

Conveners Corner

By Drew Henry, Co-Convener, Illuman New Mexico

The Wind Rider

Fly Free
you traveler of the wind
Show them how to spread
their wings
and effortlessly rise
carried higher by the
churning and turning
that will lift them
beyond that which
you can even now see

Descend into those
dark places
Return with the recognition
that all you thought
you knew
has now been transformed

My breath beckons
Ravens call
Rise and fly free

When the wind quiets
listen
I will rise again
So shall you

Ride the wind
Fly free

The words of "The Wind Rider" came to me as I sat at the base of a majestic cottonwood not far from the banks of the Rio Grande. We had been sent out to walk

on the land and to listen for the lessons of the more-than-human world. The fall colors dotted the New Mexico landscape. Blue skies of October hung overhead.

The call from the ravens summoned my attention skyward. I watched their dark figures soar, the westward-facing granite of the Sandias offering a backdrop to the scene. I could see the foothills across the way, up against the Cibola National Forest where my former home—and, more significantly, my former life—lay. The ravens soared, flying free.

I remembered other ravens that flew overhead as I sat up against the red rock cliffs north of Abiquiu. Following one of our rituals of the Men's Rites, we again had been sent out on the land. I knew the terrain well. Campo Santo called, inviting me to lay my own dyings to rest.

I sat in the shade of a dusty juniper, looking west, when I heard the flap of his wings before I could see his dark body. His shadow splayed in front of me. His descent turned as Pedernal framed this scene. A rising current my own human eyes could not see began to lift the raven's body as he stretched out his wings. Turning and turning, upward he climbed, almost effortlessly, until his shape escaped my sight. The bright sun of late May warmed us both. Red, sage-green, and wide-open blue hues surrounded us. A light wind, creation's breath, carried us onward.

A marriage of over twenty years was coming to an end. The dusty, desert earth here had often received the salt of my tears. Adolescent sons inhabited my heart. The life they had known had likewise been severed. It was a wilderness friend who helped me to see that they were the *them* of my stirrings.

Show *them* how to spread their wings . . . that will lift *them* beyond that which you can even now see . . . I will rise again . . . so shall you . . . ride the wind . . . fly free.

The invitation to learn from the land and all its inhabitants, including our brothers—human and others—continues to call. Here with Illuman New Mexico, we are weaving together this pattern as we begin 2021. There has been much descent over this past year. As I write these words, Quarantine distanced us almost 365 days ago.

In our monthly gatherings, we are sending brothers out on the land to listen for the voices of creation. In alternating months, we are gathering in a virtual circle to listen from the heart as brothers speak from their hearts about the twists and turns of their own lives. These practices are foundational for us all. So, we gather. We go out. We come back in. We seek to be transformed by a power greater than ourselves, and we welcome others . . . into the wind.

Fly free.