Hey folks! Please don't forget to tell your friends about Keepers gift shop.

We have local tribal art including limited addition prints and originals. Pipestone items including pipes, effigies and raw stone, as well as many craft supplies to make your own items. Our store also carries many hand crafted items made by tribal people such as: dream catchers, hat bands, buckskin clothing, bags, pottery, salves, small pipestone carvings and herbs. Members get a 10% discount if ordered online so make sure to use the coupon code 10discount .This password will be valid until the next newsletter when the password will be changed.

All sales help support local tribal artists, keep the depot running and contribute to our prison donation program. As always no one is paid for working at Keepers, we are all volunteers! If you have an item you want to put in the store on consignment, you will need to be a Keepers member. Keepers gets 25% of the sale price once the item sells. You do not have to be a tribal member but we will label your item as not tribal made.

Money from sales at the gift shop support Keepers
www.pipekeepers.org
“Canciones de piedra,” by Tony Prince
I know what I am.
To most of you I am a bowl and pestle of lava rock, but I am more than what you see. I was made with skill and passed down through the decades. I am a survivor and blessed with the ability to help others survive. I am that which sustained many a poor community, mixed meals with love and absorbed the many flavors of a rich culture. I have guided aged hands in molding food which never went wasted, never was denied to those without, and always made myself ready if there were more mouths to feed. I have awoken to crisp autumn mornings, and have held the green chiles, freshly peeled and painted with the orange and charcoal colorings of a fresh roast. I have labored in the hot summer sun, awaiting a cool spray of water before churning the flesh of soft and ripened avocados. My roughened skin has made your salsas, welcoming the ripened tomatoes, tomatillos, onions, jalapeños and exotic spices made from creativity and poverty alone. I have created for birth, life and death. I didn’t ask, I just did.
Yes to you I am just a rock, but I was loved and cared for. I worked endlessly and took on more, because hunger never sleeps.
When my handler could do no more forever, I was put on a shelf to sleep for eternity.
When I am taken down, I will be looked at as just a rock and pestle, but when you stare deep into the center of my crater, I will sing. I will sing the songs of familia, of love, life, poverty and riches most will never know. I will never stop singing if I am loved as I was before.
I know what I am.
This is a pipe stem (below) and bowl that was presented from Chief Buffalo to Governor James Duane Doty. Chief Buffalo was the Chief of the Ojibway people at La Pointe, Madeline Island, WI. They said that this bowl actually came from the quarries here in Pipestone, MN. The stem was quilled (which is no small feat). This is by far no small gift that was given.

This happened in 1844. This exchange took place 6 years before the Sandy Lake Tragedy and 10 years before the reservations were created. It was presented by Tay-che-gwi-au-nee who was a member of the Ojibway band at the council held at Fort Winnebago, WI. This shows that even though Catholicism was prominent at that time, the natives did not forget their traditions either.

Tay-che-gwi-au-nee, a member of an Ojibwe band from the south shore of Lake Superior, presented this pipe to Wisconsin’s territorial governor James Duane Doty on behalf of his father, Chief Buffalo. Doty received the gift on February 12, 1844 at a council held at Fort Winnebago, Wisconsin, near present day Portage.

Dyed porcupine quills in white, orange, red, and brown decorate the wooden stem and form Thunderbird figures. Horsehair and remnants of pileated woodpecker scalp, with some remaining feathers, also ornament the pipe stem. The other half of the pipe stem is carved with round and rectangular shapes, their inner surfaces painted red. The coloring of the pipe today appears muted due to fading over time. Originally, the colors of the quillwork were much more vivid and the bright red woodpecker feathers made the pipe a visually striking piece.

The heavy pipe bowl is carved from the stone catlinite, quarried near the town of Pipestone in southwestern Minnesota. The relatively soft siltstone can be hand carved and drilled with stone or metal tools. One end of the pipe bowl has a carved figure commonly known as a Janus head, which represents two human faces pointing in opposite directions. On the bowl’s anterior ridge is carved a representation of a bison, which is a common symbol carved on pipes.

Effigy pipes such as this one had been used among Native Americans both religiously and secularly for many years prior to European contact. However, there are some details about this pipe that suggest it was manufactured for trade or presentation. For example, human head effigies were not carved wearing hats, as this one is, prior to European contact.
We were all humans until race disconnected us, Religion separated us, politics divided us, and wealth classified us.

