

## **Suggested interview questions for The Wind Is My Mother:**

### **How did you meet Bear Heart?**

I was going through a serious low point in my life in 1987. I had to file for bankruptcy, lost my business to a dishonest partner, my lover committed suicide and my new boyfriend dumped me for a girl 15 years younger. I was thinking of suicide when a friend suggested I go to see Bear Heart. He was a brilliant counselor and my meeting with him gave me hope. I was living in Los Angeles at the time and he was coming there frequently to teach and I was blessed to be able to spend time with him on each visit, do vision quests with him and travel with him.

### **How did you get interested in Native American spirituality?**

I've always been a spiritual seeker and tried many paths to have a relationship with a Higher Power that would fulfill me. One I tried was joining a cult that had us meditating an hour each morning and an hour each evening. That was very tough for me because I have always loved to be active and outdoors. I finally put out a prayer to the universe asking for a spiritual path that involved nature. Two weeks later I was invited to my first Native American purification lodge. I felt I'd come home. Native American's respect for nature, the animal world and elders was a natural fit for me.

### **How did you come to write this book?**

My first 20 minute meeting with Bear Heart literally saved my life. I felt a book of his wisdom and teachings could help a lot of people.

### **Does this book teach how to become a shaman?**

Absolutely not. Interestingly, a much more relevant Native American teaching is how to be a human being: how to practice kindness, loyalty, courage, patience and so many other positive qualities that lead to a healthy, balanced life. No one who truly understands the responsibilities of being a medicine person or shaman would ever seek it. Your life is not your own; you live a life of constant service.

### **What can a modern reader take away from this book?**

How to be happy, healthy, wise, funny, conscientious, inspired and inspiring, a good parent, a good child, a good citizen of planet earth. It's a long list about living a good life.

### **I heard Bear Heart was an ordained Baptist minister. Doesn't that conflict with his traditional training?**

Not at all. There's only one God. How different religious groups approach prayer and devotion is, to me, the same as whether you say a prayer in English, German or Portuguese.

### **Why would a Christian read this book?**

For the universal truths of how to live a balanced, spiritual life. Let your every step be as a prayer is a good place to start.

**What surprised you the most about what you learned from Native American spirituality?**

Their sense of humor. That's part of the balance. Being a spiritual person is not about being serious all the time. It's about enjoying all of the beauty the Creator put on this planet.

The other important thing I learned is how to pray from the heart without memorizing a prayer. I was raised as a Catholic and prayer was about memorizing the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary." But when I would sit in ceremony with Native Americans, they prayed very eloquently from their hearts. I was often moved to tears by their sincerity. It took me awhile to learn that simplicity in prayer, but now it's how I pray every day.

**What native American traditions do you recommend we incorporate into our society?**

Ceremony for Soldiers coming home from war; they've seen death and need to be cleansed of that negative energy.

Respect for elders; they have so much to teach us on the wisdom learned from a full life. All our elders should be honored and well-taken care of. Not left alone in nursing facilities.

Teaching children not to make fun of those who are different. Bullying would never be tolerated in an indigenous society.

The chief was always the poorest man in the tribe, because he gave away what he had to ensure all his people had what they needed. So not giving so many special privileges to our leaders would be a good place to start. We could solve a lot of our countries' problems if Congress had to use the same medical plan and retirement funding that the rest of our citizens do. Then we'd get something that worked!

**Isn't Native American ceremony something white's aren't supposed to do?**

Many Native American's feel that way, but the Native American spiritual path is much more than ceremony. It's about a way of living your life, developing good character: kindness, forgiveness. The list is long. Actually, my Native American teachers were more interested in a person's heart than the color of their skin as to whether they would authorize them to conduct ceremony. Bear Heart addressed that in the book. Some Natives were forming a new chapter of the Native American Church and wanted to keep non-Indians out. They asked Bear Heart's opinion and he said, "You can forbid them to participate if you want to. But then you can't call it a church. Because a church is God's business, and no human can take a stand like God and say, 'you can't come in.'"