes the energy of those who are the unwitting recipients. I remember how drained I felt as a child when I was exposed to verbal abuse and had no way of escaping from it. Today I still experience the same sapping of energy when I hear cursing, even though I might feel less victimized than when I was a child.

**If you curse and would like to change that,
here are some suggestions that might prove helpful:**

- 1. Know yourself.** I've noticed that the more People learn about themselves, the easier they can learn other things. When my son realized that he was visually oriented, he focused on geometry rather than algebra, which cured his frustration over math.
- 2. Cultivate patience.**
- 3. Say what you mean.** "That fucking car!" and "God damn you" mean nothing in and of themselves. Choose language that really helps you to express what you want to say.
- 4. Work on your personal Healing.** The less old woundedness and pained memory you carry, the easier it is to not only accept, but cherish, yourself and others. Like so many others have, you will probably then naturally realize that swearing is not cherishing.
- 5. Observe others who swear.** Imagine that it is you speaking. You may learn something about yourself.

If you are one who swears, have you noticed that you tend to swear less when you are around People you respect and admire? I've found that when I am with People who might be healthier and more self-aware than me, I am more self-conscious about my imbalanced habits.

That fits hand-in-glove with an awareness that the kind Blackfoot Elders gave me years ago—that I become what I surround myself with. I am deeply grateful to them for that teaching, because it helped me use self-consciousness in my healing. It seemed so deceptively simple—just surround myself with those who were the way I'd like to be! Could it really just rub off on me?

I found this practice to be so effective, that in virtually any way I wanted to grow or change, it worked! And it's worked for hundreds of others. It bears repeating:

Change my surroundings—I change.

Stick with my surroundings—I stay stuck in my behavior.

The stick-with-surroundings part is also astonishingly effective—I will continue to be what I continue to surround myself with. In other words, if I don't change my surroundings, if I don't change the type of People I choose to be with, I don't change.

This is not a sanction for escapism. When we have participated in creating a situation, and have the wherewithal and support, it is often better to

“face the music”—learn the lessons and help heal the wounds.

Directly below is an envisioning exercise that can help you break habits and patterns. The first column is for listing the habits you would like to break, the second column is for recording the environments in which you practice the habits (or the People associated with them), and the third column is for noting the changes in surroundings that you think might inspire and support your change in behavior. The examples are patterns and behaviors that I have Healed myself from by using this method. For yourself, draw a chart like this one and begin by listing what you would like to change about yourself. Then complete column two, and save the change column for last.

Changing Habits Exercise

Habit/ Behavior	Environment or People associated with Habit	Environment or People who might support my change
Drinking Alcohol	College bars, “partiers”	Coffeehouses, creative and constructive People
Smoking Marijuana	Record/ “head” shops, “alternative partiers”	Alternative communities, People involved in healthy lifestyles
Overeating	All-you-can-eat restaurants, food addicts	Restaurants that emphasize quality over quantity, food respecters
Disorganization	My “Attention Deficit Disorder” mind	Life and surroundings structured to accommodate simultaneous activities
Judgmentalism	Highly opinionated People	People who listen, practice tolerance, acceptance
Stress-Ulcer	Responsibilities of self-employment or stressful job	Fulfillment outside of work, such as relationship, social change, crafts
Biting Lip	Eating while working	Special time and place for meal, with others who honor mealtime

We each want to be heard. Swearing is one way of getting this attention—if I don’t mind *how* I’m being heard, or what swearing might be

saying about me as a person. Those who don't swear are often listened to more closely, and with more Respect. They frequently stand out in a different way—as being more intelligent, self-aware, and emotionally mature.

The more we grow as Truthspeakers, the more we will be inclined to say what we mean and share what we are actually feeling. And the less we will be inclined to resort to common catch-alls, whether or not they be swear words.

Truth in Cursing Exercise

Old habits die hard, and this is particularly true with cursing, because we often resort to it in the heat of the moment. This gives us no time to think about options. The following exercise is designed to give us non-cursing options we can have on the tip of our tongues when we need them. Make yourself a box like the one below, and on the left side jot down the swearing phrases you commonly use. To the right of them, record non-swearing alternatives. Keep this list handy so that you can easily refer to it when you need it. You might want to make copies and place them in various locations. In the box are some examples from the repertoires of myself and others.

Swearing Phrase	Alternative phrase
“God damn it!” or “That pisses me off!”	“I’m angry!” or “I’m about to explode!” or “I’m hoppin’ mad!”
“What the hell did you do that for?” or “What a stupid idiot!”	“I don’t understand why you just did that!” or simply “Why did you do that?”
“Jesus Christ!” or “Oh fuck!” such as when hurting yourself	“Ouch!” or “Aaaahh!” They are oldies-but-goodies, and they still work!
“What a pig!” or “You lazy bastard!”	“What a mess!” or “I didn’t hear anything about a Tornado passing through!”
“Go to hell.” Or “Fuck you!”	“I won’t do it.” or “I don’t agree with you.”

Lies *The Myth of Lies is often the most challenging aspect of Truthspeaking to embrace, because it rocks the very foundation of our culture.*

Civilized communication is word-based, while the rest of life communicates through a wide range of feelings, gestures, and impressions. Civilized communication centers on the individual; natural communication includes the entire LifeCircle, of which the individual is part. Non-Native People have largely forgotten these other aspects of full communication.

It takes trust and knowing in order to engage in full communication. There are simply too many People in our lives to truly know and trust. We evolved the ability to fully communicate with roughly 15 to 25 People, which was the size of our ancestral clans. That's perhaps the primary reason we tend to grow suspicious and prone to lie-labeling when we are outside of our family circle.

Considering that most of us interact with far more than 25 People, is full communication even possible? We are guided, but not always limited, by our biological makeup. We are a tremendously adaptable creature, which we have proven time and again by the fantastic—and horrific—feats we have accomplished. Did our Ancestors ever imagine that their grandchildren would some day fly, create new forms of life, butcher millions of their own kind, and greedily charge into a massive and bloody rape of their own Mother?

We can learn to hear unrelated People's Heartvoices by consciously applying our innate ability to fully communicate. Helping us to renew that ability is the purpose of the guidelines and exercises found throughout this book. Yet they will do us little good if we refuse to hear what someone is trying to tell us. That is usually the case when we suspect that what we are hearing is a lie. Because of this incredible power that lies wield, I am here devoting a special section of this book to exposing lies for what they really are.

"To tell the Truth is good; to tell a lie is bad." Virtually all of us grew up being told this over and over again by parents and teachers. To them a lie was a willful deception that was wrong, even a sin. Because of that, we grew up viewing lies as the opposite of Truth.

I would like to suggest another awareness—that a lie *is* the Truth. A liar *is* a Truthspeaker—a liar is expressing her Truth of the Moment. This is what I have learned in living the Native Way. The concept of the lie is a myth—another spin on the civilized black-and-white, right-and-wrong approach to life.

"No way!" you say? "What about fork-tongued politicians and used-car salesmen, and how about conniving rapists and those who sweet-talk the elderly out of their money?"

That's the reaction I often get. Let me show you, with a simple example, how "lies" speak Truth.

Imagine that you suspect a neighborhood child broke your garage window. When you question her about it, she responds, "I didn't do it."

If you are a typical person, the first thing you will do is judge whether or not she is lying.

Children have amazing perceptive abilities—they can usually tell when they are being judged. This child is feeling threatened by the judgment of someone unrelated and more powerful than her.

That makes her reality very different from yours. If she did break the window, you will want to know whether or not it was an accident. That is not important to her; instead she is thinking, "I'm afraid I did something wrong and won't be accepted for it—I'm afraid I will be judged and punished." That is her Truth.

In order to help keep you focused on her Truth, I will not tell you if she actually broke the window. Nor will I divulge—if she did break the window—whether it was accidental or intentional. Those "facts" are not important, as they have nothing to do with the expression of her Truth.

As fair and noble as your intentions regarding your window may seem, they are a diversion from matters of the Heart. Yours is the focus of an overactive ego reacting to being violated. In response, your ego is looking to place blame, which it disguises as "responsibility". In effect, what your ego is doing is externalizing—taking you in the reverse direction of your Heart and going outside yourself to judge and blame. The ego, having no feel for the Truth-of-Hearts, is not aware that it cannot be found in facts or accountability.

The result of your ego's efforts is that the child has been stymied from directly expressing herself—just the opposite of what you had originally wanted. By asking for facts, for the black-and-white of the matter, she became intimidated. Facts were the last thing on her mind. She needed an opening for her Truth. Instead, she got the message that she was going to be judged rather than heard.

The upshot is that you are not able to hear her Truth, and you are not able to connect with your own. You are relating from your head rather than your Heart.

The child's mother, on the other hand, might well hear her child's Truth. The mother's Heart-of-Hearts can hear beyond, "I didn't do it," and can listen to her child's Heartvoice saying, "I'm afraid I did something wrong and won't be accepted for it—I'm afraid I will be judged and punished."

You could hear that also—if you were part of the child's family. And if

you were not the product of an ego-based culture. You have been conditioned to value property over Truth, and to favor right-and-wrong Truth over Heart Truth.

That is why you think someone is not speaking the Truth when what they say doesn't fit what you have predetermined to be "right". Those who do not speak the Truth—*your* Truth—are liars. As soon as you label someone a liar, you have shut yourself off from the Truth they are trying to express.

Imagine how ludicrous it would be to label a child a liar, thus denying his reality, because he said to his parent, "I hate you!" or "I'm going to starve myself to death!" Yet that is exactly what we do every time we judge someone—anyone—a liar.

It doesn't have to be that way. We are more than our ego; we are more than our cultural conditioning. Once we are aware of that, it is our responsibility to relearn how to listen to the person behind the words. Listening skills are covered in Chapter 6, so here I will offer only an abbreviated three step method that will specifically help clear the way to hear the Truth in "lies".

1. Become aware of your reactive feelings and cultural conditioning. Healing work of various sorts could be helpful—Rebirthing, counseling, the Sweat Lodge Ceremony, mirroring, discussion and support groups, the guidance of Elders, Dream work, meditation, reading.
2. Honor your reactions and conditioning by recognizing their effect upon you. Suppression and denial makes them stronger; recognizing their place in your Life breaks their subversive grip and brings them into the light so that they may be healed and released.
3. Center yourself in your Heart-of-Hearts. How to do this is explained in the Listening Skills box in Chapter 6.

