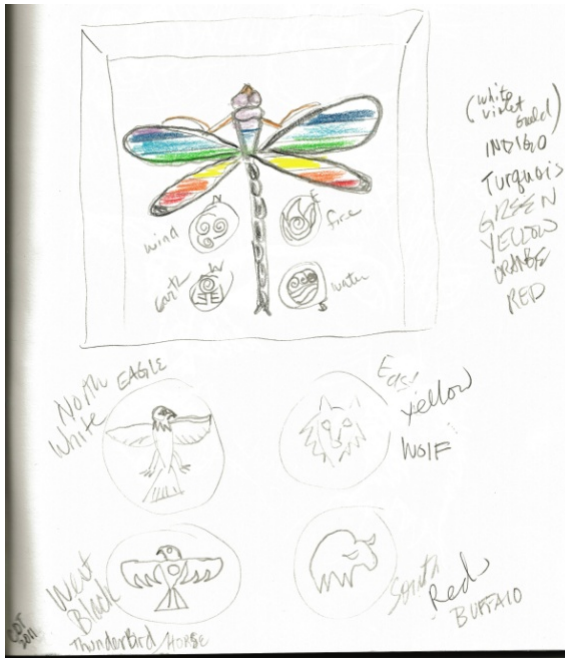


# The Journey of Anne's Button Blanket

By: Sounding Woman

March 2011



I had a vision come to me for a Button Blanket for my mother, Anne, the Elder of our Fireweed Eagle Clan. A Rainbow Dragonfly on a green field.

I wasn't quite sure how I would pull this off in Melton Wool and Wool Felt, but began sketching ideas. I thought of the colors of the rainbow: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, and Violet. I also thought of the colors of the Chakras: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Turquoise,

Indigo, and Violet (white or gold). My idea was for the colors to go through the dragonfly wings and body.

The other part of the vision was for four shields with Elements or Power Animals, and the colors of the medicine wheel.



The wool fabrics were ordered online, and were on their way in the post. I had the buttons that Anne gave me, she had them from the 1970's, beautiful white shell with a single button hole; they would have to be sewed on with a Glass Bead. So it was time to begin!

## DRAGONFLY:

I cleaned up my studio (as much as possible anyway), I got out my large pattern paper and began to sketch ideas for the dragonfly. Calculating the approximate size I would need to fit on the Blanket. The dragonfly took shape with pens and colored with pencils



I chose Spruce Green Melton Wool for the Blanket and Turquoise Blue for the

Wool Felt Borders. I now had my “canvas” made and displayed on my Grandmother’s Dress Form.



### April 2011

Now it was time for the Dragonfly! I thought of the way a Rainbow arcs so I wanted the colors to go through the wings and body with an arc. I improvised a math compass tool with a pin and string tied onto a pencil. Just the thing for nice color arcs! I cut out the color arcs of wool felt and began to sew them together using a nice zigzag stitch, matching the felt color with coordinating threads. What I ended up with was a half circle of rainbow colors. Then I cut out the Dragonfly outline in black I made five pieces, four wings and a body.

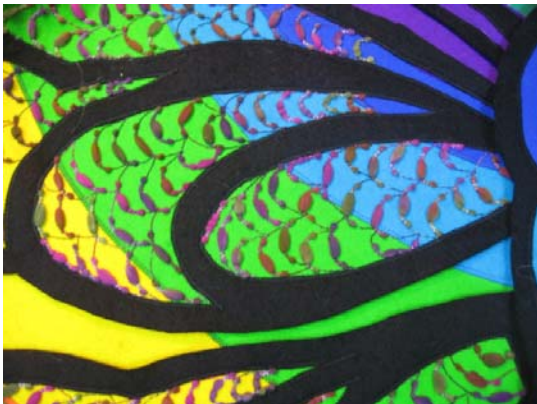
I zigzag stitched the black dragonfly outline down on the rainbow.





The next consideration was how to make the wings look like delicate gossamer. I remembered this crochet yarn I got at one of the quilting conventions I attended with my friend

Susan. The idea was to use the yarn to add texture to fabric. I went digging in the supply cabinet and sure enough I found it and it was perfect, the colors ran from brown-green to pink-violet. I decided to apply the yarn by hand, using a couch stitch, in a pattern that would look like webbing. I just started stitching and the design developed very organically. It was fun and I am quite pleased with the final look of the wings.



