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## In Celebration

As we approach the holiday season, I have such a feeling of celebration. Traditionally I get caught up in the hustle and bustle of preparation for family, gift giving, and of course food! This year there is a spirit of grace and sacred wonder filling my heart - for our family, our community and especially the horses. The horses have *remembered* for me the light we share as humans, that each one of us can make a difference through heart to heart connection!

Love and light to you all  
Wendy



## Celebrating Spirit Walker

Spirit Walker (formerly called Buddy) joined our horse rehabilitation program here at Horse Spirit Connections in August 2011.

Spirit had raced at the Finger Lakes Gaming and Race Track in New York where he showed some promise and won a number of races. After his second year of racing, he ended up at the Finger Lakes Thoroughbred Rescue Centre. When he came to us, his thin, four-year-old body couldn't support him and he had lost the spirit to run. Spirit was emaciated and suffering from rain rot and mud fever. His nose and jaw are permanently disfigured from what appears to be the effects of rough treatment from a chain. In his short four years of life, ours became his sixth home.

Unfortunately, Spirit's introduction to our herd was traumatic. He presented himself as such a victim that neither one of our herds would accept him. My heart broke when they physically attacked him and he suffered even more abuse. We quickly put him on his own to recover from his additional injuries and the trauma of rejection. Aria agreed to join him while he



was being nurtured back to health settling into a new way of life.

Throughout all of this turmoil, Spirit remained calm and sensitive. During his last two years with us, he has gone through all the traditional life milestones that should have occurred over his six years of life: kicking up his heels and racing through the fields; developing confidence; expressing his sexual interest in the mares (they kept him in line!); creating his own little herd (including the lead mare) within the bigger herd; playing with Thor and being respected for who he is! It was during this time that "Buddy" stepped into his power and received his new name "Spirit Walker".

Due to past trauma associated with arena's and round pens, Spirit has not engaged in the majority of our teaching exercises. However, when people meet our teaching horses in the barn or outside in the paddocks, he has made very deep and healing connections with people he can resonate with.



Today I am celebrating Spirit's first Reflective Round Pen in the arena! I am so proud of him!,

Catherine Davies, one of our current FEEL Facilitators, shares her thoughts from this experience with Spirit:

*"Even before I asked Spirit if he wanted to join me in the round pen, it felt like he had already made a choice. He was just waiting for the invitation. I could feel his quiet resolve; as we walked to the arena, and it never wavered, not even amidst the swirl of my own self-doubt."*

*"It brings tears to my eyes as I remember the way we danced lightly together in the sacred space created by each member of the FEEL team. The entire arena seemed to fill with the grace of Spirit - his deep awareness of the honor and responsibility contained in this new path."*

*"It was a feeling he carried with him into the barn where the other horses seemed to pause in recognition. Spirit had grown."*

*"I know everyone in our group felt very grateful to have experienced Spirit's quiet power as he stepped into his role as a teacher and healer at Horse Spirit Connections."*

*"Me - there are no words to describe how blessed I feel to have been right by his side."*

Two weeks ago, my heart burst with joy watching Spirit interact with Red Man and Thor when they came together for an exercise in the arena. Participants had created a Mandela of their vision with objects found in the arena to represent various themes. One of the creations was made up of thin foam tubes about three feet in length. Thor and Red Man each had an end in their mouths and were playing with it. This was magical enough but then Spirit approached and as an accepted member of the herd, took hold of it as well. All three of them came together in unity and harmony with respect for one another.

This gentle soul is learning from our wise herd what it is like to be recognized as a sentient being and have choice in life. His heart is huge and remains open to human connection.



*Spirit Walker has a new life here at Horse Spirit Connections. This is made possible by donations to our rehabilitation program. This money goes towards the care and feeding of these beautiful creatures. If you would like to donate to this program, click on the button below:*

[Donate Today](#)

Like us on Facebook!

## Our 2014 Calendar of Workshops

Workshop details and schedule for 2014 are available [on-line](#). We also offer private sessions and intensive explorations. Please call us for details.

### **Discover Your Inner Self** (2 day workshop)

March 22 & 23 - May 3 & 4 - July 12 & 13 - September 27 & 28

### **Heart Connections** (2 day workshop)

July 19 & 20 - November 1 & 2

### **Horse Medicine** (3 day workshop)

August 15, 16 & 17 - October 3, 4 & 5



## Reflections from a one day workshop

**Mary Zilney** MSW, RSW  
Chief Executive Officer  
Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region

As the CEO of a mid-size not for profit agency, my responsibilities seem endless. One day runs into the next with constant worry about accomplishing excellence in service delivery with inadequate funding. The pace is fast, the hours are long, and the stress is high. Being able to spend a day at Horse Spirit Connections with my relatively new management team was definitely a luxury; while at the same time being absolutely necessary in order to propel the team to the next level of development.

For me personally, it is best described as a day of reflection and redirection. I have garnered a deeper respect for this magnificent animal; admiration encircled in a renewed understanding. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to spend the day with the horses, especially Thor and Paris, who taught me: to slow down, breathe deeply and just be me... not a CEO, wife, mother or grandmother; but just me. I connected with these teachers at a level that I didn't know existed until that day. The connection was profound and unexplainable. It was an unforgettable experience. Wendy and Andre are extraordinary human beings; I feel most fortunate that our paths have crossed. Thank you for allowing me this life altering experience.



