

H Sacred HOOP

CELEBRATE THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

IN TIMES OF CHANGE...

SACRED ACTIVISM

- Change Without Provocation - Lenore Norrgard on mixing Shamanism with Political Action
- Jonathan Horwitz and Zara Waldebäck on Asking for Spirit Help
- Returning Home from Standing Rock

ROLLING THUNDER

A Medicine Man Remembered

Rappé Amazonian Snuff

Creating Sacred Space

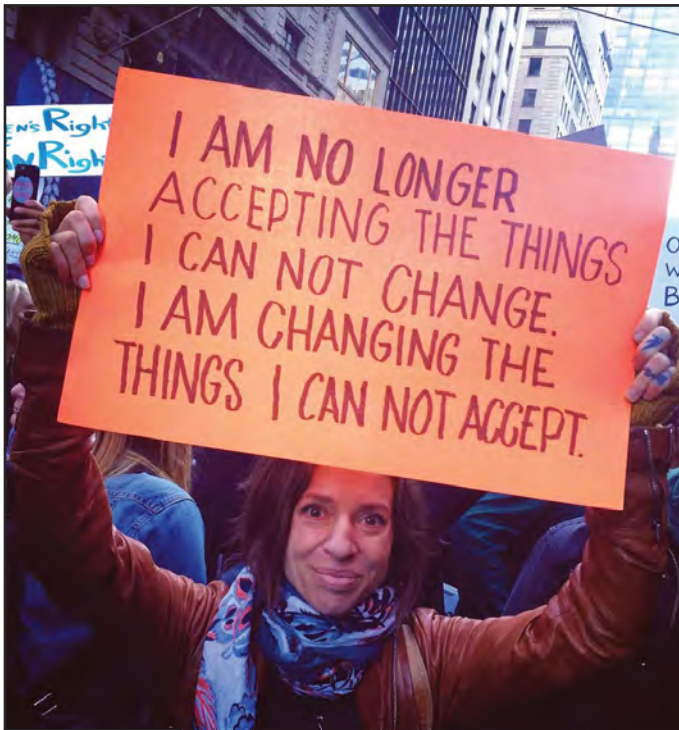
The Foundation of Ceremony

Psychotherapy Meets Shamanism

Working with the Sweatlodge Fire

Respecting the Spirit of Oil





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"Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and around and about me was the whole hoop of the world... I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit and the shapes of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the Sacred Hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight and in the centre grew one almighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father, and I saw that it was holy."
 (From the vision of Nicholas Black Elk Lakota Holy Man: 1863 - 1950)



Amazonian Tobacco Snuff : pages 31-33

From the Editor



My, my, but it's a stormy old world out there at the moment isn't it. I dare say many of us have an urge to batten down the hatches, put our head under the duvet and hope it all goes away. Well - unsurprisingly - I don't think that is a very good plan, as I think anyone with half an insight knows that it's not going to go away any time soon. So I think a better plan might be for us all to pick up our shamanic tool kits, and rough weather gear, and get working to people the barricades and especially climb up into the watchtowers with our eyes peeled.

Welcome to the 95th issue of Sacred Hoop, I really hope you enjoy the range of articles you will find in its pages. Our main theme this time is about shamanic activism, because I don't see how anyone can avoid acting at this time - because any option for 'business as normal' is rapidly receding into the distance.

The social-media-o-sphere is full of news reports - real and fake - about socio-eco-spiritual dramas, such as the recent eviction of the Water Protestors from the Oceti Sakowin - Sacred Stones Camp - at Standing Rock and the global mass binding spell cast against Trump and his cronies, which was put out by some in the Pagan community.

So I have been reminding myself about something my friend Jonathan Horwitz teaches - that power has two forms - 'macht' and 'kraft' - or to put it another way, 'power over' and 'power for.'

Macht - might - is power over, and is a very slippery slope. The binding spell, and out-and-out cursing that some are putting on Trump, is macht. Whereas ethical power 'for' - kraft - is strengthening.

So yes, let's do lots of shamanic work - lots and lots and lots of ceremony, prayer and shamanic activism. And love. Let us strengthen the spirits of our land (wherever we live), strengthen the spirit of our nation - knowing it is joined in one big circle with all nations, and we are all related. Let us work to strengthen the beauty of the people (two, four, six and many leggeds, as well as the swimmers, flyers, tree nation, stone people and all the rest), and make them strong, so they are resilient to those who wish to diminish them. Let's encourage ourselves and the world - and let's not seek to bind or curse parts of it because we fear it.

Blessings to all Beings
 Nicholas Breeze Wood



Right: the author speaking at a spiritual activism gathering in America



However, as an artist I found party politics too constricting, and went my own way, remaining an independent activist, and becoming a photo-journalist and writer.

But how did you get from there to shamanism?

I had never considered myself spiritual, but I carried deep wounds from my childhood, and struggled with clinical depression for decades.

In 1987 an animal spirit intervened and blessed me with a spontaneous healing. My depression was finished overnight. What could I do but become spiritual?

One of my very first thoughts, after gratitude, was, "Oh! This is what's been missing from the political work!" If I can receive such a miraculous healing, personally, why can't we have miracles of social healing, too?

At that point I shifted from a paradigm of social revolution to one of social healing, and started naming things like racism and misogyny as social wounds, and wondering how we could heal them.

I was alone with my initiatory experience, and didn't know anything about shamanism.

When Sandra Ingerman's book, 'Soul Retrieval', came out in 1991,

I read that, and I immediately realised that we had experienced soul loss as a nation, with the assassinations of Dr. King, the Kennedys and Malcolm X, and also with the betrayal of the Democratic Party convention in 1968 and, later, Watergate.

Our citizenry was a broken body politic, paralysed in the face of a right-wing reaction to the gains of Civil Rights, feminism, labour, etc.

I received intensive training with the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, and then started teaching, all along thinking about this question of shamanic social healing.

The first social healing ritual I developed, in 1994, was 'Dreaming the Dark,' a celebration to honour and receive healing from the spirit of darkness. The intention was to heal our relationship with 'the dark,' the Western repository of all bad things. Dreaming the Dark became a highly-anticipated, annual winter solstice celebration in the Pacific Northwest.

I suppose some people understood the ritual as political, and others did not.

True. In fact, I think there are different ways for shamanic practitioners to influence the political situation.

We can participate in community organising meetings, and bring the



Right: a gathering of people at Standing Rock in North Dakota, USA

perspective of the spirits into planning that work. And there is very private work, such as the Buddhist practice of tonglen¹, and other practices to help shift the social and earth vibration, that we can do alone. Another level is doing closed healing rituals and other circle work that is focussed on social healing, like 'Dreaming the Dark.' And we can do very public things, like bringing ritual into public protest, and thereby transforming it.

I've had decades when I've been out in the streets protesting, and years where it's been more about writing. I've worked privately in shamanic circles, and I've also done a lot of very public, interfaith work, infusing shamanism into interfaith social activism, and also bringing the power of ritual into public protests.

Now I'm making a dramatic film, 'American Ubuntu,' which weaves together shamanism, earth activism, and politics.

When you're working in shamanic circles, doing work on behalf of social or earth issues, how do you approach that? I can imagine all kinds of interesting ethical issues arising, like how much can I ask my spirits to interfere with some monster dam project in the Amazon basin, that kind of thing.

Yes - as with all shamanic work - I am careful about not asking for specific outcomes. I usually include a caveat that our work ultimately serves the highest good of all, because we don't have the whole picture. Through our shamanic work, we can get a peek at the big view.

So I think one crucial thing in shamanic activism is to have humility as we stand before the Great Mystery, and to know that we haven't got the meta view. It is hubris to think that we can know how the specific outcome of each individual struggle will affect the whole. Does that make sense?

Of course it does.

This came up recently in my drumming circle. Someone said that the Monsanto Corporation is the embodiment of evil, and we should ask the spirits to destroy it.

After discussion, we asked instead for whatever was necessary

for harmony and healing on the planet with regard to Monsanto, and left it up to the spirits as to how they want to handle that.

Another time I was teaching a 'Shamanism for Activists' weekend, and it happened that the World Trade Organisation was meeting at the same time. Naturally, people wanted to journey about putting a stop to globalisation.

I told them, "My heart is really with you, but remember what I said, about having humility before the Great Mystery? We do not know, ultimately, what the role of globalisation is in the evolution of the world." The amazing thing was that these activists all nodded their heads, soberly, and we reframed the journey question as a mission to ask, 'What is our right relationship to globalisation?' It was a very powerful journey, with not a few tears.

Sometimes I'm really torn, when I become very emotionally involved and really want to do something like that. One way is to ask to see a given situation through one of my spirit helpers' or teachers' eyes. And although sometimes you don't get a total view, you often can get a more nuanced view. You can see a lot of things that aren't immediately apparent.



Yes, exactly.

Because if you're going to work with the spirits to engage as an activist, you have to go into the activism from their point of view, and not from your personal point of view.

Right. One of the most powerful things shamanism can bring to activism is exactly this. It can help us to work on issues, and work in

Above: recent protest by Naelyn Pike - a 16-year-old San Carlos Apache woman - in Times Square



Left: singer songwriter and feminist activist Ani Defranco taking part in one of the recent women's marches



SHINING LESSONS FROM STANDING ROCK

An update from Lenore Norrgard

The Water Protectors of the Sacred Stone Camp continue to be a source of tremendous inspiration to social justice warriors and defenders of the Earth around the world. Let's look at some of the key stances they have taken that lift everyone involved to a higher spiritual plane:

- **Protect the Sacred.** Refuse the powerless frame of 'protesting' to the powers that be, and instead stand in their sacred duty to protect the Earth as their prime directive, following it wherever it takes them. Protecting the Sacred is tantamount to physical and cultural survival, and stands above any personal needs or desires.
- **Take direction from the Ancestors and Great Spirit.** Rather than debating strategy from a human-centered perspective, seek spiritual wisdom all day, every day, and particularly before and after every strategic action. Decisions are spiritually integrous, rather than materially 'realistic' or personally expedient.
- **Prayer as action, action as prayer.** Every action taken, whether preparing food, setting up a sweat lodge, or holding the line from encroachment by police, is performed with fidelity to Spirit. By staying in constant alignment with Spirit, the corporate Faustian bargain for oil is exposed for what it is.
- **Peacemaking.** Indigenous nations with centuries-long feuds made sacred ceremonies to end said feuds with mutual honour, in order to come into harmony and defend the Sacred together. Such unity on Turtle Island had been unprecedented.
- **Inclusivity.** Non-indigenous solidarity, predicated on respecting indigenous leadership, was fostered, not only in the form of donations and legal support, but also in action on the ground, in shoulder-to-shoulder community. Non-Natives experienced a kind of love and community never before known. This created an unbreakable solidarity in defending the Sacred.
- **Centre women's leadership.** While the beloved indigenous youth founded this movement, and Water Protectors honor all their elders, it is the women of all generations who have been honoured as the central leaders of the various camps. This is a struggle to Protect Life, and indigenous people know women are the carriers and nurturers of life, and their leadership must be centred.
- **All are One - Really.** The Water Protectors have refused to be divided from those assigned to suppress them. On arrival last spring, each Water Protector walked down a long police line, stopping to smile into the eyes of each officer and shake his hand. Even as the officers have acted on orders to attack them, the Protectors remind them that they are protecting the water for ALL their children -- the children of those attacking, as well as those defending. When, in the dead of winter, the Morton County Sheriff's Department put out a call for supply donations on its web site, the Water Protectors sent them a hefty in-kind donation from their own cache. Imagine this: Supplying those bent on suppressing you.
- **Nonviolence.** When we truly know we are One, violence is not an option -- any violence becomes violence against oneself, one's family and tribe, because there is no 'other'. By abstaining from violence and remaining prayerful, the violence of the State is thrown into relief.
- **Healing is always possible.** When veterans came to Oceti Sakowin to pledge fealty to indigenous leadership and place their bodies between the Water Protectors and the police, the Lakota conducted ceremony in which any veteran who wished could atone for the genocidal history of the U.S. military. Members of the 7th Cavalry, which in 1890 massacred 200 Lakota, participated. Forgiveness was bestowed. Many tears were shed, and many hugs were shared. A bloody part of history started healing that day.

The power forged by adherence to the above principles is superhuman in nature, and cannot be conquered by guns. What would it mean to apply these principles in other struggles? What if, instead of an anti-Trump movement, the U.S. managed to birth a generation that defended sacred Democracy in a sacred way?

In a recent shamanic circle, we worked to bathe the entire world in love. In my personal journey, my spirits showed that we need to infuse Donald Trump with great love; that he doesn't know what it is, and it's the only thing that will actually disarm him.

the midst of conflicts, in a way that brings about harmony and connection. Because one of the root problems - if not the root problem - on the planet, is the illusion of separation. Not only separation from Spirit, but from one another, from the Earth, and sometimes from ourselves. I feel that the danger in getting very vociferous, is that we end up feeding that separation.

So, we need continually to ask our spirits how to enter into these crucial conflicts in ways that reduce separation, and in ways that bring about the sense of interconnection. That is the very foundation for shifting our relationship with one another - and with the Earth.

This shift in consciousness is crucial, or we can get all caught up in how 'evil' Monsanto is. Actually, we could say that Monsanto is the ultimate expression of the human illusion of separation - thinking that we can somehow manipulate genes, that we can take land and seeds from other people and destroy their lives, and not be affected ourselves. We've created that - humanity has created that illusion of separation. Monsanto actually is a manifestation of a fundamental misunderstanding on the part of humanity.

You're onto something. Separation is our guiding illusion, and propagates fear and greed, which are like the forces of Mordor driving the human world today. So when we are going into an activist setting, going in with an angry 'Us versus Them' attitude is a dangerous thing. I think the best way to get to an equanimous state is to try to see things as the spirits do. And often the spirits have an agenda. But if they have an agenda, I'm willing to work for it - I trust their agenda more than I trust mine! Tell me more about the interfaith activism.

That really started when I attended the West Coast founding Conference of the 'Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP),' which was initiated by Rabbi Michael Lerner in 2005. The Conference was overwhelmingly Christian and Jewish and White. So I helped start a





diversity caucus at the conference, to promote racial and all kinds of diversity, including spiritual - after I had campaigned for months to get an interfaith healing ritual on the agenda of the East Coast NSP founding conference in Washington, DC.

It was a tremendous amount of work to get that ritual accepted, but many joined me in calling for it, and when it was won, I invited Myron Eshowsky to collaborate with me.

We performed the ritual across from the White House, in Lafayette Park, and when we told the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and spiritual-not-religious participants that our intention was to heal the history of violence in the name of religion, they got it, immediately - their response was, 'Oh, yeah, we really need to do that.'

Wow. That's really brave of you. What happened?

Some of the participants said it was the most powerful spiritual experience they had in the four-day conference.

When I returned to Portland - where I was living at the time - another interfaith peace group had



heard about the D.C. ritual, and asked if I would do one for them. So we talked about it, and I journeyed, and we did a public peacemaking ritual for our neighbourhood, which was torn by gentrification.

It turned out that the day before the ritual there was a huge escalation in the Gulf War, and many people were upset - so not only did people from the immediate neighbourhood come, but also many from beyond it. They said they came because they felt helpless, and wanted to do something positive, instead of just another anti-war protest. They left feeling empowered and hopeful.

That reminds me of when I got back from Viet Nam in 1966 and I joined in the Anti-War movement. But a few years later I got involved in the Peace Movement.

Exactly! In 2008, I wrote an article for Sacred Hoop Magazine about my vision of transforming mass social protests into massive public rituals of social healing². I had come to feel that the practice of protest had become disempowering..

In anti-war demonstrations, we would be given a prescribed route to march, then we would hear a bunch of speakers and performers, then we were asked for donations, and then

Above: women have played an important roll in the stand at Standing Rock

One crucial thing in shamanic activism is to have humility as we stand before the Great Mystery, and to know that we haven't got the meta view. It is hubris to think that we can know how the specific outcome of each individual struggle will affect the whole

Below: a San Carlos Apache man stands firm at Oak Flat - a sacred site to his people. The site has been sold to Resolution Copper Mining, an Australian-British mining company, who want to dig a vast mine there which will obliterate the Apache's sacred site completely

we were dismissed to go home. And I thought, 'Disempowered, again!'

It had become awfully rote, and instead of people connecting with their own power, and expressing that together, on behalf of the greater good, it'd become like the worst of going to church - you know? You get a moment to feel good that you did the right thing - but did it affect anything?

What if, instead, we all encircled the Pentagon and created a huge field of love around it? The Pentagon is filled with people. We can affect their hearts, and affect what they actually do. So instead of making a big 'Us versus Them' protest, and feeding conflict, we can create peace. I also wrote about bringing in the ancestors to help us to do this, and connecting with the spirits of the land.

Do you see these public rituals going beyond the interfaith activist movement?

They must - and they have. This happened for the first time in 2009, when I was asked to put together a ritual for the National Conference of the Peace and Justice Studies Association.

That was a real turning point, because it was the first time a secular group had asked me to put together a ritual. I journeyed and asked, 'Please show me a peace-making ritual for a secular group, that reaches them, and that they will participate in.'

My spirits showed me that what we needed to do was a 'Coronation of the Collective Heart.' They said, 'People will understand that. They know the word coronation. It's about crowning a sovereign. This is about installing the collective heart as the sovereign of the world.'

That's beautiful. And by going to your spirits with this it gives a perfect example of what I think of when I talk about shamanic activism.

It was really amazing. I saw in my journey a huge garland of

flowers for this coronation, and I thought, 'That's a cool metaphor, how shall we do that?' Later I learned that the word coronation comes from the word corona, the Latin word for garland!

Ultimately, we actually made a 100-foot-long garland. Some shamanic folk made a base garland of greens, and blessed it - and a florist donated hundreds and hundreds of flowers.

The ritual itself was very transformational. One man, who at the opening had his arms folded, stayed and participated in weaving the flowers into the garland, and hoisting it. At the end, he was wiping tears from his eyes, and he joined in the crowd's cheers for accomplishing this Coronation of the Collective Heart.

The energy generated was palpable and lasted several days, staying with people as they dispersed to different parts of the country.

That's how it should be.

One thing I've found is that, as we enter the political arena, it is a fantastic arena for our spiritual unfolding.

This is the direct opposite of what many experience. Say more.

Well, here's an example. As I was developing the ritual I just described, I kept getting email reminders about registering for the conference the ritual was for. However, the only way to register for it was to pay the registration fee.

So I emailed the man who had requested the ritual, and said, 'Hey, I'm happy to register, but since I'm putting together and leading this ritual - and also teaching a workshop for free - can you just add my name?'

He wrote back to me and lambasted me for suggesting I shouldn't have to pay. His response, in fact, was very angry and toxic. He suggested that he would be happy to drop me from the program, and that 'given my attitude,' this probably was just as well. I felt the force of his rage - I'm sensitive and it really affected me. Of course, part of me reacted and wanted to just write back and say 'To hell with you, I don't need to work for you for free, and then pay you to boot.' But I also was struck that this man is a leader of



some renown - as I was becoming - and thought, 'What power has a peace movement if we can't even sort things out among ourselves?'

So I slept on it, and the next day I went online and registered, and paid. Then I wrote to him and said, "Look, I must have hit a raw nerve with my request. I have just registered and paid for the conference, and would like to go forward with the ritual. And if you don't want me to, then I'll just consider my registration fee a donation to a good cause."

Paying that fee really stretched me - in more ways than one - but I did not want to lose the opportunity to bring ritual activism into a secular environment, and felt that making this sacrifice was part and parcel of the peacemaking work.

The man wrote back, and said; "You're right, I'm overwhelmed, you did hit a raw nerve... Thanks for handling this with much more grace than I did."

So this process somehow lifted both him and me up, and I think this was not only part of my own spiritual practice, but also part of the social healing involved in that piece of work.

As it does so often. So where does your film-making come into all of this?

In the late 1990s, I went to film school in San Francisco.

I understood the power of stories in creating ourselves and our world, and I had an idea that we needed new stories, but I wasn't aware of any particular new story I had to tell. In Spring 2001, I returned to Seattle, and thought it was time to advance the shamanic social healing work, so in August I announced a Fall circle called 'Reweaving the Web: Healing Our World.' Flyers for it went out, and people were signing up, when one day I was doing a soul retrieval, and my spirits piped up, "You need to do film." I said, "Well, I'm helping people, I'm doing good work." They said, "No, you have a big message, and you need this bigger tool."

Your spirits knew before you did.

Yes, and I knew what that meant as soon as they said it. I knew I had to return to the Bay Area, and would have to commute to lead the 'Reweaving the Web.'



So I left Seattle with a car-load of my things, and overnighted with some friends near sacred Mount Shasta. That's where I was on the morning of 9-11. When I got to San Francisco late on 9-11, I curled up on my futon, asking myself, 'How do I respond to this, as a healer, as a filmmaker, and an activist?'

For days I meditated on this, and that is when the characters who would later populate my screenplay for 'American Ubuntu,' first revealed themselves and their predicaments to me. I didn't actually start writing the story for a few years, though, after I'd moved to Portland.

And Portland is where you engaged in all that interfaith activism?

Yes. And throughout the ritual activism my spirits were tapping their paws, saying, 'What about film?'

This needs to be done'. In between the activism and the demands of my shamanic practice I occasionally would steal a week or two, and go away and work on the script, but it was coming too slowly, and I constantly felt torn.

Finally, I got clear that I really needed to focus on the film: it was

my activism and social healing ministry, as well as my art, rolled into one. If I was going to actually make this movie, I had to focus, or it never would happen.

After several drafts, 'American Ubuntu,' finally arrived at the current draft. The story is a culmination of all the things we've been talking about - shamanic activism, and the collapsing of polarisations.

As Christina Pratt³, host of the 'Why Shamanism Now?' online radio show said, "This is a movie that shows how shamanism actually works - grappling with real world problems, and solving things."

I can't wait to see it!

I usually include a caveat that our work ultimately serves the highest good of all, because we don't have the whole picture. For example, with the election, I wasn't willing to do shamanic work specifically for a victory. How would I know the best outcome of the election?

Above: Native Americans at the California Native American Day



Above: Shameeka Dream walks along a line of State Troopers while burning sage in protests for the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland, USA April 2015

Below: Alton Sterling peacefully confronts during a recent 'Black lives matter' protest in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

I can't wait either. I moved to Oakland in the summer of 2011 to set about bringing it into production, and then the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement began, and I was powerfully drawn to it.

Of course you were! There was a lot going on in Oakland, too, wasn't there?

Yes. It was huge. I started getting involved. I wrote about it from a shamanic perspective, held a teleseminar, and did a Tuesday Morning Conversation with Christina Pratt.

