

AICAP

Digital Tribal Art

Quarterly

Volume 24 Summer 2001

Sacred

Pipe Parts 1 and 2

Stories of the



Turtle Heart (Winterstone)
Ahnishinabeg

Stories

of the



Sacred Pipe

Turtle Heart (Winterstone)
Ahnishinabe

American Indian Computer Art Project
(AICAP)

www.aicap.org

About this publication:

The Sacred Pipe, as we will refer to it in this document, is an object at the center of a very ancient culture. Much of this culture and the teachings represented by its sacred objects are being lost. Even as the abused culture which owns and follows this sacred path are shrinking, misguided people in the modern world are turning the sacred pipes into objects of shame, pathological exploitation and abuse.

The author is from a culture of Sacred Pipes; he is a maker and a keeper of Sacred Pipes. He is a person of this modern world, of this American Society. He is a Four Directions Man.

It is our hope to add to the world's limited knowledge on this subject. We hope to inform people so that the many abuses and misrepresentations of the Sacred in Native American Culture will diminish rather than continue to spread. We would also like to celebrate the continued insights into understanding the human condition which may lead to compassion for all people. A limited, shared knowledge of the Sacred of these pipes is offered on that basis.

Turtle Heart
Summer, 2001

This document is in two parts

Part One: The *current commentary* on the issue of sacred pipes in the 21st Century. Posted from Taos, New Mexico.

Part Two: An *early commentary* on the sacred pipe, referring especially to stolen sacred pipes.

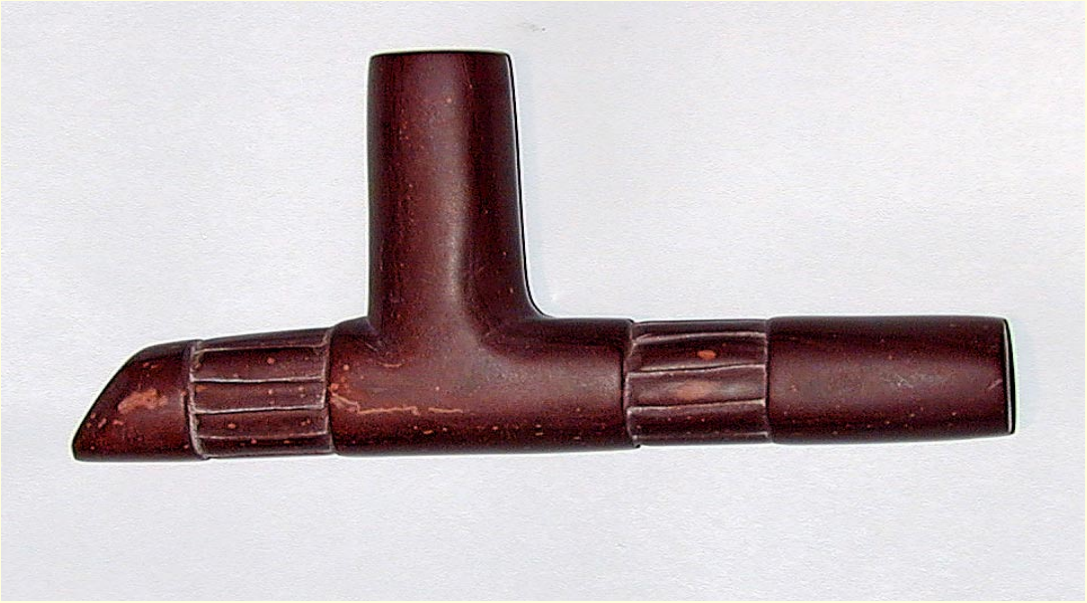
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Summer, 2001.

As I write this, my pipe bundle sits in its spirit house. It has been some years since that bundle has known smoke. Over the years I have taken it to the rivers to renew it. I smoked it a few years ago in a Kiva at Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. I smoked it for my partner's father who had passed over. The otter skin in which the pipe lives at this time has made a few appearances at some meetings in Taos.

I am not fearful. I am not even discouraged. I am in a place of questions.

I was asked in the spring by an elder I know up in the Northwest, about making a pipe for his nephew. An Alaskan Man, a native police officer and a family man. I agreed to do this. No money was exchanged. As I was thinking about how to go about it, a friend of mine from the Taos Pueblo stopped by for a visit.

He came up to me and as we said hello to each other, he gave me a piece of Pipestone roughed out in the perfect shape and size for this man's pipe. Neither one of us was surprised so much. He said that piece of pipestone was given to him by someone from up North in the plains a long time ago. He saw it sitting around that morning and thought I would have a use for it.

