



William Winterstone in his Captain's Walk office

For most people, Indian peace pipes and medicine bags are the stuff of old cowboy movies, but for William Winterstone, they are links to an ancient heritage he believes could help solve many modern-day problems.

Winterstone, son of an Anishinabe-Ojibwa Indian from Minnesota, hopes to show how Indian customs and religious beliefs can help Indians and non-Indians alike find peace of mind.

"This country is famous for its hospitality towards ideas from other countries," he said. "Yet we continue to overlook what the American Indian has to say."

From a tiny office on Captain's Walk adorned with Indian blankets, artworks, a traditional Indian shield and other artifacts, Winterstone is spreading the message that modern-day people can learn from Indian ways. He has conducted workshops on Indian customs and the Indian way of interpreting dreams and early next month will lead a three-day workshop on important Indian ceremonies, such as the pipe, the sweat lodge, ritual song and dance and the medicine wheel.

The workshops are more than discussion groups. Each person will participate in all the ceremonies and Winterstone is hoping they will find a way to make the rituals relevant to their own personal lives.

Winterstone's father was born on an Indian reservation but left at an early age for a life-long career in the military, passing on little of his Indian heritage to his son. Nonetheless, Winterstone has been interested in Indian beliefs since he was a boy and visited many different Indian reservations as a teenager.

"I've always been the type of person who looks for answers," he said.

As he grew older, Winterstone delved into several different religions and philosophies, from fundamental Christianity to Zen Buddhism, but kept coming back to the Indian approach to life, which he said seeks to embrace all things in nature and also accepts the truths of other religions.

After serving in Vietnam as a medical corpsman, Winterstone, 33, expanded his knowledge of Indian tradition. He visited reservations throughout the country, seeking out elders from the Sioux, Apache, Hopi

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and other tribes for formal training in their ceremonies and heritage. Finally, after working for several

years as a trauma specialist in hospital emergency rooms, he decided to work full-time spreading

the Indian message.
Winterstone is a member
Winterstone/A-5

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Seattle-based Xat American Indian Medicine Society. Xat, pronounced "cat," means "those who have gone before," representing the link to the past, he said. Among the society's goals are teaching about and preserving Indian heritage and helping secure rights to religious services for Indians in prison.

: American Indians developed their culture over thousands of years, longer than virtually any other civilization, Winterstone says. In that time, he maintains, they developed a way of looking at the world that can provide many lessons to modern-day people. One part of their heritage is a reliance on ceremonies to mark the important parts of their lives, such as the return from a successful hunt. The ceremonies provided continuity to their lives and a special way to communicate with members of their tribe, he said.

• People today might be able to learn from such ceremonies, he believes. His next workshop, advertised around the region with posters and by word-of-mouth, will concentrate on the use of the Indian

posters and by word-of-mouth, will concentrate on the use of the Indian pipe and the sweat lodge, Indian dance and song, and the creation of a prayer wheel. It also will touch on the Indian approach to solitude as a form of meditation.

The workshop is called the Tao of Turtle Island. Tao refers to an Oriental philosophy and Turtle Island is a traditional Indian name for the Earth. The session will be conducted Aug. 7, 14 and 15, probably in the woods in Salem, where Winterstone lives in a teepee.

Winterstone also has been invited to present a brief pipe ceremony tonight at the First Baptist Church on Captain's Walk during a service in support of the arms freeze movement.

Winterstone admits not everyone has been quick to accept his message about Indian ways. Most Indians have greeted him with hospitality but some have been less than eager to have their heritage discussed, perhaps fearing it will be exploited or misinterpreted, he said. Some non-Indians may find the teachings of Indian custom difficult at first. But he said anyone truly

at first. But he said anyone truly interested in learning and seeking more meaning from life will find the Indian customs valuable.

"We are living now in the land of the American Indian," he said. "For many thousands of years, this was his home. Any person truly seeking balance in the modern age has to take into consideration what the Indians are saying."

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