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Who I Am Today: Raven Crow and the Gifts from My “Strokes”

Raven Crow
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I freak out sometimes because I am not an artist. I am a doodler. I like to do my own art, my own way. I have always been that type of person. Once a teacher said I made a mistake on my painting. She told me to do something blue on my painting. I was offended. I cannot honour what is coming out in the art when someone is telling me what to do. It is a sacred gift that is coming out. I have to honour it as much as I can.

I understand self-doubt, especially if someone isn't there to tell you not to have self-doubt. I tried to commit suicide many times. I was heavily into drinking and drugs too. I split my head on a train track and died when I was 18. I went to the spirit world and came back. At 19 people thought I was mute because I was shy: shy and introverted. I did not learn to read and write until I was 40 years old, and then when I was 52 years old, I lost it

again. All I ever wanted was to get a degree and provide for myself.

Before I had the strokes, I was a dance instructor. I had my own business too. And I also led ceremonies for the community. I never asked for money. I did what I was supposed to do to help people. When I help people, I help myself. I was asked to leave after some time. I was heartbroken because these ceremonies were about helping the people. I needed that medicine. I carried the pipe but then those things stopped. I hoped it would come back.

I had gangrene twice. They were about to amputate my arm the first time. The second time I had gangrene was after I had a breast reduction. I am a diabetic and they didn't take care of me properly. They were negligent. I was scared as hell. The smell of the infection was so rotten. The infections led to seizures and strokes. I could barely talk. I could barely say anything. I was told I would have to be on medication for the rest of my life. People ask me, "Do you think it is because you're Native?" Guaranteed.

If it were not for the strokes, though, I wouldn't be doing this. At the hospital almost everybody lived in their room watching television. I could not afford it, so that's why I started to draw. Things always happen for a reason and I'm okay with it. This is the path that Creator has made for me. That's why Creator kicked my ass a couple times. "You're not listening to me." So Creator says it is time for us to get back together.

I never had an art lesson in my life. The art came out of the strokes. A year after my first

stroke, I had another stroke again. I thought, “Oh, cool! More new gifts.” That’s the first thing I had in my mind after the stroke. What gifts are going to come my way? And then a year later another stroke, and I said to myself, more gifts are coming. I had six strokes in a row and multiple seizures. I have always been a positive person, but since the strokes I’m even more positive.

After the strokes, I had reading and writing problems. It improved dramatically with the help of the art. It’s interesting how things come out and things come in. With the strokes, the ceremony left and the dancing left, but the art came in. The only way I know how to help now is through my art. If I can help one person lift their spirit, I have accomplished what I need to do. So that is the way it is. At the end, it all created who I am today and I love it. I am perfect the way I am.



**Blue Morning
Star a.k.a B-Star**

Blue Morning Star is one of my spirit names. I made this for a friend of mine who lives in Sweden. We have been friends for 32 years, and she’s always taking care of me and helping me out.



The Power of your Ancestors

This bird is looking back to our ancestors and honouring our medicine people. To me, everyone is a medicine person, and we must honour those who have gone home to the spirit world. They are always there looking over us.



Einstein and Friends

It took a long time for this painting to come and I didn't realize right away what it was about. The spiky haired one on the left is a female and the one on the right is a male. The middle one is a Two-Spirit bird with the medicine wheels. By claiming their sacred identities, Two-Spirit people are restoring balance between the male and female genders and bringing balance to the world.



Bear Medicine

Another one of my spirit names is Bear Woman so I drew myself here. Like many of my paintings, this one has spikes. The spikes are a form of armour and protection for myself.



The Courage to Be Me

I always felt like the ugly duckling and the black sheep. I never felt like I fit in with anyone. I never had a place to belong. This is me honouring my own uniqueness. There is a reason why the Creator created each one of us. The Creator wants us to be who we are. It's about honouring who you are, and you are perfect. We are all perfect just the way we are.

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