When we finished that pipe, I took it into the sweat lodge here and we all participated in a blessing for it. I mailed it up to the elder who had made the request. We wrote down a little story about that pipe and sent it along. We told that man he should send something of his medicine, something from his relations back down this way. So far we have not heard anything from him.

Elsewhere, we hear stories that the "White Buffalo Calf Pipe" has been travelling around, most often in the company of a rather young Sioux man. He has been known to stop by and see friends of mine up at the Pueblo. We heard that someone pretending to be that man was arrested for calling people on the phone to get donations of money for an imaginary stranded sacred pipe. I mention these rumors because they are evidence of common understanding, true or not, by people around here. You can go many years without hearing any stories about this particular pipe bundle. The man has appeared in the national press as the keeper of this pipe bundle. I have assumed that if he was not supposed to be doing this, you would hear a lot of protesting from the plains peoples.

When I was younger the rumors about pipes were of a more healing and mysterious nature. The rumors were exciting and promised that good people were doing the right thing. I am confident that this remains the story today.



This kind of little pipe has become very common. In the older days this would be called a personal woman's pipe. It was used to smoke to the herbs and to the flowers. In those days the rule with this little pipes was for you to sing a soft little song while you smoked. The song and the smoke worked together. Today it is more common to see marijuana smoked in these little pipes. Even so, it is interesting to see how people who own these pipes are really attached to them.

I can make no judgements on these pipes. It is inevitable that such things will be made and used. I always tell people with these little pipes to smoke with respect, to honor the circle of good feelings when passing these around.



This pipe was given to me by an actress in movies named Sean Young. It looks almost exactly like me. It scares her, she said. She would not tell me where she got it or how much she paid for it. It is very beautiful but does not smoke very well. Its engineering for smoking is not right. Sean is like that. She is very beautiful but she does not function right. A choking action at the place where the stem meets the bowl shows a lack of clarity. It is a strange little pipe, being so beautiful yet so useless.

This pipe is a teaching about the broken bowl. A good bowl is never empty, unless it is broken.

The original artist who carved this face is unknown.



The first pipe I made of Pipestone. Taos New Mexico, about 1982 or earlier. I had been making pipes of a stone common for that purpose on the east coast, a type of green steatite. When I first came to Taos I spent several weeks living with and studying with Ralph Suazo, a real character and a Taos Pueblo Indian man. Ralph made a reasonable living over many years making carvings in wood and stone. That year he gave me a big slab of pipestone. This was a great moment. I had never held a piece of the beloved stone in my hands before. Over the next few days I took this one piece of the slab and worked it into a pipe. It has some lines on it that Ralph carved himself. It was a great experience sitting with him under his big tree all day, working stone. It is tied with a small wisp of buffalo hair that was gifted to me by Ralph's father. That pipe has stayed with me all these years. I have never wanted to sell it or give it away, though I have gifted many pipes to many Indian people over the years. It is a piece of the spirit that connects me and this ancient Pueblo.

Ralph Suazo is laid low now in a retirement hospital for elders in the town. The tribe has no programs at all to take care of its treasured elders. His carving days now long behind him, there is almost no record of his work. His many little carvings are all over the world. His family has a ring that was given to Ralph by Nelson Rockefeller, who visited the Pueblo some long time ago and felt a real connection with Ralph and his father. Ralph's father, Jim Suazo, is "the Man Who Killed the Deer", the man whose life the book of that same name was written by Frank Waters, now also passed away. I recommend reading that book. It is still in print and widely available. People came from all over to visit Ralph and his dad in their little house. That house has a well with the sweetest water on earth in it. I used to go miles out of my way, anytime I was vaguely in the area, to drink that water.

Over the years I showed up at all sorts of odd times, mostly in the Winter months. I was called Winterstone in those days. Many of my friends at the pueblo still call me by that name. This pipe is a storehouse for those great feelings, those rich experiences I had in those days. These men are my ancestors; these men allowed me to stand softly on their shoulders and become a better human being, a learning human being. That is what this pipe is all about. The way of learning; first to open your heart to those elders. When you do, real magic happens. For me, the time of this pipe was the time of my becoming an Indian man with real relations. Now I live here. The elders who carried me gone. I see my friends at the Pueblo almost every day. The pipe rests in a basket.



River Otter Clan.