The more you progress in these three steps, the more you should become aware of your innate ability to listen without judgment. Perhaps someday you will realize that you are no longer regarding someone's story as a "lie" or a "not-a-lie", but as an expression of personal Truth. That is all the girl in the example above needed, and that is what she was trying to ask of you. Being able to give that to her would have given her great Honor.

Perhaps you are now able to see that those four words of hers—"I didn't do it"—were actually a complex expression of her Truth. If she had broken the window, can you see how labeling her statement a "lie" would have been an oversimplification of what was going on, as well as being unfair to her?

This example illustrates how and why virtually all lie-labeling occurs. However, not all “lies” will be as easy to interpret as that one. The smiling CEO and the slick-talking salesperson are masters of deception—they have intelligence and training on their side. They have polished their deliveries to mimic personal Truth, and they often have a title and base of power that legitimizes them and magnifies their voice.

When the Board Chairman of BattleAxe Forest Products puts the spin on his company’s logging operations, it may be very hard to hear him crying out to us for acceptance because his father never acknowledged his abilities. When he is standing on the podium or coming to you via the TV screen, bigger-than-Life and quite inaccessible, it may be hard to see him as the hurt little boy he is.

The Truth of a loved one who says she never wants to see you again may be even more challenging to hear. How, through the emotional trauma, can one be expected to hear her saying that she is simply too hurt, and too out-of-control, to trust in her love for you?

We need to remember that the Truth which a lie speaks is not denied by our inability to hear it. That is why, no matter what we think we hear, and no matter from whom, we are serving the Truth by extending Honor and Respect.

Easier said than done. When someone is rubbing our face in doublespeak, how can we expect to maintain perspective and listen with our Hearts? Actually it is deceptively easy, and at the same time it is extremely difficult. One Heart naturally knows the voice of another Heart. That’s the easy part. Our supreme challenge is to quiet our ego—and at the same time listen through the din of another’s ego—so that we can hear the Heartvoices.

How can we do that? By looking further beneath the shrouds that our culture has draped over both Truth and lie, we could discover just how much they are one. Realizing that they are not really in conflict with each other, our ego might then relax his defenses and allow our Heart-of-Hearts to listen.

One of my Elders gave me a peek beneath the two shrouds that helped me to see the oneness that was really there. He told me that there can be no lies when we speak from our Heart-of-Hearts, and that this is a commonly-held awareness amongst Native People.

“Why is that?” I asked.

As is customary, I did not get a direct answer. Through the guidance of his well-phrased questions, he helped me to realize that because our Heart-of-Hearts is the wellspring of our personal Truth, lies could not possibly originate there. The sensory, mental, feeling, intuitive, and ancestral voices that join to form the Heart-of-Hearts are each already their own Truth. Like begets like, so how could their collective voice—the Heartvoice—be anything but Truth?

The Heartvoice is our center, our seat of Balance. It resonates our essence and speaks our pure Awareness-of-the-Moment. How could that ever be right or wrong, Truth or lie?

For the same reason that we do not speak lies when we speak from our Heart-of-Hearts, we do not hear lies when we listen from our Heart-of-Hearts.

Then what are lies? If anything is a lie, it is the fear that fills a child—and the child within anyone—when she doesn't feel safe enough to speak her Truth. A lie is the ego refusing to let the Heartvoice be heard. A lie is the product of a belief system (a moral or religious code) that lets someone assume the right to judge and label. For then, when someone says something that isn't sanctioned by the belief system, he has lied.

There are no lies. Everything has its own Truth—its own reason for being. That's because Truth is personal. My Truth begins with me and ends with me. In that sense, my Truth is a "lie" to everyone else. If I try to convince someone else to adopt my Truth, I am attempting to deceive him, to rob him of his own Truth. If I were successful, my Truth would become his belief system, not his Truth. This, by the way, is how religions are born.

Words do not tell the Truth—they tell a story. The good storyteller can perhaps dance close to the Truth, and the deceiving storyteller can dance around the Truth. He might even be able to create the illusion of Truth.

The poor storyteller is not so fortunate. If she were expected to express her Truth in words only, the Truth might not be heard. Or worse, it could be misinterpreted. It's easy for someone who expects to find the Truth in words, to instead find a lie.

For the Truth, we need to listen to more than words. When we listen from the Heart-of-Hearts, we find that words are only one of many expressions of the voice of Heart. Intent, feeling and intuition are all part of how the Heart speaks. This is why the mother in the example a few pages back could hear her daughter's *Truth*—her feelings related to breaking the window—and why you couldn't hear her Truth. Listening as the mother did—with intent, feeling and intuition—is how we also can hear the Heart Truth through a wounded ego's attempt to create its own Truth.

How can we tell the difference between the clear voice of the Heart-of-Hearts and the distorted voice of an emotionally wounded individual with an out-of-Balance ego?

- The Heartvoice is often soft and complex; the ego's voice is usually straightforward and lacks depth.

- The Heartvoice asks for openness and discernment in order to be heard; the ego's voice needs only another listening ego.
- The Heartvoice travels from one Heart to another slowly, with little fanfare; the ego's voice carries like the hullabaloo of a fired-up preacher on a crusade.

For these reasons, the Heartvoice is often near-impossible to hear by those whose emotional woundedness or lack of love has created such overpowering need that they have become numbed to all but the most raucous of voices.

This is a perfect and easy setup to be taken advantage of by someone who also has an out-of-Balance ego. That person's voice is often magnified by a tormented intensity which, along with the ego's usual simple and dramatic style, drives the person to sensationalizing and overstatement. The upshot is that Heartvoices are smothered—both the speaker's and the listener's. In the words of Mark Twain, "A lie can travel halfway around the world while the Truth is still putting on its shoes."

As deceptive and smothering as the words of an out-of-Balance ego can be, we still usually have gut reactions to them. These reactions are signals from our Heart-of-Hearts to not accept the words for face value, and rather to listen to the Truth that is spoken between them.

To our detriment, we often ignore our gut reactions. If we were able to embrace them, they could help us distinguish the clear Heartvoice from the warped plea for love and understanding. The following exercise, which lists examples of common types of pleas from out-of-Balance egos, is designed to help recognize these ego voices for what they are. A good way to personalize this exercise, and thus increase your sensitivity to your gut reactions, is to find parallel examples from your own experience.

Truth Clarity Exercise

What I hear	My gut reaction	What she/he is really saying
“I feel your pain.”	“That’s unlikely.”	“I have suffered too much alone; I’m looking for empathy”
“You need this item.”	“How would <i>you</i> know that?”	“I’m looking for validation of my self-worth. The only way I know to get it is to have People buy something from me.”
“I have found the One True Political System/ Faith; come join me!”	“I feel coerced; I feel that I’m not being respected for the individual I am.”	“I don’t know myself, and I fear my own mortality. The more People I can get to join me, the more secure I feel.”
“I don’t trust you.”	“I feel distanced and belittled.”	“I don’t trust myself enough to open up to you and accept who you really are.”
“I didn’t do anything wrong!”	“I am not accusing you.”	“I don’t trust in my own Heartvoice; I’m looking for validation from others.”
“I’m mad at you.” or “I’m depressed from being with you.”	“I’m feeling blamed.”	“My self-esteem is low and I feel vulnerable, out of control, so I’m taking care of myself by pushing you away and blaming you.”
“I didn’t get much sleep last night.” or “I lost out again.”	“I can’t feel sorry for you.”	“I need to play victim, so I can’t feel good for how much sleep I did get, or for all the times I did win.”

We’ve now taken a long-enough look beneath the shrouds of Truth and lie that we might be able to begin speaking and listening with less judgment and self-protectiveness. Yet there will be times when someone is speaking their Truth and, hard as we try, we will not be able to understand her. Here is an example, from a conversation I recently had with my mate.

Her: “Look up at the skylight; there were only four a little while ago, then there were seven, and now there are 12.”

Me: “They must be increasing as the Sun gets higher. Look, they’re spreading over the wall!”

Her: “Are you sure? What you’re pointing at looks like knots in the wood to me.”

Me: “*Rainbow knots??*”

Her: “What...?!”

We ended up looking at each other in confusion. It turned out that she was counting the Flies collecting on the skylight, and I was focused on the increasing number of rainbows being cast on the wall by the prism hanging in the skylight. She assumed I was referring also to the Flies, and I assumed she was counting rainbows with me!

This type of misunderstanding occurs when we rely too heavily upon words to connect with someone’s Truth. My Mate and I were not making eye contact, and we were not giving each other our full attention, so it was easy for each of us to assume that we were both talking about the same thing.

This example shows that understanding another’s words does not necessarily have anything to do with whether that person is speaking from his Heart. Because there is nearly always the possibility that we are not able to hear what another is saying, it is good policy to—*without exception*—hold the speaker in Honor and Respect.

I learned this lesson first from Wolves. There were times when I could not understand them. If I got frustrated, I virtually assured myself that I would not be able to come to understand them. If I extended them Honor and Respect, realizing that they were speaking their Truth, I was often able to grow into an understanding with them.

Another reason to extend Honor and Respect is that our inability to connect with another’s Truth may be because she is “lying”—crying out for help. If we were to judge her a liar, we would withdraw our Honor and Respect. In doing so, we would dismiss her personal Truth and cut off the hand that she had extended for help. It may have been the only way she was capable of reaching out.

If we do not allow the artist her brushstrokes, we will never see the picture she envisions. When we encourage the artist, perhaps we will be blessed with the picture of her Truth. The following is the only guideline we need in order to encourage, and to keep open to, that expressiveness, whether it be through paint or words.

- **Accept.**

Sound simple? If we did not have to pay the price for acceptance, perhaps it would be simple. In order to give someone with a wounded ego, safe space to voice his Truth, we must extend him Honor and Respect. He is probably sensitive to judgment, and most likely suffers from fear of rejection, so no matter what his Truth, and no matter what our reaction, we must extend him Honor and Respect.

At first this may seem to be a price, but only at first. Giving is Receiving; if we can give him Honor and Respect, we might have the rare privilege of viewing his most beautiful Truth-painting. After that, the price we have paid for the experience will seem more like it was an opening of the Clouds to let The Sun shine through.

If we are not willing pay the price up-front, it means we believe in lies. It means we have bought into the black-and-white civilized world. It means we cannot embrace all that is given, just because it *is*. It means we have lost touch with our intrinsic awareness that everything exists or happens for a reason, and that everything we are given is a Gift to be cherished.

For that loss of awareness, we will pay a much more personal price—loss of vital energy and perspective. When we think someone is Lying to us, we become victims. Often we feel deceived. Then we become mistrusting. We reason that if a person is lying—and he must be if we can't hear his Truth—he is either trying to get something or get away with something.

