

## **POSITIVE PEER ~ Weyhan “Moon” Smith**

People call him Moon. Weyhan means moon in his original Algonquin language and he clearly reflects a life that honors the traditional ways in which he was raised. Growing up as part of the Shinnecock Nation in New York, life revolved around ceremony, singing, dancing, and sweat lodges. Growing up, Moon did not resemble the “typical” look of a Native American. His skin was dark, and his hair was long and wavy and because of this he would be judged and teased by other Natives about his identity as he traveled the country doing what he loved, singing and dancing. His own relatives would tease him for having long hair and knowing his ceremonial ways. This would have an impact on Moon like no other. He could recall a time when he did not want to be Indian. It was too hard. This affected his self-esteem and like so many others that had experienced this kind of trauma, he turned to alcohol to suppress those emotions.

His first experience with alcohol took away those difficult feelings and the more he drank the more he convinced himself that drinking let him be whomever he wanted to be. He became an addict because he couldn't be himself. Moon always had a connection with youth in his community and so he became involved in the Shinnecock

Youth Council as youth advisor and advocate. He worked with the youth teaching them the songs and dances of their culture because he wanted the youth to be proud of who they were and not struggle with identity as he did. Although the work he was doing was profound, he was still using in the background. He had always blamed his parents' divorce for the reason he picked up. It wasn't until he read “The Red Road to Wellbriety” that he learned about intergenerational trauma and the real reasons he drank and escaped. Indian people were denied their own language and their land. Traditions were beaten out of their grandparents in boarding school. The trauma eclipsed the traditions and he was sensitive to feel it all.

Finally, his addiction started steamrolling his life and after several DWIs and arrests, he was sent to county jail. It was in jail where he had a spiritual experience. As he laid on the bed in his cell, his eyes staring at the ceiling, he thought about his late older brother Jason ‘Tek’ King and continuing their dream of their own clothing line, Evitan (Native spelled backwards) Couture. As Moon's eyes went from the staring at the ceiling to looking over the cell door the words ‘Tek King’ were engraved over the cell door. It was this experience that Moon knew his brother was talking to him and he needed to somehow continue their dream. And so, after completing impatient, Moon resided in a Sober Living house and it was in the basement of the home where Moon created his first Evitan Couture sweat suit. He posted the picture of himself in the sweat suit on Face Book and Evitan Couture was revived. He now has a Facebook page, Evitan Couture and Instagram, Evitan\_KS to promote his brand.

In May of 2019 Moon decided to make his journey from New York to New Mexico to be with his three incredible boys and be a full time dad to them. When he first

arrived in New Mexico he knew he had to get connected to AA/NA meetings. He went to First Nations Community Health Source looking for a meeting but ended up speaking to a woman about his story and his name was passed on the Director of Traditional Wellness at First Nations. One thing led to another and he was offered a position for Peer Support Worker. He quickly trained to be a CSPW and has created a Peer Support Program at First Nations. He holds a traditional talking circle that has grabbed the attention of many and is doing what the Creator has gifted him to do, help and connect with others. A life of recovery for Moon means praying in his traditional way every morning. He lets the sun soak in, gets grounded, and gives thanks. He likes to network and stay connected and doing peer work helps him walk his talk. Most importantly, he lives a life that reflects his lineage and his dreams.