

# "Welcome Home"

## Healing Community Project for Veterans

by Heidi Katchia Van Vliet, MSSW, HTCP

In August of 2005, I organized my first volunteer project on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Oregon for my Healing Touch Program Level 5 homework. I had planned on doing HT with the elders in the assisted living program while a friend of mine, Larson, (from the reservation), played the Native American flute. When I asked Larson about playing the flute, he wanted to know about Healing Touch. I met him at the longhouse (a Native American lodge) and gave him a treatment. He felt relief from his pain from shrapnel injuries he sustained in combat. Immediately, he felt that we should bring Healing Touch treatments to the veterans.

Larson, a Vietnam veteran, told me he had a vision as a child of seven Native American warriors riding horseback up a hill and into the sky. Years after his tour of duty in Vietnam he realized that this vision was meant to inspire him to help many wounded warriors like himself and their families. In 1996 he started the "Wounded Warriors Healing Circle". For my project, he gathered a group of Vietnam veterans from his healing circle to receive HT, as well as, a couple of elders to be there for support.

I brought my husband, Ken, a medicine man for the tribe, and asked my HT mentor, Linda Thomas, to help me offer treatments. There were six veterans, two family members of veterans, and two elders. I gave a short explanation of Healing Touch before we started. My husband would "brush down" the veterans with the eagle feather fan after my initial Healing Touch assessment, and again, at the end of the session -- after the final HT assessment.

Working on the veterans was a very intense experience. All the veterans had post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from their experiences in Vietnam. Some of them looked old for their age and some seemed angry, some had substance abuse problems

and all had many physical problems related to war injuries. The

Healing Touch treatments transformed them.

During the assessment, it was noted that all of the chakras were very compromised so I began each session with either a Chakra Connection or Full Body Connection depending on their physical symptoms. Following that, I found several techniques to be very helpful for PTSD. Mind Clearing seemed to help the flashbacks, nightmares, anger, headaches, and distorted thinking. One veteran stated that he felt like he had something stuck on the side of his head. Magnetic Clearing was good for substance abuse problems --to remove debris from their energy systems.

Etheric Clearing (Level 3) was good for clearing specific energy that I intuitively felt to have been brought back from Vietnam. I set my intent to lovingly send this energy back to its home. I felt this condition with several of the veterans on which I worked. Magnetic Passes: Hands in Motion (MPHIM) helped balance the energy system. I was able to coach one veteran's spouse to do MPHIM on her husband whenever she felt that he was



getting agitated. I felt that it was good to educate the spouse or other family members about the energy system and what they could do to help.

Some of the veterans talked about their war experience and some did not. When they did talk I was able to connect the symptoms and their trauma and how it affected their energy system and body. In some cases I was able to help them understand from an energetic point of view what the PTSD did to their energy system and how they could reframe some of their symptoms.

For example, the anger, which was needed for combat, did not serve them anymore. This anger could be seen as a friend to alert them when something was being triggered with the PTSD or when they were feeling powerless. This awareness could also help them handle their emotions in another manner and help shed the self-appointed label of an “angry” person. Most of the veterans felt or were told that the PTSD would never be cured. It became clear that the PTSD had become an integral part of who they are and how they see themselves. It has been so pervasive in their lives that they continually see themselves as the wounded veteran.

This project taught me a lot about the veterans and how their trauma affected them. After the treatments, the veterans looked younger, more relaxed, and happier. To finish the session, I would always say “welcome home”. This was symbolic of the session, in helping to bring them back to balance, to their center, and to welcome them back to their greater home -- their country. At the end of the day, the elders initiated a talking circle to offer some words of wisdom. Everyone was able to express how they felt about the day. The talking circle was very moving. It added an element of the sacred which we already feel every time we do Healing Touch. The day was a healing day for the group of veterans as well as those of us who were there to do the work.

Every April, Larson and his family hold their “Healing Circle” on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation at a longhouse in the wilderness. This is open to all veterans and families who need healing. I volunteer Healing Touch treatment sessions and often work outside under a tarp by a river. It is the most wonderful place to do healing work. The Healing Circle begins on a Friday night with the lighting of the healing fire which is kept burning all week-end. On Saturday, classes and ceremonies are held to educate, share, and heal the veteran and their families. Sunday, a closing ceremony is held. It is a wonderfully supportive group of people that get together.

If anyone would like more information on the “Healing Circle” for a veteran or for themselves, feel free to email me at [h2bears@cascadeaccess.com](mailto:h2bears@cascadeaccess.com).

#### About the author:

Heidi Katchia Van Vliet, Two Bears, is a Healing Touch Certified Practitioner and has a Masters degree in Social Work. Heidi worked for 20 years with emotionally disturbed children and their families, but now uses some of those skills with her Healing Touch. She has been doing Healing Touch work since her first class in 2001, and became certified at the first HTPA conference in Denver last summer. She lives in Oregon and works with her husband, who is a medicine man, doing healing work on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation with veterans, elders, and families as well as having a small Healing Touch practice. She is involved in the wonderful and supportive local Healing Touch community and helps plan their spring and fall gatherings. She and her husband co-write a monthly article called “At the Crossroads, A Native American perspective on self-care”. Heidi and her husband spend much of their summer and fall time in the high mountains on the reservation hiking, fishing, gathering, and taking photos. Heidi has a business called Two Bears Designs, selling her photos, beadwork, talking sticks and a variety of other inspirational products.



Above photos: (top) The He He LongHouse, (bottom) Welcome Home Healing Project participants with Heidi and Linnie Thomas, HTCP/I.

On page 23: Heidi providing Healing Touch during the Welcome Home Healing Project for Veterans.