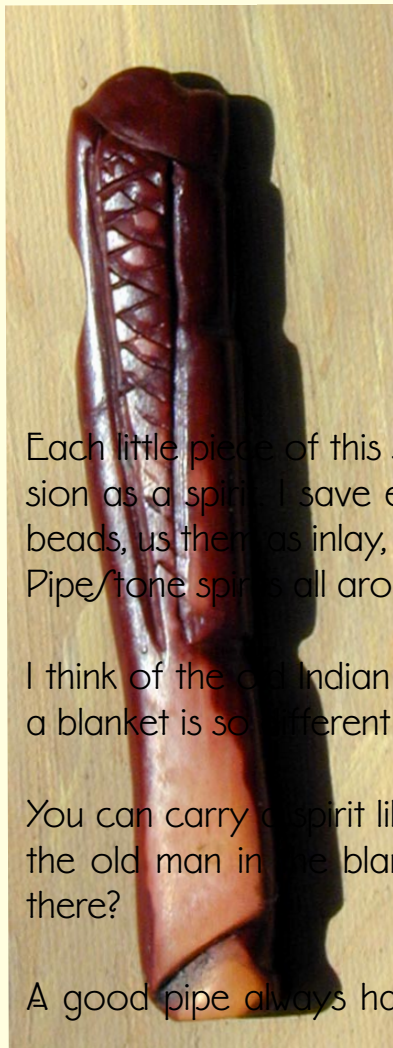
A masterwork by Chaskê of the Pipestone Monument in Minnesota. This pipe was gifted to me a few years after the pipes I had been holding in my bundle were stolen. Eleven sacred pipes were stolen while I visited my friends at Taos Pueblo. This was all some time ago. It was a hard time, hard to take. In all those years since that theft, we have not heard a rumor or a clue as to what happened to them.

There was another pipe by Chaskê in that bundle. A great pipe made as a running horse. That was me in those days, a running-horse-man. Today I sit at the roots of the sacred tree and life is more quiet. I sit there like a man of the otter clan and I remember where I have been, I remember where I am going. This is the future pipe. The pipe that knows some song we have all yet to sing in a place I have yet to stand. You could call this a looking ahead pipe.



Pre-Contact: A very old pipe.

This is a small effigy pipe. It is more than 500 years old. I call it a pre-contact pipe because it was made and smoked long before any modern people showed up on any Indian lands as “discover’s”. A friend of ours confiscated it from an archaeological dig in the upper east coast. People often gift me with old sacred things they have rescued from the collectors and the bone diggers. I have smoked this pipe many times. There is a song that goes with it. It has spoken to me quietly through its art and its spirit. It was left behind at the home camp the year I journeyed with the larger pipe bundle that became stolen. Usually it was with the main bundle. For some reason, on that trip I left behind this pipe and one other large ceremonial pipe. That other pipe is buried along with an 800 year-old Japanese sacred sword on the spot where the first atomic explosion took place. The web site has an account of that ceremony in the eBook Library.



It might take some squinting to see the whole story on this pipe. This is standing man. Standing Man is another name for pipes that are used in a ceremonial manner. It is a long man, with a long braid; he is looking straight up, like good smoke.

Each little piece of this stone wants to find expression; expression as a spirit. I save every little piece of Pipestone. I make beads, use them as inlay, and have carved a great circle of little Pipestone spirits all around the Turtle Island.

I think of the old Indian men inside their blankets. Being inside a blanket is so different than being inside a jacket or sweater.

You can carry a spirit like this inside your pocket. What would the old man in the blanket say to you if you were standing there?

A good pipe always has a story. If you hear that story, you should examine your feelings with your belly muscles. The belly will tell you when you are hearing the truth. That is how the sacred stone works for you; it is in each case a “key” to a story.

Being Taken Away

I used to have long talks with an Anglo man in California. He raised birds, parrots and so forth. I met him when we bought "Wh-bheek-we" our African Gray parrot. We talked about pipes. I told him that our elders generally do not like to see what we call stone bowls with wooden stems being sold to collectors. Many Indians make pipes like this, and that's ok. I am talking about my relations, my heart under the direction of my elders. The pipe that has a long wooden stem is a sacred object that should not be traded in the collectors market.

One day I showed up at this man's house and he proudly showed me the pipe he had purchased on a road trip through the Pipestone Monument area. He was so happy with his little pipe with a sumac stem.

I reminded him of our conversation. I told him he was free to just give that pipe up to me at that moment. I was thinking he would not give it up. He surprised me and handed it over. He seemed to be taking it rather well.