We need to encourage ourselves to look deeply into all things in our lives to see the inherent goodness of everything. Sometimes we find it difficult to see the good in people, places, or situations that aren’t to our liking. We focus on the things we don’t like in our lives as a way of fueling our efforts to create change. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, and it is one way we make progress. However, if we get too caught up in this way of looking at the world, we lose touch with our ability to sit back and simply say yes to everything on our plates, which is the true starting point for all successful activity. Sometimes what we really need is to encourage ourselves to look deeply into all things in our lives to see the inherent goodness at the heart of everything.

At the core of this inquiry is the practice of unconditional acceptance, which can be scary because we feel as if we are being asked not to change the things we don’t like. But when we think this way, we are still operating on the surface of our lives. In order to feel the beauty and warmth of full acceptance, we have to be willing to sink deeper into the stratum underlying the external manifestation of our lives. This deeper place of being is the origin of all lasting change, yet its paradox is that when we are in it, we often don’t feel the need to change anything. From this place, we experience the pure beauty of the process of being alive, and we see that all things change in their own time. We don’t need to force anything. If there are things that we do need to change, from this place of serenity we create the shift easily, our hands guided by an energy that resides at the very center of our hearts. In our active, goal-oriented culture, we learn to distrust stillness and to engage in busyness on the surface of life. This tendency can blind us to the good that lies at the heart of all things. But all we have to do to see again is stop for a moment, let go of our preconceptions and our agendas, and settle into the very center of our hearts, remembering that it is only from here that we can truly see.

Elder’s Meditation of the Day January 19

“Heal yourself – your physical and spiritual bodies. Regenerate yourself with light, and then help those who have poverty of the soul. Return to the inner spirit, which we have abandoned while looking elsewhere for happiness.”

–Willaru Huayta, QUECHUA NATION, PERU

It is difficult to look inside ourselves, especially when we see conflict or confusion. During times of conflict we need to realize that we are talking to ourselves about our thoughts. This conversation is printing in our subconscious and forming our beliefs. During times of conflict we need to ask the spirit to control our self-talk. Only through finding that inner place and going there during troubled times will we ever find happiness.

Great Spirit, You are my peace and you dwell within me. Let me look for You within myself.
The Sounds of the Quarry

By Heidi Swalve

The sounds of the Quarry

I watched an older gentleman climb out of the quarry with a bucket of stone in hand. He slowly made his way to the top. “How long you been out here for?” He takes a breath “All day”. He didn’t look up as he spoke, just focused on the small path up the steep hill. He dumped the stone into the pile that was slowly accumulating at the top and he continued his journey back down the steep hill again. I saw the pile and asked him if he made much progress. He said he didn’t. I said, “Well…every little bit helps right?” He looked at me and continued his journey back down the small path on the steep hill.

Quarrying is not made for just anyone. It requires a strong back, a connection with the earth, and persistence. There’s the first layer that one needs to break. That’s the earth. The grass and roots all need to be cleared. Then the next layer is the most difficult.

Chink, chink, chink. You can hear the sound of the mallet hitting the metal wedge that’s placed in the crack of the quartzite. Chink, chink, chink. The heartbeat of the quarry is much like the heartbeat of mother earth. To sit on a hill and just sit is a difficult task in todays driven world. Our footsteps at work are often muddled with the earplugs in our ears or the sounds of voices of our co-workers, printers, scanners and telephones. We are thinking of the next task that we need to complete. Just when we get into focus we are interrupted by someone or something or that other thing that we have forgotten about that we just remembered. Our minds are rarely silent.

Chink, chink, chink. One hears the chips of the rocks that are strewn on the base of the quarry floor. The mallet is set down. One can hear the whispers of the wind. One wipes the perspiration from one’s face. One stops and then there is silence. You are with the heartbeat of mother earth.

Travis is a fourth-generation pipe carver. His work sits in the shelves of our store and I am continually in admiration of the skill that he has built over the years as I micro-inspect his eagle with the chisel marks that create the effect of its’ feathers as the eagle stares back at me simultaneously. He comes in covered with red pipe dust from head to toe bringing another couple of pipes that he just made. This has been his life serving the greater good.

Unfortunately, though his sledgehammer is one of the few that ring out amongst the many quarries at the Pipestone Monument and the ones that are there are questioning how long their bodies can withstand the work that they have built their lives around. I think of that man who was bringing up that stone and I wished that I had the ability to get in there and do the work. I would, but to be able to work at the quarries one needs to be native. Unfortunately, I have a broken ancestry line and no proof that I could do this work.

