

## 2022 Prairie Awakening-Prairie Awoke Celebration - Forming Relations

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Earlier this winter, I met with a Council Circle of Elders to discuss the 2022 Prairie Awakening-Prairie Awoke Celebration. We gathered to reflect on the Celebration's past, to assess our current standing, and to envision the future. I would like to take a moment here to publicly thank this group. Without their wisdom, there could not have been the "awakening" that so many of us have experienced in the arena at Kuehn over the years.

One of the outcomes that emerged from this circle's conversation was a need to return to the roots of the Celebration when it comes to relationships. The presence of almost everyone in the circle could be traced back to a connection they made with another person through the Celebration. The challenge here is that the Celebration is just that, a celebration— a large number of people in the arena together. There is a shared experience of "awakening", but little opportunity to interact on a one-to-one basis. How can we return to the important roots of relationships?

The Council's collective answer to this challenge was to propose the creation of a series of programs spread across the calendar, standing alone from the September Celebration, but nonetheless connected. These programs would create opportunities to "celebrate" on a more personal, one-to-one level, to build relationships, and to "awaken". Each of these programs will provide the audience a chance to have a face-to-face lesson with an Elder. Not only will the participants gain knowledge on the designated program topic, but they will also form friendships, relationships, connections.



DCCB summer camp youth on community drum

Ever since I shared the circle with the Elders and was tasked with the creation of these programs, I have been searching for a name. Relations, Relations, RELATIONS. And there it was, in a phrase I learned at the first Celebration: *Mitakuye Oyasin*. This is a Lakota phrase that reflects the worldview of interconnectedness held by the Lakota people- two words that mean All my Relations or We are All Related.

The first of these *Mitakuye Oyasin* meetings will be in April. The Elder we will share time with is Irma Wilson White— Omaha/Winnebagos who will focus on traditional native gardening. Irma will share traditions and stories, especially the three sisters plantings—corn, squash and beans. Participants will complete their learning by assisting us in the planting of the three sisters plots at Kuehn. You will be encouraged to take home your own three sisters seeds and start your own story at home. Perhaps one of our most important relationships is not only with other learners, but with our food and the land. (See the Calendar of Events on page 7 for details.)

Our second relations-building *Mitakuye Oyasin* program will be in May. The elder we will share time with at this gathering will be Harland Brown—Meskwaki. Harland has attended many Celebrations with the traditional Brown Otter drum of the Settlement. He will share stories of the origin of the drum--its voice and its place in traditions and ceremonies--and also provide insight into the structure of many traditional native songs. The participatory aspect of this program will be an invitation to learn the traditional native flag song that has been used to start the Celebration each year. DCCB will host a series of summer gatherings where we will practice drumming on DCCB's community drum and learning this song. (*See the Calendar of Events on page 9 for details.*) In September, our group will honor our relations by joining the Brown Otter drum in the singing of the flag song to open the Celebration.

In closing, the translation of *Mitakuye Oyasin* is in a larger sense a salutation or prayer for all creation to live together in balance and harmony. Join us at these programs as we continue the lessons, friendships and relations that the Celebration has brought to our place.