Now to get the body of the Dragonfly to look cool. I was thinking that since I was going to have to use glass beads to attach the buttons on, I might use beads as part of the dragonfly body design. I wanted the body to have texture and shine, so I added glass beads to each of the body sections.



May 2011

I now had all five of the Dragonfly pieces done so I needed to place the Dragonfly on the Blanket. I measured and pinned and then began to sew the



Dragonfly in place using a zigzag stitch.



### FOUR SHIELDS:

Once the Dragonfly was in place I began to think about the Four Shields. I wanted to use the four colors of the Medicine Wheel: Yellow, Red, Black and White. I also wanted to acknowledge Anne's Power Animals: Eagle, Wolf, and White Buffalo. These were the three I was pretty sure of the fourth I knew would come to me.



**WOLF:** I started in the South direction, Red Shield, and Wolf. I was reading in *Dancing with the Wheel: The Medicine Wheel Workbook*<sup>1</sup> that one of the Spirit Path Animals for the South is the Wolf. One of Anne's Power

Animal is "Teaching Wolf". I made sketches then created the wolf by appliqueing wool felt pieces down, this method worked well, so I used it on all shields.





**EAGLE:** The Eastern direction, Yellow Shield and Eagle. Wabun<sup>2</sup> is the spirit keeper of the East, the place of Air Elementals and with that I thought of the Flyers, Hawk, Owl and I

decided that Eagle would work well here. One of Anne's Names is "Fireweed Eagle Woman". Again I sketched then made the Eagle manifest in applique.



**WHITE BUFFALO:** The Northern direction, White Shield and White Buffalo. The spirit keeper of the North, Waboose<sup>3</sup>, is often represented by a

White Buffalo. If I remember correctly Anne has a beautiful buffalo pipe. I sketched and then appliquéd the buffalo into being.



**THUNDERBIRD:** The Western direction, Black Shield and the Thunderbird. I had to think of a spirit keeper for the West then remembered something I read in *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's*

*Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, that Wakinyan-Tanka, the great Thunderbird of the west is living "in a lodge



on the tip of a mountain at the edge of the world where the sun goes down”<sup>4</sup>. So I came up with this Thunderbird design.

**BLANKET COMPLETION:** After making each shield I then used the zigzag stitch to affix them to the blanket. I then added beads on the tops of each wing for shine, added final beads to the Dragonfly Eyes to give depth. I had most of the beads in my supply closet, but needed a slightly larger size to sew the buttons on with so I had to go off to Jo Ann Fabrics and as luck would have it, found similar beads in the larger size to the ones I used on the Dragonfly wings and also some green button thread. I looked at each shell button on both sides and chose the side with the most character to face up; the buttons have a luminous shine when caught by the light. I made all the Power Animal eyes Blue, just like Anne’s, and I can imagine her gently being enveloped by Dragonfly wings!

I finished the blanket by attaching my own design label, “Sounding Woman Designs”, and made a carry sack, put together a repair kit, and was done. I took the blanket and the sack off to the dry cleaners to have all cat-hairs removed, then shipped it straight off to California to my son Matt, so I can present the Blanket to Anne at the June Sweat Ceremony.

### **MY THOUGHTS:**

Of Course, at the beginning of each sewing session I smudged my work area with Sage, and cleared my mind to prepare for the upcoming task. I set my iPod to play Native American Music, like Andrew Vasquez, Coyote Oldman, Kevin Locke, Nicole and Spirit Nation. Then I begin designing, sewing, and beading with enthusiasm. I was in the Zone!