Now we become judgmental: To lie is wrong, so we either hold him accountable or we distance ourself from him. Again, Giving is Receiving. In exchange for passing judgment we have been bestowed tunnel vision and further isolation from the voice of Truth.

Why would we pay such a personal price to deny someone else his Truth? Perhaps because it's cheaper than the cost of facing our inability to connect with our own Truth. Voice is voice; if we can't hear our own, we won't be able to hear someone else's. Hearing is like seeing—if I am blind, it will be extremely difficult for me to envision what someone with sight might be viewing.

At other times we pay such a price because it is a matter of self trust. Without faith in our own voice, we will probably not have faith in another's. To use the example of sight again—if I don't believe what I am seeing, it is unlikely that I will believe what someone else tells me they are seeing.

Now let's step back and take a look at what we have done by not paying the price of Honor and Respect. We have transformed the Truth into a lie—we have made telling the Truth a bad thing! We have performed a feat that would paint a medieval alchemist's face green with envy. He would have been ecstatic if he could have been only half as successful in his efforts to transform lead into gold!

However, we have accomplished the opposite—to the alchemist, the unthinkable, the absurd—we have degraded precious, glistening gold into dreary lead.

The irony is that we didn't do it consciously; it happened by default.

Only because we were not able to be present for the Truth, it became a lie. It's like the proverbial Tree who falls in the Forest—if no one is present to hear her fall, is there a noise?

Even though we didn't pay the price of Honor and Respect, we must pay a tax—carrying the crippling burden of a lie, rather than the uplifting Gift of Truth. We will be denied the teaching that the Truth was intended to bring us. And we will not have the benefit of the greater Truth, which each individual's Truth leads to. Our Truth is like the lone Bird who, when released, flies off to find her flock.

Like begets like; to hear Truth is to speak Truth. When we can hear the Truth welling up from the soul of a "lie"—the cry for help, for understanding—we will know that we have returned to Truthspeaking. We will have given a wounded Heart-of-Hearts safe haven for healing, and we will have received the Gift of our own Truth.

Truth in Lies Exercise

This exercise summarizes how to embrace “lies”, and how we often don’t. It is designed to be used immediately after we have judged something a “lie”, so that it can help raise our awareness as to what we did, and what we could have done. The most effective time to work on breaking an old pattern and establishing a new one is when the pattern is being enacted. Reproduce this exercise and carry it with you, so that you will have it at your ready when you need it.

How to Honor a “lie”	How we dishonor a “lie”
First honor my own Heartvoice	Mistrust the “liar”
Listen from my Heart-of-Hearts	Label and judge his story
Be fully present	Make assumptions about his story
Listen with complete acceptance	Interject when he is speaking
Forget about facts; open to intent, feeling and intuition	Assume that his Truth is his words
Listen to my gut reaction	Be swayed by his title, rank or credentials
Recognize that what is “right” differs from person to person	Distance myself from him
Admit that any block to another’s Truth is actually my block to my own Truth	Feel victimized by him

I’d like to honor the fact that in every lie dwells the rhyme of Truth by having these last words on lies be a rhyme of mine echoing that awareness.

when we believe in lies
we draw between us lines
which are savagely dividing
and send all truth to hiding

perhaps if we could listen
to lie’s voice often hidden
we’d hear the pleading wail

of a child's heart grown pale

what if with lies we'd dance
and start a new romance
with truth and lie as lovers
we'd find balance with all others

Humor *This is an awkward topic to write about, because its power lies in intuitive feel and timing rather than in talking about it. Yet this is an important topic, because it can both melt walls in communication and create walls to hide behind.*

"Humor gets in the way of Truthspeaking?! How can that be—isn't humor supposed to be good for you?"

That is the reaction I often get when I speak about the other side of humor.

In general, humor *is* good for us. Yet, as strange as it may seem, for the same reasons that it is beneficial, it can interfere with Truthspeaking. What a paradox! Humor can drag us into a dishonoring quagmire so deep that even Truthspeaking can barely redeem us. This predicament exists because the magic of humor dwells beyond our boundaries of convention and the rules we live by.

Humor leaves behind consideration for what is “right” and “acceptable”. Therein lies humor’s benefit—it opens us to other perspectives. And therein lies the quandary—without the rules we live by, someone not solidly grounded in their Heart-of-Hearts can, without even knowing it, easily slip into the dishonoring quagmire.

That is the paradox—the quagmire must be risked in order to gain the benefits.

The Gifts of Humor

The quagmire *can* be avoided. In order to learn how to do that, we need to know both the risks and the benefits. Let us begin with a look at humor’s uncharted territory.

Perspective can be fleeting for us Humans. We tend to take ourself too seriously—especially those of us who dwell in civilized environs. At the slightest illusion of self-mastery, we become “profound” and self-absorbed. In doing so, we imagine ourself to be self-important.

This dulls our ability to hear the voices of Wisdom that are continually

whispering to us. They are our tempering agents; they help keep us in Balance. Without them, we become like the self-absorbed Wile E. Coyote of cartoon fame, who is ever on a quest to trap the Roadrunner. Wile E. is endlessly obsessed with one scheme after another, never taking time to gain perspective, or to realize the teaching from his last failed attempt. Never will it dawn on him to abandon his pursuit and try a new—and perhaps more realistic—approach to getting a meal.

Humor is our third eye. It is our watchtower, our critic, our reminder to remain humble. In the uncharted territory of humor we can explore options without threat or commitment. This is possible because humor

- opens us to considering what we might normally not consider.
- brings even the nonsensical and absurd into the realm of possibility.

Each of us benefits from this Gift of humor, because we all have a “sense of humor”. This is literally a sense, in the same way that touch and smell are senses. Humor is a necessary component of our mental functioning, because it supports the way the mind is designed to work. Our mind is constantly presenting us with ideas and options. Without humor, we reject most of them. Our beliefs and prejudices won’t even allow us to consider them.

Humor sees clearly through our filters and around our blinders—it is disrespectful and irreverent; it is oblivious to power, status, and convention. It gives us a bridge over our grumpy ego, a path around our dismissing pride, and a tunnel through our prickly acculturated values. With humor, we have license to give fair consideration to just about anything our mind dishes out.

With humor we can take on another guise, another persona, which allows us to step back from ourself and be self-critical. This is necessary, because we cannot know the Forest with our face up against a Tree.

Humor can open healing channels. Laughing invigorates the physical system, lowers blood pressure, and aids digestion. It is great therapy for depression; it actually triggers the release of endorphins—natural antidepressants—in the brain. It soothes the emotions and helps release tension. Comic relief is stress relief.

Some say that Humor is as important in life as love. I have found humor to be central to mated love—in fact, so vital and intrinsic that I regard it *as* love. Here’s why:

1. Humor recognizes the Beauty and uniqueness in another. With humor
 - I can give my mate a compliment *and* a smile.

- I can challenge her wit, which gives radiance to her intelligence and perspective.
 - I show her that she is worth the extra energy that a humorous exchange requires.
2. Humor is part of the Beauty and uniqueness of another. My mate uses humor to
- give spice to otherwise run-of-the-mill exchanges.
 - snap me out of a rut or help give me new outlook.
 - accentuate her allure.

Humor gives the perspective that keeps relationship vibrant and growing. Humor opens the doorway to listening and acceptance. And healing. Without humor, relationships grow shallow and bland. Just as important, let us not forget that humor can be just plain fun—another essential ingredient of vibrant relationship.

The Pitfalls of Humor

Perhaps you can now see how humor, with so much potency, and with as many aspects of life that it touches, could weaken and injure if it were not Heart-centered.

How can we tell when humor is being used out of Balance with the Heart? One way is to imagine that you are on the receiving end of the humor, and see how it feels. If you are a reasonably healthy person emotionally, your Heartvoice will tell you whether or not the humor is healthy.

If you have some imbalanced behavioral or emotional patterns, they may mask or distort your Heartvoice. For example, if your self-esteem is low, you may not be sensitive to deprecating humor. When I am unsure of my own perspective, I will ask someone whom I trust, and who is emotionally healthy, to be my “deprecating Humor barometer.” I’ll try out my humor on her in order to get her reaction. I do the same when I am the recipient of some humor that I am uncertain about.

You can be pretty sure humor is out of Balance when it is used to:

- Soothe tension between People, without resolving the source of the tension.
- Say something serious in a light, easy way. While it may make for easier delivery, it also dilutes the message.
- Mask feelings.
- Camouflage criticism and judgmentalism.
- Escape from reality. Some folks' motto is "Lighten up—life is for living! Let's have some fun and not take things so seriously!" Oftentimes this is a cover-up for someone's lack of self-love and fear of Walking his given Path.
- Get a laugh at another person's expense. Besides not having the therapeutic benefits of healthy humor, victim humor can cause hurt and erode self-esteem.

How to use Humor Healthily

Healthy humor is a sign of Walking in Balance. However, few of us have role models for healthy humor, and most of us are emotionally wounded in one way or another, so we cannot trust in just our Heart-of-Hearts to steer us away from using humor abusively. This leaves us like a ship without a rudder when we venture into humor's uncharted territory.

The following guidelines, though no substitute for a healthy culture and the clear voice of the Heart-of-Hearts, are offered so that they might be of help during the healing process.

Humor can be used as an icebreaker when approaching a touchy or overwhelming subject. After the opening is made, it is important to then get serious and focused, or humor could become a diversion.

Use humor to create an opening in an overly-serious discussion. A sardonic twist or frivolous quip injected into an oppressively solemn situation is sometimes "just what the doctor ordered" to break us out of a rut and open us to other perspectives.

What humors us, makes us wise. This is an old saying that has survived because of its intrinsic Wisdom. Humor can wake us up, stimulate us, and focus us on something we might otherwise miss.

Humor can diffuse collective stress. The natural tension that sometimes builds up during a focused group activity, can be diffused by humor.

Humor builds comradery. When People can laugh together, they can often share in other ways.

Humor can help regain centeredness. When we slip into imbalanced behaviors, denial, or turn to our opiating addictions, humor is able to give us some space and time to get a grip.

Humor restores perspective. When we start seeing in black-and-white, humor can give us back our view of the Rainbow.

Humor can be an Awareness-raising tool. It is used occasionally, and selectively, by Native Guides to help Seekers break through impediments to Awareness. This takes a high degree of Attunement—knowledge of the Seeker and confidence in the trust between them—in order for the humor to be effective and not detrimental. Because of the tremendous risk for inappropriately using humor in this way, it is nothing to be toyed with by someone who is not a Guide and does not have the traditional background and training to do so.