Yesterday I held a piece of pipestone in my hand and just cried. Many have talked about this time for generations. The children have a choice. They can remember how to connect with mother earth, or these sites will sit silent.

I was brought to Pipestone, MN after my last vision quest. I sat on the hill of Bear Butte and woke up with six eyes staring at me in the dead of the night. I yelled, “Who are you?” and they just continued to stare. Right then I heard the voices of those that were in the camp singing at the top of their lungs. I listened to the sound of their voices and breathed a sigh of relief. I was not alone. I was safe. I was cared for. I saw in my mind a woman in white walking towards me with a pipe in her hands. “For the people she said.” Little did I know that two months later I would be sitting next to the quarry where her hand brought so many before me. Little did I know that I would be the one crying with that small piece of stone in my hand wondering how to bring the children here. I feel helpless.

I have talked with the park service next door. They want the same thing that we do. One is preparing and learning herself so that she can pass this information on if that time comes. Bus loads have come to the pit and no one is interested.

Chink, chink, chink. I pray that I may never hear silence.
Herbs in my Garden – YARROW

Yarrow (Achillea millefolium) also is called woundwort, milfoil, thousand-leaf, carpenters weed, nosebleed weed, staunchwort, field hops knight’s milfoil, and herb m-ilitaris.

Yarrow is a drought-tolerant perennial with feathery, fern-like leaves and tiny flowers that are spread out over large, flat heads. A number of showy yarrow hybrids have been bred to display an entire rainbow of colours, however; if you’re growing yarrow for its medicinal properties then stick to the traditional white-flowered heirloom, which most resembles its wild and hardy ancestors.

Yarrow’s genus name, Achillea, comes from the Greek mythological warrior Achilles. Legend says that Achilles used yarrow in the battlefield to help heal his soldiers’ wounds and to stop the bleeding. As a battlefield herb, yarrow was picked fresh, chewed or mashed, and then applied directly to the wound as a poultice.

Yarrow often grows in the disturbed soil of roadsides, along fields and meadows and is particularly prevalent in my back garden as it spreads by both its creeping roots and dropped seeds.

Yarrow’s healing properties and diaphoretic (perspiration inducing) properties are well known. Applied topically as a poultice or rinse, this antimicrobial, styptic, and astringent herb helps promote the growth of healthy tissue while protecting against infection and preventing blood loss. Taken internally as an infusion or tincture, yarrow’s diaphoretic properties cause a light sweat, which helps cool the body and reduce fevers. A uterine stimulant and antispasmodic, yarrow is also traditionally used for relieving painful and delayed menstruation (NB. should be avoided by pregnant women).

Although used primarily as a medicinal herb, Yarrow is also harvested for culinary purposes. With a flavor similar to chervil but a little more bitter Yarrow can be used to flavor fermenting beer in lieu of hops. Tea made of yarrow flowers and leaves is a delightful after dinner beverage, used alone or in combination with other plant material. Although one must be careful to use only a small amount of the crushed dry leaves and flowers, as yarrow is a robust herb. The brew would be bitter if too much is used.

To use fresh yarrow for cooking, cut or break leaves from the stems, or cut the whole plant and keep it fresh in a glass of water, taking the leaves off the plant as you need them. The yarrow will stay fresh 2 to 3 days at room temperature, and up to a week in the refrigerator.

To prepare yarrow for tea I usually cut the entire plant. Rinse in cool water, tie in bunches, shake off excess moisture and hang in a cool, dry and shady place where the air circulates freely. When completely dry, discard the stems and crumble only the leaves and flowers. Place in an airtight glass container and store in a cupboard. Steep 1/2 teaspoon or less in boiling water for each cup of tea. I like the tea sweetened with sugar or honey.

A standard favourite recipe of mine for summer is Beetroot and Yarrow Salad, which can be served warm or the beet cooled before combining..... yum

BEET AND YARROW SALAD
Makes about 4 servings.
1 lb small beets
2 tbsps sugar
2 to 3 tbsps chopped tender yarrow leaves
4 tbsps sour cream
2 tbsps red wine vinegar
Boil beets until tender, peel and dice into cubes. Put in a bowl with yarrow and sprinkle with sugar. Mix together sour cream and vinegar and fold into beets. . .