## Looking for something unique as a Gift?

*Gift Certificates from Horse Spirit Connections*

It is not too late to give the gift of horse magic with our incredible herd of horses.

Gift Certificates are available for private sessions and workshops.

Contact us at 905-936-4450

## Making Connections at Pine River

By Victoria Poe

### FEEL Trainer and Horse Spirit Connections Advisory Board Member

"If I want to change something, I have to truly want it in my heart." (Reflection from Pine River participant.)

Over many years, I have witnessed connections between horses and connections between humans and horses. Horses have continually united with humans throughout history and across cultures. It amazes me how horses touch peoples' hearts and allow persons to rediscover parts of themselves. Horses invite us to feel deeply.

This summer, I finished my Master of Social Work and during this journey I worked at Pine River Institute, a residential treatment centre and outdoor leadership experience for youth 13 to 19 struggling with mental health issues, and specifically with addictive behaviours. The youth engaged in many experiential activities during their healing journey and I felt compelled to connect the horses with the youth at Pine River. Finally in October the girl's team came to meet the horses at Horse Spirit Connections and in December the boy's team spent the day. The community at Pine River is constantly changing; some youth are starting their program; some are mid-way and some are transitioning back to the community at large. Watching the group dynamics adjust to new members coming in and persons leaving, reminded me of how horses find their place in the herd, respond to a hierarchy yet help each other thrive as a group.



During the one-day workshops, the Pine River participants met the horses, listened to their stories, and encountered trials and tribulations. They walked with horses over hurdles and in turn understood a little more the challenges that may interfere with achieving their goals. They also led horses in a round pen or as a group. It was soon apparent when one group of boys struggled to hold the position of visionary, and trust that the team members would follow. A youth wrote, "Improving my confidence will not happen overnight. It will require perseverance."

One participant described how trust can be developed and felt with horses, "Horses are animals that make me feel grounded and safe. Connections are very valuable." Another girl said horses calmed her down, and although skeptical at the beginning of the day, she commented on how connected she could feel with an animal.

Participants learned to determine the 'personal space' of horses and also to set their personal boundaries to feel safe in the presence of a horse. After spending a day with horses one person wrote, "Move slowly when meeting new people. They may need more time than you."

From the interactions with the horses and each other, participants experienced feelings and gained skills in the management of self and interactions of others including self-confidence and empathy. One youth wrote, "I need to speak my mind. I'm so unsure of myself so I never speak up. But turns out, when I share, people can relate and want to listen."

The horses give a deeper sense of self and help build confidence to make change in our lives. Gratitude to the community from Pine River who were willing to engage, persevere and open up to the horses.



A hand painted Thank You card from the youth at Pine River

## Become a FEEL Facilitator!

Horse Spirit Connections founded the FEEL (Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning) Certification Program in 2008 and have over 90 graduates from North America. FEEL is a leading-edge modality for developing human potential and participants learn to create a horse-centered, experiential learning environment that supports personal growth. Throughout the training, prospective FEEL facilitators gain self-knowledge and acquire skills and experience to develop their own FEEL programs where horses are valued for their roles as teachers and therapists.

This comprehensive training program is suitable for coaches, educators, facilitators, equine professionals, wellness practitioners, and other individuals who are looking for practical training and experience in developing Facilitated Equine Experiential Learning programs in the expanding field of Equine Guided Healing.





We celebrate these five passionate women who completed their FEEL training sessions in October: Beverley Clifton, Brenda Elkins, Chantel Lemire, Jennifer Garland and Julia Morgan.

*"My FEEL certification program opened up my awareness to the wisdom of horses. I have been around horses for most of my life but I have learned to connect with them and appreciate them on an entirely different level. I love how quickly my own horse learned the work and began to partner with me in a way I could never have imagined. I look forward to sharing the magic of this experience with horses and people."*  
Brenda E.

**In March we are offering the FEEL training in British Columbia. Hillary Schneider, one of our FEEL Graduates is hosting it at her beautiful facility outside of Ladner. Interested? There are only 2 spots remaining.**



Wendy & Hillary in Ladner BC

**Or Join us at the next FEEL Certification Training in Ontario which starts in May. [Click here for more information](#)**

## Awaken your soul through the Wisdom Circle Path



We invite you to discover more of the life YOU came here to live! Live life with passion, courage, and joy. This yearlong Wisdom Circle program is a combination of ancient Shamanic teachings and the mystery and magic of our eleven horses having ascended to a higher consciousness. This experiential program is the quickest way to find your connection to a heart empowered way of being. This journey will take you through a transformation of consciousness connecting your body, mind, and soul to Spirit.

**Our next program starts February 7, 2014**

Click here to [download](#) our flyer.

For more information and program details visit [HorseMedicineLodge.com](http://HorseMedicineLodge.com)

*"This past weekend for me, was a milestone of having completed the first year of the Wisdom Circle Path. I have commented many times that the decision to follow this path has allowed me to heal more in my life than I ever thought would be possible. As I look back to my circumstances a year ago, even I am amazed by the leap into healing that has transpired.*

*"As I allowed myself to trust, I found support and acceptance - not judgment and rejection for essentially being 'me'. In sharing authentically, what I received was a deeper understanding of not only who I am but why I am."*

Nancy B.

Quick Links:

**Horse Spirit Connections website**  
**Horse Spirit Connections Facebook page**  
**Horse Spirit Connections You Tube channel**  
**Horse Medicine Lodge website**  
**FEEL Alumni webpage**

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