But I saw the writing on the wall: 'Lenore' - I told myself - 'If you get involved in this, American Ubuntu never will be made'. I feel

that making that choice - to hold back from getting deeply involved in Occupy, and keep a clear focus on the film - has served well.

That's a really good point, how important it is to be really present, and aware of your role in a given situation. So there were all these temptations, but you kept your focus throughout. I think focus is something that we can lose very quickly and easily. Would you tell us a little about 'American Ubuntu'? You call it 'a healing story for the USA.' What does ubuntu mean?

Ubuntu is a Zulu word. It means, 'I am what I am, because of who we

all are.' In the story, I apply this philosophy to the very diverse country the USA is today: Americans are what we are, because of who we all are.

That's a very powerful, and important, statement in a country as split as the U.S.

It is truly a shamanic tale of our times. One of the main characters is in the ancestral realm. The script has won an award, and at this point renowned indie producer Debbie Brubaker (Diary of a Teenage Girl, La Mission, Blue Jasmine) and I are seeking investors to bring the film into production and distribution.

I've always known this film would be made through a groundswell of support from the shamanic community.

For me, what you have been talking about is what I see as the role of the shamanic activist: to bring healing to our world with the help of the spirits, living the teachings they give us, following the path they show us. Thank you for doing that. It's been inspiring.

Lenore Norrgard, founder of Circle of the Living Earth, has taught and practised shamanism for 25 years. She is a writer, filmmaker, and offers training in shamanic activism. She currently resides near Seattle, Washington, USA. lenore@lenorenorrgard.com www.lenorenorrgard.com www.americanubuntu.com www.circlelivingearth.org

Jonathan Horwitz is the European editor of the Journal of Shamanic Practice. He is co-founder of the Scandinavian Centre for Shamanic Studies, and a teacher of shamanism for more than twenty-five years. He lives in Sweden.

A version of this interview first appeared in 'A Journal of Contemporary Shamanism' Volume 6, Nr. 1, Spring 2013. www.shamansociety.org

NOTES:

1: Tonglen is a Tibetan Buddhist practice where someone else's illness, or environmental pollution is taken - through meditation - into the practitioner's body and transmuted. This is done by visualising the breath coming into the practitioner's body containing the harming substance - often seen in the form of black smoke - and the practitioner then internally transmutes it and breaths out once again - often visualised as white smoke or light.

2: See Sacred Hoop Magazin Issue 58

3: For more information and to listen to episodes of Why Shamanism Now: www.whyshamanismnow.com



Remember to REMEMBER

Jonathan Horwitz and Zara Waldebäck

We live in amazingly challenging times. Often we cannot help but feel hopeless in the face of what is happening, be it environmental destruction, political injustice, poverty or greed. But if we allow these things to cripple us, then neither we nor the world has a chance. This cannot be allowed to happen.

We also live in a time of amazing possibilities. We are being asked to wake up and remember who we are, remember what is truly important, focus on what we can bring to the Circle of Life, and discover our part in how to help.

As shamanic practitioners, we also have the ability to ask the spirits for support, to empower, guide and inspire us. We are not alone.

The words 'remember to remember' are a resonant phrase from the Pueblo people of New Mexico. It reminds us that we have so much already - we have connection, ability, knowledge, ancestors. We just need to remember.

A place to start is by considering what our most important questions are: what really touches our hearts and souls, what is truly meaningful for us? If you can find and put words to this, you can work together with the spirits on these heart questions and they can help you move further into Life.

Another gift that shamanic work can bring is to remind us of the role and power of ceremony. Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network (www.ienearth.org) spoke last year on the importance of the flow of Intention to Prayer to Action. Before Action comes Prayer (connection) and before Prayer comes Intention. Whatever we do in the world, large or small, has the potential to be a sacred act. An act becomes sacred because it grows from a place of prayer and intention. This is what gives it power, resonance and effect. It is not just what we do: it is how we do it.

Standing Rock has shown us how ceremony is central to the work for the Earth at this time, and how healing for the Earth is also healing

for the people - all the people. Their intention to hold peace in their hearts and in their actions at all times made a strong impact on the world, and so it is not only the outcomes of their actions that count, it is also the place they come from.

Standing Rock has taught us that the time has come to take care of our home, the Earth. We cannot wait any longer and there is no more pressing task than this in our lifetime. Starting now, we need to live in a way that recognises that everything we have - and are - comes from the Earth and, therefore, is sacred.

When we don't know what to do, we go into Nature to ask - and often a solution will come which we had never thought of. If we pay attention and open our senses, there is so much the world is teaching us - whether it is a new seed beginning to grow, a leaf falling to the ground, or the wind touching the surface of water. Nature is a great teacher, and we cannot help the Earth without also allowing the Earth to take part, to be heard and share its voice.

Working from a place of love is different from trying to save the world from a place of fear. Fear can be a great stimulus, but it is necessary to step through the fear, rather than have fear pushing you - so allow fear to set off the alarm bell, then wake up, turn off the alarm and get to work! If you work from fear, you will feed the spirit of fear with your power and eventually be consumed. You need that power to do what you have to do, so find ways to keep it strong.

If we remember the real reason we are standing up for the Earth, that our roots are deep in a love for all life, we will feel more calm, connected and sure, and we can keep going. It can be a subtle difference but you will definitely feel it and be nourished by it over time.

If you don't know what is the right thing to do, then stand still until you do. Often we can be desperate to jump into action, and it is a desperate time that needs action. But a moment of stillness, clarity, awareness, connecting and choice - of how we

move into action - can make a big difference. The same act made from a different place can create a different outcome. Stop and remember to breathe, look at the situation through the eyes of the spirits and ask for help. Remember to remember and from here, begin to respond.

The challenge we are facing at the moment is to re-learn another way of living, another way of being. A way of being that longs for fullness of life rather than empty consumerism.

A spiritual practice helps to put us back into balance, and shamanism is essentially about re-empowerment. Anyone actively involved in wanting to help others, or making the world a better place, needs to give time and energy to putting themselves into the flow of power so they don't get depleted and burned out.

Whenever we go into nature it revives us and gives us hope, not just because it is beautiful and peaceful, but because we come into communion and communication with Nature.

Whether you are in a city or the countryside try to hear and actively ask the world around you what it can show you, what you need to see, what you can learn. When we see life from another perspective new solutions come. The same situation seen in a different way can be enough to shift us from a place of hopelessness to hope, powerlessness to action and motivation. Coming always from a more-than-human perspective, we know this world is not only about humans but about all beings, all of Creation.

Let's take time to find the place deep within us that no longer only thinks about 'me' but feels the deep connection to all life and to 'we,' the place that goes beyond 'what I want to do' to 'what needs to be done.' By shifting into this way, we can all contribute to a healthy future for the Earth, every day, step by step, small or big acts, sacred and loving.

Jonathan Horwitz has practiced shamanism since 1972, co-founding the Scandinavian Center for Shamanic Studies. His focus is the shamanic aspects of healing, ecology and community. He has a master's degree in anthropology and was European Editor of *Journal of Contemporary Shamanism*.

Zara Waldebäck has practiced shamanism since 2005, and is also a writer and filmmaker, teaching creativity. She has a deep interest in the role of story as a spiritual tool, and works regularly with place-specific ceremony and partnering with Nature for healing.

www.shamanism.dk



A Return Home From Standing Rock

Dini Arrice



My first night home from Standing Rock was one of great reflection.

I drove up to my home, Christmas lights filling the streets with a light sprinkle of snow on the ground. People were comfortably having dinner in their homes, complaining about some minuscule problem they had faced that day. I knew that I would be walking into my warm home and sleeping in my king bed tonight.

I felt like I was in the wrong place - that even though it was announced that the Dakota access pipeline was rerouted, water protectors and veterans would be staying at Standing Rock through blizzards until the last pipeline worker was gone and last police officer had vanished.

For the last few months, I have been following the water protectors. I have watched a brave group of Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota Sioux trying to protect their

sacred lands while police forces, who should be protecting them, are protecting a corporation.

I watched as the media refused to cover any of the brutality that was happening to peaceful people. I began to 'friend' and 'follow' people on Facebook who were actually at the reservation so that I could see the true story. That is when I started seeing the truth: the water cannons going off for hours on people in subzero temperatures, the tear gas, the rubber bullets, people being arrested and held in dog cages.

I saw people peacefully standing on their land, asking the police officers to please go home, while they are being abused. Then I would check the news, and it was silenced. If anything was mentioned, it was the Morton County sheriff saying that people were rioting. I was watching it, live from people who were there, and knew it was a lie.

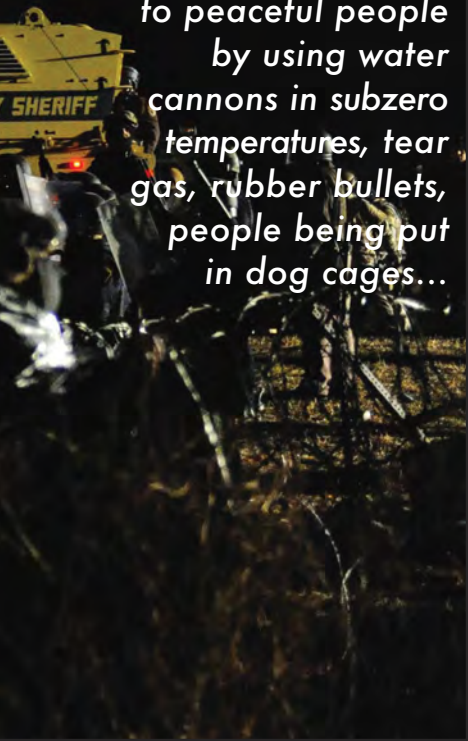
Along with watching the abuse, I began to do my own research about the situation. I learned about the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and the land the federal government recognised as sacred, Sioux land.

I listened to the meetings where DAPL was being presented to the tribes and that there was never an agreement. I learned about how the pipeline was originally supposed to be routed through Bismarck - the state capital - but the people there thought it would hurt their resources, so putting it through sacred Native land was more suitable to them.

There was so much hurt inside me knowing that Native Americans have been going through over 500 years of genocide, broken treaties, and mistrust. That a predominantly white area thought their resources were more important than that of others. I was done with corporations taking valuable resources and taking advantage of people who did not have the money to stop them.

That is when I knew I had to help. I do not have money, but what I do have is my physical

The media refused to cover any of the brutality happening to peaceful people by using water cannons in subzero temperatures, tear gas, rubber bullets, people being put in dog cages...



being, my time, and whatever skills I could provide. I decided my place would be my presence. I knew that my white privilege could be of value for getting the word out.

And I knew my grandmother, who was a registered member of the Ojibwa tribe, would expect me to stand up for our Native brothers and sisters.

I got called names and was harassed when I announced I was going, but I would just respond with "thank you, have a great day".

My husband knew what was going on was against everything we believed in, but was scared for my safety and tried to talk me out of going. I was constantly being told if I were to go there, I would be fined \$1000 and imprisoned.

But then I would tell myself: doing the right thing is not always easy. Change is not easy. People need to stand up for what is right, no matter the negative backlash.

To me this was not just about Standing Rock, but about the hundreds of years of oppression which minorities have had to face, white privilege, the resources that are taken from all of us, the top 1% thinking they have no consequences for their actions, media lies, and a continued police state for those they believe are at the bottom.

When I arrived at Standing Rock, I did not know what to expect. Anxiety filled me, having a large amount of unanswered questions; not knowing my future. How would I eat? How would I sleep in a vehicle during the North Dakota winter? What happened was something beautiful.

Over 500 different tribes, people from all around the world – multiple races, religions, sexual orientations, careers, lives - all joined together to support what was right. People stood together and prayed - Christians, Jewish, Muslims, Buddhists, agnostics, atheists, etc, for the hopes that peace would be found. Everyone took down the barrier of stereotypes and created an existence of love.

The Sioux taught us all to be honest with one another and to

accept the truths. Stop being on the offensive. Accept that we need to talk about white privilege as white people and realise the effects it has on others.

I realised my constant questioning about what to do, and how to do it. I realised that I needed to slow down and just study what others were doing and just help, without questions. I realised that it is their home, which they invited everyone to, and my needs for answered questions were not valid here. That I should ask, "May I?", before I began speaking. That political correctness is being respectful, not being restricted. I was taught to breathe... slow down my heart, and listen to my thoughts before displaying action.

I was taught that I need to learn to forgive. I prayed with the veterans as we all went down to our knees and held them, crying together, remembering what happened at the 1890 massacre of Wounded Knee, and what is happening now. The

I was taught that I need to learn to forgive. I prayed with the veterans as we all went down to our knees and held them, crying together, remembering what happened at Wounded Knee and what is happening now. The tribes kept reminding everyone to forgive the people that have hurt you, the police officers who have beaten you, and the corporations that have stolen from you



Left: army veteran Wesley Clark Jr - son of former supreme commander of NATO, Wesley Clark Sr - kneels and asks for forgiveness from Lakota elder Leonard Crow Dog



tribes kept reminding everyone to forgive, don't forget. Forgive the people that have hurt you, the police officers who have beaten you, and the corporations that have stolen from you.

That it is hard, but we all live here on earth and that peace will guide us. People would bring peace offerings to the police, warm food and gloves, showing them that all that was here was love.

We were put in peaceful action training to learn that anger will not help us here. We were taught that we should never try to agitate anyone to get our point across, but to guide them with respect. That we

should always protect people who can't protect themselves; to barricade ourselves around the elders, the children, and the animals. That I am a body that can handle it and that protecting others is a priority. That having priorities such as money will not bring happiness.

We were taught when the last tree has been cut down, the last fish caught, the last river poisoned, only then will we realise that one cannot eat money.

I learned that my peace was not my comfort - that being uncomfortable is comfort. I felt at peace sleeping in the cold. I walked so many miles and used so many muscles I did not know existed that a flat surface, no matter where, cold or wet, felt like perfection.

My pain felt needed. Food tasted better because I worked for it. I ate what I had, when I had it. What was created at Standing Rock was a world of giving, trading, and bartering. No money was handled. If you had wood to keep someone warm at night, you gave it. If you needed a tarp to stay dry, others helped you. If your car got stuck, you had five people giving you a push before you noticed. If your shoe was untied, someone would bend down to tie it for you. If you saw someone needing help building a structure,

you grabbed a tool and just did it. People went around every day making sure that people were safe. Every one else's needs became yours. It was a self-sustaining movement with morals and principles that we all could live by.

I had the privilege of joining in a community circle dance - drums pounded and beautiful native rhythms filled the area while hundreds of people joined together. We all started dancing with our jackets, snowpants, gloves, and hats on, and by the end we were all crowded together, sweating and taking off every item we could even in the North Dakota winter. We learned we could laugh and dance without any alcohol or drugs. We jumped around, celebrating life... not caring that there was a corporation right outside trying to push us out and cops down the road with their guns pointed in our direction.

I joined a prayer circle with thousands of people, from multiple religions, joining hands and circling the entire camp. I felt so much comfort knowing there were people of all religions - or no religious affiliation like myself - that could find so much love in one another.

There we were, all of us standing together telling the people

Above and Below:
scenes from
Standing Rock



I joined a circle with thousands of people, joining hands and circling the entire camp. I felt so much comfort knowing there were people like myself, that could find so much love in one another. There we were, all of us standing together telling the people who think, because they have money, they are allowed to take anything they want. That we don't need guns on our side or hatred because we had something stronger, each other

who think because they have money, they are allowed to take anything they want. That our love and our presence alone could stop them. That we don't need guns on our side or hatred because we had something stronger, each other.

My camp neighbour told me of a wonderful speech she'd heard from an elder, which put everything into perspective. The elder had put a group together and he asked, "Raise your hand if you are native". Natives raised their hands. Then he asked, "Raise your hand if you are not native". Non-natives raised their hands. Then he continued, "Every person that raised their

hands is Native today because if we are cut, we all bleed the same, red. We are a red nation."

The Sioux showed the world you can stand up for what you believe in with dignity and grace. That love conquers all. No matter what someone has done to you, learn to slow down, breathe, and feel your heart. Know that their heart beats the same and they feel the same pain. You don't need to hurt to get your point across. Standing Rock has proven that. We stood there, without showing any aggression, getting the truth out there and standing together.



Above: praying at the razor wire at Standing Rock

I am forever honoured to be able to stand with the Sioux. I feel like they gave me way more than anything I could have ever given them. I thought I was going there to help them when in fact, they helped me and others more than they will ever know. I will be forever changed.

Dini Pederson-Opsahl is a small business owner of Wall Lake Creations and a LGBTQ, social and environmental activist. She focusses on raising awareness for equal rights and using nonviolent resistance to create positive change. She is a Minnesota native, with family roots to the White Earth Band of the Ojibwe. www.facebook.com/WallLakeCreations walllakecreations@gmail.com

Below: prayer circle around the camp at the winter bound Oceti Sakowin Sacred Stones Camp at Standing Rock





How Does a Revolution Begin?

Annie Spencer

The events at Standing Rock have stirred many of us to consider what we might best do to protect the earth and the people in our own lands.

The Standing Rock protest encompasses complex issues particular to place and people: the continuing struggle of the Lakota people, who have been overrun by force, and whose rights (and lives) have been ignored for generations. They have come together to fight for water without which no living being can survive.

At Standing Rock we have been shown how multi layered a movement can be, and what extraordinary things can be accomplished if the movement has a strong spiritual core. The core of their camp was a space where

sacred fires were kept burning, and where elders, and those who had long worked with Spirit, held ceremony and made prayer, keeping the focus and calling in all that they needed.

So, thousands of people came from all over the world to support them and thousands more sent money and supplies. Representatives from both Christian churches and the US army came to acknowledge, and apologise, for the horrific ways in which their forebears had murdered and abused the first peoples of their land... and always they remembered 'mni wiconi:' water is life.

They were careful to call their movement a 'protect' not a 'protest' movement. They are standing to protect the water on which they depend. And I think that is an important distinction. They are not protesting an action, but protecting a vital source of life.

So what might we, shamanic practitioners, ceremonialists, energy workers, learn from this and start applying in our own homelands? What do we need to protect?

Here in Britain, we have different problems, which are all connected, and yet each calls up its own protests and calls for change. We face fracking, the collapse of bee colonies, over fishing, GM crops, and pollution in all its forms. We have the collapse of services for the sick, the vulnerable and the old; we have a refusal to help refugees; and we have the continual flow of money and resources to the very rich.

There are demonstrations and petitions and meetings about all of

these things, and many people pray and do ceremony to call for change. I don't want to denigrate what everybody is doing at all.

However, it seems to me that we are somewhat fragmented: we have the spiritual people, and the political people, and the environmentalists, and the activists and many other groups besides, and none of us really come together - other than for the occasional big march. Even among those people on a spiritual path, there is a huge diversity of form and practice, and shamanism is just one branch.

For real change to happen, we need to unite, or at least come together in cooperation. To find ways to understand each other's strengths and build community in a way that makes space for us all with our very diverse skills.

I believe that a strong spiritual core would help us call in the miracles necessary for the healing and the creative inspiration we need for the transformation of our society. But how do we - many of us quiet, inner people - make our ways into the centre of things?

A friend of mine, Cathy Shea, reminded me of the story of Humming Bird. So, jumping into the middle of the story, with apologies for giving you its bare bones instead of covering it with the rich garment of words that all stories deserve, let me say that there was a great fire in the forest and all the animals had run a good way away from the flames and were gathered to watch its

It seems to me that we are somewhat fragmented: we have the spiritual people, and the political people, and the environmentalists, and the activists and many other groups besides, and none of us really come together - other than for the occasional big march. Even among those people on a spiritual path, there is a huge diversity of form and practice, and shamanism is just one branch



Left: #noDAPL protests on Westminster Bridge, London

progress and talk about the disaster among themselves.

Soon one animal noticed, and pointed out to the others, the action of an exceedingly small humming bird who seemed to be flying back and forth in the direction of the fire.

"What are you doing?" asked the others.

"I am taking as many drops of water as I can carry to drop on the fire," came the reply. Through a fair amount of derision and laughter, the humming bird added: "I'm doing what I can". And they all fell silent.

So I guess the way forward would be just to begin. I went to a small demonstration for #noDAPL a few months ago, and while we were gathering and waiting to start on our march, I sat down and laid out a cloth and put a bowl of water on it.

Soon someone arrived with some copal incense and lit it for me, and others were drawn to ask me what I was doing, or just to stay with me, quiet, for a few minutes.

Then I asked the organiser if he believed in spiritual matters.

"No," he said,

"Ah well," I replied, "I would have liked to say a few words to the group when the march was about to begin. "

I went back to my cloth

and my prayers, but whatever he thought of my small altar, he came across later and unexpectedly gave me the opportunity to speak to everyone. So, scared as I was, I said a few words, not very well, but it was a beginning for me. Nobody minded, no one was in any way negative.

Perhaps we could find our way into the heart of things by just being present. By being brave enough to take our prayers out into unfamiliar places.

Perhaps we could call together small local gatherings of people who are concerned about our health care or the land or whatever is our own particular passion and get one another to start talking and cooperating.

At Standing Rock the Lakota are delighted to learn from others who have come to them. They now have plans to build an eco village with the help of straw bale builders and permaculturists so that they will have a permanent place where people may come to learn about the combination of prayer and action that is necessary for good and positive change to happen. This is our time.

Between us we have developed so many skills. Together we could make the change that we are all crying out for. Only when we lead will the politicians follow – they are more lost than most, caught up in forms that no longer serve us but too busy attempting to hold everything together in an impossible situation to be able to glimpse what the new ways might be.

It is we - the ordinary people - who need to come together, to reach across the boundaries of our different belief systems and to find the tolerance and love to join together, to share what we each, in our differences, have to offer.

Let us find the strength to stretch ourselves to embrace, or at least learn to tolerate, those who have a dream of the way forward that is different to ours, but still shows a love for our great earth herself.

When the blizzards came, the elders closed down their sacred fire. The action is far from over on the Lakota lands at Standing Rock. But the elders knew that something greater and more widespread had been ignited through last year. When they closed down their fire in that one place, the elders called for its energy to go out into the Four Directions. They sent it to all of us as an inspiration and a call.

And we, who long to respond to the call of Spirit, we have a role to play if we dare to come out into the greater community.