I cleansed the pipe and put it into my bundle. Honestly, I thought no more about it. I was pleased that this modern person would give it up, show a desire to understand and cooperate.

It would be great to see more of our sacred things being given back to us by the innocent fools who have them.



A traditional and ancient Ahnishinabeg bowl

This pipe was made by the late Ahnishinabeg Elder. Standing Eagle of Pipestone, Minnesota. It has had a rough life. It was broken several times. We keep it patched together to keep the Spirit of Standing Eagle with us. While many people are familiar with the “t-shaped” bowl, most readers



will never have seen a pipe like this one. These pipes are very difficult to make. This design goes back many thousands of years and is considered very sacred. Standing Eagle was a fine pipe-maker. He also made amazing little Turtles. Making Turtles is a long-time tradition of the carvers who hang-out at the Pipestone Monument. Standing Eagle was a daily fixture there for many years. He was a very humble and sweet man. He was one of the very first Pipestone Carvers at the Monument to start bringing back very ancient designs like this one.

Here is a side view of that same pipe. This is a rather stylized version of the ancient design. There are several variations in this style of pipe. Notice the spotted nature of this piece of Pipestone. The spotted stone is more rare. It is considered more spiritual in nature. Many elders do not like to see any spotted Pipestone made into commercial objects.

This type of pipe can be smoked a very long time. The smoking mixture is rather "piled up" on the platform, the "lip" of the creator's song-



ing mouth. As the little central bowl is smoked, the piled up smoking mix is pushed into the center. This type of pipe is used in very old healing ceremonies. It was also very popular on the lengthy vision quest ceremonies. There are ceremonies where the smoke must be kept going for very long periods. That is what this sort of pipe-bowl does best. Standing Eagle was a man of great spirit. He was a talented and very humble man. His many Pipestone creations have made a circle around the world.



Strong Dog of the Great Straits

For some time I lived in the Pacific Northwest. Right off Highway 101, just at the north tip of the bridge crossing the Hamma-Hamma River. I lived in the tide flat where the Hamma-Hamma met the Hood Canal. While I lived there I learned from the Elders and from the Standing Tree People about the ancient cedars of the old growth forests. I learned “how to talk cedar”, a language used to address the spirits of the old wood and bring forth the spirits and “totems” of the mystery life. This is a large pipestone object in which I recorded my lessons in this ancient religious “language”.

The great lesson was in spirit parts. All parts are spirits; there are spirits which are in the parts.

The wings can be carved and drawn as spirits in their own right. Look at the tail of this Orca. It is a unique spirit and its powers are a blessing to the life of the whole spirit, the Orca.

Some things are so simple, words just misdirect us. That's why there is art I think. In the sacred language each power was and is a blessing. What is a power? That is the simple part. We can easily be seduced by our own cleverness.

This is a very large piece of Pipestone. I worked on this pipe for many days. The light there was really magnificent. We were surrounded by Eagles. Hundreds of them in the Winter months. Salmon climbed the river that ran through our front yard. Huge Elk, an old family themselves, roamed freely in the same yard. Right where we lived the river joined the Hood canal. Orca used to bring their families down the canal as far as we lived, but not anymore. The Navy has submarine bases and all sorts of secret equipment buried in the Hood Canal. It is a very deep and ancient channel. It no longer knows the songs of the whales.

In my mind's eye I could still see them, their long fins cutting through the deep green waters. I would go way up in the mountains and bring home old pieces of cedar and practice speaking and carving the language. The big pipe just happened, a way to celebrate and record what I found it during my five years with the ancient cedar and the elders of the Salish Nation.

This is not a regular pipe. This is a special ceremonial pipe. Sometimes I call it the "wishfull-thinking pipe". I would like to see the way and law of the sacred pipe more visibly at work. Because of the many abuses of the modern world, the peoples of the sacred pipe follow a road that is subtle and not visible to people in the outside cultures. This is true, even after all these many years. The abuses make it hard for a more traditional and proper PipeHolder to stand up. It can become dangerous pretty quick. The reluctance of that Indian person acts as permission to some person outside the culture. Someone with good intentions who reaches for the sacred which some other Indian with good intentions made for the market place. It is easy to get caught up in the drama, romance and mystery of pipes.

The truth is, there are many old pipes in use today. It is a quiet affair. For many centuries now these pipes have continued to smoke, have continued to "stand up" as we say.

This pipe was made as a hope for more of this. More strength, more initiated persons, more resolve by the Elders. I used to dream that when trouble would come, there would be always visible a row of PipeHolders standing between the trouble and the people. I wish AIM could have even once put forward a line of PipeHolders to the United States, rather than a line of guns. I have never seen a group of PipeHolders united in this way.

