

profile

BUD JOHNSTON

BY KATHLEEN SOMERS



Bud Johnston; if the name doesn't conjure up images of pow wows, pipes and a man committed to his Native American heritage...well, perhaps it should. Read on, perhaps it will.

As President of the Keepers—an organization supporting the Native American tradition of pipemaking—artist, public speaker, world traveler, and jack of all trades, Johnston is a devoted spokesman for his people and a champion of the young. It wasn't always so.

As a member of the Bad River Band of Chippewa, Johnston grew up on a reservation in Wisconsin. He knew poverty well and decided he didn't like it. "I wanted a lot of things and there was no way of getting 'em," says Johnston, so at the age of eleven he took a paper route, leading to an eventual 37-year career with United Airlines. Even today this 60-year-old man demonstrates evidence of his parents' and grandparents' influence, in the stories he tells, the values he lives, and his chosen work.

While living in California more than twenty years ago, Johnston volunteered at the Fremont Indian Center, working with troubled youth. After an old Lakota spiritual leader had passed away, there was a large ceremonial gathering to honor the individual and send his spirit on. Johnston appreciated his Native American heritage greatly, and was shocked to discover that from a crowd of two thousand Native Americans, not one had a pipe.

This was very important. To Native Americans, smoke is the vehicle that carries their prayers to God's ears. The ceremonial pipe is an important aspect of this tradition. But tobacco is tobacco and smoke is still smoke, so the renowned man's spirit was sent off by cigarette smoke.

Recognizing that an important part of his beloved Native American culture was dying, Johnston vowed "If I ever get back around Pipestone in Minnesota, I'll make pipes available to whoever needs them." His own grandfather had told Johnston about Pipestone, of its significance as the quarry source for their pipes and crossroads for many American Indian tribes, when he was just a kid. But he never really knew where Pipestone was. After being transferred to Sioux Falls, SD, it took less than a week for Johnston to

discover how close the Pipestone quarry was. And the very next day, Johnston was in Pipestone acquiring a quarry permit. "...and (I) met a couple guys who were making pipes. I rented one of those glass display cases in the Sioux Falls airport and hung a bunch of pipes in it and printed a little catalog and ...it's been getting bigger and bigger ever since."

That was twenty years ago. Today, though retired, Johnston keeps busy making pipes for people around the world, and working with children and in general educating people on the sacred tradition of pipemaking. His vision is to "educate the public about what we do and why we do it." He's even produced two excellent videos, *The Pipemaker* and *Medicine People*.

In 1996, working with a small group of friends,



A Keeper at the Crossroads



Johnston began a movement designed to protect the quarries from exploitation and to preserve them as a sacred place where all tribal people have equal rights to gather in peace and mine the special red stone for their pipes and art works. That is how the Keepers of The Sacred Traditions of Pipemaking came to be.

In a nutshell, this is what Bud Johnston is about. He works tirelessly to give his people the same strong sense of identity his own grandfather instilled in him. He teaches programs to communicate the significance of the pipe and ceremonies. He works with schools, offering young Native Americans a connection to their heritage and a sense of pride. Johnston continues to travel locally, nationally and internationally with his message. When he's not traveling or speaking, you can find Bud in the historic Rock Island Depot in Pipestone with the 28-foot Peace Pipe sculpture in front. You can't miss it. The keepers restored the depot converting it to a fun and authentic Native American gift shop (with pipes, of course) and coffeehouse with the best espresso sold in Pipestone. And when you stop by, plan to spend some time with Bud. He has wonderful stories to tell. Ask him to tell you how the chipmunk got its stripes. ✕

To meet Bud Johnston, contact the Pipestone CVB at 800-336-6125.

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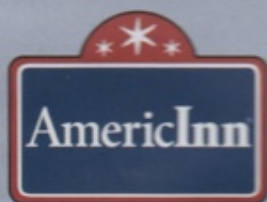


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THE HONOR OF A PEACE PIPE



The pipe is a important part of Native American culture and is used in many sacred ceremonies. Pipes are sacred and should be treated with respect. The pipe is an important part of prayer, since rising smoke carries prayers directly to the Great Creator.

pipe signified peaceful intent. In modern times, the term "peace pipe" has a much broader definition. It refers to many different kinds of pipes used for Indian religious ceremonies to commemorate or bless an event, such as the swearing in of an elected official, naming ceremonies for children, and groundbreaking for new buildings and facilities.



Today, tribal members from all over America come to quarry stone for their pipes at the Pipestone National Monument. As the center for stone quarrying and for the international organization "The Keepers of the Sacred Tradition of Pipemakers", Pipestone is known as the "Crossroads of Native America".

It is an honor to be selected to have a peace pipe, a tradition that continues today.

When numerous tribes dominated North America, carrying a ceremonial

Information provided by "The Keepers of the Sacred Tradition of Pipemakers" located in Pipestone, with members in over 40 states and many countries worldwide.

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