Annie Spencer is a ceremonialist and workshop leader with a background in humanistic psychology and earth based spiritual traditions and over 30 years' experience of working with people. Annie weaves teachings from the Americas with the seasonal ceremonies of this land. Vision Quest, initiation and rites of passage are a large part of her journey. As a teacher, Annie opens pathways for others - illuminating their life's journeys. Her primary interest is the renewal of ancient ceremonial forms for creating a path of beauty upon Grandmother Earth. www.Hartwell.eu.com





Walking your Talk

Medicine Man Rolling Thunder Remembered

Carolyna Saint Germain and Norman Cohen

My husband, Norman Cohen, and I will always remember two of our favorite, respected, and beloved people, Rolling Thunder (John Pope) and his loving and kindhearted wife Spotted Fawn. Although they have both crossed over to another place, they remain very dear to our hearts and we speak of them often with great fondness.

We had the privilege of meeting Rolling Thunder and Spotted Fawn in Los Angeles after we had read the book 'Rolling Thunder, by Doug Boyd. Little did we know that when we set out for the evening engagement at which we would meet them, our longtime quest for spiritual understanding and transformation would finally begin to accelerate.

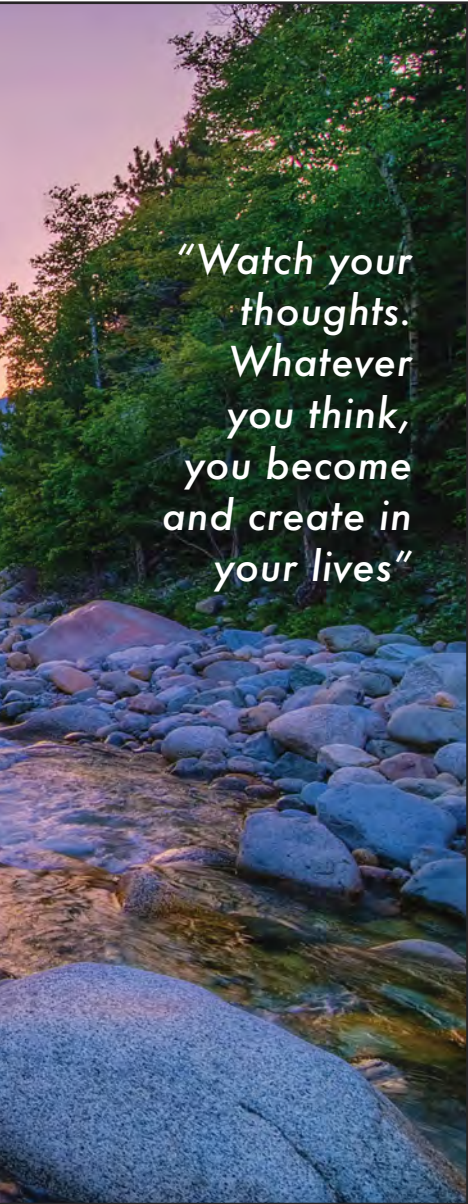
My husband and I were curious and intrigued with the mysteries of the natural world, and had both been reading transpersonal and metaphysical philosophies, which kept us up into the wee hours of the morning. We were seeking a spiritual direction that would resonate with our natural being, one that we could incorporate into our daily lives, unfolding from within. Rolling Thunder entered our lives at this moment in time, proving indeed the truth of the old adage 'When the student is ready, the master appears.'

The continuing revolutionary spirit of the 1960s and early 1970s was deeply embedded in us. As 'revolutionary activists' we felt that the sociopolitical consciousness had to shift and change.

Our first exchange with Rolling Thunder was about ideas of change. We came to understand that change can only come from within, and that this process benefitted and was enhanced by living in small communities in natural settings. This combination allows for the opportunity to fully and, with an open heart, experience oneself and others.

This is what Earth, our Great Mother, teaches and personifies in all her aspects.

As I wrote in my book 'Stewards for the Earth,' 'The oak grows next to the evergreen, the river runs into the sea, the wind and the rain are granted free rein. The Earth's natural possessions are resourced and consumed unrelentingly, without ever a grumble, nor an



“Watch your thoughts. Whatever you think, you become and create in your lives”

inkling of resentful bitterness. She is the ultimate, unsurpassed, unconditional Giver.

In every aspect she exhibits compassionate coexistence and undeniable bounty. She displays exceptional qualities: unprecedented generosity, all-inclusive diversity, magnanimous acceptance and allowance, quiet wisdom and infinitely wide ranging magnificent beauty.

She is clothed in vibrant colours, dramatic landscapes, and liquid light and shadow; offering all the possible hues, shades, textures, aromas, resonances, palettes, and perceptions. These are benevolent gifts, bestowed upon all of us who live here, without exception.

The Mother Earth is our great mentor. Through her unceasing and



Above: Rolling Thunder holding a baby eagle

perpetual example, she demonstrates allowance and acceptance of all things. Emulating her is truly possible. Rolling Thunder and Spotted Fawn quietly personified this teaching in their daily lives and we were eager to learn from them.

Rolling Thunder told us from the very beginning, “Watch your thoughts. Whatever you think, you become and create in your lives.”

Even though this is a common saying today, at that time it was a less widely known and accepted concept. It is true also that every spiritual teacher has expounded on this principle, but we had the privilege of observing Rolling Thunder living that truth. Through the experience of his example, he taught us how to live with an awareness of our thoughts.

We recall the sunrise ceremony held at the beginning of the day. During this ceremony, our thoughts, prayers, and intentions were instilled into a little mound of tobacco resting in the palm of our hands. It was then offered to the four directions: the North, South, East, and West; to the elements of Fire, Air, Earth, and Water; to the Father Sun, Mother Earth, and Grandmother Moon.

These thoughts create our day. This is a simple, extremely powerful ceremony. The smoke from the fire, the drumming, and the welcome song all conspired

together to send our prayers to the Great Spirit. The energy of the circle spiralled out and up to the Great Beyond, to the land of Spirit.

Rolling Thunder was not afraid to tell the ‘long-haired white folks’ how to live in harmony with the Mother Earth and be connected with the Great Spirit. He held no prejudice against us, the descendants of the white persecutors. He told us that the prophecies spoke of the time when the white man and woman would become interested in the Native American and the tribal-clan spiritual way of life. And it was then that the Mother Earth would begin to make her changes.

He hoped to see it, and I guess he did. Things don’t always appear as they seem. Only the Great Spirit knows the right time and place for everything. We can only continue to pray for “what is good and meant to be, and to all of our relations” and offer our tobacco to the morning fire.

The first time I went to Meta Tantay, Rolling Thunder’s community at Carlin, Nevada, it was life altering on many levels.

For the first twelve hours I was there, I went from involuntarily holding my breath to gasping for air. I realised later that I could not have prepared myself for the emotional roller-coaster ride I would experience there.

The locals already spoke of Rolling Thunder as 'that crazy Injun,' but in his amicable way he received everyone with equal respect and honour. There were wickiups - traditional Native American huts made with willow - as accommodation, and children running underfoot, and in and out of the woodshed and work sheds, harassing the chickens, ducks, and geese. It was truly a melee!



Rolling Thunder owned a few lots at the end of a little street in this very small, high-desert Nevada town. The locals already spoke of him as 'that crazy Injun,' but as he became more renowned because of his book and the lectures he was giving all over the country, and world, he began to receive many guests. Then the locals began to worry that he would take over the place!

In his amicable way Rolling Thunder received everyone with equal respect and honour and created all the necessary accommodations to feed and house his guests and patients.

There were wickiups (traditional Native American huts made with willows and covered with hides) and small travel trailers all over his property.

There were also lots and lots of people of all ages. Some were busy with the task of feeding the crowd and others with making up beds for the new arrivals. There were children running underfoot and in and out of the woodshed and work sheds and harassing the chickens, ducks, and geese. It was truly a melee!



Inside the little box house where Rolling Thunder and Spotted Fawn lived was a very small kitchen crammed with women cooking the evening meal for all these people. And, oh yes, one very small bathroom! Coming from Beverly Hills, California, Norman and I could not have imagined this scene if we'd tried. But we loved it!

We loved Spotted Fawn at first sight. She was the matriarch and clan mother to this eclectic crowd of Native Americans, African Americans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Asians, and whites.

She emanated pure unconditional love. That didn't mean she was a pushover! She had rules and regulations and one had better follow them or there would be hell to pay - and hell existed right here on Mother Earth. But she was so loving, sincere, and wonderful that no one ever wanted to cross her, except maybe her own children. (It seems as if we always have to test our parents!)

Norman went to sit with the men in the arbour outside, where Rolling Thunder was giving a lecture, teaching some young people from Europe about the correct way to pick herbs and take the bounty from Mother Earth. You never just take something from the Mother Earth without asking if it is permitted by the plant or tree, and making a prayer of thanksgiving. Then you give something in return: some tobacco, a coin, or some of your hair.

The landscape of Carlin, Nevada, where Rolling Thunder had his centre

Inset: traditional wickiup shelter



I slipped away from this group and went to the little kitchen to offer my help to the women. I started helping to cook, clean, wash dishes, and perform other kinds of 'womanly chores.' I was involved in the women's consciousness-raising movement at that time, and I should have been bothered by these seemingly distinct male-female roles, but somehow it just seemed like such a natural part of what was going on in Carlin. I instinctively understood the authentic mutual respect among the sexes, despite the age differences and cultural diversities.

Rolling Thunder was very willing to explain his ideas and understanding of the male-female balance at the dinner table that night. As he did so, I remember thinking that he was reading my mind!

Twelve men and boys all crowded around the big kitchen table on one side of the room. They ate first and were served by the women. I figured the men ate first because there was not much room for everyone to sit. This was true, but the real reason for the separation of the men and women was to allow for bonding to take place. I enjoyed sitting with the women and girls afterward. And it was a good bonding time.

That first night, after all the cleanup was done, we were about twenty people crowded in the front room on two old sofas and chairs or sitting on the floor.

I became sort of mesmerised listening to Rolling Thunder as he smoked his corn cob pipe. He spoke about the condition of the Native American people in America. He shared that the white people wanted all the Indians to become assimilated into their culture and throw away their own culture and beliefs.

He told us the story of the 'Trail of Tears,' when the Cherokee were moved from east of the Mississippi to Oklahoma, twelve hundred miles away. More than five thousand Cherokee - men, women, and children - died on the Trail of Tears due to starvation and the white man's diseases of smallpox, measles, cholera, malaria, and whooping cough. These Indians were not allowed to perform the sacred ceremonies for their dead. They were humiliated, forced to

move from their homes, and almost annihilated.

Rolling Thunder took on the anguish and torment of this march. His voice rose and fell over us in waves of sorrow, regret, compassion, and forgiveness. It became a trail of tears for me too. I couldn't stop weeping; neither could I hide my distress and tears.

He looked over at me, his dark eyes shooting lightning bolts. He knew that he had found a compatriot and friend. I never said a word to him personally during our whole three-day visit but we were definitely psychically and spiritually connected.

Norman had the honour and opportunity of being at his side the whole time and he shared Rolling Thunder's wisdom with me on the long drive home.

Rolling Thunder's pragmatic and tribal wisdom to live by can be summarised in some general statements:

- The clan mother is the only one who can dehorn a chief; all she has to do is pack his things and put his bag outside their tipi.
- There is no need for lawyers when a couple is divorced; all you have to do is just change your tipi.
- Walk your talk or be quiet.
- Respect one another.
- Respect yourself.
- Never touch anyone else's belongings without asking.
- At meetings, if no conclusion can be reached, the women will call for a food break, and when the meeting is resumed, a consensus is achieved because everyone has had time to think.
- It is necessary to listen to the opinions of women and gain from the woman's intuition and wisdom without losing face.
- When a warrior goes to war with another tribe, if a killing occurs, the warrior is not allowed back into the camp until he purifies himself through fasting, prayer, and solitude, in order to make amends with the dead. (This teaching was especially appropriate in relation to the mass murders happening during the Vietnam War. But in all wars, glorified killing should never be the standard.)
- The positions in the tribe are all equal, it is a circle.
- Medicine people are born gifted, but they have to pass the Great Spirit's tests in order to be humble

You never just take something from the Mother Earth without asking if it is permitted by the plant or tree, and making a prayer of thanksgiving. Then you give something in return: some tobacco, a coin, or some of your hair



enough to be healers.

- Chiefs are appointed by the circle for their strength, courage, intelligence, compassion, leadership, and commitment to the circle.
- Always make an offering to the Mother Earth and Spirit when taking something from the earth such as plants, feathers, and rocks.
- Show love and respect for the Mother Earth, above all else. It is our home.
- We are all connected.

Norman and I and some of our friends brought Rolling Thunder a big truck, which became known as the 'Billy Jack' truck. It had been used during the making of the Billy Jack movie, which was loosely based on part of the life of Rolling

Below: photo of Rolling Thunder taken in the 1970s

Thunder, and in which Rolling Thunder played a small role.

We heavily loaded it down with everything we could jam into it: boxes of nails, carpets, tools, foodstuffs, furniture, a huge variety of clothing, and donations from our friends and associates in the Topanga Canyon, Beverly Hills, and greater Los Angeles area.

Rolling Thunder conducted numerous healing ceremonies in our presence. It is difficult to recount all of these because they were all 'otherworldly': the intensity of the drumming and singing, the burning of the cedar, his actions as a medicine man, the energy in the room. These were times of powerful witnessing to the work of Spirit moving and coming through the open vessel that was Rolling Thunder



This 'mobile masterpiece' was driven to Carlin and unloaded by Rolling Thunder's sons and warriors, who included Buffalo Horse, Spotted Eagle, Running Bear, and all the other 'boys' in the group.

Norman (our Jewish princel!) was present and was thrown a fifty-pound box of nails. He staggered under the weight of it and almost dropped it, but "held on for dear life!" as he would later exclaim while retelling the story.

Of course, all the warriors smirked and hid behind their politeness, but as Norman would go on to explain, when the weight of the carpets that we tossed from the truck brought me to my knees I saw Rolling Thunder chewing really hard on his pipe to keep from laughing, too.

Norman wondered what these guys were doing to him. However, he kept his own sense of humour and told a joke (he was famous for having the right joke at the right time!) and then everybody could laugh and feel comic relief, including me. Later Rolling Thunder told me that if the men didn't respect or like Norman they wouldn't bother to tease and mess with him. It was a way of expressing affection. I could relate to that, We all became close friends over the many years.

NORMAN'S MEMORIES

I went out to the land one time with Buffalo Horse and Carolyn, before it became Meta Tantay and it was occupied by the Rolling Thunder tribe of Thunder People. There was only Greg, the Puerto Rican, out there serving as the caretaker.

We were going to smoke a pipe or two and enjoy the night sky. Well, we got to the gate and since I was riding shotgun, I jumped out to unlock and open the gate. Everything went fine.

However, on the way out, I jumped out and opened the gate, Buffalo Horse drove through, and then I closed and locked the gate with me on the wrong side. I had locked myself in! Well, we all laughed ourselves into tears over that! It was another classic Norman manoeuvre.

On another occasion, Buffalo Horse and I were sent to get a load of gravel. Rolling Thunder was having a gathering at the house and he wanted to put gravel on all the pathways so folks wouldn't have to walk in the mud.

We drove around, I thought to the gravel yard, or somewhere where he had already made arrangements to pick the gravel up. We got there and started loading the bed of an old Dodge station wagon. Well, I never saw someone shovel so fast in my life. Buffalo Horse shoveled three or four shovelfuls to my one. He was amazing! He got tired of my bragging about him, the greatest shoveller ever. I told that story a hundred times!

One day, many years later, he told me, "The truth is, Norman, that gravel wasn't ours!" No wonder he shovelled so fast. Go figure!

One time we were all with Rolling Thunder, having a fabulous Italian dinner, made by a friend of mine. There were about twelve men sitting around the table. It was a great feast and celebration. At the end of the meal, a pipe was brought out and Rolling Thunder loaded it with his famous 'Five Brothers' tobacco.

Well, I was overwhelmed to be smoking with everyone in this ceremony of brotherhood. So, when my turn came, I took a hit of this twenty-five-cents-a-package tobacco, inhaling deep into my lungs, and I turned red, then green. I didn't want to have a coughing fit but, man, I was dying. My eyes were watering, I was sweating and finally I had to cough, choking nearly to death!

Rolling Thunder said I disappeared, probably under the table. Maybe I did. I sure felt like disappearing!

Several years later, when Carolyn and I owned the Thunder Trading Company and Frontier Deli in Santa Cruz, California. Rolling Thunder would come and spend lots of time with us there, as it was a great centre of operation for his talks all around the San Francisco Bay area and farther south.

We so much enjoyed and appreciated his visits. With his entourage of singers and drummers and security team, he would go out into the garden of our restaurant and drum and sing. Everyone from all around would come and be uplifted by the singing and drumming. He helped us create a great business.

One day Rolling Thunder, along with one of his dear friends, Grandfather Semu, and I were



I became sort of mesmerised listening to Rolling Thunder as he smoked his cornucob pipe. He spoke about the condition of the Native American people in America. He shared that the white people wanted all the Indians to become assimilated into their culture and throw away their own culture and beliefs

sitting in the sun at a garden table eating our wonderful food. They started talking about giving me an Indian name.

Well, I had always wanted an 'Indian name,' but God forbid that I would ever say anything like that. I was very aware how Rolling Thunder felt about 'Indians' giving white people 'Indian names.' This was something that generally did not sit very well with him.

Despite this, I got very excited, but tried hard not to show it. Then Rolling Thunder began to speak about the eagle, what it meant symbolically, its significance, and its nature. He looked up at the blue sky and I followed his gaze, expecting a giant eagle to show up right then and there. He looked down and became quiet, chewing on his pipe. So Grandfather Semu took up the narrative. He spoke about the hawk, expounding on its significance. Then they both sat very still and were quiet for quite a while.

I stayed as calm as possible but I certainly was fidgety.

At last Rolling Thunder looked up at me with his black-as-night eyes and spoke again. Without one bit of humour, nor a twinkle in his eye, he quietly said, "We have decided that your name will be Bagel Feather."

Total silence.

I wasn't sure whether I should laugh or not, or if it was a joke or what. Then, in all earnestness Rolling Thunder told me that we should always honour and be proud of where we come from. Since I was a 'Jewish Indian,' part of the lost tribe, then I should always be proud of that.

I tell everyone that story now, and people always laugh, but for me it has great meaning and sincerity. It took me a few years to

understand the significance and the wisdom of my name, and I honour the great man who saw me for who I am and I profoundly respect the name Bagel Feather.

Rolling Thunder conducted numerous healing ceremonies in our presence. It is difficult to recount all of those events because they were all 'otherworldly': the intensity of the drumming and singing, the burning of the cedar, his actions as a medicine man, the energy in the room.

These were times of powerful witnessing to the work of Spirit moving and coming through the open vessel that was Rolling Thunder. They were transcendental and transpersonal experiences. We never talked about them much. They were sacred.

Rolling Thunder did heal people. I saw it, and I witnessed the transformation that occurred during these events, not only on the patient, but on everyone involved - even those in the household.

Some of these healings happened in our California homes in Topanga Canyon and Santa Cruz. Our living quarters were blessed as a result.

Rolling Thunder also named our two sons at the time of their births by interpreting the dreams of all those who were present at the time. These names are sacred to us and our sons, Big Man and Sunrise Strong Heart.

There are many other Rolling Thunder stories that I could share, but the ones included here will serve to tell the people who read them how Rolling Thunder and Spotted Fawn changed the direction of our lives. Rolling Thunder is our

relation in the world of Spirit now. We have a benefactor in the Great Beyond. He is with us in our daily lives too, because he lives and breathes in the hearts of all his Thunder People, and my husband, Bagel Feather, and I are very proud to number among them.

This is an edited extract from the book: 'The Shamanic Powers of Rolling Thunder' edited by Sidian Morningstar Jones and Stanley Kroppner. See a review of the book in this issue of Sacred Hoop.

Carolyna Saint Germain is the author of 'Stewards for the Earth.' In addition to being a midwife, she officiates and teaches ceremonies which she calls 'Blessingways.' These practices allow one to experience mindful awareness and conscious connection to our Mother Earth.

Rolling Thunder, 1916-1997, born John Pope was a well known medicine person, although there is some controversy as to whether he was part Native American or completely of European ancestry. He was raised in Oklahoma, and said he was part Cherokee, although he at other times he said he had both Shoshone and Hopi blood. Whatever his blood, during his life, Rolling Thunder, was well known for his 'medicine work,' as well as for the number of powerful healings he performed, and the strange phenomena that occurred around him - especially to do with his ability to work with the weather spirits.

He taught in both the USA and Europe and wrote several books. He was also at times an actor and appeared in several 'Billy Jack' films, which were loosely based on his life. In the mid 1970's Bob Dylan, who was working with him as a spiritual advisor, named the Rolling Thunder Revue tour after him. Rolling Thunder and his wife Spotted Fawn, a Western Shoshone woman, founded a non-profit 262 acre community in north-eastern Nevada called Meta Tantay which operated until 1985. There people from all over the world came for healings and teachings.

Rolling Thunder's work and vision is now continued by his son, Mala Spotted Eagle Pope. www.nanish.org

Below: traditional cornucob pipe



I began bringing in stones, one at a time... the third stone rocked back and forth across the tines of the pitchfork I was using to carry it from the fire...



Lessons from the Fire

Reflections on being a Sweatlodge Fire Keeper

Micah Armstrong

On a cold, windy and rainy morning in late October I rolled out of bed, and quickly made preparations to attend a sweat lodge ceremony I was expected at.

I did not want to go, and

had been experiencing an ominous foreboding feeling for some days prior to the event; this feeling would prove oddly prescient as the day unfolded. What follows is an account of the events of that day; written in an attempt to wrestle forth some sort of meaning from them, as they are re-lived from my memory upon this page. The story is elucidative, in that it speaks to the idea that lessons can be found anywhere where one is willing to look for them.

All too often I have been in the dark heat of a sweat, wondering what it was that I was there for, my questions all too often answered only with more intense heat and darkness. Now I am forced to ask: could it be that what one comes to a sweat for, is sometimes found not by entering the lodge, but by being in the service to it?

I now gaze into my own folly, and humbly ask: was this a sacred lesson, or my own profane ineptitude?

When I arrived there was only one other person there, she was struggling to get the fire lit. We greeted one another and then I set

to work on the fire. As it had been raining all week, it was no easy task to get the wet wood, sputtering and spurting, with the alchemy of combustion, into a roaring fire sufficient for heating the stones used in the ceremony. Once the fire was going, the woman, who had arrived before me said something to the effect of "it's as if the fire was waiting for you!"

As I was coaxing the fire, the water pourer had emerged from the back door of his home; a lit cigarette between his pursed lips, and a cup of coffee in hand. It took some time for him to descend from the elevated back deck of his house. He saw me chopping wood, and walked over, saying; "well it looks like you're fire tending."

Never mind that I have never done it before; his words were not a question.

