

Foundations for Shamanic Practice (Read me first)

Soon to be available in French, German, and Spanish

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FOUNDATIONS FOR SHAMANIC AND SHAMANIC PSYCHOTHERAPY OR COACHING PRACTICE.

Please read this discussion of the Foundational Principles before attempting any experiential practices on this website. Such practices need to be grounded in the Sacred Hoop principles that are heart-centered and earth-honoring. This discussion not only lays the Foundation for Apprenticeship, but also gives the horizon in which all practices and skills find their rightful balance, and in balance with each other. So read slow and digest before attempting the practices. Thank You. Mikkal

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ABSTRACT: Mikkal is a Jungian psychologist and Cherokee-metis shamanic healer. In this lecture he discusses the basics of shamanic healing from within the purview of these orientations which guides his work in the context of modern culture. His aim is to show one model, and it is only one, of how shamanic healing and recovery of soul may take a legitimized place in the modern world of depth psychology today. He has made the psychology of Jung his own, and does not attempt to explain the intricacies of Jungian theory, only to show how he has made the core Jungian concepts and values his own in blending them with his own core Cherokee shamanic roots. (C) Copyright 2009

Personal Introduction

It is exciting to be here, today, in this ancient land of the Gaulois-Celtic Ancestry, and more anciently a few hundred kilometers from here, the Lascaux caves at Dordogne in which ancient shamans drew their visions on the walls estimated at some 20,000 years ago. I am going to speak to the topic of shamanic soul loss and recovery from within my own context of being a modern, North American Cherokee-metis, a Jungian psychologist, and shamanic healer. My aim is to be a 'bridge builder' between a very ancient healing wisdom and modern psychotherapy (primarily Jungian). I will be sharing with you shamanic healing of soul from within the indigenous American perspective [Part I], and then I will share some ways I use the analytical psychology inspired by C.G. Jung to bridge the ancient and modern healing systems in my own clinical practice [Part II].

Part I. SHAMANISM

Definition of Shamanism

The word 'shamanism' has become associated with a technique of ecstasy, known as the 'shamanic journey' (a form of spirit-travel) in which in an ecstatic altered state the shaman departs from his ordinary sensory-based bodily orientation and state of mind, and moves into the visionary planes of consciousness associated with upper, lower, and middle worlds. There he or she may locate lost objects or game, or consult the spirits, or find and return lost souls for the purpose of healing, or diagnose and remove something that is intruding and doesn't belong to the patient....

All this is true of my own experience, tradition, initiation and lineages. From within this point of view, a shaman is Called by the Spirit, is Initiated and undergoes a profound experience of death and rebirth, learns to bind and heal his or her own wounds, a process of "wounded healer training", because it becomes a data-base of experience upon which to draw in working to help heal others. You must be called by the Spirit to do this work, either a direct call coming in the form of visions and crisis, or through an inward Call and Questing. All of this is true of my own background and experience. Yet it is the kind of explanation that scholars and ethnographers give, and misses the intricacies, details, and cultural nuances.

One important thing it misses is the heart-centered and earth-honoring spiritual basis, misses the role of sacred ceremonies and wisdom of the Elders that ground and situate these shamanic activities. It also misses the profound ecological concern and role of balance, harmony, and integration symbolized by ancient sacred hoop or circle. It misses the concern with restoring harmony of relationships with the spirits of the land and the ancestors.

Because restoring balance and establishing "right relationships" is crucial to the work of being a shamanic healer, from within my traditions, I will discuss the role of the Sacred Hoop, discuss how the Hoop Becomes Broken resulting in soul loss, and how the sacred hoop teachings support the work of soul recovery. The Great Spirit, is at the root of the shamanic healing process. We must now turn to it, and the role it plays in this shamanic system.

The Great Spirit

Like the Christian Trinity, the Great Spirit is both one and many, it is a complexity of powers, and it is, paradoxically, One. The Great Teton Sioux Medicine Chief Old Fools Crows once said that the Great Spirit as a formless mystery is called Wakan Tanka, and when manifest in form, Tunkeshela (grandfather), but it is also the Spirit of Mother Earth, the Helpers, and the Powers

of the cardinal directions of the sacred hoop of life. He said he could call on anyone of those particular manifestations by name in various ceremonies, or just refer to it as “Wakan Tanka” for short. Each indigenous nation in the Americas has its own name for this ultimate reality, but by convention, in North America, we have somewhat settled on the “Great Spirit” as the common English name for it.

The Call-Initiation-Service

In my own tradition a shamanic healer is called by the Great Spirit. This Call may be through dream and vision, such as Black Elk is famous for, or it may arise more inwardly and express itself through Questing for it. But however it comes, it is not a good idea to resist it, for the Great Spirit is calling you to a way of life that will fulfill and bless you, however difficult a path it may be.