Enjoy the Blessings
Ulysses Grant’s Failed Attempt to Grant Native Americans Citizenship

By Mary Stockwell, Zócalo Public Square
SMITHSONIANMAG.COM
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The man elected president in 1868—Ulysses S. Grant—was determined to change the way many of his fellow Americans understood citizenship. As he saw it, anyone could become an American, not just people like himself who could trace their ancestry back eight generations to Puritan New England. Grant maintained that the millions of Catholic and Jewish immigrants pouring into the country should be welcomed as American citizens, as should the men, women, and children just set free from slavery during the Civil War. And, at a time when many in the press and public alike called for the extermination of the Indians, he believed every Indian from every tribe should be made a citizen of the United States, too.

Grant was sworn into office as president in 1869, and set forth his vision in his first inaugural address. Calling American Indians the “original occupants of the land,” he promised to pursue any course of action that would lead to their “ultimate citizenship.” It was not an idle promise. In the spring of 1865, he had been appointed the nation’s first General of the Army, a post that involved overseeing all the armies of the United States—including in the West, where conflicts with native tribes had raged throughout the Civil War. In this position, Grant had relied on his good friend and military secretary, Ely S. Parker, a member of the Seneca tribe, for advice. Now, as the newly inaugurated president of the United States, he was ready to implement his plans for the Indians, with Parker at his side as his Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Parker and Grant’s friendship began in 1860, when Parker was working at the time as an engineer for the Treasury Department in Galena, Illinois, and often visited a leather goods store, where the proprietor’s son, Ulysses, worked as a clerk. Ulysses Grant had developed a deep sympathy for the Indians while serving in the army during the Mexican War. Later, on active duty in California and the Columbia River Valley, he saw firsthand the misery that Indians endured in his own nation. Grant never bought into the popular notion that Americans wanted to improve the lives of the native peoples, noting that civilization had brought only two things to the Indians: whiskey and smallpox.

By the time he met Parker, though, Grant was considered a failure. His heavy drinking had helped to end his military career, and now, as a grown man with a wife and four children to support, he was reduced to working for his father. But Parker recognized a kindred spirit. Unlike most white men, who prided themselves on being outgoing, even boisterous, Grant was quiet—so reserved that he usually headed for the store’s back room to avoid talking to customers. Only after Grant got to know a person well did he reveal his kindness and his intelligence. This was just how Parker had been taught to behave when growing up on his people’s reserve in Tonawanda, New York. Men were to remain stoic in public, and to open their hearts to friends only in private.

That President Grant chose Ely Parker as his Commissioner of Indian Affairs was no surprise to anyone who knew Parker. A descendant of the renowned Seneca chiefs Red Jacket and Handsome Lake, he had been marked for greatness even before birth, when his pregnant mother had dreamt of a rainbow stretching from Tonawanda to the farm of the tribe’s Indian agent, which, according to the tribe’s dream interpreters, meant that her child would be a peacemaker between his people and the whites.

Parker mastered English in local academies, both on and off the Tonawanda Reserve, and became an avid reader. In 1846, when just 18 years old, he became the official spokesman of his people, who were fighting the U.S. government’s efforts to remove them from Tonawanda. He soon traveled with the tribe’s leaders to Washington, where he impressed the nation’s top politicians, including President James K. Polk. It would take 11 more years of negotiating with the government for Parker to win the right of his people to stay in their ancestral home. During those years, he studied law and even helped argue a case in the Supreme Court on behalf of his tribe, but he was unable to take the bar exam because he was an Indian, so he became an engineer instead. He was overseeing the construction of a customhouse and marine hospital in
Galena when he met Ulysses Grant.

When the Civil War broke out, Parker returned to New York and tried unsuccessfully to enlist in the Union Army. Finally, with the help of his friend Grant, who was no longer a failure, but instead a renowned general on the brink of defeating the Confederates at Vicksburg, Parker won an appointment as a military secretary. He first served General John Smith and later Grant himself. From Chattanooga to Appomattox, Parker always could be seen at Grant’s side, usually carrying a stack of papers and with an ink bottle tied to a button on his coat. When Lee finally surrendered, it was Ely Parker who wrote down the terms.

Ely S. Parker, the Seneca attorney, engineer, and tribal diplomat, as photographed by Civil War photographer Mathew Brady (National Archives)

The friendship between Grant and Parker strengthened after Grant was appointed General of the Army, a position he held from 1865 to 1869. During these years, Grant often sent Parker, now an adjutant general, to meet with tribes in the Indian Territory and farther west in Montana and Wyoming. Parker listened as tribal leaders described how their country was being overrun by miners, cattlemen, railroad workers, farmers, immigrants from Europe, and freedmen from the South.