I answer simply, quickly before I could think better of it; "OK." In reflection this request came as no surprise as a continuation of the premonitions aforementioned.

I was a little disappointed, as typically the fire tender does not enter the lodge; rather staying

outside to ensure that everything within the lodge runs smoothly.

I tried to dissipate this feeling by remaining grateful to all those who had tended the fire before; when it had been my turn to enter the lodge. I had known that it was only a matter of time before I would be called on to perform this task, and some might even say I was tardy in payment.

The others who would be joining us began to arrive; they stood around garrulous, drinking water or coffee, waiting for instruction, or for the lodge to be ready. Chit chat always makes me nervous; so I typically sequester myself between the wood pile and the fire, as the fire's demeanour is always taciturn and welcoming.

When the stones were glowing red they were ready for the sweat, and I let the water pourer know that we were ready. He let everyone else know that it was time to change into what they would wear for the lodge, and so everyone got ready.

When everybody had changed and was inside the lodge, I used a pitchfork to begin carrying in seven glowing stones - one at a time - sweeping each with a bundle of cedar fronds used for cleaning off the remnants of the fire. This cleaning should have been performed by someone else, but today there was no one else to

help so I had to do it myself. Again my ire mounted, and I remember thinking that I should have stayed in bed, but again I dampened these feelings back, with the memory of all the stones which had been brushed and carried during previous ceremonies, while I sat comfortably within the lodge, only welcoming them from within.

Once the stones were all in, the water pourer called for the bucket of water, water which would be poured upon the hot stones.

As I handed the bucket to the water pourer, he asked me; "Did you put prayers in the water?"

"Yes," I said.

"I don't see any prayers" he snapped.

I replied, "I prayed over the buckets."

He shot back "I don't see them... you needed to put prayers on sage, and then put the sage in the water."

We exchanged a few more quick words; and were able to improvise; I handed him some sage, which he put in the water.

I knew this was not the time to feel humiliated; I also understood that my ignorance was not reprehensible; for no act performed in ignorance can offend the ceremony, as long as the act is performed with good intention.

A sweatlodge is divided into four rounds, four quarters, four times that people pray in the circle within the darkness. As I had for the first round, I carried in more stones for the second and third rounds, but these rounds were punctuated with cries of 'glee' - light seeping in though the blankets that covered the lodge. This light corrupts the darkness within the lodge, and so I covered, and recovered, the offending areas, seemingly to no effect.

The third round finished, and I delivered water to the participants, which they would pass around. While they refreshed themselves, I draped more blankets upon the lodge, re-draping blankets, which unusually strong gusts of wind had displaced. And then it was time for the fourth round.

I began bringing in stones, one at a time, brushing off each glowing stone with cedar again. The third stone was more round than the rest, and it rocked back and forth

across the tines of the pitchfork I was using to carry it from the fire.

For a moment I had a vision of the stone, dangerously rolling off of the pitchfork into the lodge, but I quickly dismissed this idea and moved the stone into position on the plank which is used for transitioning the stones from the outside into the inside of the lodge.

Pushing the stone forward, it rolled to the left, off of the fork and into the lodge.

The water pourer, jumped into action, using a set of deer antlers to try and pull the hot stone safely away from the others in the lodge.

Antlers are traditionally used in sweatlodes for negotiating the stones into the hole in the ground in the centre of the floor of the lodge. But I was quicker with the pitch fork, too quick in fact, as one of the fork's tines burned the water pourer's arm.

Eventually I was able to bring the stone back to the fire, because if a stone falls on the ground at any time it must be brought back to the fire.

The water pourer, and everyone in the lodge were distressed by the accident. He kept saying; "I have never seen that happen before," and this sentiment was echoed by everyone else in the lodge. He instructed me to pray - but of course he did not tell me what to pray for - so I knelt down by the fire and pretended to pray, not really sure what for, or how, I was supposed to go about praying for it.

At the time, I remember, I was rather unmoved by the whole event. I was of course concerned that I had burned the water pourer's arm with the pitchfork, I had compassion, but this did not seem like the time to worry about minor injuries.

Eventually, as I was un-phased, I let the water pourer know that I was ready to start bringing the stones into the lodge again, for the forth and final round; but the lodge needed a few more minutes to prepare for their arrival, and so I was told once again to pray.

It was not until later that I began to think about all these events, and how they impacted, and influenced me.

In the liminal ceremonial space, I do not believe it's one's job to ask questions, things happen, and those things are dealt with. I am not suggesting that one should act

All too often I have been in the dark heat of a sweat, wondering what it was that I was there for, my questions all too often answered only with more intense heat and darkness. Now I am forced to ask: could it be that what one comes to a sweat for, is sometimes found not by entering the lodge, but by being in the service of it?



blindly - ignoring sensations, or obeying untoward commands - rather, when one is within the ceremony, within the 'flux of the space', one's own identity becomes secondary to that of the group.

At first, when you start showing up for ceremonies, you do your own inner work - which of course is never really finished. But as you mature in this 'work,' you are then there to serve others, who have shown up to do their work. This is not a chronological progression of course - where one achieves enough 'merit' based upon the amount of participation in ceremonies - rather it a 'psychic measure', which allows for anyone to attend a ceremony, and for those who can give to the ceremony

to do so - and for those who need to draw from the ceremony are also allowed to do so .

After the lodge was complete, I become more distraught. I pulled the water pourer aside, and asked him if I should be concerned about anything. He told me no, but now it was my job to beware, and to help prevent others from making the same mistake that I had made.

At the time I felt reassured, perhaps even a little self-righteous, knowing that no-one blamed me; though my actions had brought harm to another, however, this feeling waned in the days following the ceremony, and was replaced by feelings of shame and self-doubt,

which manifested with the notion that the lodge - which I had helped to build - no longer wanted me.

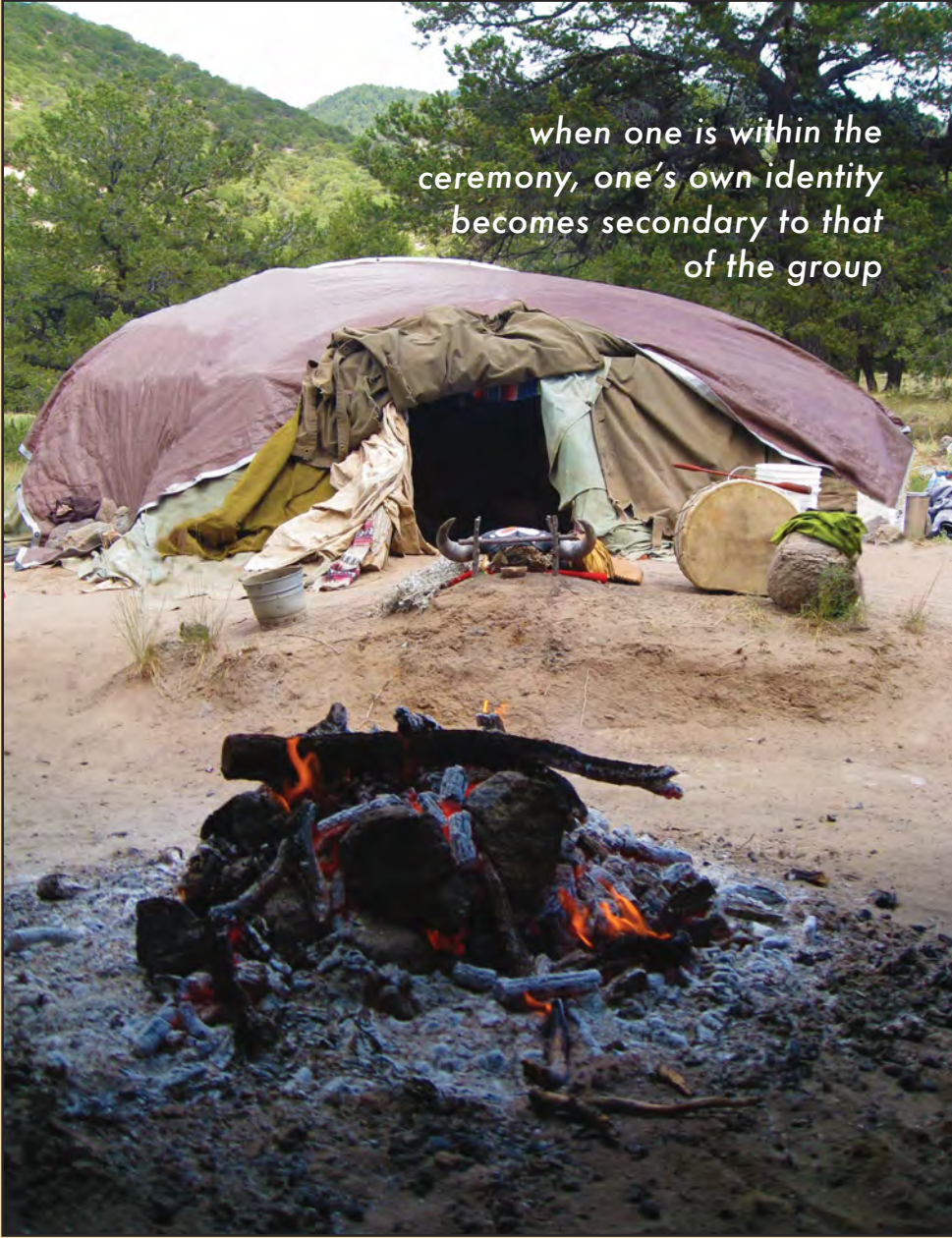
The more I thought about it, the more I was able to see that I was participating in something that I had no right to be a part of, indeed I might even be stealing from a culture that was not my own. But about a week later, after talking with several friends I was able to reconcile with myself. It occurred to me that the gross aggregate of our folly is can be the mine for our deepest wisdom, and I remembered hearing the mythologist and story teller Michael Meade say something like; 'it is underneath our scars where our gold lays.' This idea placated my sentiments about the sweat, and convinced me to return upon the next opportunity.

All this has been a curious lesson for me, and one that I am still learning. I would have already forgotten the accident, had anyone else made it - even if I had been the victim of a burn - for I am well aware of the perils inherent in the task of fire tending. But this lesson, it seems, was meant for me to remember.

I was the one that set the plank incorrectly, it was not level, and this allowed the stone to roll off to one side. Was this negligence spawned from a senses of hubris - one which urged me on without caution - or, was it a gift from the lodge? for I am sure that the plank had never been level in previous lodges. I can only gaze into my own folly, and humbly ask: was this a sacred lesson, or my own profane ineptitude?

It occurs to me that I need to pray for a willingness to see what I need to see - even when it comes in the form of a mistake - and accept what may come. It is for me to learn, for mistakes are our greatest teachers, showing us our own shortcomings, and limitations.

Micah Armstrong lives in Seattle Washington, where he is an avid writer of personal essays, and a verbose correspondence. He is a passionate hiker and has cultivated a deep yoga asana practice. He is also a frequent dabbler at pastel drawing and playing the didgeridoo. An innate curiosity, and devotion to veracity, long ago attracted Micah to Shamanism; it has proven to be a crooked path which inevitably leads to things sacred, profane, and unknown. micahadloc@hotmail.com



when one is within the ceremony, one's own identity becomes secondary to that of the group



Rappé Tribal Tobacco Snuff

Travis Bodick

Tobacco is a very misunderstood plant in our culture. Many people associate it with addiction and death, and considering it is one of the top killers in some countries this is understandable. But for thousands of years, tribal societies have worked with tobacco as a medicine, and considered it to be one of the earth's greatest healing plants.

While there were some dangers associated with the plant, in most cases the plant was revered as powerful medicine. There are 'tobacco shamans' who ingest huge amounts of the plant on a regular basis, without getting sick, and using tobacco, these healers can cure illnesses of many different kinds.

There could be many different reasons for these different perspectives of tobacco, but my understanding is that the main difference is intention and respect.

Tobacco is considered an amplifier of intention, prayers and thoughts, so when you ask the plant for medicine and protection that gets amplified. If you are smoking angrily and habitually to relieve frustration and desire – that amplifies something else.

So, this being said, I want to suggest that anyone who feels

called to work with this plant be mindful of how they use it. It is a very powerful plant capable of great wonder and miracles as well as great destruction.

There are many ways to work with tobacco, but I want to focus on one tobacco tradition that is very close to my heart - rappé.

Rappé is a dried and powdered tobacco snuff which comes from the Amazon, where it is used as a powerful and beautiful healing medicine. It is pronounced 'ra-pe' in Spanish, or more commonly "ha-pe" in Portuguese (the snuff is found in both Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries, but is most popular in Brazil which speaks Portuguese).

It also has many other names in other indigenous tongues from the Amazon region. I prefer the spelling rappé with an extra "p" because some people misread the word rapé and confuse it for something else - although traditionally it is spelled with only one p.

Rappé is a dried and powdered snuff which is usually blown into the nose through a blow pipe. You can use a special blowpipe for serving yourself, which is called a

kuripe, but most often a larger blowpipe, called a *tepi* is used to serve a partner.

The main ingredients of the snuff are usually tobacco and tree ash, but often times other seeds, leaves and plants may be added for additional properties, or even just for aroma. Sometimes a rappé can be made without the tobacco and tree ash, but this is uncommon – generally the first ingredient is always the cured jungle tobacco, called mapacho.

This species of tobacco - *Nicotiana rustica* - is different to the common tobacco found in cigarettes, it is often between eight to twenty times stronger, and it, of course, has zero additives, and generally lots of prayer and intention. The ashes added to the snuff comes from sacred trees, and these act as an alkaliser, which balances the tobacco.

In personal recipes, people may add whatever plants they want to, to get specific desired effects. Seeds such as *yopo* (*Anadenanthera peregrina*) or *wilka* (*Anadenanthera colubrina*) may be added to increase the visionary properties of the snuff, or flowers might be added to instill a more feminine and nurturing energy.

Above left: kuripe blowpipe

Above: two Amazonians use a kuripe to deliver rappé



Above: Nicotiana rustica flowers and leaves

The snuff is made during a lengthy and intensive ritual process, done to invoke the maker's medicine, and the spirits of the plants used.

There are many reasons one might wish to work with rappé, just as there are many ways of working with it as well. Because there are so many different cultures in the Amazon region who use rappé, a number of different traditions and practices have evolved around its use.

The benefits of using rappé range from the physical and psychological, to the energetic and spiritual. Rappé clears and focusses the mind and thoughts, centres and grounds your energy, opens up your physical and spiritual senses and awareness, cleanses and purifies your body and energy, connects you to your spirit allies and medicine and much more.

It can be used in almost any situation a ceremony might call for, and can function, or pair well, with many other rituals, or medicines. Traditionally it is used within its own ceremony, but can also be taken within other ceremonies, such as an Ayahuasca or kambo ceremony. It is also used for hunting, before warfare, and even for recreation.

Sometimes you mostly feel energetic and physical sensations from the rappé, but at other times it can even create visionary

experiences, despite not being a classically visionary medicine. Because of this, it is possible to do different styles of 'journey work' using the rappé, as it acts as an aid, helping you to communicate with your spirit guides and allies for healing or guidance.

To work with rappé you will want to get some quality product. These days there are a number of online shops which sell tribal rappés gathered in the Amazon, so luckily for those of us not living in South America, we can still have access to this medicine if we wish it.

It is also possible to make your own rappé by drying, powdering

and mixing the plants you want to use. You will probably also want a *kuripe* blowpipe for serving the rappé, although the medicine can be snuffed directly off of your hand, or a small scooping device. Pipes, however, really add a nice dimension to the ceremony and also get the snuff further into your nose, where it absorbs better.

You will get a more profound effect from the rappé by using it in an intentional and ceremonial manner. There are many ways to do this, as each culture using the medicine developed its own rituals.

I will share my method of working with rappé and the symbolism behind it.

It is good to 'open sacred space,' or begin with your usual style of beginning ceremony. It is also nice to take a time to pray and think about your intentions, and if you feel called to sing a medicine song or two, or play a little ceremonial music do so.

When you are ready, you can put a single serving of rappé into your hand – for beginners this might be a pea sized amount (that amount will serve both nostrils). You can use less or more depending on your experience level and your intention – someone with more experience or who needs deep cleansing or healing might do a much larger amount.

I like to then take three breaths to focus and ask for blessings – if I am sharing rappé with a partner I like to do these three breaths together, as a way of connecting with each other's energy before serving the medicine.



Right: prepared rappé snuff

Scoop half of the rappé in your hand – this amount will serve your first nostril. With the first breath, I hold the rappé and the blowpipe towards the earth, and breath in the blessings of Pachamama (Mother Earth).

With the second breath I hold the pipe towards the sky and breath in the blessings of Creator.

With the third breath I hold the pipe at my heart asking my personal allies to bless my medicine and for these blessing to all come from my heart These three breaths also represent the three worlds to me - lower, upper, and middle.

I then blow the rappé into my left nostril first - and if blowing for someone else I will tell them to hold their breath before blowing it in, and then to breathe from the mouth afterwards.

As soon as possible, I scoop the remaining rappé into the blowpipe and serve the right nostril. In this way the left nostril is a symbolic death, while the right is a symbolic rebirth. This balances the yin/yang energies of your body and mind.

After the rappé is in the nose, try to mostly breathe through the mouth and keep all the medicine in your nose. Try to sit with it and observe any sensations that arise without reacting to them.

You may wipe your nose if some snot drips out, but try to wait at least 20-40 minutes before blowing your nose. If you feel anything drip into your throat from the rappé, you can spit it out – some tribes view this as a type of purge while others actually swallow it so as to not waste any medicine (you can make your own judgement call here).

Mostly I sit and meditate while under the effects of the rappé, but sometimes I will sing medicine songs to deepen or guide the effects of the medicine.

This is also a great time to pray or ask for guidance and healing. Most times the rappé puts one into a deep meditative state, but sometimes it causes more profound cleansing and purging – as, while not always common with smaller amounts of rappé, it is possible to experience purging, bowel movements, energetic or emotional releases and so on. This is a powerful medicine and usually

these are signs of deeper healing and releasing – I once saw someone purge out physical parasites during a bowel movement initiated by the rappé.

Besides the different recipes of rappé and different medicine songs you can use to empower and guide the medicine, there are also different breaths you can use to focus your intention.

There are many types of animals and other spirits one can call on to empower the breath, and generally each one of these breaths takes time to get to know and learn correctly. Generally one learns these breaths either from spirit allies directly, or from rappé shamans one works with. The most common and basic breath is the 'deer breath.' For this, one starts by taking a deep breath into one's stomach, connecting with one's power and medicine, and then one blows out long, then at the end hard, while closing one's throat at the same time.

This is just the beginning of what you can learn about rappé and the real benefits come from experiencing it yourself.

This medicine can, as I said above, be a very powerful way to cleanse one's body and energy as well as connect with one's spirit allies through prayer and ceremony; but the real beauty of

This medicine can be a very powerful way to cleanse one's body and energy as well as connect with one's spirit allies through prayer and ceremony; but the real beauty of the medicine is that it can be used expertly in the hands of a master, but is still effective when used by a beginner

the medicine is that it can be used expertly in the hands of a master, but is still effective when used by a beginner, learning on their own. Just remember to be mindful and respectful of the medicine and pray from the heart.

Travis Bodick is the author of four books, with the most recent work being 'The Plant Remedy.' All of Travis's books are written to help the reader engage with and encounter their own truth through direct experience. Trained and practised in a number of healing disciplines and traditions, his wide range of influences allows him to relate with people from all backgrounds, and his focus is on the common threads that unite all practices based in Spirit.

Travis especially focusses on nature based spiritual healing practices and helping clients encounter and know their own heart and soul. Helping others to find and embrace their true passion in life is Travis's greatest joy.
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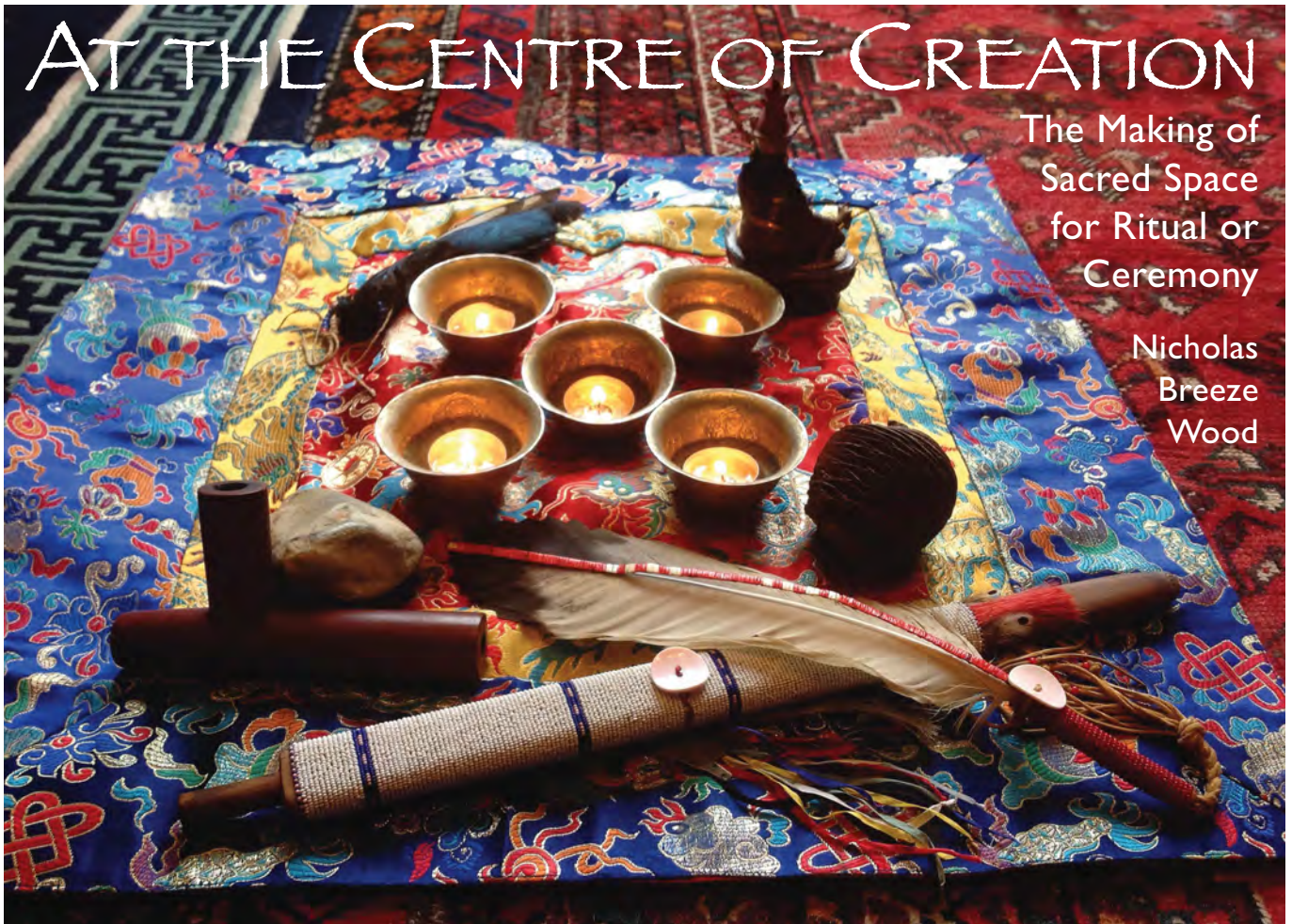
*Below:
taking rappé
in a ceremony*



AT THE CENTRE OF CREATION

The Making of
Sacred Space
for Ritual or
Ceremony

Nicholas
Breeze
Wood



Above: an altar representing the Four Directions and the Four Realms (the plant people, the stone people, the animal people, and the human people), placed in the centre of a pipe ceremony

The creating of a Sacred Space is fundamental to any ceremony or ritual practice, but exactly how does one go about creating one?