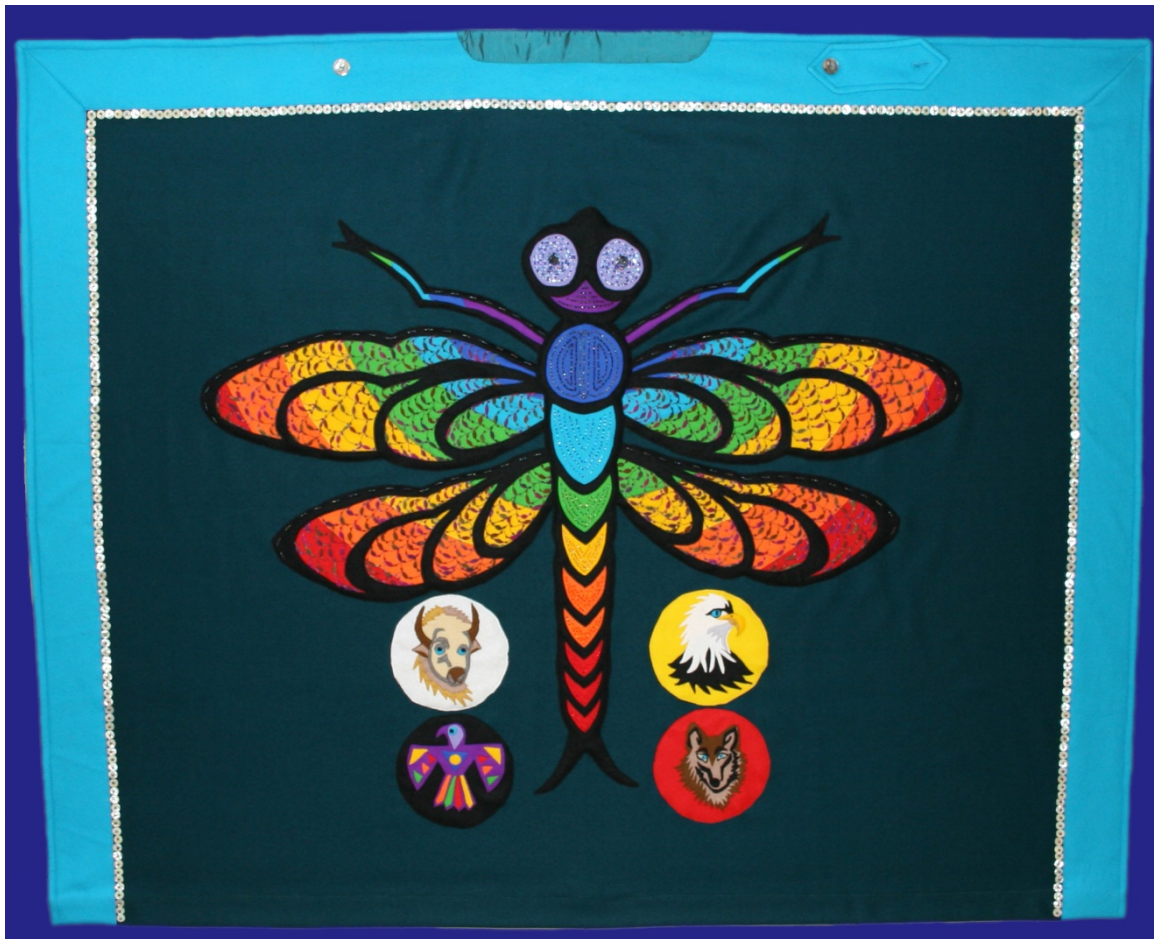
In a magazine article I read in *Spirituality & Health*, *Your Soul Needs Playtime* by Emma Seppala<sup>5</sup>, “enthusiasm” was defined as “to be inspired or

possessed by divinity; it literally means “inside God.”” And that is how I felt while I was working on the Button Blanket; I call it being in the Zone. The article put it as, “Play allows us to inhabit the present...Another way to think of play is the state of *flow*.”, “Flow occurs when we are completely immersed in an activity - a state of being 100 percent in the present moment”. This is a concept proposed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi<sup>6</sup> in his book *The Evolving Self*.

Enthusiastically in the Zone is exactly how I feel when I am sewing or creating art in any medium, fully present as in meditation, or play! So I got to PLAY at creating this blanket for three months and I enjoyed every second.

## Anne’s Button Blanket

58 x 70



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Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Sun Bear, Wabun Wind and Crysalis Mulligan, *Dancing with the Wheel: The Medicine Wheel Workbook* (New York: Fireside 1991), 191.

<sup>2</sup> Sun Bear, Wabun wind, and Crysalis Mulligan, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Sun Bear, Wabun wind, and Crysalis Mulligan, 32.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press 1985), 39.

<sup>5</sup> Emma Seppala, "Your Soul Needs Playtime", *Spirituality & Health*, May-June 2011, 50-53.

<sup>6</sup> Seppala, 52.

*All designs and photos are the sole property of Cathie Tonkins*