Humor can help share feelings. The language of humor sometimes conveys feelings that are otherwise too elusive or sensitive to express. Humor could also help express hard-to-grasp ideas. Humor will sometimes convey in a few words what would otherwise take lengthy description. The following joke, which someone got off of the Internet and sent to me, is an example of how humor can be used to give a feel for complex values.

Four People found themselves together on a train going across Europe—a Cuban, a Russian, an American lawyer, and a Native American. They began to talk amongst themselves, and after a bit the Cuban lit up a cigar. He took a couple puffs, then flicked it out the window.

No one thought much of it except the Native, because the way of his People is to be respectful of what The Earth Mother provides. He was also raised to honor the traditions of different Peoples, and to "Be as a Question" instead of jumping to conclusions. So he thought he'd ask the Cuban why he flung the cigar.

"Ah," said the Cuban, "back home, cigars are a dime a dozen!"

Next the Russian pulled out a bottle of vodka, took a quick swig, then

tossed the bottle out the window. Of course, the Native had to ask why, and he got pretty much the same reply as from the Cuban. So the Native sat back for a while and reflected, then got up and threw the lawyer out the window.

There's one more guideline to healthy Humor that deserves special mention. And Elder once suggested to me, "*Gidaa-baapi'idiz bishigochigeyan—***Laugh at yourself when you make a mistake.**" She said that the ability to chuckle rather than grumble would help me remember that there are no mistakes, that everything happens for a reason.

While putting her advice to practice, I came to realize how often my attitude was denying me teachings by turning them into "mistakes". Humor allowed me to step back and gain perspective, rather than slapping myself with some stern self-judgment. When I would trip on an exposed root, for example, my usual reaction would be to berate myself for being so unaware. That would entrench me all the more in my self-image of being a klutz, a slow-learner. When I started to respond with the likes of, "Hey root, you're quick! Let's see if you can pop up out of nowhere and catch me off-guard again," it changed my attitude and opened me to the challenge to grow.

In this way humor can take us to a lush vacationland of opportunity for growth, as opposed to languishing in the constricting, Rock-strewn landscape the ego often creates for us. When we joke about ourself, we keep our ego in check. When we joke about our hardships, we open ourself to their Blessings. When we joke about rules and traditions, we keep them connected with real life, and thereby fluid and changing. For example, when People ask how I'm doing with this cold I'm presently nursing, I tell them what a treat it is—that it makes me feel like I'm on vacation. Explaining the gist of that—the cold is a welcome break from the more serious back-to-back health crises I just came through—helps me maintain perspective and Thankfulness.

An important thing to remember is to use humor to laugh at ourself, and not at others. We can give ourself license to be the butt-end of our own jokes; to extended that to someone else is dishonoring, perhaps even hurtful. It can so easily be taken as criticism or demeanment. Being able to laugh at ourself is a matter of *personal* awareness—we each need to find our own sardonic twist in order for it to be effective.

"Humor in all things"

That is my motto in Life. Even in the direst of circumstances and the most tearful of happenings, there is a pearl of mirth or a satirical edge. It is there for a reason—it is a Gift to help keep us from going blind from near-sightedness, or from becoming self-righteous to the point of tyranny.

If we can't laugh, we can't be serious. Without the clear eyes and centeredness that humor helps us to maintain, we are not able to keep perspective in approaching the important matters of life.

If we can't laugh, we can't know our Truth. The Gifts of a healthy, functioning "sense of humor" are essential for Balance in the Heart-of-Hearts. They are to Truthspeaking what rich Earth and sweet Rain are to a growing Flower.

Here it is important to understand that our personal reality—the way we manifest our "seriousness," our Truth—is no more than a personal envisionment. In other words, envisionment creates reality. Humor allows for the fullness of envisionment, because (as we have already explored) humor breaks through boundaries, frees the mind, and stimulates creative juices.

When we embrace our envisionment as our reality, humor can act as our Guide and take us to the uncharted territory out beyond our boundaries. There we are free to create the person, the relationships, the life, and the world, that we want—the reality that resonates with our personal Truth. We can then come home from the uncharted territory with that envisionment, and manifest it..

How specifically does humor help with this? Imagine that my ego is creating boundaries that are preventing me from having meaningful friendships. Let's say I will not associate with People who are not of my "race", and I feel isolated because there are only a few of my race where I live. If I choose to live with that boundary, mine may be a lonely life.

Humor can take me—without my ego—to the uncharted territory beyond my racial prejudice that I can't seem to get to on my own. There, I will be free to create the vision of a friendship I might like, without the restrictions that might normally paralyze me.

Here are three ways humor could help me do this:

1. Role Reversal. I can take a racial joke and substitute myself, perhaps along with family members or friends, for the characters. Here is an example. "How many Chinamen does it take to change a lightbulb? Four—one on his hands and knees, another to stand on that person's back (they're short and don't have chairs!), then someone to hand her the lightbulb, and finally, somebody to read her the chapter in the installation manual on which way to turn the bulb." If I were to envision myself reading the manual to my sister, who was standing on my father's back, I might well realize how utterly, unrealistically absurd and demeaning I've been with my prejudice.

2. Parallel Experience. I create a parallel situation that I resonate with and then inject one of the victims of my racism into it. Let's say I believe that Extraterrestrial Beings are visiting our Mother Planet, and I would very much like to befriend them. I will envision myself meeting with them, and then replace them with Human neighbors of the "other race." Realizing that in my mind I was opening to friendship with who-knows-what-kind-of-life-form, yet I can't even open to a fellow being who is very much like me, could shake me out of my stupor.

3. Ridiculousness. Here I will envision one of my neighbors in the most outlandish, yet attractive, get-up I can imagine. The main criterion is that the costuming be very appealing to me. My goal is to sneak my neighbor over the boundary of my prejudice by casting him in an unconventional role that I already have an endearing relationship with. Let's say I am enamored with the medieval court jester who, while flamboyantly dressed, performs juggling feats at the same time he sings silly-sounding (though often poignant) ditties. By casting my neighbor in the role of the jester, who has already crossed the boundary of the norm, I have pulled my neighbor also over the boundary. By stripping him of his traditional garb, which triggers my racist stereotypes, and clothing him in something familiar and likable to me, perhaps I will be able to see the person behind the image.

If any of these three boundary-busting techniques work, I stand a good chance of making the envisionment that humor helped me create, my reality. Bigotry for friendship—a good reality swap!

A unique quality of healthy humor is that using it is like planting a seed—it nurtures growth in Awareness and thus repays the sower many fold. However, with out-of-Balance humor, caveat emptor (user beware)—it is like spreading the seed of an invasive alien Plant. Let us be very mindful as to what kind of sowing we are doing.

Whether coming from Native contrary, medieval jester or contemporary satirist, the seeds of humor are considered such Gifts that the humorist is honored in virtually all cultures. Let us also honor the humorist in us—the one who is always there to take us beyond the assumed limits of our vision.

Truth in Humor Exercise

There is no easy formula for using humor. It is a complex sense that enlists our other senses, exploits our idiosyncrasies, plays upon our feelings, and relies heavily on spontaneity. Because of that, it is usually easier to fix what is almost working humor-wise than to try to create it from scratch. The following is a troubleshooting guideline for tweaking those almost-successes. This guideline can also help to distinguish humor from escapist comedy.

Reaction	Why it may not be working	What might be done about it
None	It is not humor	Nothing; why waste time kicking a dead Horse?
Easily forgotten	Not relevant	Same as above
Attention-getting, yet no punch	Delivery too conventional or unchallenging	More “out there” approach—more defiant, absurd, probing
Passing interest only	Too impersonal, not close enough to home	Draw scenarios from real life
Defensiveness	Too personal, too “close to home”	Less intimate approach
Too predictable	Too familiar a delivery or subject matter	Contrary approach, exotic setting
Anger, feel judged or victimized	Pushing buttons or shutting off	Parallel rather than personal scenario
Feel offended, repulsed	Crossed boundary set by beliefs, familiarity, or rules we live by	Humor can have no boundaries; honor its right to exist or avoid

When all else fails, remember that the reason our sense of humor evolved is to help us get in touch with our personal Truth. That makes your Heart, rather than your mind, your best Guide to making humor work. Follow your gut feeling.

Gossip *Some like to believe that gossip is Truth's shadow; the Heart says that gossip is Truth's mutilator.*

The Woman and the Talking Feathers

This story helped me to see the slashing fangs of gossip. Originally gifted to me by my mate, the Woman of the Four Colors, the story was expanded for me in the Dreamline (the spirit-realm where the Ancestors take me to spend time with them).

South of here, on the banks of the great River that is born in the Mountains, stood a handsome Buffalorobe lodge. It was nestled in a grove of Cottonwoods and had a tiny sweetwater Stream flowing beside it. Sun Chaser and Snow on the Leaves dwelled there, along with their first babe, whose name had not yet come.

On this particular day, Sun Chaser was at the Riverside making a dugout canoe from a great Elder Cottonwood. He looked up from the Fire he was using to hollow out the log, and noticed a boat in the distance. He knew it came from the Heron Clan, whose Camp was about a half day's paddle upriver. Their dugouts had a unique design—an extended bow and stern platform on which they could stand while they were spearing and pulling in nets. Being Heron People, they ate many Fish!

Seeing canoes on the River was not uncommon, yet something troubled Sun Chaser about this one. It was coming faster than usual; as it got closer, he could see that the paddlers were pushing hard.

He waded out to hail them, to see if he could be of some help. Realizing that they were already headed in his direction, he called for Snow on the Leaves, who was up in the Clearing beside the lodge, cleaning Sunflower seeds.

The first man who stepped out of the boat held a Message Stick, which told the couple that there was a serious matter at hand. In silence, they all walked up to the lodge and sat around the outside hearth, the place of social gathering. The messenger was given the Place of Honor on the Sunset side of the hearth circle.

After food was served, as was the custom with visitors, the messenger spoke:

“Snow on the Leaves, I respectfully ask that you listen to these words: Your blood sister, Sits High, is without mate. He, Cricket Who Runs, who was also my blood brother, journeyed out on the Prairie four Moons ago to scout the whereabouts of Buffalo. We have not seen him since. Not even our best

hunters could follow his trail in the dry Grasses trampled by so many hooves. The only sign they found of him was his Pipe. We fear that he is gone on to another destiny.”

In those days it was the tradition for a man to take in his mate’s needy sisters and children, if he was capable of doing so. Sun Chaser was young and talented; he was already providing for several of the Elders and injured.