Well, the short answer is there is no single way, and every sacred tradition, and every practitioner will have their own methods, but there are a few fundamentals that most people and traditions will all share. So, here are a few ideas, and a few of the things I personally do.

The nature of sacred space is such that it is at the very heart of all things - it is the sacred centre point of creation from which all directions radiate. In essence - to paraphrase a medieval Christian phrase used to define God - sacred space is a place whose centre is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere. In other words, when we create sacred space it is the centre of everywhere - and where we stand is the centre of Creation, and everywhere else is the circumference of the sacred circle of Creation, the Sacred Hoop.

For me, this is very beautifully encapsulated in my favourite Lakota sacred pipe song, a song called 'The Sacred Nation Must Live':

*Lay yuah
chey wa ceyelo
Canupa kei
Lay yuah
chey wa ceyelo
Oyate ke Zanipikta
Oye wayelo*

*With this sacred pipe I go to
the centre of the world to pray.
I pray for the whole of Creation,
that all creatures shall live in good
health, and that the whole of
creation be blessed*

When I do any ceremony, and especially when I am doing a pipe ceremony, I am stepping into the very centre of all of Creation, with the sacred Four Directions all around me, along with the Above and the Below, placing me in the centre of the sacred Six Directions.

This centre point of Creation is often depicted symbolically - especially if you are working with a

group of people, no matter how small - by placing a small altar, on the ground or on a low table, in the centre of your work space, and the group then sits in a sacred circle around that altar. The altar is the sacred centre point of Creation.

However, of course, if you are working by yourself, you can't sit in a circle by yourself, but you can still create an altar, and either you personally, or the altar will be the centre of Creation.

ESTABLISHING THE CENTRE

It is perfectly possible to just place a single object as the centre point of Creation, a rock, a candle, a mug of coffee - whatever seems appropriate to you at the time, but if I am putting a centre down for a ceremony, I like to actually build a sort of medicine wheel, which represents the Powers of the Four Directions.

For this, I always put a cloth down first - an altar should always be suspended from ordinary reality, and a cloth is ideal for doing this. What is on the cloth is on the altar, and what is not on the cloth is not

on the altar - it's bad form and 'sloppy medicine' to have things half on and half off an altar; be spiritually tidy.

Different spiritual systems will have different attributes for each point of the compass. I have, for over 30 years, used the medicine wheel system taught by the métis (part Native American) teacher Hyemeyohsts Storm. His wheels have, pretty much, become the standard ones for many people in the West. These are shown in the medicine wheel diagram shown on this page.

I have specific objects, which I have used when constructing many hundreds of altars over the last few decades. These are a cedar cone for the South, a specific rock for the West, a magpie's wing for the North and a statue of Padmasambhava¹ for the East. I also always put five lit candles, one in the very centre and one each for each of the directions.

I have made altars like this for so long, their making has become part of me, and so, for me, an altar like this denotes the setting up of this form of sacred space - creates the sacred centre of Creation. Altars in this form are not traditional *per se*, but they have now, most certainly, become traditional for me.

CALLING IN THE POWERS

When I am working with the sacred pipe the way the tobacco is placed into the pipe's bowl - along with the prayers to the Sacred Powers made during the filling of the pipe - means that I always formally invite the Powers in to help with the ceremony. But in general 'calling in' the spirit powers is an important aspect of creating a sacred space in its own right, and it can - without any physical supports such as an altar - be the simplest and most quickly performed method.

But before I write about that, let me say a little about intent. Intent is very important when you perform a ceremony or create sacred space. In reality it is the essence of what you do - whether you do it with words, objects or visualisations.

If you place a central altar down, with objects representing the Four Directions, you will be building intent when you first place the cloth, and then expanding it each time you place one of the objects

down. You can do this silently, but it can be a good thing to do it verbally too - calling in each Power as you place the object.

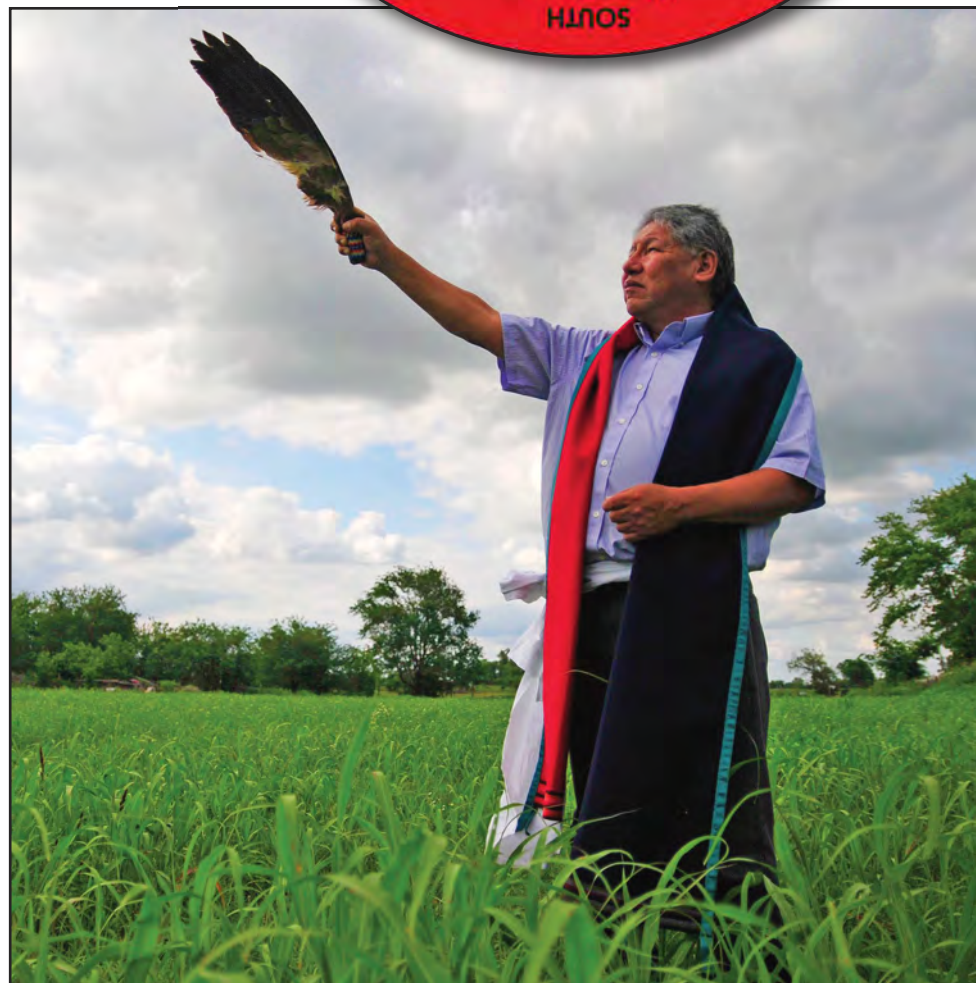
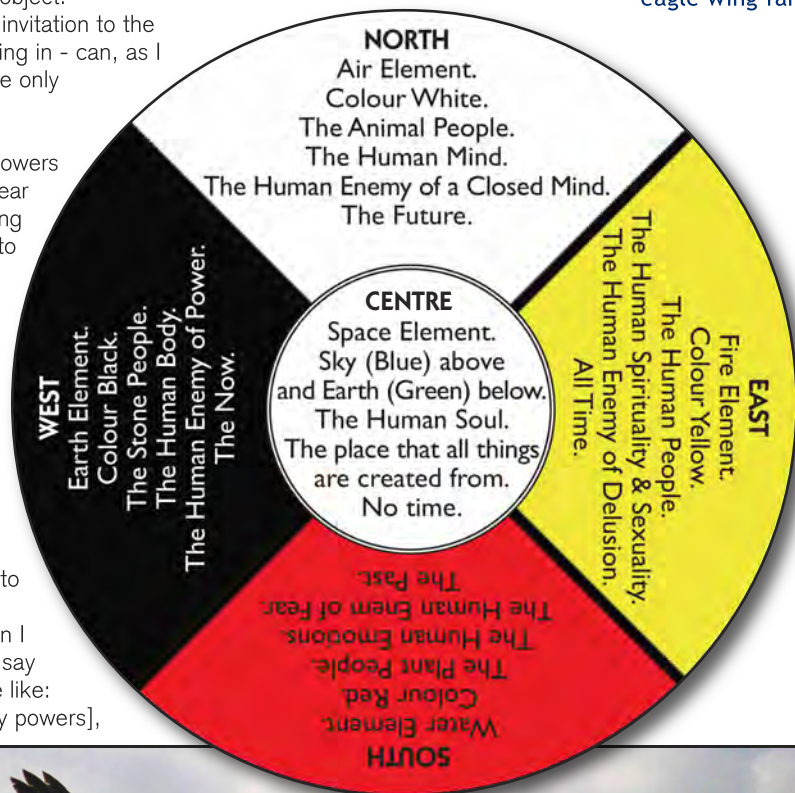
However, this invitation to the Powers - the calling in - can, as I said above, be the only practice needed.

To call in the powers you need to be clear what you are calling in, and it is good to be eloquent in your language too. It comes with practice - but the most important thing is clarity of speech and thought, so you really are actually inviting in the Powers you wish to invite in.

Generally when I call the Powers I say something simple like: "Grandfather [Sky powers],

Grandmother [Grandmother Earth], Sacred Ones, Grandfathers [the Four Direction Powers].

Below:
calling to the Powers using an eagle wing fan



Below:
holding an eagle
feather fan
while making
prayers outside
of a sweatlodge.

The powers are not going to respond any better if you give them yards of verbose invitation, being lean of speech is good when you are doing ceremony, just as it is in life in general.

I might well face each of the directions in turn, always turning to the next one 'sun-wise' - clockwise - as moving the way the sun does in the sky symbolises that you are moving 'with life'. Some traditions - such as the ancient, pre-Buddhist Bon tradition of Tibet - travel anti sunwise in ceremonies, but this is rare, and in the West there has been a long tradition that it is a negative thing to do, done for black magic, or if done accidentally will result in misfortune.

Some people will call in the Powers of the Directions simply by naming them - north, south, east and west - and I generally do this because I know the deeper meaning underneath those simple names. Other people may call in the four elements - earth, air, fire and water - possibly facing the direction they are attributed too - or other spirit powers. Intent is all.

I generally hold something when I am calling in the Powers. This may well be a feather, or my eagle wing fan, but it could be a rattle or a drum beater - whatever is sacred to you.

Holding something sacred helps to give you a sense of power and

authority; it is like a conductor before an orchestra. When doing ceremony, one needs a balance of deep humility and authority. Humility because you know before Creation, the Great Mystery, the spirits you are nothing; and authority, because you are solid in your own centre and grounded, and sure about what you are doing. You as the 'dance chief' - the ceremony leader - are a bridge between this world and the spirit world, and the last thing a ceremony needs is a wobbly bridge.

I will also often add another line to my calling in, inviting in the 'Uncles and Aunts.' These are my relatives in creation, the plants and animals and general spirit folk, such as land spirits, local protectors and the like.

I don't tend to include ancestors with my intent in this group, if I want to invite them, I will call to them specifically, by inviting in the 'Sacred Ancestors'.

However, it is important to remember not everything is friendly out there. If you were to put an open invitation out to a party in the physical world, and everyone was free to come, you would get some unsavoury guests. It is not any different in the spirit world, so it is good to put a filter on any wider invitation you make beyond the Sacred Four directions and the Above and Below. This would apply to the Uncles, Aunts and ancestors.

The way I have been taught to do it is to put a caveat on my invitation, only inviting those 'who love me' (or 'love us' if I am working with a group), as not everything out there will love you. Be selective when you invite in your house guests.

KEEP YOURSELF SAFE

This brings us to another, often thorny, subject - how protected should our working be, from 'ghoulies and ghosties and long-leggedy beasties?'

It is easy to become paranoid about the spirits, I have seen many people get so, and it gives them hours and weeks of entertainment, drama and neurosis. If you are too careful as to what they invite in you can end up being scared of your shadow.

But, on the other hand, I have seen people be so cavalier and



slipshod with their ceremonies that they let all sorts of 'undesirables' in to their space, and can, as a result, sometimes get themselves into all sorts of trouble.

I think, with any ceremony, one needs to have developed a degree of grounded awareness. If you get 'vibes' that 'something wicked this way comes,' you need to deal with it in no uncertain terms, but the first thing is developing an accurate awareness.

One night I was 'pouring for a sweat lodge' (running the lodge) with a friend, and both of us, unbeknown to the other, sensed the lodge was under attack. As a result both of us turned our backs on the central stone pit in the darkness, and faced the lodge's door to protect the lodge from any spirit intruders.

It was the most frightening ceremony I have ever been in, and a lot more happened during it that just a vague sense of dread, but it should have been a 'safe' - albeit - powerful - space, as we were both experienced and had done the ceremony properly.

In hindsight, it was the land the lodge was built upon, a most disturbed piece of land, and we should have factored that in the mix, but didn't.

Normally a ceremony will be safe and sound, but work with your 'spider senses' all the time and keep testing the feel, the vibe, of the state of play, and act accordingly.

The amount of protection needed will also depend on what the ceremony is for. If you are doing a healing for someone who has a serious health issue, such as a cancer or a bad infection - an illness that has a predatory spirit - you will need to be aware much more about protection than you will if you are doing a general blessing ceremony or a simple prayer circle.

There are many ways to protect a sacred space, and these include both physical and visualised defences.

In Tibetan Buddhism, a lot of the practices are done by visualising. Don't be put off, thinking this is some sort of second rate, new age way to defend a space, because it is not.

However, visualising is like a muscle, and you need to work out

regularly in order to being up the sacred muscle tone. I have been visualising in a magical and sacred way for decades, but I was 'totally pants' at it when I started. So, the good news is - yes you can do it, but the bad news is, you might have to practise a lot and get spiritually fit, till you get the hang of it to do it strongly.

However, saying that, to borrow a phrase from Buddhism, it is important to develop a sense of 'vajra pride.' This means that you develop a really deep, inner certainty - a pride - that you are doing it right and it is working - even if you feel you are a raw beginner. This is about intent of course, so even if you can't visualise for toffee, if you can honestly tell yourself, with all your intent, that you are doing it right - it will be right.

I often visualise I am standing or sitting within a circle of protection when I am working. This can be a circle of light, but I often use a circle of tigers - calling them in with a tiger mantra.

I also place a visualised medicine wheel shape - a cross within a circle - in each of the four directions around me and above and below me.



Because I work a lot with the phurba, the ritual demon dagger, found in Tibetan Buddhism and shamanism, and I very often place a visualised picket fence of them around me, at least 8 in a circle. I visualising thrusting them into the earth, and generally also say an accompanying Tibetan mantra as I place each one. Mantras are a bit like magic spells, in fact the word mantra actually means 'that which protects [the mind]'.

If you are lucky enough to work in a regular room - a shrine room - you can do a lot more with the

When doing ceremony, one needs a balance of deep humility and authority. Humility because you know before the Great Mystery, you are nothing; and authority, because you are solid in your own centre and grounded, and sure about what you are doing. You are a bridge between this world and the spirit world, and the last thing a ceremony needs is a wobbly bridge

fabric of the walls of the room, spending time visualising protection and protective symbols of your choice into the walls, so that you know those symbols are there - in the fabric - acting all the time you doing practice in there. You can also paint symbols on the wall or hang textiles. The floor of my shrine room is covered in Tibetan tiger rugs, which also act as protection, as in Tibetan traditions such rugs attract the dakini, the fairy-like spirit beings who come around practitioners to teach and protect them.

Red is generally considered a sacred protective colour, as it

Inset: an antique bronze and iron phurba
Below: a Tibetan Buddhist monk holds a phurba ritual dagger





Above: a Tibetan thangka painting depicting a form of Mahakala, one of the main protector beings

Top right: two Tibetan Buddhist dob-dob monks, with their ritual clubs of office



Below: traditional Pembrokehire cottage with red windows and doors to protect against fairies



represents life and blood. In Pembrokeshire, in West Wales, where I live it is traditional to paint doors and windows red to stop the fairies and other mischievous spirits getting into the house.

If you are working with physical things for protection, the easiest and most obvious is smudge, the smoke of burning herbs, such as desert or white sage, or cedar or juniper. Smudging is so commonly practiced nowadays I don't think I need to say anymore about it, but if you are in doubt about it, Google it, you will find loads of information online.

Other physical things can include making a sacred circle of some kind. I often use eagle feathers - laid end to end, running in a sun wise manner - and sometimes *paho* - sacred blue corn flour, or on occasions salt or tobacco, although these work best

outside as they are difficult to clean up from carpets or wooden floors. If very extreme measures are called for, I might use something called 'banishing medicine', which is an equal mix of salt, garlic and cayenne pepper.

I would also, at times, place physical phurbas in the directions - ideally iron ones, but bronze or brass ones would be fine - especially if I intended they were iron. Protection bundles - collections of sacred objects in a bag or wrapped in cloth - can also be placed in each of the directions. These are individual things, and I think - if you feel drawn to making these - it is best you talk to your spirits about what you should put in them.

SPIRITS OF PROTECTION

I would - if needed - also call in the Protectors, spirit powers who act as protector beings - but as always, only those who love me, and who support the work I am doing. In Tibetan Buddhism there are specific wrathful Protectors, and they are there to keep the teachings and the practitioners safe.

Protectors act as 'dog soldiers' and this is another phrase I often use when I think of them. Dog soldier is a Native American term. Originally they were the bravest of

warriors, those who would tie themselves to a spear, thrust the spear into the ground, and refuse to leave that place - fighting until they had either died or had won. Nowadays, the term is often used to denote the sacred 'police' at a ceremony, those who keep order and maintain the boundaries.

In Tibetan ceremonies big burly monks called dob-dob have the same role. When doing a ceremony - especially with a lot of energetic potential - it is good to have dog soldiers.

Another aspect of protection, especially in shamanism, is the 'shaman's armour.' This is the ritual clothing which many shamans wear. Shaman's armour is full of spirit helpers who assist the shaman and protect them, and in addition to that they are generally hung with empowered sacred objects, designed to protect the shaman in other ways - such as bronze mirrors, one of whose roles is to reflect away any harm.

The putting on of shaman's armour creates sacred space in its own right, as when a shaman puts it on, they are - with their intent - stepping out of the mundane everyday world, and stepping into the sacred centre of all things. Once they

put it on, they immediately have their spirits close to them, and they start to go into trance. I know from my own experience of putting on my own ritual clothes how powerfully and quickly this trance can fall upon one.

Sometimes a shaman will not need their full armour - it depends on the nature of the work - but if it's a piece of dangerous work, the shaman will generally be in full kit, boots and all.

Even if you do not have or use 'shaman's amour,' you can have items of clothes you keep just for ceremony and also perhaps amulets or other 'ritual jewellery' which, when you wear them, denotes you are doing sacred work of some sort.

It is also good to dress respectfully for the spirits, so the wearing of fine clothes, ideally clothes kept especially for ceremony; this will help in the building of your intent, and also show you are approaching the spirits in a good way.

Creating a sacred space is just that - the telling to the universe that this place, at this time, is sacred because you are 'opening the sky' opening the gates to the spirit world.

The main thing is your intent - if you have clear intent, you will have created a good, strong sacred space. Intent is like legal language - it needs no sloppy thinking, no magical loopholes. You have to cross every 't' and dot every 'i' and have all bases covered. You need to be on your toes, ready to steer the sacred

ship away from unexpected high seas and into a safe harbour - you need your eyes peeled at all times and your feet firmly on the ground.

And when you have finished the ceremony, you need to collapse the space again - close the sky - and thank the spirit helpers you called in to assist you (so keep a mental checklist when you do your original calling in), scatter and dismantle the central altar if you have used one, put away any sacred objects employed, and generally close it down, so the spirits know play time is over for now.

Nicholas Breeze Wood is the editor of Sacred Hoop Magazine. He has made a long study of Native American, Tibetan and Southern Siberian shamanic traditions - especially their use of ritual objects. He is deeply apprenticed to his spirits. www.NicholasBreezeWood.me
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NOTES:

1: Padmasambhava is a Tibetan first-shaman figure and Tantric magician. In Buddhism he is considered to be the Tantric Buddha, the Buddha whom the historical Buddha (the man who formed Buddhism) spoke of when he said a more powerful Buddha would come after him. In historical terms, Padmasambhava was an 8th prince from the region between modern day Pakistan and Afghanistan who brought the Buddhist teachings to shamanic Tibet. He was said to have travelled all over Tibet and surrounding countries, magically binding all of the shamanic land spirits to his will and making them swear an oath to become Protector spirits of Buddhism. (See Sacred Hoop Issue 47 for an in depth article about him.)

Creating a sacred space is just that, telling universe that this place, at this time, is sacred because you are 'opening the sky' opening the gates to the spirit world



Above: a female shaman's costume. Tofalar people, Siberia, late C19th

Below: a Tibetan woman with a domestic altar, containing offerings and a ritual dar-dar arrow with bronze mirror tied to it, which is standing in a brass pot



CROSSING BOUNDARIES

When Shamanism and
Psychotherapy Meet

Alesia Kunz

I've been working as a licensed psychotherapist in California for twenty-seven years and as a shamanic practitioner for thirteen years. About four years ago I decided to integrate my shamanic healing practice and my psychotherapy practice, and now, although they are two separate practices, in appropriate situations I use shamanic healing with psychotherapy clients.