Many years ago I was a PipeHolder for a small tribe. They were very enthusiastic about using the medicines and ceremonies to make life better for everyone.

That Elder of that tribe has passed over some time ago. He was great. He wanted me right away to go to visit Pipe- Holders in the other small tribes in the region. We had some great meetings which he sponsored himself on his land. Those were great experiences which really opened my eyes. These powers of pipes we have been given have their secretive and their private side. I have never argued with that fact. Because the pipe is a sacred object, it is not limited in the way and manner of its use. Because the sacred is sacred, it has some gift of itself for all people. It was really a great experience to participate in these ceremonies, a great honor. Many times the PipeHolders put all their pipes together during the meetings, however long that would be. When one PipeHolder visited another, there is a place for the pipes to hang out together. A place with many pipes together is a very interesting place. I have been to places during those times, when those many pipes were together.

To bad this page can't sing. That's the kind of feeling I get talking about this. An old song on an old drum. The drum holds people in a circle. Most of us have seen that happen. the pipe is the same way. The proper pipe is inside a proper bundle with the other things. Together that bundle makes possible songs, words, dances and great silences.

I wish there was more "putting our sacred before us" in this life. I have walked into danger a few times in my life with my sacred pipe held out in a visible manner before me. I have opened a hole in the sky. I have walked with the sacred in a visible manner before the waiting world. I know that it works. I have seen it work right before my eyes.

Slow Turtle
Supreme Medicine Man
of the
Wampanouag Nation

Together he and I put pipes into prisons in the Northeast. We buried the precious remains of Indian people given back to us by museums. The first formal reburial in the country. This elder has passed over. During his time he sat at the center of what we call the “Eastern gate”. He was one of

those whose prayers and medicines carried many miles and a number of years. His breath is on the sacred objects that have survived with me to these days.

Many years ago, *Slow Turtle* was staying at my house in Rocky Hill, Connecticut. We had a ceremonial tipi set up and had been doing ceremonies all week with a number of visitors who stopped by from all over. At that moment I was there in the tipi with *Slow Turtle* and no one else was around. I did get called out of the tipi. I went up to the front of the house and talked to a big man on a big black motorcycle. He was a wild-looking fellow. He had a pipe he wanted to know if I would bless it for him. He gave me his story of how that pipe came to be with him. I told him to come on over to the tipi. When we went inside, I went over and sat by *Slow Turtle*. I had the man sit at the tipi door, just before the sweet little fire we had going there. That fire had been going for many days. Its energy was very good.



I told that man to offer his pipe up to “this Elder who is sitting here”. I told him it was up to this elder to find out if he would bless that pipe. He pulled forth his pipe from wherever he had it. He put himself up on his knees and offered that pipe in a very pretty way up to the creation. His knees were trembling, soon his whole body was shaking. I told him then to ask this elder to bless his pipe. He was very shaken up, very overcome by this moment.

Nearly 30 years later I have moved to Taos, just inside Ranchos de Taos. I have a little sign out front that says “Winterstone gallery and Studio” and I sell my sculptures and paintings from here. I do not sell pipes.

One day a big, wild-looking man stopped by. He did not look familiar. However, as we talked he referred to old Slow Turtle and told me about a time when him and a Sioux medicine man named Turtle Heart blessed his pipe. He was wondering if I was that Sioux man. I immediately went back in my mind, remembering the whole incident. I told him I was his Winterstone, but that I was Ojibway, not Sioux. I noticed he was drunk, alcohol breath all over him. He was just as brazen as ever. He told me his ex-wife had kept that pipe in his divorce from her years before. It was clear that the power of that moment stayed with him all those years. That was many months ago. I have not seen him since, even though he lives less than a mile away.