In honor of her mate, Snow on the Leaves immediately turned to Sun Chaser and said, “Beloved mate, your eyes have smiled kindly upon me and our child, and your hands are strong and giving. The Great Mother has provided well for us, and The Great Father has shined warmly upon us. I respectfully ask if you would take my sister, Sits High, as you have taken me. I would be honored if you would shelter her and bathe her in the beauty of your Song.”

In the waning of the Green Season, the two sisters and the man came together and became one lodge. Life was good for them in the Moons of Change before the coming of the Snows. The shared blood of the sisters drew them all together, and the babe grew plump in spirit on the nourishment of two mothers. Throughout the Falling Leaves Moon, they dried Fish, and in the Freezing-over Moon they Gathered wood and readied their lodge and clothing for the gifting white blanket that was soon to come.

The White Season was the time for their People to gather together—a time of Feasting and reconnection. Kin, some of whom had not seen each other since the last White Season, would visit each other’s camps and share personal stories around the warm Lodgefire.

This was also a time of reflection and guidance. In the evening, the ancient teaching legends would be retold by the Elders. They would also recount the history of the People, in order that it remain alive in the clan memory and be passed down to the coming generations. The past Turn of the Seasons would be reflected upon, and stories of Hunts and Journeys would provide entertainment. This was also a fun way for the young to gain knowledge and learn about new places.

It was during this time that Sits High grew distraught. When she was around other People, she realized that she was not always first with Sun Chaser, as she had been with Cricket Who Runs. This did not bother her when they were at their lodge on the River. Yet now, when with other People, she would feel her face grow hot when Snow on the Leaves was referred to as Sun Chaser’s mate, or when Sun Chaser would smile at Snow on the Leaves rather than her.

There were a couple of others in the clan who were also struggling with their self-worth. A bitterness caught in their throats, and they did not know how to get rid of it. So they tried to find others to pass it on to.

When no one else was around, they would go to Sits High and say things like, “Do you know what Snow on the Leaves said about you to your mother?” and “What do you think Snow on the Leaves would do if she knew all that Sun Chaser did on his Journey, before he came back to mate with her?”

Now Sits High tasted the bitterness also and wanted to get rid of it. When Snow on the Leaves was not around, Sits High would say to Sun Chaser things like, “Where is the Sunflower seed that my sister was supposed to grind?” and “I know all the men who my sister spent the night with while you were gone on your Journey.”

In similar manner, Sits High spread up and down the River rumors and tidbits of Sun Chaser and Snow on the Leaves’ private life.

As the White Season lingered on, Snow on the Leaves became despondent. Her mate, for some reason unknown to her, was not as warm and trusting as usual. She noticed more and more that others would look at her strangely and not talk as kindly with her as they once did.

One day, when the Waters were high from the melting of the Snows, Sun Chaser and the sisters decided to take some extra Fish to their kin downriver. It was a warm, bright afternoon—the buds of the Cottonwoods were exploding, and the Fish were moving into the shallows to spawn. Sits High, not being needed to paddle, chose to stay behind and enjoy the day. She offered to watch the child.

She and the child, who was now out of his cradleboard and learning to walk, were down by the River watching the returning Geese. Before she knew it, the babe slipped on a wet Rock, tumbled into the Water, and was being swished down the River!

Sits High hesitated for an instant—a shameful thought crossed her mind. She came to her senses and rushed into the Water to grab the babe, but her delay had been an instant too long—he was gone!

She stood there in the shallows, as stone-still as an old Cottonwood stump. The Water chilled her to the bone, yet she could do nothing but stare blankly out over the River. The only sign of life in her was the tears finding their way down her face.

When dark descended, she dragged herself up the bank and started a small Fire. After burning her clothing and hair, she rubbed their ashes into

her skin. Then she walked through the night to reach the lodge of revered Elder, Fragrant Turtle, who lived with a sister clan down the River.

“My intolerance and ungratefulness have caused a great travesty,” she said upon greeting the Elder. “I was too full of myself to realize that I am my Circle, and that my Circle is me.”

In an emotion-drained, monotone voice, she went on to describe all that had happened since her mate, Cricket Who Runs, disappeared.

When she finished, they both sat for a long time in the quiet of reflection. Then Fragrant Turtle looked at Sits High as though he was looking through her. It somehow energized her, and she found the presence to listen to these words:

“Tomorrow, go ask the River for a Duck. Pluck all the feathers and put them into a basket. Then take it to the top of the high Bluff out on the Prairie and empty it to the Wind. Let the Wind scatter the feathers over the Prairie, then go gather each one. Come back to me only after you have found every last one.”

A full Moon passed, and then another. Finally, Sits High appeared back at the lodge of Fragrant Turtle. Her cheeks were sunken and her eyes were glazed over like those of a dead Fish. In her basket were some feathers, but not nearly all of them.

“Grandfather,” she said, “I have searched without stop, even after my feet wore bare of skin and left tracks of blood. I could not find all the feathers, but I did find my wretched self. The Duck I snared was me, caught in a snare of envy. The Feathers of my gossip that I scattered in all Four Directions with the Wind of my intolerance have traveled further than I could ever see or imagine.

“Each feather that I could find, has spoken to me, and told me what it has done. Most of them landed deep in the recesses of People’s souls, where I could not retrieve them. There I found them to be causing continual misery, which spread with every stinging word on the People’s bitter breath. Yet few of them stayed where they first rested; they each got blown on the next foul Breeze into another soul to infect, and then another..

“Even if all the misery I caused could be retrieved, I could not have brought it back. The burden would have been heavier than ten women could bear.

“I stand here, plucked naked and gaunt. All that clothes me is my shame. Why could I not have spoken my Truth, and have it heal me, rather than spread vile gossip and have it poison so many?”

“*Gego dazhimaaken awiya* (Don’t say anything about anyone else),” I heard an Ojibwa Elder once say. She went on to explain that a person of Honor stands before the person of whom he speaks, rather than talking about that person behind her back. When she is not around, he only says something about her that he would say also in her presence.

The person of Honor also goes to the person directly for information, rather than relying upon gossip or the opinions of others. In the words of another Elder, “Digging for facts is better than jumping to conclusions.”

Why these uncharacteristically direct teachings from an Elder, when an Elder’s normal way is by subtle guidance? The legend you have just read shows why. Because of such stories, the resounding and insidious effects of Gossip are common knowledge to most Natives.

Here are the four primary reasons, as illustrated in the legend, as to why many Elders focus first on gossip when guiding People back to Truthspeaking:

1. Gossip is debilitating not only to the gossiper and to the one being gossiped about, but also to their circle.
2. Gossip breeds mistrust. In the Old Way, if I make every effort to stand in front of someone while speaking about him, and his presence is just not possible, I must be impeccable in both my speech and my motives for speaking about him, or I will be haunted by the inevitable mistrust I create.
3. No matter how gossip is justified, it is seldom an honorable echo of another’s Truth. It is essentially filtered, subjective, second and third-person commentary—a far cry from Truthspeaking.
4. Gossip is usually a disguise for hurt, jealousy, anger, or some other unexpressed feeling that the gossiper is externalizing rather than owning and healing through. It is a shirking of responsibility for our own feelings, and our own healing. It is the blame-shame game, only played underhanded; it is judgmentalism without courage.

There is more to gossip’s poison:

When we gossip, our subjectivity takes root in someone else. We each have personal views and feelings regarding others, which are naturally subjective. Expressing them, empowers them; it gives them ungrounded and

out-of-proportion legitimacy and sway. This is an infringement of Respect for the right of others to their own feelings.

We disrupt the Balance within our Heart-of-Hearts. This happens each and every time we gossip or involve ourself in the gossip of others. Our Heart-center thrives only on its own Truth—the guiding voice that comes from the collective input of mind, feeling, senses, intuition, and ancient memories. We languish when we are asked to adopt the Truth of another. The same is true when we are asked to accept gossip. Our Heart-of-Hearts knows it is not anybody's Truth. As with lies, it's not the gossip that tells the Truth, but what the gossiper is revealing about himself in the language that goes beyond his words.

Each time we draw someone else into our gossip, we give away some of the vital energy that is intended to empower our Truth. This happens because personal Truth has its own energy, and gossip does not. We need to give it some of our energy in order for our gossip to take root.

The person who is the focus of the gossip is dishonored by being deprived of representation. She is not being given the opportunity to speak her own Truth. At the same time, the gossiper dishonors himself by presuming he can involve himself in the life of another without her consent and by presuming he knows her Truth. Giving is Receiving—the gossiper bears a heavy burden.

Gossip engenders more gossip. Once it begins, it legitimizes itself and encourages more of the same. This is similar to what happens with other imbalanced behaviors that find fertile ground in a weak circle. Before long, we find ourself surreptitiously involved in the affairs of more and more People, gathering more and more information of dubious source and legitimacy.

Gossip is self-destructive. This is one of my greater concerns about it. There are no confidants in gossip circles—those who talk with you about others are just as willing to talk with others about you. “Behind their back” becomes “behind your back” as soon as you turn your back to them. Before you know it, lies are being hatched to cover backsides, and suspicion and mistrust have crept into your relationships. (This is a favorite trust-destroying tactic in conflicts of all kinds, from war to corporate battles to soured personal relationships.)

Why do we do it?

If gossip is so destructive and so hurtful, why would anyone engage in it? One reason that I see over and over again with so many of us is that gossip is nourishment. For someone who doesn't have an emotional outlet or emotionally fulfilling relationships, gossip can provide a secret, intimate connection with somebody. Gossip creates a sense of relationship because gossipers are sharing something that others don't know about. This gives the illusion of intimate involvement in someone else's life. These perks are perhaps why it is mostly unhappy and unfulfilled People who are drawn to gossip.

As hurtful and out-of-Balance as I have found gossip to be, I still honor it as a teacher. Recognizing the contrary thought and speech patterns that entice me to gossip, helps me to see how much I yet have to learn about Sacred Speech. The more I work through those patterns, the more I realize what gossip could teach me.

When we listen to the real voice of our gossip, we can usually hear that the things that we are projecting onto another are usually not about them, but about us. Oftentimes the things that preoccupy us most about others are the things that we need to look at within ourself.

When we externalize in this way, we cheat ourself. We are missing the opportunity to know and experience ourself, and we are blocking ourself from really knowing and experiencing the person we are talking about.

There is a saying that those with small minds talk about People, those with average minds talk about things, and those with healthy minds talk about Awareness. This may be a simplification, and yet it contains a kernel of the Truth in Truthspeaking.