In each case that I've used shamanic healing with already existing psychotherapy clients, I have seen interesting shifts in healing that I don't think would have happened if shamanic healing had not been involved.

I have also received requests from psychologists to do adjunct shamanic work with their psychotherapy clients. In these situations the psychologists interviewed me in order to understand what shamanism is, and in order to decide if they, and we, thought shamanic intervention - namely 'Compassionate Depossession work' would be appropriate for their clients.

Because, as I also work as a psychotherapist and am therefore

able to distinguish between mental illness and spirit possession, generally they were encouraged and hopeful about possible healings for their clients.

It took years for me to decide to bring my psychotherapy and shamanic practice together, because in the state of California there is an ongoing ethics 'conversation' about psychotherapists using only one modality of healing - the psychotherapy model they are trained in, and any approved adjunct therapies, such as hypnotherapy. To bring another healing modality into their work risks an ethics violation.

I see that this 'conversation' occurs in the shamanic community as well, and I had been cautioned by my peers to keep the two modalities separate. I did that for years while I continued to think about it, but finally, I realised that for me, it was about healing, not about rules, and I knew that however I combined these two practices, I would do so ethically.

So far the success of this union of healing practices is fuelling my

excitement and awe. The work is deepening and is expanding my understanding of healing.

I would therefore like to share an example of this way of working, by offering a case study.

This is the story of a woman I will call Justine, who gave me permission to write about it. I will discuss only the parts of the psychotherapy work I undertook with Justine that are relevant to understanding how shamanic work differs from psychotherapy, and which has led to her healing.

It was the late 1980's and I walked into the waiting room of my psychotherapy practice in San Francisco to meet Justine, who was a new client.

She stood to greet me; and I sensed a feeling of composed quiet self-confidence filling her. She was professionally dressed, with an understated elegance, and attention to detail. I sensed she was filled with chi and present in her physical self. She was smart and savvy, experienced with diverse groups, and focussed on, and was committed to justice.

She was in her mid forties, Caucasian (Irish, Scotch, English), socially upper middle class and had been married to her husband since she was in her early twenties. Together they had adult children.

She chose a comfortable chair directly opposite mine and we began the session.

She told me that she worked for the City of San Francisco's Probation Department, was a licensed social worker - having worked as a field social worker for a number of years but was now also doing administrative work within social services, as well as her direct client work. She then launched into the problem that had brought her to seek help.

"The people at my level may now be required to carry a gun," she said. "The department is discussing it. I came to see you because this is really disturbing me. I don't want to carry a gun and I don't think I can."

As she shared more about her self and her history, what unfolded was a story about her father, who had been a military man, more often not at home but overseas when she was growing up.

When Justine was 17 years old, her father took her brother and a friend out hunting, and her father was killed with a gun, in an accident. The doctor who came to the house when they got the news gave everyone in the family a sedative immediately.

Justine and her brother never knew what happened, as her mother told them that no one was allowed to speak about it, including talking about, or expressing any feelings about losing their father. Justine and her brother obeyed her mother's commands.

Justine told me that she thought her father must have killed himself, because he knew about guns, so it couldn't have been an accident. But she never saw his body, and so it was confusing and in many ways, somewhat unreal.

During one of our psychotherapy sessions, when Justine was talking about the possible mandate to carry a gun at work, I asked her a question about her father's death.

When I did, her body flung back in the chair; her head all the way

back toward the wall behind her, so that I could not see her face - which was looking up toward the ceiling.

It was a body position similar to when a toddler doesn't want to get into a car seat in the car and they hyper-extend their body to make it all but impossible for the adult to get them into the seat. Their body is taut, stiff and hyper-extended.

Justine was making a gagging sort of sound that seemed to emanate from her throat.

"I'm choking!" She coughed out.

"It's okay, Justine. You don't have to talk. Just take your time. Let yourself relax. You're fine. Yes. That's right. Just let your body relax."

When she had recovered her posture and her composure sufficiently, I suggested she take off her shoes and count her toes one-by-one touching each with her fingers in order to get her fully back into her body.

When she was fully back in her body she spoke.

"I don't know what happened. Something happened. I wasn't there. I wasn't here. Something just happened. Can you tell me what happened?"

I described the situation. It continued to happen during the course of our work.

At this time the profession of psychotherapy was particularly interested in dissociative states. Dissociative Identity Disorder -which used to be called 'Multiple Personality Disorder'¹ - was a popular diagnosis, and a way of understanding certain dissociative states.

Not knowing about shamanism at the time, I didn't have any real alternative ideas about what was happening to Justine other than she was experiencing a dissociative state.

Yet the next time this happened I was able to see her face and her eyes before her body flung back.

The sense I got instantly, when I saw them, was that I was seeing an 'other,' a different person. There was an uncanny look in her eyes, as if someone else was looking out. A look which I now - after more similar experiences in shamanic healing- recognise. The look was not exactly menacing, but definitely fierce in some way, and it hit me in a crystal clear, visceral way, even though I did not assign theory or meaning to it at the time.

She told me that she was a licensed social worker, then launched into the problem that had brought her to seek help. "The people at my level may now be required to carry a gun, I came to see you because this is really disturbing me. I don't want to, and I don't think I can"

As usual, I logged the information into my river of hypotheses. What might be happening?

As we continued working together Justine got better and better about being able to know before this experience took her, and so she was able to alert me.

"I'm getting that feeling, Alesia."

"Yes. I can see it." I saw it each time in her eyes and her tightening musculature. It was definitely something or someone else.

We discussed it in many ways.

Over the 30 years we've worked together, Justine has done work in segments. I may not see her for a year or two and then she comes in to work on something specific.

Throughout these years, she has let me know that she doesn't believe in religions, or have any spiritual practices for herself, although she told me early on that she had been raised as a Catholic, but that she has never practised the religion. She had always been rather matter of fact about this in a dismissive, there's nothing-more-to-say manner.

She told me; "I don't believe in life after death or anything like that."

For the last few years I have introduced shamanism into many psychotherapeutic conversations with clients, when it has seemed appropriate. We discuss different ways of understanding an issue - from more psychotherapeutic points of view and from shamanic





points of view. Two years ago Justine became more curious about shamanism and asked me about it.

When Justine and I were working together one day, she told me that her husband, Gerard - who rarely consulted a doctor - was suddenly having various physical symptoms, and so was seeing his doctor, as well as specialists whom he had been referred to. Justine told me that she was concerned, but happy that he was getting help.

As we talked she stopped suddenly and said, "Alesia, I want to tell you about an experience I just now had. I just saw my father standing right there (she pointed in front and to the right of her). I know Gerard is going to die. Not right now but soon. My father was right there. That's how I know. I'm not telling my daughters."

Two weeks later Gerard died.

During a session a year later Justine began to talk about her childhood and I instantly saw the 'other' looking out from her eyes and I immediately interrupted her.

"Justine, what's happening right now?"

"Yes, I can feel it taking my body." She said.

I suggested to her that she stay present with me while she experienced it and relate her experiences back to me in real time.

I asked her what was happening, and she said, "I feel like I'm disappearing, but it's better than it used to be."

Then fairly quickly she fully returned to herself. When she was calm I began speaking. "I know that you don't believe in life-after-death or spirit-type experiences, but from a shamanic point of view it may be that a spirit is attached to you and if so, we can find out, and do something about it."

"I do want to do that." Justine said without hesitation. "Since I saw my father, it's different."

I told her to take her time and think about it, adding that when she was ready she could let me know what she thought.

So, I told her that the next time we met, we could talk about it more, and that we could do something shamanic, not psychotherapy.

"Just take your time and think about it." I told her, adding; "You can tell me then; there's no rush. Whatever feels right."

One week later Justine came in and said she was ready to proceed. I reminded her that what we would do was not psychotherapy, so that she would know exactly what we would be doing, and what I would be asking her to do.

The process was the usual template for psychopomp work, that is, helping a willing spirit to its natural destination after the body dies. In this regard it was unremarkable in any dramatic way.

Psychopomp is an ancient practice of helping spirits get out of this material world and go to the spirit world where they're meant to

be. Possession illness or spirit attachment is a normal and natural occurrence in many dying situations. In this type of situation when someone dies and their spirit does not move on to the spirit world, it may instead attach to another person - often a loved one.

Unlike exorcism (also a form of psychopomp), which can be an aggressive and forceful process of removing a spirit from a person, Compassionate Depossession is a process in which love and compassion are employed and the possessing spirit ultimately chooses to leave its host for its rightful place in the spirit world.

After hearing my description of the process in which I would be speaking with any attached spirit, if one were present, and her participation, Justine agreed that she would like to proceed.

Justine easily moved aside so the spirit could answer my questions.

The spirit did not give a name; but identified itself as male, and at a certain point, which I'll explain later, appeared reluctant to go. When I enquired about a direction for his destination - if he were to have one - he immediately indicated that he would go up.

It was at this point I began the slow process of assisting the spirit to go in the direction he had indicated, which he ultimately did.

The session came to a close after I did a healing journey for Justine, and we discussed aftercare that would be helpful for her. The session lasted about one hour.

In our next session the comments Justine made were the most enlightening and informative about this piece of work.

I asked her how she was feeling during the week following our work.

"I felt lighter. This thing that I had always thought was a part of me - that something was wrong with me, that I was damaged - was gone."

When Justine said this so simply, so directly I felt deeply moved - both by what she had endured holding this secret, and by the beauty of the healing.

"Remember when I knew that Gerard was going to die because I saw my father standing there?" She asked me.

"Yes." I nodded.

"Recently I had a dream where Gerard took me down into a garage; into a room. It was bright white; the kind of white you don't like. And people were standing straight up like my father did when he was here in front of me. They were all packed in there. Just standing, totally silent.

"I knew that wasn't for me. I had to leave. I started up the stairs. Gerard took my hand and said, 'Come back.' I woke up."

We sat in silence for a while. "Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about the process?" I asked.

"It was like when I was hypnotised before dental work. I was conscious physically. I felt like I stepped aside when you asked me to.

"I let the spirit speak...When the spirit said he was male, he flowed into my heart like water...there was no space!

"A few weeks ago before we did this, you know, when I went to Vietnam, I randomly met a monk who said, 'Your heart is open for more compassion for others.'

"Now, Alesia, my heart is a spiritual place; not just an organ."

We marvelled over this together and let it sink in.

Then I asked her what was happening when the spirit told me I was being bossy?

Justine smiled and said; "You were being directive, you told the spirit to move toward the Light, but it didn't want to take the chance."

I asked her what she meant by that, and she replied that: "It was afraid; what if there wasn't a place for it? The spirit then was like a stubborn child. It thought...'Maybe I'll just disappear and be quiet.'

"And I, Justine, thought...I might stop too."

Here Justine laughed as she said, "I'm sure you're not surprised, Alesia; it went right along with my personality."

We both laughed appreciating Justine's love of being in control.

When she gets into certain emotional states that are challenging, she can become dissociative and often experiences a feeling that someone may be trying to trick her. (This was like the spirit being afraid that there really wasn't a place in the Light for him to go.)

"It's very amazing." Justine said. "Just receiving that information that Gerard was going to die.

"In my life now in general everything is connected. I have a daily gratitude practice and I practice compassion.

"Something changed for me."

She was silent for a minute.

"Alesia, will I do that thing again and disappear?"

"I don't think so." I said.

"I don't think so either." Justine smiled. "We'll see."

She didn't speak for a moment then she looked at me and said. "I think it was my father."

This work with Justine was deeply moving. As we continue our work, I continue to think about particular aspects of it, including the fact that it was only in the de possession work, not in the psychotherapy, that she revealed how she had been living for over fifty years with the belief that there was this part of her that was wrong, that was damaged.

Also, I'm thinking about the fact that this healing 'took place' in three sessions.

I say, 'took place' but I don't consider healing to be associated with conventional time in that healing can and often begins before it shows itself in material-world-chronological time. And it often continues simultaneously subterraneanly, and above ground, observable by those around us especially.

What really strikes me is that if psychotherapy had been the single, the only healing modality we worked in, this healing may never have occurred.

Differentiating between host and spirit is at the core of Compassionate Depossession work and can be very complex. So, I continue to ponder the intermingling of the personality of the host, (Justine my client), and that of the spirit.

This may be exemplified by the spirit's fear of being tricked, which the client had identified as an issue of hers from the past. (Justine said that 'being tricked' stems from never having seen her father's dead body, never knowing how he died, if in fact he did really die; and the resulting confusion about that. Also, being 'tricked' that her parents would always be there for her as a child, and her father wasn't.)

The sense I got instantly, when I saw them, was that I was seeing an 'other,' a different person. There was an uncanny look in her eyes, as if someone else was looking out

But a crucial point here is that many attached spirits fear that either they are being tricked or they will some how not be able to move to the spirit world in spite of the practitioner saying they can.

So I am questioning the genesis of the personality of the host/client and the speech of the spirit, and the relationship of each to the other. I'm wondering if now that this spirit is no longer with her, will Justine be differently free from these fears? Especially if this spirit was her father's as she suggested.

Also regarding 'bossiness' I'm thinking about my manner. I'm thinking about how my intent to assist and direct the spirit in the direction he indicated he wanted to go manifested.

Was my timing off? I think my timing was too fast. Perhaps I sped up when I sensed the spirit's hesitation. I may have felt unsure of being able to accomplish the goal of getting him to his rightful destination. It's crucial to be relaxed and not hurry this process. To remember that there is no rush and ultimately it is the spirit's choice to leave. Would the process have gone differently if I had settled into the present more and asked the spirit about his hesitation.

That also encourages me to consider my attitude/perspective about 'accomplishing' in doing this work. Exploring this with questions to myself continues to expand and deepen my understanding of the work.

Alesia Kunz Ph.D trained in the United States with The Foundation for Shamanic Studies, completed the Foundation's Two Week Intensive and Three-Year Advanced Shamanic Initiations, and almost all of their workshops.

She continues to train with Betsy Bergstrom and Christina Donnell as well as other shamanic teachers. She has had her own shamanic healing practice for twelve years, and 'compassionate de possession' and 'curse unravelling' are now staples of her practice. alesiakunz@gmail.com

NOTES: 1: Read an article about shamanism and Disassociative Identity Disorder in Sacred Hoop Issue 60



Welcome to the Spirit Camp

Ancient Wisdom for a Child's Mind, Body and Spirit

Eva Goulette

At the top of a small hill, overlooking a grove of birch trees, I stood with a group of five to eight-year-old children as we prepared to create sacred space.

I had done work prior to their arrival, and had placed stakes to mark the four directions. As the children were new to the concept of creating a sacred space, I began by explaining to the children that I would be drumming while facing each of the four directions, then would drum as I honoured Father Sky, Mother Earth, and finally, within.

We talked about the spirits of each direction, as well as the ancestors and helping spirits, and when I felt that they understood what was going to happen, I handed each of them a drum or rattle and began the process of calling in the spirits. The children were enthusiastic, engrossed in the activity; they closely watched every move I made, listening to every word I uttered.

Upon completion of the ceremony, I suggested we all sit down so we could discuss what had transpired.

A tiny five-year-old, with blue eyes and short blonde hair, raised her hand. "Um...um, Eva, my brother died when he was little. When you were calling in the spirits..... my brother came. He's standing over there," she said, while pointing to the outer edges of our circle. "Can he stay and play with us today?"

And with that, my first day of Spirit Camp had started.

I believe children come into this world as perfect beings, open to Spirit, and as they grow, in time they typically close off parts of themselves, which are connected to Spirit, or their God source.

In our fast-paced, materialistic society, children who speak of seeing spirits, or who have invisible friends are often ridiculed, and sometimes bullied. My intention for starting Spirit Camp was to give sensitive children a safe place to talk about their experiences, a format for learning how to develop their gifts, and a curriculum that would assist them in expanding their awareness and consciousness.

Adults can often be in their 30's, or older, when they have a spiritual awakening and begin to remember the things they knew as a child, but had forgotten. If the children of today are encouraged and nurtured to stay open to Spirit, learn how to trust their intuition, honour their truth and speak from their heart; when they become adults they won't have to spend years 'undoing' the layers of conformity that were piled on them as they grew up.

As a shamanic practitioner with a passion for working with children, I created this fun, five-day summer programme which teaches children how to nurture their inner and outer worlds; drawing from ancient wisdom traditions and present-day holistic practices, that lead them to a deeper awareness of themselves, Spirit and the inner and outer worlds. This integrates a child's mind, body and spirit.

At the camp, experiential learning is the vehicle for connection to the self and Spirit, and the children work with an array of methods, such as storytelling, crafts, activities, games and spending time in nature.

We also include such things as shamanic journeying, working with power animals and spirit helpers, teachings about the chakras and auras; dowsing rods; drumming; using affirmations; working within nature, and with nature spirits and creating sacred space and ceremony.

There is magic in the air at these camps. Anything seems possible, and the unexpected happens on a regular basis.

I regularly receive reports from parents about how their children have incorporated the teachings into their daily lives.

Jennifer was a six-year-old child whose bedtime routine had become challenging for her and her parents. She was very anxious about going to sleep at night, fearing that she would die during her sleep and not wake up in the morning.

This led to Jennifer fighting her body's natural urge to go to sleep, which resulted in her being over tired and miserable. The family was living in a downward spiral and were at their wits' end.

Jennifer had been taking classes with me for some time, and I was aware that Owl was her spirit helper. She was experienced at rattling and drumming, and helping me call in the spirits at the beginning of ceremonies and

workshops so, I suggested that when she gets into bed at night, she rattle and call in the essence of Owl. I explained that she could ask Owl to stay at the foot of her bed during the night, watch over her while she slept, and be responsible to wake her up in the morning.

Jennifer was thrilled to discover that her spirit helper could help her with the issue she was struggling with, and once rattling to call in her Owl had become a part of her night time routine, she no longer had trouble going to sleep.

She loved and trusted Owl, and understood he would protect her and wake her up in the morning as she had asked him to. And so, for close to a year now, Owl has been watching over Jennifer every night and Jennifer's mom reports that her daughter has been sleeping soundly the entire time.

Lucy was thirteen when she was enrolled in the programme. She had been having a great deal of difficulty at school, and also in her relationships with her family and friends. She was entering a dark place in her life, and had begun cutting herself as a coping mechanism.

However, she thrived throughout her week at the camp, and smiled and laughed. She seemed to have found a connection to Spirit that she never knew existed, and participated in every aspect of the camp - from making prayer ties and

animal masks, to helping create a fire ceremony as part of our closing events on the last day of camp.

Lucy's mother contacted me a few days after the camp ended, and explained to me that Lucy's grandmother - who was central in Lucy's life - had suffered a stroke and would not recover, telling me that she had only a few days to live.

Her mother was pleased, and relieved, that, instead of turning to her old coping mechanism of cutting herself in order to deal with the pain she was feeling, Lucy had asked her mother if the family could hold a fire ceremony in her grandmother's honour.

Lucy had asked each of her siblings to write a letter to their grandmother, and at the end of the fire ceremony, she instructed them to throw their letters onto the fire, so that the smoke would carry their words up to heaven.

When her grandmother crossed over and went to heaven, letters from her grandchildren were waiting for her.

Lucy's mother was moved to tears that her child had learned such important coping skills with which to help her deal with such an emotional pain. Lucy is a different child today: fun, light hearted, happy and full of life.

One day, while teaching an exercise to the children about listening to the spirits of the trees and plants, I asked them to sit with

their backs against a tree, with their eyes closed for three minutes.

I explained to them that they would be listening to see if the tree had a message for them.

A child approached me after the exercise and whispered; "The tree asked me to take care of it and protect it. It thinks that the wind might blow it over."

As we walked away from the tree, I looked back and let my eyes wander up to the top of it. The top third of the 50-foot tree was dead. The top of the tree could very well be snapped off in a strong wind storm. I am convinced this six-year-old heard the spirit of the tree whisper to her.

I think that the children in the programme leave the camp with a greater sense of connection to themselves, as well as to the community of other programme participants. They also develop a greater connection to 'all that is,' and what better gift can we be giving our future world?

In the small area of the north-eastern United States where I live and practise, there is - I believe - an army of spiritual warriors, who are learning to honour their truth, their environment and their connection to spirit.

These young warriors are teaching me every day the beauty and potency of this work, and I feel and see through their healing, that our world is in good hands.



A child approached me after the exercise and whispered; "The tree asked me to take care of it and protect it. It thinks that the wind might blow it over"

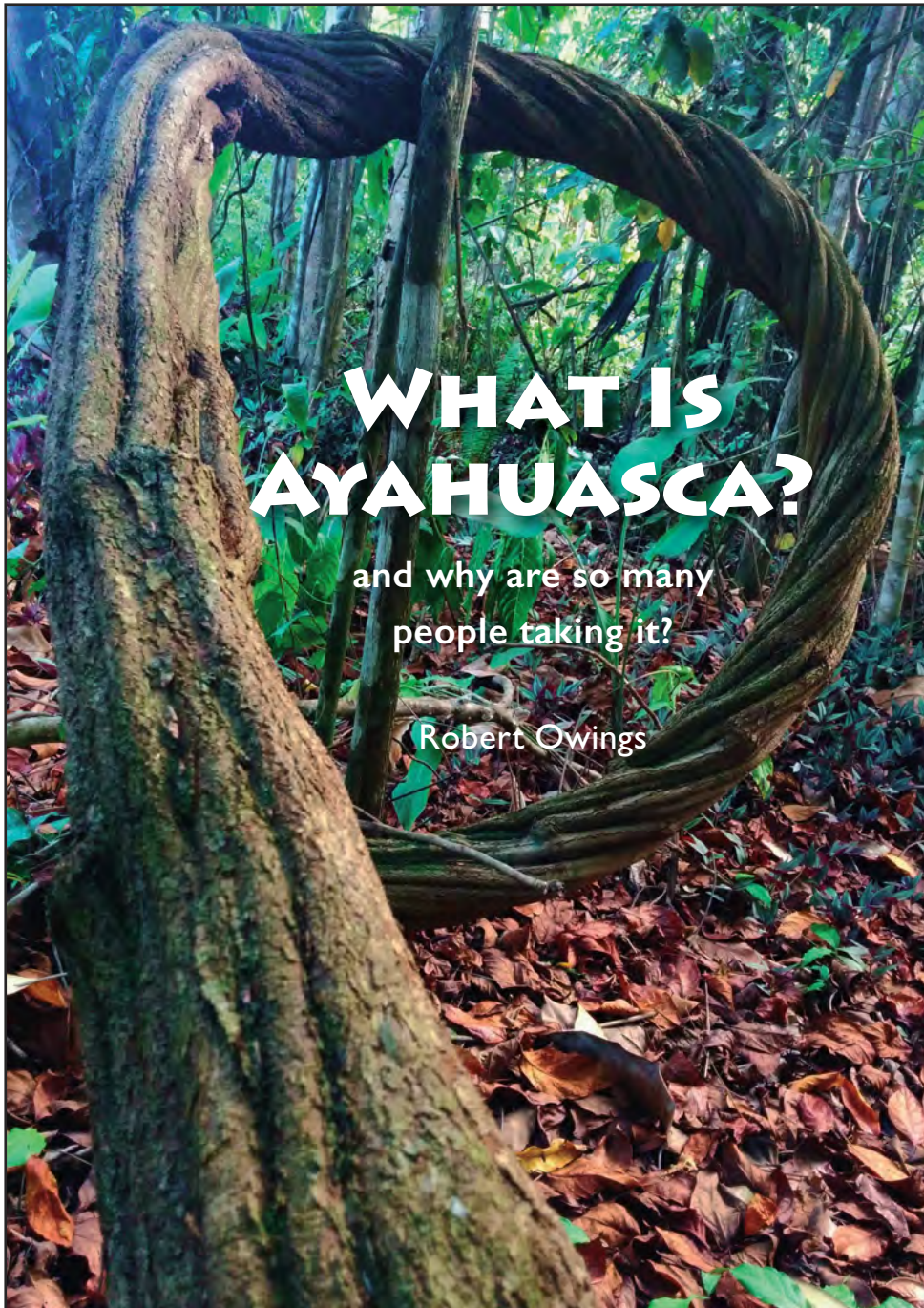
Eva Goulette is the founder and director of Dancing Jaguar Inspirations LLC and Spirit Camp. She is a shamanic practitioner, with a natural gift for working with children. Understanding the importance of balancing mind, body, and spirit, Eva has developed a curriculum and programmes designed to nurture a child's spirit.