Summer 2001

Part Two:

an earlier commentary on sacred pipes
with reference to stolen pipes

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Turtle Heart
Ojibway Artist
American Indian Computer Art Project (AICAP)





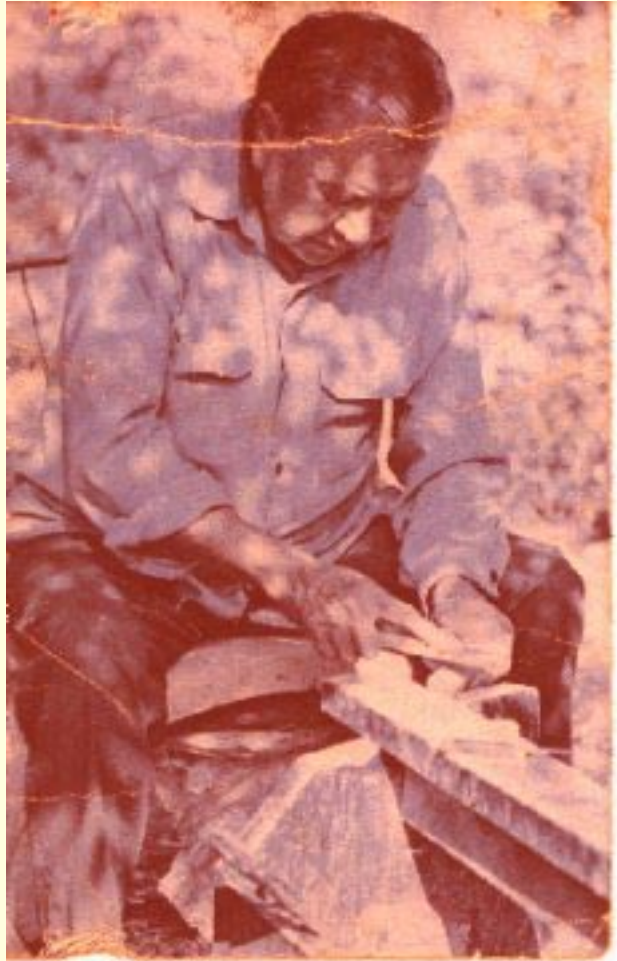
In this age, our people of the sacred pipes require our support and understanding. Our tribal elders wish to see many of the pipes shown in museums and offered by dealers and auctions to be returned to their tribal communities. *Some of the pipes you will see in this series of pages are stolen pipes.*

Sometimes, by sharing information and some level, if not all levels; then all sides may benefit. It is our hope that this information will help in the preservation and proper lines of authority being honored regarding pipes. When you see pipes perhaps this series will help you understand in ways you did not before; including the right questions to ask in your heart when you see pipes in museums and art galleries.

Each important Pipe Bundle was and is in the hands of special keepers. There are people in this line of guardianship who have directly received these bundles for well over 600 years; probably more. This is comparable to the lineage of the Dalai Lama of Tibet, whose lineage of teachings goes back a mere 15 generations.

Such special lodges and such special people, like all great spiritual and religious cultures, produced organized societies and clans with vast specialized knowledge in many important areas of human life.

This man is called Standing Eagle. For many years visitors to Pipestone National Monument would have seen this man working on Pipestone carvings in the quarry which is there. Pipestone comes from the place known as



Pipestone in Minnesota. It is a small and humble place. It is belligerently and capitalistically controlled by the national park service; not by the inter-tribal Elders Group many of the native

peoples would like to see in charge there. This man's family has been carving Pipestone for over 600 years.



Standing Eagle passed away some years ago. Remaining at Pipestone Monument, however, are well over 60 families who consistently work this sacred stone. Tribal People from all over the world have come here to meet and talk with these families.

This is a very powerful pipe. It is in the hands of merchants who have been selling it back and forth for many years. Where is it now? It is from the great Pawnee Nation and is related to the exchange of Bear Powers with sacred human. This is an outstanding example of the sort of ritual and teaching/learning objects made long before the modern people arrived on this land.



Here we have another very special ceremonial pipe being held prisoner by profit-making collectors. This is a very long pipe and the Eagle Feathers worked with porcupine quills are very sacred. It is a great sadness to the Tribal Elders to see such objects in glass cases. This fine sacred pipe is still considered a living spirit, an object with a long and important history of many councils, and many fires. The hair locks are human hair, representing the special ceremony which took place at the creation of this sacred object. The real heart of the teachings are contained by the particular objects which are secured to a pipe.