Truth in Gossip Exercise

How can I tell if I am gossiping or in the presence of gossip? First of all, I do not distinguish between gossip and rumor—the line between them is so fine that I have trouble seeing it. Secondly, I recognize that when I am not centered, the line between gossip-rumor and Truth can also be muddy. At such times, I use the following test to find the line. If something fails any point of this test, it is probably gossip.

It is Truthspeaking if:	It is gossip if:
The person being talked about is present	The person is absent
It has already been discussed with the person	It has not been discussed
The discussion is necessary	The discussion is unnecessary
It is a statement of fact	It is a value judgment or hearsay
It is helpful	It is hurtful or derogatory

A Cure for Gossip

Because we turn to gossip primarily due to our emotional woundedness or unfulfilledness, the most potent cure for gossip may be to heal emotionally. It is the only thing that worked for me. There are techniques, including sheer willpower, which can stop us from gossiping. However they do not address the reason we turned to gossip in the first place. They leave us wounded and unfulfilled, which often causes us to turn to yet another out-of-Balance way to meet our needs for intimate sharing with another person.

One big fringe benefit of addressing the underlying cause of our gossiping is that at the same time it can help many of the other emotionally-related imbalances in our life, and thus enrich our life in general.

Small Talk —*Space-filling words that convey no Truth, and don't even rate as gossip.*

The more we talk the less we are heard. The less we are heard, the more we are driven to talk. It is a Catch 22 situation which is endemic in our culture. Yet it doesn't stop there. When we keep talking, People tend to distance themselves from us, either physically or emotionally. The more we talk, the lonelier we become.

This happens because the more words we use, the less meaningful they become. First our audience feels dishonored because they are having to sit through our verbal drivel. Then they drift off because we cloud our Truth to the point where barely a ray of its light is able to shine through. The aftershock of our small talk is that, even if our audience has not deserted us, we are alone.

To illustrate how this happens, imagine a word as a spoonful of delicious food. If I take it all at once, I have a mouthful to savor. If I divide it into two bites, they will probably both be quite satisfying. However, the further I subdivide the spoonful, the less flavorful and fulfilling each bite will be.

When do we resort to small talk?

- When we are uncomfortable with silence
- To fill in the awkward spaces between relevant talk
- When we feel uneasy or anxious
- To cover up or deny our feelings
- As a form of entertainment
- Elaborating or interpreting our Truth can degrade to small talk
- When we alter our Truth to fit our audience

Why do we Small Talk?

As with healing in general, the better we know our imbalance, the more fully we can be involved in our return to wellness. This applies especially well to small talk because it is such a clear and obvious sign of a deeper imbalance. Like swearing, lies, unhealthy humor and gossip, small talk is no more than a symptom of a wounded ego.

The ego's favorite hangout is the left brain, which is our rational center (The right brain is our intuitive-feeling center.) The left brain's language is based on symbols; words are symbols.

The more wounded the ego, the more she seems to savor words. Sometimes it is in desperation—words are the life raft she latches onto in an

effort to stay afloat. At other times she floats words out from her island of loneliness like notes in a bottle looking for love. When she has given up on that, she might still send out words, hoping that their echo will provide some company.

Our ego does her best to serve. Out of love for us, she tries to convey for us that which words are woefully inadequate to express. She does not know that feelings and impulses have nothing to do with words. She has no understanding of full communication. Through no fault of hers, she is just not equipped to give voice to the Song of our Heart.

Unlike gossip, small talk is not directly and blatantly hurtful (unless you are pained by boredom!). It is more like a chronic case of verbal diarrhea—draining, yet not life-threatening. What small talk does directly and blatantly is to dishonor the Now. When we resort to small talk, we are not speaking the Truth of the Now. We are merely filling the silence with fluff and drivel. We are merely trashing the Moment.

Small talk often begins as Truthspeaking. The more we wander from sharing the essence of our Truth, the closer we come to small talking. Because small talk is Truthspeaking's polar extreme, it paves a wide road for the ego and prejudices to come rolling in.

When small talk is not the result of degraded Truthspeaking, the chances are slim that there will be Truthspeaking. When we engage in small talk, our ego becomes the intermediary between our inner self—our Heart-center—and the outside world. This erodes the natural and direct path of our Truth from Heart-of-Hearts to others.

Small talk can not be Truthspeaking because it simply is not the voice of the Heart-of-Hearts. Whether he does so consciously or not, the Truthspeaker connects with his Heart-of-Hearts before speaking. Then he chooses his words carefully, so that they best express his Truth. Any verbiage beyond that is not only unnecessary—it detracts from his personal Truth. It can also create a countercurrent to clarity that would make it seem as though it were better if he had not spoken at all.

How to identify Small Talk

Small Talk is most easily stopped before a word is spoken. Here is a simple test to screen what you are about to say. If you answer “No” to any of the questions, there is a chance that you are going to be engaging in small talk. Before speaking, ask yourself

- Have I thought about what I’m going to say?
- Is it necessary or relevant?
- Will I be speaking from my Heart-of-Hearts?
- Will I be speaking clearly and to-the-point?
- Does my audience have an interest in it?
- Have I chosen this topic for any other reason than to speak my Truth?

No matter how diligent we might be in recognizing our small talk, there will undoubtedly be times when it sneaks by anyway. Fortunately, there are a few easy-to-recognize clues. You may be small talking if you find yourself

- losing your train of thought
- forgetting what you just said
- losing the feeling for what you are sharing.

If you miss those clues, all is not lost, because your audience probably didn’t. They make a great mirror! There is a good chance that your audience is bored and that you are small talking when you notice your audience

- staring blankly or eyes wandering
- talking amongst themselves, reading
- nervously shuffling, looking at their watches.

These clues will likely be obvious to you—so obvious, in fact, that you may begin feeling uneasy and self-conscious before you realize the cause.

What to do when I catch myself

As helpful as these techniques for identifying small talk can be, they are not cures. They can help in keeping us from spewing verbal diarrhea over others, yet holding it inside is not healthy either. Along with getting a grip on the small talk habit, we need to continue learning and practicing Truthspeaking, so that we are no longer compelled to small talk.

What to do when I catch myself small talking.	How it helps to do this.
Breathe. Do it consciously, listening to your lungs filling. Exhale slowly, feeling the flow of the warm, moist Air.	Gives time to center and reconnect with the Heart-of-Hearts
Remind self that words are the last step in communication, rather than the first	Encourages the other voices of the Heart-of-Hearts to come forth
Stay as close to the raw Truth as possible	Gives little opening or encouragement for small talk
Choose rich, descriptive words, and only as few as needed	Keeps word-bites appetizing, listener attentive and hungering for more

In the Natural Realm everything exists for a reason. One reason for small talk is to help us know our loneliness. If we did not engage in small talk, perhaps our feelings of isolation would remain buried. When we can get in touch with the source of our small talking, it can transform itself into a beautiful healing Gift.

The choice is ours as to whether we accept these surface barriers to Truthspeaking, such as small talk, gossip and lies, as Gifts, or whether we take them as curses. With new awareness, let us embrace them every time we hear or practice them. Perhaps they once were curses; now they can be openings for the healing that will bring us back to our natural state of Truthspeaking.

Chapter Six A Guide for Beginning

In order to become Truthspeakers, we must also become Truthlisteners. Listening is a gentle art, which acknowledges all Truths, all answers.

What I've Learned *“Let us share our Truths,” rather than, “I speak, you listen.”*

Occasionally someone will grow confused over the way I express myself as a Truthspeaker. They are more used to “Get to the point, say what you mean” communication. It seems to them that I am not speaking definitively—that I am dancing around the issue or soft-soaping it rather than spitting it out. Yesterday, for example, rather than asking someone directly to clean up the workshop, I asked how the project she was working on, was going. Then I shared my sensitivity over visitor’s first impressions and my concern for keeping shared space open. She told me that she resonated with my feelings, and that there wasn’t enough shelf space for her large project. We ended up talking about how we could create more space.

People’s reactions to my style are quite understandable. We’re products of a culture in which the voices of the most dominant and assertive are usually the ones that are heard. Communication is two-dimensional—either you speak or you are spoken to. You often have to fight for your right to speak, or you will not have the opportunity.

Most members of the culture are part of the non-differentiated masses. Those who control the masses would like it to remain that way. It gives them a captive audience of passive receptors. Listening skills get the masses nowhere—they have already been so conditioned to sit back and be spoon-fed. If they want to distinguish themselves, they must learn to speak so that they can be heard. In other words, they need to become assertive like those who manipulate them.

Truthspeaking is based upon a different way of being—the Circle Way. Everything is related; everything is part of the same continual flow. There are no boundaries—Giving is Receiving and Receiving this Giving. This is the way it has always been. And this is the way it is now; the Civilized World has only forgotten it.

In the Circle Way, listening is speaking and speaking is listening. There is no need to create space for myself, no need to drive my point home. There is already a place for me, just because I am. And there are inquisitive ears, because I am valued—valued because of me, not because of what I might have to say.

When I speak (or listen) in this gentle and circular way, I can understand how those raised in the dominant culture could react with confusion, or even irritation and suspicion. There is a world of difference between “I speak, you listen” and “Let us share our Truths.”

I learned how to speak in this honoring way from the Wolves and Doves that I lived with as a youth, and later from my Native Elders. They all talked with me in a way that forced me to listen.

Notice I said that they talked *with* me rather than *to* me. A Dove, for example, speaks in a personalized way that attracts the listener to her voice. Even though only she is speaking, the listener feels included, almost as though they were dialoging. This is because her multi-dimensional language can be responsive to the listener at the same time that it is expressive. Being given that kind of Respect made me want to listen, and her soft speaking obliged me to listen attentively. Her honoring tone of voice, which felt like an inviting warm Wind, then drew me in completely.

This was Doves’ and Wolves’ general way of speaking, no matter how serious the subject, and no matter how important it was that I listen. The power of their words came from the spirit of what they were speaking, rather than from intensity or slickness of delivery. This put the onus on me to listen, rather than on them to make sure I was listening.

I reacted at first, just like People now do to me. Once I got accustomed to Truthspeaking, I came to realize how well it resonated with the energy of life. Truthspeaking felt as though it was a natural part of me—as though it was the way I was designed and intended to communicate.

An easy way to become a Truthspeaker

So you do not have a pack of Wolves hanging out in your backyard to help you with Truthspeaking? No problem; children will do just as well, and I suspect that they are far more common than Wolves in your neighborhood! As I have already mentioned, children are natural Truthspeakers.

