

The Legend of the Giveaway

By: Toni Thompson-Vessels

In the time before this, the people lived underground, and Tatanka was the holy man who guided them. The people wanted to leave the underworld. Tatanka, the Great Red Buffalo and holy being of the people, warned them that if they passed through to the outer world they would remain there. Tatanka worried for these people and went to seek advice from the Sacred Beings. He saw that those that left the inner world would forget the language of the Sacred Beings. Tatanka would become large and hairy, and he would also be the caretaker for the people of the outer world. Tatanka then told the people he would be their sustenance, and to use every part of his body for their needs. It was a great give-away to become physical for the people.

The Buffalo meant survival to the Plains Indians. Because of this, The People honored Buffalo throughout their lives. Buffalo stood for life and abundance in all things. They honored Buffalo by praying before the hunt, giving thanks for what they knew they would receive. After the kill, tobacco was given to the spirit of Buffalo in thanks for the gift of its life. Thanks were given daily, as Buffalo was used for food, clothing, shelter, and ceremony. Buffalo gave its life so that The People could live. A circle of life was completed.

After a person receives gifts of any kind, they must give back to the People so that the circle is completed and the gifts can continue to circle and cycle throughout all life. When ceremony is given for a person, that person returns the gift by holding a feast or giveaway, for the People. This is the giveaway to complete the circle of giving. The giveaway is a continuing circle of giving and thanksgiving for the abundance of life that Buffalo provided the People.

We have found that when we attend the [women's retreat] weekend that we receive so many gifts from all who attend. The slight hug when we have gone through rough times, the workshop that opened our eyes and our hearts. The ceremony, that seems to bring us a little closer to the Great Spirit. It is in the spirit of the Giveaway and Tatanka that during the weekend we are given the opportunity to complete the circle with the giveaway blanket. We place a gift that has meaning to us on the blanket and then the spirit guides the person who needs that gift to it.

Bring a personally meaningful gift, perhaps something you already own as a giveaway. Please wrap your giveaway in brown paper or newspaper with your name inside. These items will be placed on the blanket to be shared on Saturday (or Sunday) morning.