Crossing the Sky

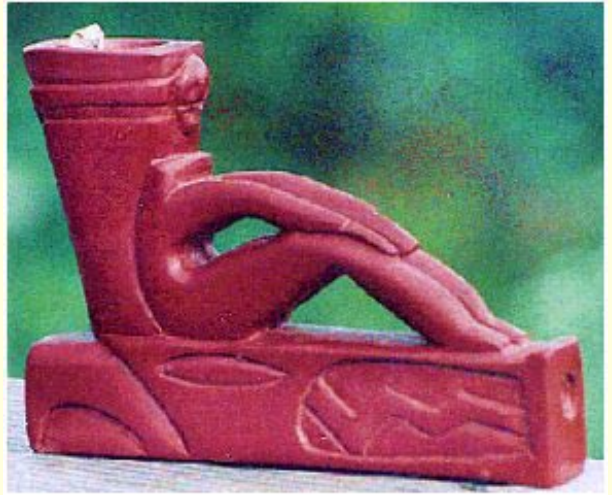
This is an Ahnishinabeg, or Ojibway, Elder with another very important pipe. This man was photographed during an official visit to the government at the near turn of the century. Those who know, realize that this massive pipe was a special ceremonial pipe which was created with the concerns, desires and instructions of many special councils and ceremonial meetings. Such a pipe is created to carry the most important messages of a large number of other pipe-holding peoples. We know that the US Government never recognized or respected the authority and position of faith and trust that such a man as this commanded from his tribal nation.



He was tooled around town with his group. They had their photos taken, were shown the sites. They came as designated leaders come and were given the bum's rush back to the forest.

A new pipe.

This is a pipe carved by Turtle Heart, an Ojibway or Ahnishinabeg person who has been traveling and working with Pipes for many years, with many other people. Some years ago he made a journey to Trinity Site, the loca-

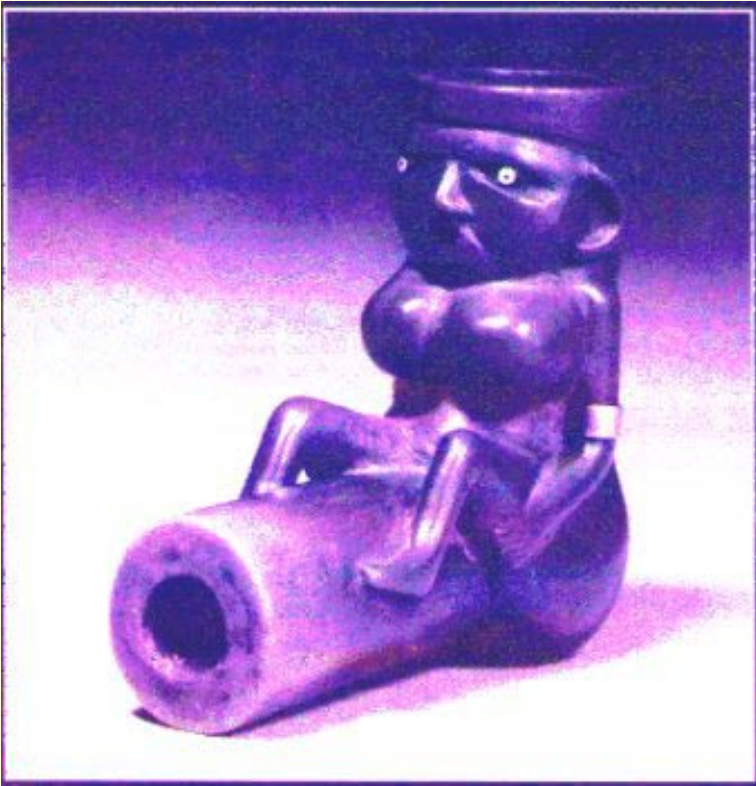


tion of the first atomic bomb explosion in the world. He buried a special sacred pipe there, along with an 800 year-old Samurai sword blessed and purified by Shinto Priests. This was a special ceremony where prayers and ceremonies were placed on that wounded earth to link the path of peace to the roots of that time and that energy.



Every good Pipe must have a house to live in. This fine pipe and this fine Pipe House were put together by merchants who own and sell these items. They did not start off their journey together.

These are the types of objects which the elders wish to see returned.



This is a profound and very important sacred object. Unlike the *council pipes* we have seen so far, this is a special pipe, the property of a very specialized sacred society or initiated person.

This is a stolen object, another one, which needs to be returned to its tribal home one day.



Here we have a very highly qualified Bear Clan Elder and a special Mide Priest of the Ahnishinabeg Nation at another visit of state to the US Government at the turn of the century. The captions on this picture did not mention the sacred and profoundly elevated nature of these men. It dwelled upon the quaint appointments of their "costumes".