Parker reported everything back to Grant and together they worked out the details of a policy with the main goal of citizenship for the Indians. The army would protect Indians on their reservations as they transitioned from their old ways and entered the mainstream of American life, learning how to support themselves through new livelihoods like farming or ranching. It might take a generation or two, but eventually Indians would be able to vote, own businesses, and rely on the protections guaranteed to them in the Constitution.

As president, Grant made Parker his Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and Parker began working to implement the president’s plans, appointing dozens of army officers to oversee the superintendencies, agencies, and reservations in the West. Grant and Parker were so certain of the wisdom of their policy that they failed to see how many people opposed it. Congressmen, who had previously rewarded their supporters with jobs in the Indian service, resented the fact that Grant had taken away these plum positions. Many Americans, especially in the West, complained that the president sided with the Indians rather than with his own countrymen. Reformers, who wanted the government to impose radical changes on the Indians, doing away with tribal identity and dividing reservations among individual property owners, criticized Grant and Parker for allowing the Indians to make changes at their own pace. Tribes that had not yet been brought onto reservations vowed to fight any attempt by the army to do so. Tribes in the Indian Territory, especially the Cherokee, wanted to remain independent nations.

But no one opposed Grant’s policy as strongly as the Board of Indian Commissioners, a 10-man committee of wealthy Americans that Grant had appointed as part of his new Indian policy. Grant had expected the board to audit the Indian service, but the board demanded instead to run it.

The board wholeheartedly supported the efforts of Congress to overturn Grant’s Indian policy. The first step came in the summer of 1870 when Congress banned active duty military personnel from serving in government posts—primarily, Grant believed, so that Congressmen could appoint their supporters instead. To counteract this move and prevent the Indian service from sliding back into the corruption of political patronage, the president appointed missionaries to run the reservations. Grant was still determined to win American citizenship for every Indian, and he hoped that the missionaries would guide them along the path toward it. But the Board of Indian Commissioners remained just as determined to oppose Grant. William Welsh, the board’s first chairman, believed the president’s policy could be overturned by toppling the “savage” who stood at its center, Ely Parker. Welsh was infuriated that a man like Parker could hold such a high position. He was also appalled that Parker had married a young white woman, Minnie Sackett, and that the couple was the toast of Washington society.
To take down Parker, Welsh accused him of negotiating a bloated million-dollar contract to supply the Sioux in the summer of 1870 and pocketing most of the money himself. Welsh demanded that Congress investigate Parker and hand over the management of the Indian service to the Board of Indian Commissioners. Congress obliged, forcing Parker to submit to a public trial before a committee of the House of Representatives. Although Parker was ultimately exonerated, Congress passed legislation recognizing the members of the Board of Indian Commissioners as the supervisors of the Indian service. Humiliated and with no real power, Parker resigned his position as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1871.

Without an ally like Parker at his side, Grant watched his plans for the Indians come undone. A succession of Commissioners of Indian Affairs replaced Parker, but none had his vision. Before long, Grant ordered the army, which he had once hoped would protect the Indians, to fight against the tribes in a series of bloody wars, including the Modoc War in 1873, the Red River War in 1874, and the Great Sioux War in 1876. By the time Grant left office in 1877, his “peace policy,” as the press had nicknamed it, was judged a failure by all.

Since then, Grant has been remembered as a “circumstantial” reformer, at best, or as the clueless tool of wealthy men like Welsh, at worst. His accomplished friend Ely Parker has been wrongly dismissed as little more than a token. Americans would not realize until the 20th century that the vision of the two friends had been correct. In 1924, Congress granted citizenship to all American Indians who had not already achieved it.

Sadly, the friendship between Parker and the president came undone along with Grant’s Indian policy. After resigning his post in 1871 and moving away from Washington, Parker saw Grant only twice more. When the former president lay dying in the summer of 1885, Parker came to visit him, but Grant’s oldest son Fred always turned him away. While Grant never reflected on the failure of his policy, Parker always regretted that the plans he had made with his quiet friend from the leather goods store in Galena had ended so badly.

Mary Stockwell is a writer in Ohio. She is the author of Interrupted Odyssey: Ulysses S. Grant and the American Indians.
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