Her teachings - grounded in nature, and informed by both ancient wisdom and modern holistic techniques - enable children to connect to their authentic selves

www.dancingjaguarinspirations.comemail

Jennifer and the Owl illustration: Vivi Shaw

Photo of the group calling in the spirits: Daniele Pease Photography



WHAT IS AYAHUASCA?

and why are so many
people taking it?

Robert Owings

*Above: the
Banisteriopsis
caapi vine*

Evidence suggests that people have sought out substances to alter their consciousness throughout history. In that sense the psychoactive plant brew ayahuasca could be seen as just yet another of these substances, one which is currently enjoying a certain vogue caché.

Many of you will, of course, be already familiar with it, but for those who are less familiar, ayahuasca is a 'tea' brewed from two South American plants; the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine and the *Psychotria viridis* leaf.

Neither plant separately has an effect on those who ingest it, but when the two plants are combined, they come together to generate a powerful psychoactive brew. This brew, when ingested, takes one on a powerful journey to inner worlds, with an intense amplification of spiritual immersion.

There are tens of thousands of plant species in the Amazon, and so the statistical odds of experimenting among the possible combinations of these plants, in order to achieve such a powerful

recipe, are of course beyond staggering; one in tens of millions.

The traditional people who discovered this combination achieved a feat, which today's giant pharmaceutical labs cannot even imagine attempting. When indigenous tribes are asked how they ever arrived at knowing which plants to select, they say the plant spirits told them which ones to use.

Ayahuasca has been in use by native peoples in the Amazon for as long as their mythology goes back. For these indigenous people, ayahuasca is a living, sacred thing, a spirit which their shamans, often known as 'ayahuasqueros,' sing to, during their ceremonial sessions.

These songs are called *icaros*, and are learned from the spirits, or from elder shamans, and which are used to offer protection and summon healing energy.

While anthropologists and ethnobotanists first brought information of this practice to the Western world, it was Terence McKenna and his brother, Dennis, who are credited for having the most influence in spreading its use and popularity. Terence, who coined the term 'psychonaut,' was dedicated to - arguably obsessed with - discovering pathways to the wisdom realms of expanded consciousness, so often revered in traditional tribal cultures around the world.

It was through the McKenna brothers' books and Terence's extraordinary gift as a 'spell-weaving' orator, that so many in the West were drawn to explore ayahuasca, and adopt it into their spiritual pharmacopeia.

Ayahuasca is often referred to as an entheogen, a substance that can potentiate the direct experience of the divine. This psycho-spiritual term is often employed to distinguish sacred 'plant medicine' from recreational drugs.

Those who partake of ayahuasca - hopefully in a setting with an experienced shaman - may be seeking a connection with Spirit, seeking a healing for their bodies or relationships, pursuing a fuller vision for their lives, or seeking a healing from addiction. All of these potentialities, and myriad others, are available to the individual, as the plant is said to deliver what each seeker needs.

Some first-timers may simply want to discover what the effects of ayahuasca are like, and so are curious about what they will experience. That is understandable enough, but ayahuasca is not a substance to 'party' on.

Experiencing and working with ayahuasca requires one to have a serious intention, whether that be asking for guidance, healing, or a plethora of other reasons.

Ayahuasca is a teacher - sometimes a harsh one. It can crack open one's psyche, and dismiss the gatekeepers of the unconscious which protect us from confronting the uncomfortable shadows that we all carry. Although, of course, ultimately, this is where the 'work' is.

Ayahuasca can also be a very earth-centred experience, generating a lasting relationship with what can be called 'deep ecology.' People who partake of her often state how the experience has changed their lives, changed their worldview, and their relationship to the Earth. More specifically, they say that ayahuasca created a direct engagement with Gaia, the great mother of all Earth's life.

This awakening to the interconnectedness of all things, and the sacredness of life, is why many find ayahuasca so meaningful and profound.

But ayahuasca does more than this. It's a 'full-tilt boogie for the soul,' an amplification of emotion, thought and attitude, under a flow of information which streams in from places, both familiar and unknown.

All of this often leaves the experiencer with a wealth of data to process, both during and, more importantly, after the ceremony.

This is why having an experienced shaman present with you is so critical. A ceremony can infuse the journeyer with what, at the time, seems to be the ultimate truth of all truths - which can be a can be daunting process.

It is necessary to stay in balance to work with ayahuasca. As one ayahuasquero I worked with once put it to me: "Ayahuasca always speaks the truth 40% of the time, and 30% of the time it does not."

Those words of wisdom have always served me well when I reflect on information that came through to me during a ceremony. I have learned

over time to take my time with this stuff, and pass that advice on.

Ayahuasca's gift is how one can take the experience she gives you back into your everyday world. It is through this, and through reflecting on the lessons received and learned, that we can make a seminal shift in ourselves for the better - for the greater good. At the very least, ayahuasca will teach one humility, which is never a bad place to begin from.

Ayahuasca is presently finding its way into more mainstream culture, gaining gradual acceptance, coupled with the usual reactions from the drug war crusaders, who I feel base their arguments on ignorance and greed, and government agencies generally rely on the dissemination of misinformation in their campaigns.

The increased use of ayahuasca has fostered a tourist industry in the Amazonia region, and an explosion in the population of 'shamans,' which if they are 'real shamans instead of 'tourist experience sellers' isn't necessarily a bad thing.

Ayahuasca ceremonies - either real or bogus - have become a hip, cool thing to do. Someone who proclaims they have been to the 'outer edges of their consciousness, and engaged with other realms of reality' - an endeavour that can be both terrifying and ecstatic - have

gained street cred. Ayahuasca has become a subject to be dropped into conversation at dinner parties and coffee shops, often with the panache that one has 'done it,' or one is considering giving it a try.

Today there are dozens of books on ayahuasca and other psychedelics, and workshops and medicine circles have become nearly omnipresent in much of the western world. The common theme of most of these gatherings is not to get 'high' of course, but to gain an expanded, spiritual engagement with the worlds around you.

I'm not advocating the use of ayahuasca - it is not everyone's 'cup of tea' - but if you do wish to experience and work with it, find someone who is authentic and experienced with the work as a teacher and guide. And then, be open, let the spirit of ayahuasca guide you.

But whatever you do, it won't hurt to remember a line from the book 'Alice in Wonderland,' which was craftily lifted, and used in 'White Rabbit', a song from the 1960's rock band Jefferson Airplane's: "Keep your head...."

Robert Owings is an explorer of consciousness. His recently released novel 'Call of the Forbidden Way' is a spiritual plant-medicine thriller, and the first book in a forth-coming trilogy. To learn more about the novel and to receive the first chapter free: www.robertowings.com

Below: mashing the vine before stewing it to make the tea drunk during ceremonies





Giving thanks for Oil

Faith Nolton

Oil has often appeared in the media as a pollutant, a factor of imbalance; but this ancient relative is a sacred aspect of Creation, which requires our respect and honour

With all the recent events at Standing Rock, and having witnessed many oil spills and pollutions of Mother Earth related to oil, I confess I was beginning to regard oil as a problem, as the 'dark snake' of the pipelines, the poisoner of living creatures...

I didn't do this with my conscious, rational mind, but I was being touched by all the sad stories in my heart, in the undercurrents of fearful expectations. We can so easily be coloured by these stories as the world and all our relations go through deep changes.

And reflecting on all this, I asked myself: 'What is my relationship with oil as a relative?' 'What are the gifts it brings to me personally', and 'How involved is my life in the bringing of oil from its natural home?'

Firstly, I felt a need to thank the oil in my central heating tank. To thank it for the gift of warmth. In the light of this, I decided to make an offering of gratitude to my personal store of oil and take responsibility for being part of the 'problem' in as gracious a way as I could.

Then I started to be aware of all the products that are produced from oil, without which my life would be very, very different. Oil is important in the manufacture of my computer, and the communications infrastructure, from which I reach out into the web. It is essential in the making of the art materials which I use, as an artist, to bring beauty to the world.

The deeper I looked, the more I realised that there are many items of my daily life, which are gifts from oil, which I take for granted.

Whether or not we could - or should - do without these things, we are all enmeshed in a culture that is incredibly interwoven with this relative.

This goes far beyond burning oil for powering transport, beyond the synthetic fabrics we wear, beyond the household products - such as detergents - that we have in our houses, beyond paints, beyond the technology 'stuff' and the more obvious items of everyday living.

There is a whole deeper involvement with oil - from food production to health care. Did you know that oil based materials provides us with heart valves, glues, shoes, antiseptics and insulation... the list is almost endless.

In small communities, for those who live directly from the land, it is possible to live sustainably without oil; but most of us today have to live in daily dependency upon oil products of one kind or another. So with this in mind, how can we keep this relationship balanced?

It is a fact that we have to consume - as all life does, in order to live; from the basic needs of food and shelter this cannot be avoided. But It can be done with as

much respect and gratitude and consciousness as possible.

So back to my oil tank... The first lesson I received was to bless and give thanks for the ways that oil supports my life, and to offer this thanks in a sacred manner, to oil as a living relative - which of course it is. I therefore decided to tie a rainbow streamer beside my oil tank to remind me to live mindfully of oil's blessings.

My second lesson came in the form of the awareness that oil exists because of the transmutation of many ancestors' lives. It is an ancestral substance, made from the physical bodies of my ancestral relations. And so I give thanks for the countless lives it has come from.

The third, and more sobering lesson, was that whatever the rights or wrongs of how we have processed and consumerised this relative, we are, as a species, in a profound and incredibly interwoven relationship with oil.

Of course we need to take responsibility for not creating pollution, or abusing this relative through frivolous over-use or mindless greed. But oil is a precious element in creation, as much as water, or minerals, or air.

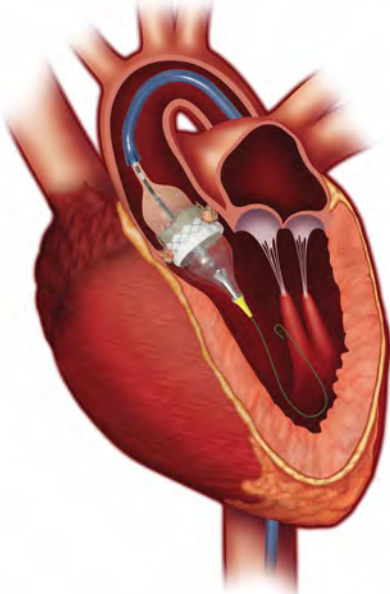
And so with that in mind, let us - with sacred awareness - protect it and honour it.

Faith is a shamanic painter, writer, and soul guide. She founded Sacred Hoop Magazine, and is author/illustrator of 'Gardens of the Soul'.

She now lives in West Wales, documenting her continuing soul travels, offering workshops and individual creative-spiritual guidance. faith@faithnolton.co.uk faithnolton.weebly.com

Below: the author's oil tank

Below Right: a modern replacement heart valve made from oil-based petro-chemicals



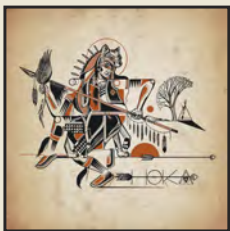


6
 Garmarna
 CD or Download: 47.32 mins.
 BMG Chrysalis Records:
 SME-5381942-92
 Reviewer: Nicholas Breeze Wood

Garmarna are a Swedish folk rock band, who produced a series of albums during the 1990s, each a heady fusion of acoustic instruments, played with a punk attitude, and the material was often arrangements of old Swedish folk songs - often of a dark and slightly supernatural nature. They are a very 'dark' band, just about as far a way from Abba as it's possible to get.

There is a 15-year gap between this and their previous album, and this one is just as dark, but further away from their folk-influenced past. This album has far more electronic and rock feel than their older work - but still has buckets of brooding atmosphere and a lot of traditional instruments mixed in with the electronica. Brooding Nordic - with all the Nordic crime shows on the TV, I think this should go down a storm.

Available from Amazon and iTunes etc.
 On Spotify
www.garmarna2015.com



HOKA
 Nahko and Medicine for the People
 CD or Download: 78:44 mins.
 SideOneDummy Records : SD1617-2
 Reviewer: Nicholas Breeze Wood

Album
 of the
 Issue

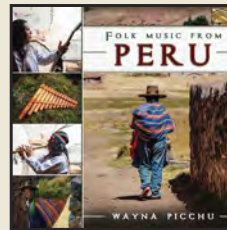
I first came to hear this band when someone posted their quite amazing and very moving video to their song called 'Love Letters to God' about the Standing Rock Water Protectors, which is on this album.

They are fronted by Nahko Bear, who is of Apache, Puerto Rican, and Filipino descent, and the ethos of the band is beautiful and honourable - in their own words - *'to be the motivation and inspiration for all that have become members of our Tribe. Within our global community, we have access to the tools needed to make changes, take action and spread awareness of how to live in harmony with Mother Gaia herself. We are honored to be a force of attraction for positive and creative minds during these often-corrupt times. With your trust and support, we humbly accept this role and speak our prayers of intention to take direct action.'* The album, created in this intent is equally beautiful and deeply prayerful and - dare I say - with a true touch of the sacred.

The songs on the album are carefully and delicately crafted and equally skillfully played. Stylistically they remind me of various musicians and bands, from the Dave Matthews Band to Mumford and Sons, and their musical sound touches on a mix of styles and includes lots of references to Native American concepts and themes. They have done the most amazing trick - managed that delicate balancing act of producing a truly

uplifting and inspiring album that is not new age sweet and fluffy. One of the best things I've heard for ages.

Available from Amazon and iTunes etc.
www.nahko.com
 On Spotify
 Youtube : www.bit.ly/Nahko-YouTube



FOLK MUSIC FROM PERU

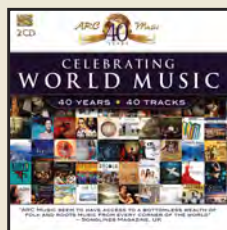
Wayna Picchu
 CD or Download: 73.14 mins.
 ArcMusic EUCD 2675
 Reviewer: Nicholas Breeze Wood

There was a time, back in the late 1970s, when this type of world music seemed to be everywhere I went. I

would go into my local city, and find buskers performing it - sometimes in the shade of the medieval cathedral, sometimes in the streets - and I can't remember the number of live concerts I went to. It brings back lovely memories, and for me I have never stopped loving its sounds, with their earthy, mountainous, sky-filled airiness qualities.

What is not to love: infectious rhythms, the sound of fabulous bombo bass drums, the glistening strumming of the small charango lutes, the flutes and panpipes and the gutsy singing. If you don't have this type of music in your collection this is an excellent album to get - and if - heaven forbid - you don't know this type of music, this is a perfect way to dive deep into its mystery and beauty. Ah, such memories of summers long ago it brings forth.

Available from Amazon and iTunes etc.
www.arcmusic.co.uk
 On Spotify



CELEBRATING WORLD MUSIC 40 Years 40 Tracks

Various Artists
 CD or Download: 158.43 mins.
 Moonlight Tribe Music
 Reviewer: Nicholas Breeze Wood

A wonderful double album sampler from ARC, giving a smorgasbord of music, both traditional and contemporary, from cultures all over the world - from the Red Army Choir to The Afghan Ensemble and many, many more.

Chances are you are not going to like everything, but that doesn't really matter, as the album gives you such a great mix of sounds it will, no-doubt, lead you on to exploring those you do like in greater depths - ultimately leading you on to other discoveries. Don't think of this as an album, instead think of it as a musical portal through which you can venture out into lands unknown - a journey of a lifetime starts with a single track...

Available from Amazon and iTunes etc.
www.arcmusic.co.uk
 On Spotify



REVIEWS



THE WAR OF NORTH DAKOTA

Director: Rod Webber
Video Documentary: 79mins
Reviewer: Nicholas Breeze Wood

I've been following the situation at Standing Rock for about half a year now - you may have seen my posts on Facebook, I often post video which has been taken on mobile phones and streamed live. It seems to me that it's one of the defining sacred ecological struggles of our time - the Lakota standing firm over sacred ground, protecting the water of the Missouri River, while oil men and politicians seek to make money hand-over-fist, selling oil from Canada's Sand Tars to the Chinese, and employing militarised police to do what cattle ranchers used to do with people in their way - intimidate them and beat them up until they get out of the way. The protests have never really made it to mainstream media, which turns a blind eye and focusses elsewhere. But the rise of social media reporting has galvanised the concern and given a power to the people never seen before. So it's wonderful - and challenging to be able to watch a full length documentary about the situation.

As the film is very much from the viewpoint of the water protectors, don't expect a balanced argument - but there is plenty in the media if you want to hear the other side. The film is a series of interviews with water protectors, Native American activists, elders, and ecologists, all interspersed with incidents with the police. These incidents include the infamous mace spraying of protectors standing in water beneath Turtle Island, the confrontation on Backwater Bridge, and the major conflict that happened in late November last year, where people were sprayed with water canon in sub zero conditions, shot with rubber bullets and sprayed with mace.

It's a very powerful and frankly upsetting and unsettling film, showing the unbelievable callous violence dealt out to unarmed men and women; I think the water cannon footage was for me the crux - rubber bullets shot at people just standing there asking the police not to shoot them, mace sprayed on quietly praying people kneeling on the ground.... I've seen all this stuff before, I'm under no illusion as to the reality of Standing Rock - but to watch such powerful footage in a full length documentary is heart-breaking. The film is essential watching for anyone with concerns for our relationship with Grandmother Earth and our conscious empowerment as sacred humans.

*Movie Trailer: www.bit.ly/War-of-North-Dakota-Trailer
Information about screenings and news - www.RodWebber.com*



LOST MANCHURIAN SHAMANS

Director: Kin Taii
Taii Projects
DVD: 117mins
Reviewer: Nicholas Breeze Wood

This new Japanese film explores the fading traditions of Manchurian shamanism, Manchuria being the region of North-East China, close to the borders of both Russia and North Korea, an ancient cradle of shamanism.

The Manchurian people trace their shamanism to Mongolia and there are similarities between their shamanism and that found in Mongolia to the West and Korean to the East. It has been a troubled land, and now it is quite impoverished. During the earlier part of the C20th it suffered under a long Japanese occupation - it's very name being of Japanese origin - and then was invaded by the Russians, and then fought over by the Chinese nationalists and the communists in the Chinese civil war, which eventually brought communism to power. In the past however it was a more prosperous region, and the last Chinese royal dynasty - the Qing - came from Manchuria.

With all of the troubles of the past hundred years, shamanism has rather vanished from the culture, as has the language, and of course the two are connected.

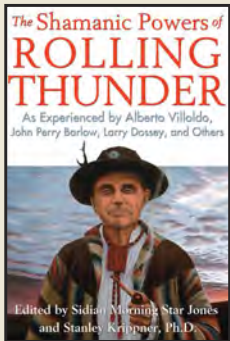
The film is a wandering travelogue across the Manchurian countryside - which in places strangely reminds me of the borderlands between England and Wales - and into rural communities there, seeking out existing shamans and shamanic traditions, as well as other aspects of original Manchu culture.

It's a slow-paced film, lingering over various ceremonies and interviewing shamans. Interesting information is offered in the form of side notes, superimposed over the film, and of course the film is a mix of Manchu and regular Chinese, although the English subtitles are excellent as well as essential.

It is interesting to see the way the shamans work, to see their quite formalised ceremonies, their very rhythmic drumming and their simple, but rather beautiful, shrine rooms and altars. There are also sequences showing outdoor ceremonies, making offerings at a sacred tree, and a ceremony for the spirits of sacrificed animals followed by a fire ceremony.

A fascinating and important film recording a tradition of shamanism not often encountered, and a film very much well worth seeking out.

*Movie Trailer: www.bit.ly/Manchu-Shamans-Trailer
Available on DVD soon: www.bit.ly/Manchu-Shamans-Website*



THE SHAMANIC POWERS OF ROLLING THUNDER

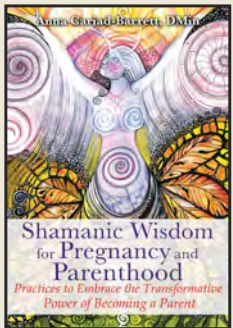
Edited by Sidan Morning Star Jones and Stanley Krippner
 Bear and Co Books
 PB: 207 pages. £11.99/\$11.99
 ISBN: 978 1 59143 227 2
 Reviewer: Sam Philips

A book of anecdotes and reflections upon the late medicine man Rolling

Thunder, written by those who knew him. The book's contributors include Alberto Villoldo, Leslie Gray, William S. Lyons and many others, including the extract we feature in this issue of Sacred Hoop.

The essays focus on various aspects of Rolling Thunder's life, his healings and ceremony, his teachings, the effect he had on others and his legacy. Many of the essays are fascinating and throughout them all we clearly get the sense of what a remarkable person Rolling Thunder was. An entertaining and thought-provoking read.

Available from Amazon etc.



