

“Medicine Man” by Sean Diediker

What is a “medicine man?” He is not a shaman, often associated with personal gain, he is not a witch doctor, associated with witchcraft. He is a traditional healer and spiritual leader among Native Americans to secure the help of the spirit world including the Great Spirit, and for the sake of healing diseases of the body as well as ailments that might occur between peoples and nature. In short, he is a man with position and power and responsibility that places him at the forefront of the cultural practices of his people, garnering respect commensurate to his duties. To paint such a noble is a prodigious task. Artist Sean Diediker has met the challenge with dignity and profundity equitable to the great subject that was this task and formidable challenge.

There is a delicate balance met in the humility of the medicine man; true servant of his people, channel of the elements, mediator of the Great Spirit, placater of man and nature, and the magnificent force that he is; leader of his people, master of the elements, mouthpiece of the Great Spirit, and commander of man and nature. Diediker has painted a synergy of both aspects of the medicine man, as both aspects are veritable, real and essential.

The facial features of this great man do not bear the mark of overt nobility or stature but of meekness and reticence. They are the features of a man who seeks within himself and holds troves of great wisdom. His eyes, not penetrating but astute, are captive to great secrets and a sanctity of knowledge and understanding; they do not share by their plasticity with any affectation. He is resolved within himself and knows his place and knows who he is and has nothing to prove and no show to put on by proving it. His posture also reveals his reticence. He holds himself inwardly, closing himself up. Never was there less a flaunting figure of a man, a more reserved and controlled sense of being.

Simultaneously, he exudes a knowing, exudes a prodigality, exudes in his composure, a wealth of inner fire, that those among men who go to great lengths to prove themselves, will recognize and shudder from, seeing the greatness of the masterful comportment of the medicine man. The shroud, in its great graphic stripes of black and white, worn on the outside, are a symbol of the power on the inside, and it is recognized seamlessly and with great effect. Comprising the entire picture plane, with a great cloud to compare in portentousness, a small figure to the bottom right looking up as if this were a god, there is no question or doubt about just who this medicine man is.

Ehren E. Clark