



John Whitright

January 10, 1941 - October 6, 2020

John was a proud Assiniboine-Sioux born in Poplar, Montana on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation to Henrietta Headdress and Everett Whitright Sr. As a young boy, John lived in a Kelso rooming house where his mother worked as a cook. Each time we'd go to the beach driving through Kelso, he'd point out the one remaining building left of the place. It was there he learned to play pool on an old table. He'd move his shoeshine box from one side to the other, standing on it to practice the shots that later earned him his reputation for being one of the best pool players in the Northwest. Later, John moved in with foster families, always saying that he learned a lot on their farms, raising cows and horses developing a lifelong affinity for animals. He especially loved his years as a boy in Rose Valley just outside of Kelso telling stories of playing with other boys up in the hills gathering berries and apples for one of his especially dear German foster families who canned and made sauerkraut he loved.

Becoming clean and sober at 34 years old, John soon trained as a drug and alcohol counselor at Northwest Training Institute. He worked for the Nisqually tribe as their first alcohol counselor learning his craft as he gained experience. Later, he worked as the Director of the Indian Child Welfare Program in Portland, Oregon. Over the years, his counseling work took him to various Native American agencies, including STOW and SPIPA culminating with several years at the Tahoma Indian Center in Tacoma. John loved pow-wows, setting up our teepee several times a year. He especially enjoyed the summer sobriety pow-wow, hosting AA meetings. He had many friends in AA and countless members have told stories of John encouraging them in the daily fight for sobriety—incorporating the name White Buffalo into his logo for halfway houses and counseling. John always carried his AA coin in his pocket—in June he got his 46th. John was a man who constantly reached out to others, affecting so many people's lives in positive, wonderful ways. He never gave up on anyone—always believing everyone was equal and worthy of his love and patience. We could never drive downtown without someone he knew waving their hands at him, smiling and waving. He made friends in many places especially in the BCA Pool League playing out of several taverns and was patiently waiting to go back when we thought it was safe. Always a gentleman, John said you are

playing against yourself, no one else. He would want us to remember others and keep ourselves last.

John leaves behind his loving wife Molly of 30 years, children Fawn Whitright, Shawna Williams and James and Nee'E Morgan and stepson Barry Miller, several grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Preceding him in death were son Eric, his parents, sisters Aloma and Siouxie and dear friend Oscar Blackwater. We would like to thank the caring team at the Puyallup Tribal clinic, especially Dr. Kozlowski.

Some words that John wrote long ago...

Softly like a flower, are as I wish life to be. Also it is like...a child, a puppy, a drop of rain, a sandy beach, a snowy mountain, a cloudy sky, woods wet from morning's dew, a song bird, a beautiful woman, an artist's touch, a day dream, a happy holiday, sunrise-sunset. Beginning always, never an end..., no good-byes...Always happy and knowing.