They are also naturals at teaching by example. Try spending about half a day every week with a child six years of age or under (Older children are more likely to be acculturated, and therefore the less likely to be Truthspeakers). My experience is that, although observing a child could be helpful, interacting with a child can work miracles.

The more I practiced Truthspeaking, the more I realized that it, by its nature alone, was creating empowering openings for others to speak their Truths. As others around me began Truthspeaking, I watched those openings widen. While helping myself, I was helping others—what an uplifting feeling! To this day a wave of joy comes over me whenever I witness Truthspeaking perform its miracle.

Here are a couple of the ways Truthspeaking creates those openings:

1. The respectful never-say-never nature of Truthspeaking does not give others the impression that I think I am the right one, that I have *the* answer.

There is a Native teaching from Africa, which says that if Lion tells the story of the hunt, it will be different from Zebra's story. Both Lion and Zebra are involved in the same hunt, yet because one is the hunter and the other is the hunted, each of their experiences is radically different! Zebra's story would be about her fear for her life, and her panicked escape. Lion would tell about her love-inspired quest to feed her cubs. Yet if we heard only Zebra's story, we might think that Lion was a rabid terrorist.

That is why, whenever personal Truth is spoken, it is not stated definitively. Instead terms like "maybe", "perhaps", or "if you wish" are either stated or implied by tone of voice and body language. This creates an opening for others to be inquisitive and reflect upon what I share. Because they are not being pummeled or seduced by my Truth, they can feel safe enough to try it on and see how it fits. In this way they'll get to know me better. At the same time, I am creating space, support and encouragement for them to become more aware of their own Truth.

The resulting energy honors the sanctity of each person's Truth, and allows for the possibility of finding natural residence with the Truths of others.

2. Truthspeaking helps People with a variety of communication styles to understand me.

Because Truthspeaking is seated in the Heart-of-Hearts, it is less laden with the ego-baggage that can sometimes make surface communication hard to swallow. It also helps that, when Truthspeaking, I am naturally more sensitive to my audience, so I tend to gear my sharing to them. For example, if I were to give a person directions based upon mileage and road signs, she would probably find them useful only if she were rationally oriented. Someone who was spacially oriented would do better if I gave directions based upon audio-visual cues, such as describing a Park, a big Tree, or a noisy factory to watch for along the route.

At the same time, Truthspeaking helps those in my audience to listen and speak in ways different than their own.

Listening—the Other Half *How to listen without debate, reaction, or judgment.*

There is no Truthspeaking without Truthlistening. A voice needs and open and accepting ear to receive it. Learning how to listen is one of the best ways to learn Truthspeaking, and a good way to encourage others to Truthspeak. This is because—even though Truthlistening is equally as important as Truthspeaking—it is so much simpler and easier to learn. The length of this section on Listening will attest to that, yet don't allow its brevity to influence the amount of attention you give to it. Truthspeaking and Truthlistening are like your right and left legs; both are equally important, and without either one you would be severely handicapped.

Respecting another's Truth means listening without debate, reaction or judgment. This is core to accepting another's Truth, and here are some simple guidelines on how to do it.

Listening Skills

- Listen *deeply*, with your whole being, to what is being said beyond words by eyes, posture, skin tone, body movements, and tone of voice. Listen also with your intuitive ears.
- Listen in silence, because only in silence can another voice be fully heard.
- Listen with acceptance. Judgment—the ego's reaction to Truth—distorts another's Truth because it causes selective memory. Remember that acceptance does not necessarily mean agreement.
- When unclear, ask rather than second guess. Guesses more often reflect your Truth than the speaker's.
- Notice the speaker's judgments and assumptions, so that you might mirror them back to her.
- Help the speaker to stay on one subject at a time. This is for her clarity as well as yours.
- As needed, encourage the speaker to slow down or pause between words and sentences, to give you space for comprehension and reflection (This also shows the speaker that you are listening)
- If it is not working, take a break

Chapter Seven

The Circle Way—The Talking Circle

Once we, as individuals, have embraced Truthspeaking, we need a way to practice it amongst ourselves.

We are social beings—we find it extremely difficult to Walk in Balance when we are not with our kind. Because of that, we return to Truthspeaking more easily by example than by intent.

When we live in isolation, we drift like a vagrant feather on the whims of the Wind. When we join with other feathers, we become a Bird who can take the Gift of the Wind and soar. Life's Blessings come from gifting our Beauty and from the gifted Beauty of those of our tribal circle.

Our Truth can shine forth to the degree that our circle provides light for it. The security and caring of our circle gives us the support and protection to comfortably free our voice. In the context of the circle, it is not whose Truth is spoken, but the speaking of Truth itself, that is cherished and defended.

The Talking Circle *Whether Wolf or Human, ancient or modern, couple or clan, the Talking Circle works.*

Circle Attunement is central to the healthy functioning of Old Way groups, and is a good share of the reason that such groups have no need for government, judiciary, or law enforcement. What those agencies handle for civilized societies is taken care of in a form of Truthspeaking common to Native Peoples, called the Talking Circle.

When imbalance arises and there is a need to discuss issues or make decisions, a Talking Circle is often called. At other times a Talking Circle may be held when People feel no more than a general desire to share personal Truths. It is a respectful way of sharing that allows every individual's Truth to be spoken. And heard. At the same time it helps maintain strong relationships, no matter what the issue or outcome.

This core reason for the traditional Talking Circle—to bring the clan circle back to Oneness—is just as relevant today as it was in the time of our Ancestors. As People, we have not changed genetically or behaviorally from our Native Ancestors. We have the same wants and needs, the same feelings and aspirations. We still live in circles, even though they may not be clan-centered.

Our surrogate clan is our mate, family and friends. We experience imbalance in these relationships, just as our Ancestors did in theirs. And we feel the same urge as did they to return our relationships to Oneness.

The Talking Circle works with groups of virtually any size, relationship or purpose. I've used the Talking Circle with couples, parent-child relationships, families of various sizes, as well as with religious, political, and job-related groups. Whether it be a circle of two or twenty, whether it be a couple or a committee, the format for conducting a Talking Circle is the same.

Many social Animals hold Talking Circles for the same reasons that we do. The Wolves that I once lived with, would hold Talking Circles before the hunt, or when there was agitation in the pack.

Wolves conduct the Truthspeaking portion of their Talking Circle a bit differently than we Humans do—we take turns talking, while Wolves talk all at once. Their rapport and their ability to communicate is such that they can listen and speak at the same time.

Like us, they have Opening and Closing Rituals. I would sometimes join with them in the Opening Ritual, in which we would rub our bodies together and share the breath of life by touching muzzles. The Closing Ritual was usually a group howl, (except before the hunt, when silence was often maintained).

The feeling of Communion that I experienced when joining in their Talking Circles is the same that I feel in Human Talking Circles. There is the same exhilarating feeling of shared spirit and heightened sense of presence.

I was delighted that I could have such a Humanlike experience with an Animal! I found with my Wolf kin what I couldn't with my Human kin. Most Humans I knew were scarred and disconnected; the Wolves I knew were whole and present.

I knew that everything is relationship, no matter with whom or what. Everything and everyone strives for Balance in relationship. Our need to be in Balance transcends—and of necessity, must transcend—any taboos or boundaries we civilized Humans have invented and imposed, including species boundaries. As soon as we draw lines, we create imbalance; as much as we remove these lines, we move closer to Balance.

A Talking Circle usually opens and closes with a ritual that joins everybody as one in spirit. The overall focus of the Talking Circle then becomes the uniting of the Opening and Closing Rituals. When the imbalance within the clan is healed, the sharing energies of these Opening and Closing are no longer separated, and the two rituals merge as one. The ritual becomes the clan circle, and the clan again dwells in Balance.

Because the entire reason for a Talking Circle is the return to Oneness, the verbal sharing is kept as short and to the point as possible. That objective is just as important as the topic of sharing. The more words between People, the more the distance between People, and between the Opening and Closing Rituals.

The Talking Stick *It keeps focus on the Truth rather than the speaker.*

The center of the Talking Circle is the Talking Stick, which is held by the person who is speaking. It may be a symbolically ornamented staff, a special feather, or a plain stick picked up just for the occasion. It is considered a sacred symbol of the voice of the Circle.

The focus of the Circle is on the Stick, not on the speaker. This helps keep the attention on what is being spoken, rather than on the speaker. The speaker then feels less self-conscious and less affected by group pressure. It encourages the speaker to express himself more from circle consciousness, rather than from personal consciousness.

In honor of the Talking Stick, the one who holds it is listened to without interruption or comment. The Circle practices what I call *affirmative listening*—focused attention along with occasional murmurs and nods of support and encouragement. These affirmations are not to be construed as agreement; rather they are the expression of the listeners' satisfaction that the speaker is expressing his Truth.

Most of us are accustomed to *editorial listening*, in which we express our agreement or disagreement with the speaker by our degree of attentiveness, and by body language and sometimes verbal utterances. This expressing of one's opinions would be considered ego-reactive in a Native Circle, and would be construed as being disrespectful of the Talking Stick and the speaker's Truth.

A Stick with Power

A Native clan's Talking Stick may come through an individual's visionary experience or as a gift from another clan. The Talking Stick could be symbolically carved and adorned. Often it is passed down from generation to generation, and thus carries a tradition with it.

The symbolism and heritage of the Talking Stick help to keep the focus of the Circle on the Talking Stick and what it represents. When such a powerful image of Balance and Wisdom stands boldly before all in the Circle, it can become difficult to be petty, self-centered and judgmental.

When the speaker is concluded, she normally passes the Talking Stick on to the person to her left (in a sunwise direction). This continues until the Talking Stick has gone full Circle. In this way, each and every individual lends his voice to help create the voice of the Circle.

Before passing the Talking Stick, the speaker might say something like "I have finished," and the others will acknowledge her by responding with something like "We have heard you." (In our Circle, the speaker concludes with "Aho" and we respond with "Aho.")

Because everyone gets to speak on an issue, and speak only once, no one can dominate by talking over another. Nor can anyone push her view with counter-arguments or follow-up solicitations. It behooves everyone to speak from a place of greater awareness rather than ego, because those who try to control or push personal agendas find that it usually backfires.

Opening and Closing Rituals *A group needs a ritual reminder that it is a circle.*

Traditional Opening Rituals include Smudging (a cleansing immersion in aromatic herbal smoke), Chanting, and with some American Natives, a Pipe Ceremony. As Pipe is passed for all to share in the breath of the Pipe, the breath of the Pipe becomes The breath of the Circle. The rising of a single plume of smoke signifies the intent of the Circle to be of one voice.