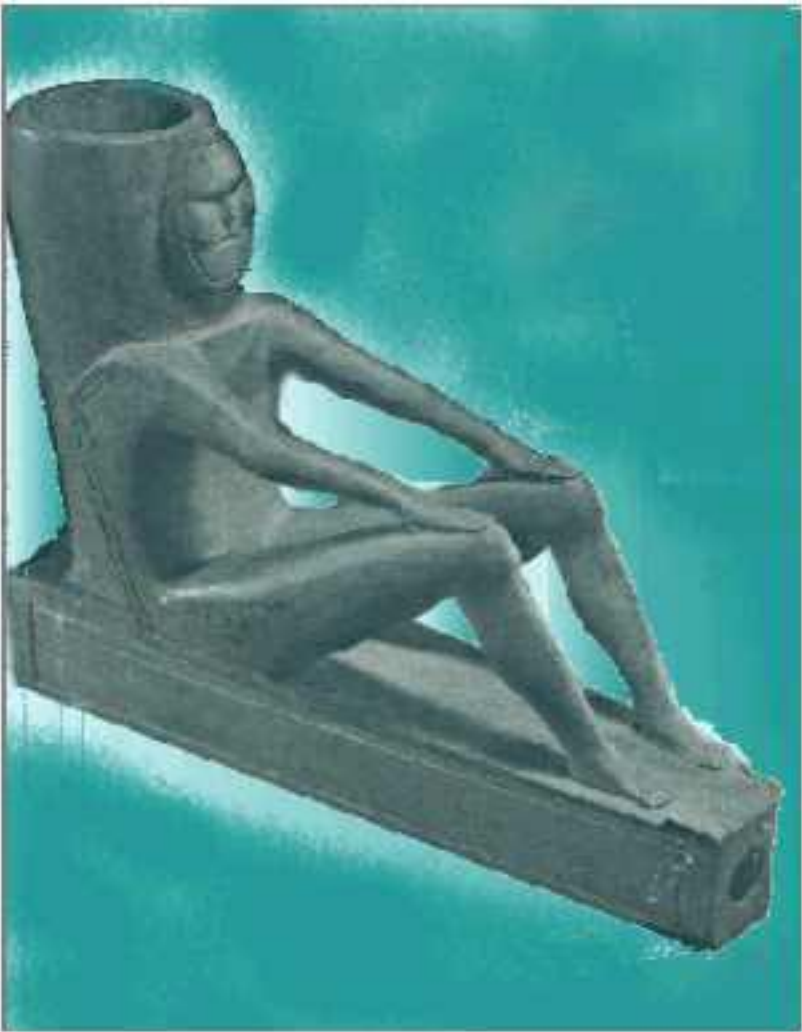
These are the sort of men who have kept alive the sacred core of tribal truth in the face of the quaint indifference of the modern world.



This is a carving by Ojibway, or Ahnishinabeg artist Turtle Heart. It is one in a series called *Sacred Pipe Fire Dancers*. It shows how pipes are linked to the creation, to all living things which are on or above or within the earth and water and sky. It shows the path between the stones and the clouds, between ignorance and knowledge. The sacred pipe is a teaching embracing respect, real practicing every-day respect for all the creation of this great mystery.



These are more collected pipes, lined up by the Paymaster to sell into the spiritual void of being in some rich persons private collection. Some of these pipes are very important council-meeting pipes, others are important personal family pipes. Many families of tribal people are cold, cold in the morning light of this modern world without their sacred pipes. Just think of the power in this world to be channeled into compassion if these pipes were all being used in the sacred manner.



The sacred truth. All the poetry, wisdom and profound discipline of the path of the Sacred Pipes is contained in this great work. Another pipe held prisoner by a man who wants money, and who is not a tribal person. How many great songs and how many great human hearts held this Stone-Man to the first light of the sacred sun? This sacred object belongs to our elders.



Our last pipe for this edition of this series. This is a pre-contact Pipe, a pipe made and used before the modern people showed up here. I love this animal spirit. Can you guess whose spirit this is? These old pipes have carried us a long way.

We are people of the morning sun, of the stars and beyond and we are everywhere still holding our sacred pipes. We have made new ones to help us find and return the stolen ones.

We have smoked in a sacred manner from the beginning of time.

We are the heat of the sacred fire; and the roots of the forest which is the stem connecting the sacred path between the original mystery, the original instructions and this cyber-space Universe. Our smoke follows you everywhere.

We are still here.

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Parts one and two of a continuing series.

The AICAP eBook series contains information and images relating to tribal culture and art. Free versions of these documents are distributed through our web site. Printable versions are available in a collection of AICAP stories and commentaries.

Ranchos deTaos
Summer 2001

Made on an apple computer with adobe indesign and adobe acrobat. The font is "EagleFeather" and is based on a font designed by Frank Llyod Wright. This is a copyrighted font.



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