

Ojibwe healer invites community on healing journey with 'Living by the Medicine Wheel'?



Ojibwe healer and author Asha Frost didn't always have a handle on what she describes as 'the healing potential that lies within us all.'

As the descendent of grandparents who survived the Residential School system, much of her ancestral knowledge was just out of reach. But, after being diagnosed with lupus as a teen, the Newmarket resident, now 47, began a journey to tap into the traditional wisdom of her people 'and now she is sharing this with the wider world.

On Tuesday, April 30, at 7 p.m. Frost will host 'Living by the Medicine Wheel,' a conversation at the Aurora Public Library (APL) which is part of APL's year-long Indigenous Teachings program.

'My grandparents [being] in Residential School really broke and fractured my connection to my ancestors, my ancestral ways,' says Frost. 'My life has been about reclamation, remembering and doing it maybe in a more non-conventional way as we imagine Indigenous people sitting with their elders doing these teachings; that's not really the way that's happened for many of us who are in my generation whose parents were fractured from those teachings. Their parents had their language taken away, their teachings taken away, their culture suppressed and oppressed. I feel like my purpose here is to reclaim and remember so that I can pass those onto my children and the seven generations that come.'

Doing so has been a very personal journey for Frost and it hasn't been easy.

Her diagnosis, she said, put her on the path of 'reclamation and remembering' because she was driven to 'find ways that the Earth could help me heal.'

Growing up in Newmarket, Frost says she did so in an environment where there was 'not a lot' of Indigenous representation and, for a time, she didn't want to be seen as Indigenous. This watershed period in her life made her realize how 'separated' she was from her 'ancestral ways and teachings' which spurred grief and sadness.

'There were a lot of questions at the time, so I really had to listen to my dream time, my ancestors' voice that spoke to me,' she

recalls. 'I have had to learn and learn ways that are more 'indigenized' and decolonized because we're really colonized into thinking the only ways to learn are through books, through lectures, through seminars, and I have had to unwind some of that and really listen to the ways our people used to listen and remember our knowledge. When my children were born, that was a huge push; somebody said to me, 'If you don't live out your purpose then your children won't be able to live out theirs,' and I realized that was a huge initiation to me to keep going, keep speaking, and then share those global skills in a big way.'

One of the results of that effort is Frost's bestselling book: 'You Are the Medicine: 13 Moons of Indigenous Wisdom, Ancestral Connection, and Animal Spirit Guidance,' published in 2022.

After publishing the book, Frost says she was 'nervous' about how it would be received within Indigenous communities.

'[It's because] I understand why we keep these so hidden, so sacred, or sort of tight to our hearts,' says Frost. 'I know my instructions from my ancestors is to share these so we can heal together. I feel it is an invitation to reconciliation to share as I do'. The most beautiful feedback I've gotten [is from] Indigenous youth who say, 'We don't have any connection to our culture. We're looking at ways to learn and your book has provided that for us.' I think I was just really terrified and that was really rooted in that generational trauma, too, so I had to work through that in big ways. Even elders who come and we sit through Zoom meetings or circles say, 'It touched me so deeply,' and that has been really rewarding.'

This month's presentation, of course, is open to all members of the public.

Frost says she hopes registrants come to the APL's Living Room space with an open heart, letting go of 'any expectations because I think we sometimes come into these spaces imagining it is going to be a certain way, and I would love people to come in with just, 'I'm going to have an experience and this is going to make the experience rooted a little deeper because it is going to be powerful.' That is something I know to be true.

'People can assume an Indigenous person is going to teach about certain things and be a certain way; I am not saying I am not those things and I don't teach in that way, but maybe it is an opportunity to look at your biases because we all have them, we have marinated in this society that has been rooted in white supremacy' perhaps even an invitation to look at, 'What are my biases about Indigenous people? What are the things I have heard over the years? What are the things that have seeped in from the collective that may be still in there somewhere and bringing that out? Hopefully we can heal it together that night.'

For more on Asha Frost and 'Living by the Medicine Wheel,' including registration, visit www.indigenousteachings.ca and select Events from the menu.

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