The fabled Pipe of Peace is actually the Pipe of Truth. Through the Ritual of the Pipe, the Native knows that only Truth will be spoken. A civilized observer sees the end result—peace; a Native who sits in the Circle, experiences the process—Truth. To a civilized person, results are what matters; to an Old Way person, the process—the Now—is what matters. She knows that results will be what they will.

The Native knows something else that perhaps the civilized person does

not: *Truth is peace.*

Chanting and Smudging serve to join the Circle in the same way as does the Pipe. Contemporary Talking Circles often begin with a song or meditation, which can have an effect similar to more traditional Opening Rituals.

In my Circle, we begin with a Joining of the Hands. Each of us extends our left hand, palm-down, and our right hand, palm-up. (The left hand, being closest to the Heart, is for Giving, and the right hand is for Receiving.) Then we Join Hands, we give our presence and energy to the Circle with our left hand and receive the Circle's energy through our right hand. This creates a sunwise flow—a Oneness—that helps bring us all to a place of shared awareness.

Wolf's Touching of Bodies and Sharing of Breath is the same as our Joining of Hands and Pipe Ritual. In both, there is the core ritual of transcending our ego-selves and coming together in spirit.

The Closing Ritual is usually not as involved as the Opening Ritual, although the two might otherwise be similar. My Circle uses the Joining of Hands also for our Closing Ritual. Some groups, especially those not living together, will have a Feast as part of their Opening or Closing.

Guidelines for conducting a Talking Circle

- Being able to attend a Talking Circle is considered a great Honor, and willful nonattendance is taken as a great Disrespect.
- Anyone can call a Talking Circle.
- A Talking Circle can be called for a single issue, or for a number of issues.
- When there are multiple issues, they are discussed one at a time, in the order in which they are offered at the beginning of the Talking Circle. If the issues are many, it may be helpful for a scribe to record them and present them in the order recorded.
- Begin by holding an Opening Ritual to form the Circle.
- The person who calls the Talking Circle is the first to speak.
- The one who suggests a topic, begins the sharing of it.
- After the Talking Stick makes one round, the person who was first to speak asks if everyone has spoken his or her Truth. If not, the Talking Stick goes around another time.
- Returning to Oneness is the goal. That may mean arriving at consensus, or it may mean coming to the awareness that consensus is not necessary or desirable.
- The best way to serve the Circle when speaking is to keep the goal of Oneness continually in mind. That is best done by choosing words carefully and keeping orations as short and to the point as possible. The voice of the Heart can get lost when it has to be heard through scatteredness, long-windedness, or endless rationalizations.
- Conclude with a Closing Ritual, to Give Thanks and honor the single voice of the Circle.

Troubleshooting Talking Circles

What happens	What can be done
Willful nonparticipation	Imagine not showing up for a romantic date—consequences for a Talking Circle are just as severe. Absentee must abide by whatever decisions made.
Long-windedness	Begin Talking Circle with reminder to speak consciously, or any speaker can remind during Circle.
Externalizing, judging, blaming	Accept; don't react. The Circle has its way of isolating such behaviors and exposing them for what they are.
Wandering off topic	Scribe interjects to draw focus back to topic-at-hand. With consensus, spinoff topic may be added to list.
Topics outstrip allotted time	Decide by consensus to adjourn, and when to readjourn.
Unresolved feelings	Reserve second half of Talking Circles for non-topic sharing—personal feelings, healing issues, and the like.

The Talking Circle has been adapted to a rainbow of formats—prisons, encounter groups, healing circles, corporations, groups of friends, couples, families, and political, racial, and religious groups in conflict. Let us not allow any preconception about the Talking Circle limit the range of its gifting. After all, it is just a structure to support our natural yearnings to speak and listen with Honor and Respect.

In Closing The Breath of Truth

*To honor the Air we breathe is to honor Truth,
because Breath and Truth are One.*

As a young boy, I remember sitting at the dinner table and feeling uneasy over the silence that sometimes overshadowed our family meals. I felt compelled to fill the void with conversation. It didn't matter about what—I just wanted to hear voices so that I could feel comfortable.

Once, when I was stumbling around for something to say, my father looked across the table at me and said, “If you don't have anything to say, don't say anything.”

I'm sure a blush of self-consciousness came over me, and yet what I most remember is how his words resonated with me. As young as I was, I understood! Sure, I was uncomfortable with the silence, but I was more uncomfortable with my assumed responsibility to fill the silence.

I felt relieved! I recall how I hardly noticed what I was eating when we were all talking, and how much I enjoyed the appearance and smells and tastes of the food when there was silence. Sharing the experience in the company of my family made it all the richer.

My father was a man of few words. What now impresses me most about his words is that I still remember them. That is because he chose them well. When he talked, I was attentive, because I knew he had something to say. Even though I sometimes reacted strongly, I respected his words, because I knew he was speaking his Truth.

As I grew into adulthood, the color of my father's words changed along with my ability to see color. He gave me the peek at the rainbow that I was ready for, then left it up to me to seek its fuller vividness in my own time and way. His words: “If you don't have anything to say...” became “Every breath is Sacred; every breath we are given, is for a purpose. Rather than wasting it to fill up space, perhaps we can first listen to its voice, and then honor its purpose.”

I found that many cultures and traditions honor the sacredness of the breath. Each tradition expresses it differently, including my father's, and yet they are all speaking the same Truth.

Breath is nourishment—I learned to inhale consciously. Breath carries

my Truth—I learned to exhale consciously. If every breath was for a reason, then every word it carried was for a reason. I began to speak more consciously, holding every word as sacred. Idle chitchat began to feel like a waste of sacred breath. Using it to spread gossip or manipulate, became distasteful, almost as though I were pouring vinegar in a trusting baby’s mouth.

The Air we breathe is the breath of The Great Mother—the breath of life. It is our vital energy; it empowers us and all the Relations—all who sit and crawl and swim and run and fly upon Her bosom. Her breath speaks Her Truth, in order that we may find guidance in it. In this way, breath and Truth are One.

The Hawai’ian Natives call the Mother-breath “Ha”. When they greet someone with Aloha, they share the breath, and they each share their Truth. In the same way, let us share in the Song of Life with every breath, and let us gift our Truth with every word that we send on the breath.

Elders

I consider some books to be my Elders. Were it not for the diligence of a few dedicated People who asked the Old Ones to leave their Wisdomtracks behind on paper, much of our Indigenous Way would be lost to us. This is the Now; it doesn't matter so much to me that back then some of the tracking was done to help lure the Native to the plow and the pulpit. For example, my favorite Native language dictionary was written by a cleric sent to capture the language and bring it back so that it could be learned by aspiring missionaries. They were to be equipped with religious hymns and texts, translated into the language.

That is history, which is perhaps often better learned from rather than relived.

There are also contemporary books that the voices of the Old Ones echo through. I Honor the authors of these books as well.

If you thirst for more voices on Sacred Speech, I recommend that you give the following books a try:

Anger by Thich Nhat Hanh

The Evasion English Dictionary by Maggie Balistreri

Gossip: Ten Pathways to Eliminate It from Your Life and Transform Your Soul by Laurie Palatnik with Bob Berg

The Healing Power of Humor by Allen Klein

How to get from where you are to where you want to be by Cheri Huber

The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle

Radical Honesty: How to Transform your Life by Telling the Truth by Brad Blanton

Start where You Are by Pema Chodron

Working with Anger by Thubten Chodron

For more on personal Truth through Native eyes, I suggest looking at the *Belief and Debwewin* and *'Chi Debwewin* sections in the Spiritual Attunement chapter of my book, *Journey to the Ancestral Self*.

Glossary of Terms

Balance The state of being Native—of living in harmony with all of self and all of life.

(Out of) Balance The state of internal and environmental disharmony caused by an ego-based existence.

Circle Way The manner in which all things are related and affect each other, as opposed to the **Linear Way** where things are separate from each other and $A=B=C$.

Civilized The lifestyle, and it's People, resulting from being out of Balance. Characterized by regimentation, hierarchical structure, materialism, and extreme manipulation of natural processes.

Contrary Thought The ego-mind based voice that often seems to run in opposition to the Heartvoice. Sometimes a potent teacher.

Green Season The warm half of a Native's two-season year.

Heart-of-Hearts A person's center of Balance, the seat of Wisdom and source of actions which are in attunement with the Hoop of Life.

Heartvoice The voice of the Heart-of-Hearts, which is spoken and heard by the entire being—body, mind, feeling, and intuition.

Hoop of Relations (also Hoop of Life, Lifecircle and variations) Related terms for the community of the Plant, Animal, Mineral and Sky beings who live together in Balance.

Native A Human or non-Human living as originally intended—a simple, often-nomadic life in rhythm with the seasons and in grateful acceptance of what The Great Mother and Father provide. Also refers to the lifestyle of a Native.

Personal Truth All expressions of the Heart-of Hearts, which stand beyond judgment because they are valid on their own merit.

Tribal Circle Those we live and associate with on a regular basis—family, extended family and trusted friends.

Truthspeaking The unfiltered, uncensored expression of purely personal reality and awareness.

Voice of the Ancestors The guidance of our forebears, which can be heard through dreams, intuition, and sometimes during ritual experiences. Also called **Ancestral Memories**.

White Season The cold snowy half of a Northern Native's two-season year.

SACRED SPEECH

THE WAY OF TRUTHSPEAKING

BY TAMARACK SONG

How many times have you heard someone begin with “to be honest,” when they intend to be straightforward with their thoughts and feelings? Wouldn’t it be nice if people could always “be honest?” Helping that to happen is the reason for this book.

In *Sacred Speech* you will learn how to hear the truth in lies and how to unmask anger to reveal the feelings that caused it. You will be shown how to see cursing and swearing as the externalizing and judging they actually are. You will find out why gossiping depletes personal power. These skills make it easier for someone to hear what you have to say – not just your words, but the thoughts and feelings behind them.

Along with that, you will learn how to better listen. A person needs to feel that he is being heard in order to feel completed in expressing himself.

These, and many more of the mysteries and delights of Truthspeaking – the natural way to fully and clearly express yourself – are the subject matter of this book. In a straightforward, step-by-step approach, you will be shown this blissful way of communicating that leaves you feeling regarded and fulfilled. When you can express yourself clearly and spontaneously, rather than stuffing it and waiting for the “right time” or the “right words,” you will feel more alive – more yourself – and more connected with those around you.

Truthspeaking is the way of your ancestors, of the surviving Native people, and of all natural life. It is also your natural way, and the experience of this book will help you regain it.