SHAMANIC WISDOM for Pregnancy and Parenthood

Anna Cariad-Barrett
 Bear and Co Books
 PB: 274 pages. £13.50/\$14.95
 ISBN: 978 1 59143 243 2
 Reviewer: Sam Philips

Becoming a parent is just about the single biggest event of your life. It

certainly will be for a woman, and unless you are the kind of feckless man who bails out and runs like hell - leaving the poor woman literally 'holding the baby' - it is massive for men too.

In most cultures in the world, birth is a big deal in a sacred way, and there will be rites of passage and other ceremonies performed. Here in the West, of course, that is not the case, and has become even less so, now that most people have turned their back on the Church and traditional religion; so to take an animistic - dare I say shamanic - and generally spiritual approach to the change of 'life stage' seems to make perfect sense to me.

However, the book has very little to do with shamanism and one gets the idea the title (which may not be the author's choice - they rarely are) has more to do with marketing than methodology. However it's full of basic animistic psycho-spiritual common sense - although of course, as we all know, common sense can often be pretty rare nowadays.

A well-grounded book, which will appeal to the new mums and dads of the world and give them some alternative ways to look at the process which they might not have thought about

before. Myself; been there, done that, got the T-shirt and wiped the baby vomit off it, so a lot of it seemed fairly obvious... but for those who are new to the world of 2am feeds, the re-arranged politics of family dynamics and the delights and disasters of family life, it might well be a godsend.

Available from Amazon etc.



WHITE BONES & LITTLE STONES: an Animist's Maps of the Unseen

Gabriel Tamaya
 PB: 136 pages.
 PB: £33.67 HB: £44.67
 ISBN: 978 1 36 679109 2
 Reviewer: Faith Nolton

As a 'luminous cartographer,' Gabriel's vibrant paintings come from a deep connection with the energies of place and his connection to the spirits that inhabit it. His paintings are maps that connect us back to a sense of our own sacred being, with their bold sweeps of colour and marks full of energy and clarity of vision.

He has collected his recent works into this visionary feast, both as he pauses in his own creative journey, a time for personal stocktaking, and as an offering of nourishment in a disconnected world - some 'wild and soulful vitamins' to remind us of our own sacred nature and the spirits that accompany us in the deep ecology of Creation.

The 'White Bones' refer to Gabriel's own deep commitment to working with his ancestor teachers, and the 'Little Stones' are the messengers of the land that he meets in his soul travels. His images plot this journey through sacred landscape with extraordinary energy and presence. We feel we are right there at the moment of his meetings with powerful and deeply compassionate spirits and enchanted lands.

Interspersed with the lavish illustrations, his own words recall the origins of the pictures and the teachings they bring, as he acts as a bridge between the worlds. Sometimes poetic, sometimes narrative, these writings give a further honest and authentic layer of insight into his experiences.

This is a generous book, lavishly produced and with excellent print quality. A rare pleasure in a time when books are more and more cheaply produced. It reaches out to the beholder with warmth and blessing.

I find that I turn to this book often to enjoy the rich kaleidoscope feel of it, to experience again the sacred bridges that he creates, to imbibe that wild soul nourishment, to feel 'Ah, yes, I remember....'

Available from www.gabrieltamaya.co.uk

WOULD YOU LIKE TO WRITE REVIEWS FOR HOOP?

Have you found some music, a film, or a book recently, which you feel would fit well here in our review pages?

If so, we'd love to get a review from you about it.

email: Nick@sacredhoop.org

We can't promise to publish it until we've seen it, so why don't you send it in so we can see it.



People on the Path

COMMUNITY AND EVENTS
MARCH-JUNE 2017

COMMUNITY AND EVENTS
MARCH - JUNE 2017

MARCH

MAR 4-5: WALKERS BETWEEN THE WORLDS (OXFORDSHIRE) Two part non-residential (also 9-10 Sept) teaches how to journey, quest, heal and arbitrate along the ancient paths of wisdom, gathering spirit allies and knowledge of ancestral and Celtic methods. John Matthews and Wil Kinghan. Jane May, (01865) 407 680 janedmay@btinternet.com www.hallowquest.org.uk

MAR 5: 3 RIVERS SHAMANIC GROUP (N.E. ESSEX) To the woods, to the water, or in a building. Journey and socialise. Contact Julia www.3riversshamanicgroup.co.uk

MAR 12: 3 RIVERS SHAMANIC GROUP (NE ESSEX) To the woods, to the water, or in a building. Journey and socialise. Contact Julia www.3riversshamanicgroup.co.uk

MAR 12: PISCES FULL MOON PILGRIMAGE (GLOUCESTERSHIRE) Short pilgrimage of Arlingham Peninsula working with the energies of masculine and feminine in the land with Mandy Pullen and Jane Embleton. Flat ground (5-6 miles) and a pub at the end! Contact (01594) 541 850 or (01823) 672 689 www.mandypullen.co.uk info@mandypullen.co.uk

MAR 18-19: THE ROLE OF DREAMS (STAFFORDSHIRE) Shamanic development workshop exploring the role of dreams in shamanic work, and dream building. With Roo Reygan (01785) 713 721 www.holisticwellbeingmidlands.co.uk roo@holisticwellbeingmidlands.co.uk

MAR 18-19: INTRODUCTION TO SHAMANISM: (ABERGAVENNY) Course exploring Shamanism, the shamanic journey and how it can help you in everyday life. With Maxine Smillie www.shamaniclife.co.uk (01873) 858 391

MAR 18-19: THE ROLE OF DREAMS (STAFFORDSHIRE) Shamanic development workshop exploring the role of dreams in shamanic work, dream building, and changing our dreams to shape our lives. With Roo Reygan www.holisticwellbeingmidlands.co.uk (01785) 713 721 roo@holisticwellbeingmidlands.co.uk

MAR 19: SPRING EQUINOX OPEN RITUAL (ORKNEY) Open ritual to celebrate the Spring Equinox, inclusive, family friendly, free event. Based on Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids ceremonies, this is a Scottish Pagan Federation event With: Helen & Mark Woodsford-Dean Contact: info@spiritualorkney.co.uk www.spiritualorkney.co.uk

MAR 19: PIPE CIRCLE (NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE) A chance to sit with the sacred pipe, a traditional Native American prayer ceremony. With Nick Breeze Wood. Nick@sacredhoop.org

MAR 26-29: THRESHOLDS OF POWER AND HEALING (SOMERSET) A full range of shamanic healing ways: plant-spirit healing, extraction of intrusions, and the shamanic embodiment ceremony of The Mare Mother's Dream-Dance. Caitlin Matthews and Margot Harrison. Jane May, (01865) 407 680 janedmay@btinternet.com www.hallowquest.org.uk

APRIL

APR 1: MERCURY RISING WORKSHOP (GLOUCESTERSHIRE) Connecting us to the energies of Mercury, trickster planet of communication and ideas. With Mandy Pullen and Jane Embleton in the Forest of Dean. Contact (01594) 541 850 or (01823) 672 689 www.mandypullen.co.uk info@mandypullen.co.uk

APR 1: JOURNEYS OF DISCOVERY (NORTH CORNWALL) Drumming, healing and journey circle, all welcome, novice and experienced who would like to explore the world of the shaman. Warm, friendly and open circle. Contact Derek (07788) 432 380 www.healingtree.org.uk

APR 1: REVISITING THE SHAMANIC JOURNEY (SE WELSH WOODLAND) A day of review and re-winding your shamanic methodology. Unlearning bad habits that prevent you from deepening and expanding your connection to Spirit. Maxine Smillie shamaniclife.co.uk (01873) 858 391

APR 2 : SHAMANIC SUNDAYS (GLOUCESTERSHIRE) Monthly journeying group. Suitable for beginners and those more experienced. With Mandy Pullen. (01594) 541 850 www.mandypullen.co.uk info@mandypullen.co.uk

APR 6-9: ECO SHAMANISM PRACTITIONER YEAR (GLOUCESTERSHIRE) Initial weekend of year training in Eco Shamanism. One place remaining - next training starts later in 2017. Contact (01594) 541 850 www.mandypullen.co.uk info@mandypullen.co.uk

APR 8: JOURNEYING GROUP (LONDON) Monthly group for those who can journey to deepen practice and community. With Shenoah Taylor and David Scott. Contact shenoah@shenoahtaylor.com www.shenoahtaylor.com

APR 9: 3 RIVERS SHAMANIC GROUP (NE ESSEX) To the woods, to the water, or in a building. Journey and socialise. Contact Julia www.3riversshamanicgroup.co.uk



SHAMANIC EVENTS DIARY

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Please send:
* no more than 5 ENTRIES per issue
* dates for the next issue only

PLEASE SEND US THE FOLLOWING:

Date of event
Title of event
Location of event (county or country)
Description (max 25 words)
With: (leader or teacher's name)
Contact: (phone/email/website)

Please email your entries to
POP@sacredhoop.org

Please note: we reserve the right to edit entries and we cannot guarantee publication as space is limited

**NEXT DEADLINE -
May 20th
for June-Sept Issue**



MAY 6: THE SHAMAN'S SONG (WYE VALLEY)
Explore our voice, our sound: that which heals, refreshes and resonates with our Soul. You do not have to be a 'singer' just come to have fun in a safe supportive atmosphere. Maxine Smillie
shamaniclfe.co.uk (01873) 858 391

MAY 6-7: INTRODUCTION TO SHAMANISM (STAFFORDSHIRE) Part 1 basics. Exploring the shamanic worlds, sacred space, journey techniques, meeting spirit allies and developing relationships with spirit. With Roo Reygan (01785) 713 721
www.holisticwellbeingmidlands.co.uk
roo@holisticwellbeingmidlands.co.uk

MAY 7: THE HEART OF THE DRUM (WYE VALLEY) So you feel called to buy a drum or rattle? Or a drum finds you! But what do you do with it? How do you play it, look after it or develop a sacred intent? Maxine Smillie shamaniclfe.co.uk (01873) 858 391

MAY 8-10: SPIRIT WEAVERS CIRCLE RETREAT (Rutland) For experienced shamanic travellers to explore core experiential practices and worldviews. Experience clear and empowering tools to develop your individual gifts to support your personal and professional life. With: Sheila Belanger Contact Lesley Gough (017780) 720 660 lesley@chatervalley.com
www.truenatureconsulting.com

MAY 13: THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE LAND: A SYMPOSIUM (OXFORD) Explore new ways of understanding our relationship with the landscape as marked by sacred places interwoven with myths and ancient mysteries. What are the mysteries and hidden aspects of the ancient landscapes right around us. Arthur Verluis, James Cowen, Kresimir Vucovic, Caitlin and John Matthews. Pre-booked tickets only via Jane May (01865) 407 680 janedmay@btinternet.com

MAY 13: JOURNEYING GROUP (LONDON) Monthly group for those who can journey to deepen practice and community. With Shenoah Taylor and David Scott. Contact shenoah@shenoahtaylor.com
www.shenoahtaylor.com

MAY 14: 3 RIVERS SHAMANIC GROUP (NE ESSEX) To the woods, to the water, or in a building. Journey and socialise. Contact Julia
www.3riversshamanicgroup.co.uk

APR 23: PIPE CIRCLE (NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE)
A chance to sit with the sacred pipe, a traditional Native American prayer ceremony. With Nick Breeze Wood. Nick@sacredhoop.org

APR 30: BELTAINE OPEN RITUAL (ORKNEY) Open ritual to celebrate Beltaine, inclusive, family friendly, free event. Based on Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids ceremonies, this is a Scottish Pagan Federation event With: Helen & Mark Woodsford-Dean. Contact: info@spiritualorkney.co.uk
www.spiritualorkney.co.uk

MAY 

MAY 6: JOURNEYS OF DISCOVERY (NORTH CORNWALL) Drumming, healing and journey circle, all welcome, novice and experienced who would like to explore the world of the shaman. Warm, friendly and open circle. Contact Derek (07788) 432 380
www.healingtree.org.uk



Above: a shamans coat and drum. The coat shows Tibetan Buddhist influences, it has a double dorje cross on the front and prayerflag like cloth penants representing the four directions and the four elements on each cuff
Mongolia early C20th



Practitioner Profile... Travis Bodick

location: Washington State, USA
www.soulremedy.org

Where did you first meet shamanism?

I almost drowned in the ocean while surfing. I left my body and experienced some visions, before it felt like a spirit carried me to the water's surface. I was actually an atheist at the time, but after this experience I started having waking visions and synchronicities in my life that eventually led me to a book ('Supernatural' by Graham Hancock) which perfectly described a couple of my visions. The book said these were the visions of shamans in South America, and from there I was kind of hooked, hoping that the types of people I was reading about could help me understand why I started seeing these things. Before reading about them I thought I was going crazy, having these visions and synchronicities and they gave me hope.

Which teachers and teachings have influenced you the most?

There are a lot of people who really inspired me these past years, but I am especially grateful to my dear friend Lesley Myburgh who taught me to trust the medicine and trust the natural power within people. So, how much healing can happen when you just pray and let go – just comfort and support someone and let their healing happen naturally through the medicine. I have also been touched deeply by the philosophies of the Q'ero people – the concept of hard work, wisdom through experience, and reciprocation with everything around you. I really believe that the more we share and work together the more everyone benefits in the process.

What makes your heart sing?

I love watching healing tears when someone really lets go and opens their heart. True passion and feeling unrestrained in the moment. My wife is also 8 months pregnant, and I have never felt anything as crazy as the little kicks in her belly! Nothing makes me cry as easy as feeling my little baby girl in there.

What is the most bizarre situation that you have found yourself in on your shamanic path

First time I ever went to the redwoods was with my wife Tasha - it was maybe the greatest hike of my life. We wanted to do a hiking ritual, an idea we had come up with together, so we started by calling in the directions, making a tobacco offering and setting our intent. This was early on in our practice and our relationship and we really wanted to connect with the spirits of this forest as well as each other. The forest came to life in a way I had never experienced before – trees talking to us, inspiration flooding our visions. We just tried to listen to the world around us, and

eventually we saw a great redwood tree. It was glowing with its own light and looked like it had animals and faces swimming up and down it. We both saw it at the same time and without saying anything to each other we both started running towards it full speed. As we touched the tree we both left our bodies. I saw a vision which felt like the Creator was speaking through the tree to us, and the tree bathed us in light and joined us in marriage, and I knew Tasha had seen the same vision without asking her. We had only known each other a year and hadn't thought about marriage, but suddenly we knew. We both suddenly fell down into each other's arms and started crying – and saw a vision of our baby - we knew that this was going to happen. Five years on, our baby arrives next month!

Where on earth do you feel most at home?

I love the Pacific Coastal forests of North America. I grew up here and they feel like home to me. I especially love the Coastal Redwoods in California and the Hoh Rainforest in Washington. I never feel more at peace than when I go into the woods for a few days with everything I need in a single backpack – it feels like freedom.

What do you do for fun?

I love making music, spending time in nature and traveling to new places. Hiking and backpacking with my family is the best.

What is your favourite food?

I love food with a lot of flavor and personality – especially Peruvian and Thai food. Mostly I cook from scratch everything we eat at home – good ingredients and a lot of love make everything taste good! I think when I am the one cooking my specialty might be Italian.

What music do you like?

I like really unique sounding music, or music with a lot of emotion in it. I listen to almost any genre and like a lot of variety. Some of my favorite artists include Iron and Wine, Foutomata Diawara, Midnite, Talking Heads, and Tool.

Best book and film?

I am a sucker for an adventure or a good story. Ever since being a kid I really love fantasy books. like 'Lord of the Rings' or 'A Wheel of Time.' My favorite book might be 'The Alchemist' – it is short but so beautiful and inspiring. I think my favorite movie might be 'Donnie Darko,' 'The Fountainhead' or 'The Big Lebowski.'

What message would you give to your 12-year-old self?

Be more open-minded and try more new things. Don't doubt yourself so much and chase your dreams – even when others don't believe in you, believe in yourself.

A wish for the future?

I really wish people could work together and help each other out more. We are all connected and cannot pretend otherwise any longer.

MAY 17-21: WALKING THE PATH OF THE HEART (CALLANDER, SCOTLAND) With renowned spiritual teacher Brooke Medicine Eagle. Be part of this healing journey, walk in a sacred manner and awaken the heart. 0044 (0)1877 376 263 www.lendricklodge.com

MAY 20-21: SHAMANIC AWARENESS (STAFFORDSHIRE) Working with trees and plants, animals and the earth to develop and deepen our connection with the world around us. With Roo Reygan www.holisticwellbeingmidlands.co.uk (01785) 713 721 roo@holisticwellbeingmidlands.co.uk

MAY 21: PIPE CIRCLE (NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE) A chance to sit with the sacred pipe, a traditional Native American prayer ceremony. With Nick Breeze Wood. Nick@sacredhoop.org

JUNE 

JUN 2-4: PADMASAMBHAVA AND YESHE TSOGYAL EMPOWERMENTS (MID WALES) An opportunity to take this Buddhist empowerment, given by Ngakchang Rinpoche And Khandro Dechen in the wild beauty of the Spirit Horse camp in Mid Wales to mark the inauguration of a special Dakini temple built there over the last few years. www.spirithorse.co.uk www.Empowerments-Facebook (the FaceBook event page)

JUN 3: THE SACRED DRUM (GLOUCESTERSHIRE) Day to make a sacred drum - limited places available. Contact (01594) 541 850 www.mandypullen.co.uk info@mandypullen.co.uk

JUN 3-4: INTRODUCTION TO SHAMANISM (ABERGAVENTNY) Two day course exploring shamanism, the shamanic journey and how it can help you in everyday life. Maxine Smillie shamaniclife.co.uk (01873) 858 391

JUN 10: JOURNEYING GROUP (LONDON) Monthly group for those who can journey to deepen practice and community. With Shenoah Taylor and David Scott. Contact shenoah@shenoahtaylor.com www.shenoahtaylor.com

JUN 10: TURNING OF THE YEAR (LONDON) Start of year long course deepening seasonal connections and shamanic practice. Five in person meetings and ongoing work between meetings. With Shenoah Taylor

and David Scott. Contact shenoah@shenoahtaylor.com www.shenoahtaylor.com

JUN 11: 3 RIVERS SHAMANIC GROUP (NE ESSEX) To the woods, to the water, or in a building. Journey and socialise. Contact Julia www.3riversshamanicgroup.co.uk

JUN 18: PIPE CIRCLE (NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE) A chance to sit with the sacred pipe, a traditional Native American prayer ceremony. With Nick Breeze Wood. Nick@sacredhoop.org

JUN 21: SUMMER SOLSTICE OPEN RITUAL (ORKNEY) Open ritual to celebrate the Summer Solstice, inclusive, family friendly, free event. Based on Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids ceremonies, this is a Scottish Pagan Federation event - please note this ritual will include a legal Pagan wedding! With: Helen & Mark Woodsford-Dean Contact: info@spiritualorkney.co.uk www.spiritualorkney.co.uk

JUN 24: JOURNEYS OF DISCOVERY (NORTH CORNWALL) Drumming, healing and journey circle, all welcome, novice and experienced who would like to explore the world of the shaman. Warm, friendly and open circle. Contact Derek (07788) 432 380 www.healingtree.org.uk

JUN 24-25: THE SHAMANIC JOURNEY (SHREWSBURY) A path to healing, insight and empowerment. Journeying, basic healing and working for others. Exploring a path that brings wisdom, healing, insight and empowerment into daily life. With Shenoah Taylor and Lisa Sture. courses@shamanicvoices.org.uk (01686) 630 717

JUN 30-JUL 3: SUN MOON DANCE (MORAYSHIRE, SCOTLAND) A beautiful sacred ceremony given to us by Joseph Rael, Beautiful Painted Arrow, with dance, song and prayers for personal and global peace. Dance Chief: Denise Ballantyne (+44) (0) (1450) 850 383 (07708) 118 980 daballantyne61@btinternet.com

NEXT POP COPY DEADLINE
May 20th for June-Sept Issue of Hoop

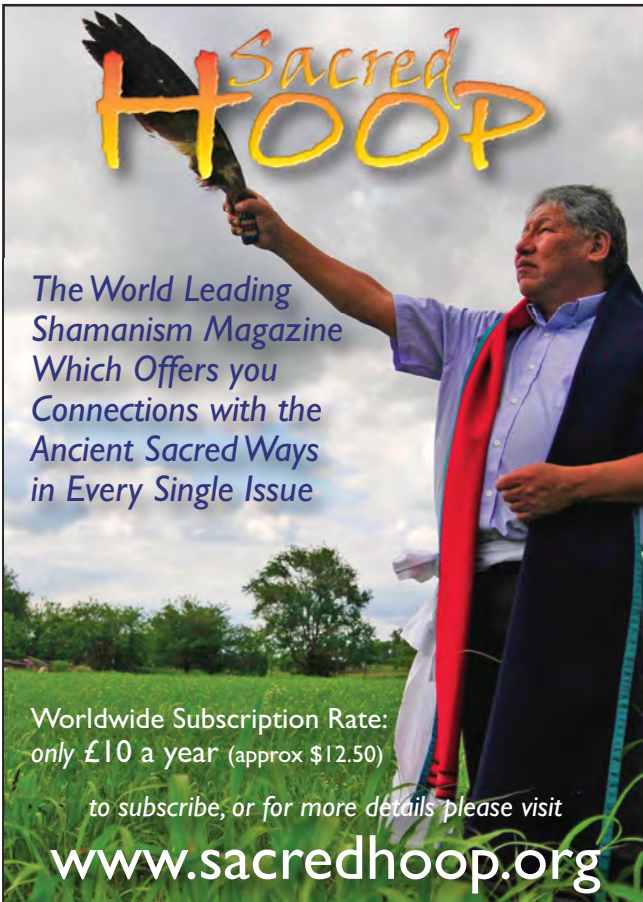


COMMUNITY AND EVENTS
MARCH - JUNE 2017



Left: set of small ongon/ongod spirit dolls on a shaman's altar. They represent important ancestral spirits who come into the bodies of shamans and work through them.

Small ongons like this can be made quite easily and then a ceremony to bring in the ancestor spirit is performed - the doll becoming a sort of 'house' for the spirit
Mongolia early C20th



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 Nicholas Breeze Wood



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The time will soon be here
When my grandchild
Will long for the cry of a loon,
The flash of a salmon,
The whisper of spruce needles,
Or the screech of an eagle.

But he will not make friends
With any of these creatures
And when his heart
Aches with longing,
He will curse me.

Have I done all to keep the air fresh?
Have I cared enough about the water?
Have I left the eagle to soar in freedom?
Have I done everything I could
To earn my grandchild's fondness?

*Chief Dan George (1899-1981)
Tseil-Waututh Band of the Coastal Salish
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