

Walking in WoLakota - Jace DeCory - Storytelling

There's a Lakota word for being at peace, being in balance with the world around you, and it is Wolakota. And I think that well, anyway, that is the way that I try to live my life: Wolakota, in Wolakota, in peace, in harmony, in balance, and it's a philosophy, it's a way of life, it's a way of believing that everything that you do every day, when you walk on earth, you try to live in balance with whatever you have, whatever task you have at hand. When I was thinking about this today, the first thing I think of is smudging off with sage and sweetgrass.

I think of putting out tobacco so that I say the right words. I think of the future generations that might see this, because it's going to be forever unless it gets burned up or whatever. But the idea is that being in Wolakota, being in balance. I think that really ties into being resilient as well, knowing that there are all kinds of things that are going to be put before you in your life.

There's going to be all kinds of trials and tribulations, problems, issues, but if you keep in your mind that you're not alone and that there are resources to help you people, and then you're never alone because you have your spirit within you to help you, and so always think about maintaining wellness in your life. And I'm glad that we have people, we have wellness majors at Black Hills State. I think that's just cool that they major in being well, but they're talking about being physically fit and mentally. You know all these things.

Oftentimes I'm asked to speak to the stress management class for the wellness majors, and so I will go in there and I will smudge them off. And first of all, they're saying this is stressful because I don't know what I'm doing, you know, but I explain the procedure. This is part of a way of thinking and believing and being well. And then, you know, talk about some of the things that help me to stay well: my prayers, certainly, but also in my interactions with people.

My grandmother used to always say: try to affect one person every day of your life, whoever that is. It can be your children, it can be an associate, it can be somebody on the street, maybe somebody's having a hard time. They've fallen and they can't get up and you know you will affect that person that day. Do not walk past them if you, you know, help them.

And so she said in your mind: keep that idea of consciously helping one person, do something good for one person every day of your life, and so that way you look outside of yourself, not just be selfish.

And so I think our wellness majors and I think our native people, our Lakota people, I think they understand that we have to do certain things and stay away from certain

things to be well. One is alcohol and drugs. We can't do those things and be well. And many of us realize that. I quit smoking after many years of killing myself with smoke in my lungs. But I did that with prayer and I did that with the help of a medicine woman who also was smoking. And we both made a pact to quit. And we did quit together.

But through prayer and through that connection to the spirits and understanding that some things are more powerful than me, nicotine, that I had to seek help to help with that. Back in the day we had individuals who were specialists that dealt with certain kinds of issues. We had our medicine people that did our herbal medicines and even those they had specialists in there. We had our bear dreamers. They dreamed of the bear and they were astute healers, wonderful healers. They had a vast array of knowledge of herbs, herbal remedies.

They had a whole bunch of medicines that they knew that they could call upon to help the people. And so we had those specialists. Well now we have other medicine people. We have people that heal and doctor. So we still have those today. We have Rick Two Dogs and Wilmer Mesteth and Steve DuBray and all different ones. And some of our spiritual leaders who are so humble that really don't want to be called spiritual leaders, but like a relative of Duane Hollow Horn Bear, Albert White Hat. He's a wonderful role model. And we have Marcella LeBeau.

Do we have these people here today with us, but we need to talk to them and see how well you stay well? And try to get their feelings of how their philosophy essentially is what it is. And I made contact with those elders. I consciously do that to be well. That's what helps me be well, by staying close to the elders. But on the other hand, also what helps me be well is by going every now and again to an elementary classroom and talking to little kids. They help me be well as well. Because they ask the craziest questions and make me think.

And I enjoy going and talking to them so that I can understand that. It really humbles me that you think you have all this knowledge, Jace, and those little kids ask me something. Oh dear, I don't know. I'll come back and if I find the answer, I'll come back and tell you. I'll share that with you. So the young and the old and all of us in between and some of us that are training to be elders, I think that the idea of a way of life and understanding that we're only on this earth for a limited amount of time.

So use that time in a good way so that you can go on to the next life with a clean heart and also a clean name so that you don't tarnish it and you can be happy and look back. Like I know Fool's Crow is. I'm sure he's looking back on some of the people that he's helped. And he's happy, I think. And he still helps us. So... I go on. I hope so. I hope I will.