The shamanic healer is called but must be initiated and transformed into a Hollow Bone servant of the Great Spirit, such that the diagnosing and the treatment come through the shaman. The shaman does not create it, but responds to the inner direction and vision of the Great Spirit. To be sure, this initiation process includes sacred ceremonies, quests, purifications, lamenting, and spirit traveling to other realms, but all these methods are ways of hollowing out, becoming a servant of Spirit.

While the shaman is called by the Great Spirit, it is important to have human teachers to help initiate, ground, pass on their wisdom and tools to the future shaman. In my own initiations, there were not only difficult ordeals and tests, there was a confrontation with death, visionary dismemberment and reassembly, a death and rebirth process that strips you to the bare bones of soul, connects your heart with the Great Spirit and rebuilds you around that central axis. In this process your own wounds and truth must be faced, no matter how painful, your wounds healed, cared for, and a recovery to wholeness and harmony in living. It is difficult to refuse this Call to such transformation because it is a call to your true self, your true life in this world. To refuse it is to lose your purpose.

The whole process of Initiation is a transformation into your true self, heart-centered and earth-honoring. This is a call to a shaman-self for the future shaman. This is also the great school of the shaman, I called it the Wounded Healer School, for your Initiation process because the database of experience and wisdom for helping others respond to the Call of the Great Spirit to live their true lives. You need human Ritual Elders to guide, contain, and support this process. It cannot be done alone. Only a relatively few people are called to be shamanic healers, but everyone is called by the Great Spirit to live their true life, authentically from the heart, be of service and walk in balance. The indigenous American shaman by virtue of her or his initiation learns how to guide and support others in their response to the Call.

The Sacred Circle

The sacred circle is a universally recurring form of very ancient origin and is to be found on all five continents, and amongst a great diversity of peoples. It is a symbol of centered wholeness, what C.G. Jung, the great depth psychologist, called a 'mandala' after the Sanskrit word for sacred symbol. This symbol is very common throughout the Americas and plays a big role in the traditional life of many indigenous peoples, and plays a special role in shamanic healing and sacred ceremonies. In North America this is often elegantly simple, a circle with a vertical and horizontal line intersecting in the center. It is called the Sacred Hoop or Medicine Wheel, because to practice its wisdom teachings is good medicine, good for your life and health.

This symbol comes layered with many self-replicating patterns, one for each dimension of life expressed within it. In General, the East often symbolizes Sunrise, Spring, New Life, Birth, and Spirituality. The South often symbolizes Earth, Summer, Healing, Youth, Growth and Expansion, the West symbolizes Autumn, Introspection, Adulthood and midlife, and the North symbolizes Winter, Age, Wisdom, Ancestors & Elders, mental life.

Each tribe has its own Animal Power for each direction. For the Cherokee these are East: Golden Eagle, South Rabbit, West Bear, and North: Deer. Each tribe also has its own color symbolism. For the Cherokee, these are East: Red, South White, West Black, and North Blue.

In addition to the four cardinal directions, there are three others recognized by most tribes. Cherokees call this the powers of 4 & 7. So the other three are Center = Heart/You), color Green, Lower world of Mother Earth = Brown, and Grandfather Heaven or upper world = Yellow.

The 7th Direction & the Hoop of the Psyche

The seventh basically direction symbolizes You, in the center. It also symbolizes the heart in which the Great Spirit dwells, or in which Grandfather Heaven and Mother Earth are united in you. This is the core of you, the place you live from as you live the wholeness of the sacred hoop.

A fairly common motif for many North American tribes, and especially for the Cherokee is the Great Tree which resides in the hoop. It represents the life within the bounds of the sacred hoop. Its roots reach deep into Mother Earth, and spread upwards toward Father Heaven, and reaches out in all four cardinal directions, embracing and integrating them in its life. The Great Tree grows from its core and expands. The sacred hoop must remain healthy to protect the life of the Tree within. Now this Tree can also symbolize the wisdom and sacred ceremonies of a people, the cultural heart of a nation, and it is the Magic visionary Tree the Cherokee shaman climbs or

descends by means of--so keep in mind the multilayered meanings of the sacred hoop and the Great Tree of Life within it.

All this Hoop and Tree symbolism is vital to the Cherokee shamanic system I was initiated in. But this wisdom is common through many or most North American tribes. Having a healthy hoop is important to have strong boundaries which support and protect the life within.

Each cell of your body is a little sacred hoop supporting the life within. Getting out of balance or becoming injured can break the hoop of a cell, and its fluid pours out, the cell dies. It is the same with the medicine wheel. We must walk in balance and live from our center to keep our hoops strong and healthy. If we get out of balance, the hoop can break.

Breaking the Hoop Results in Soul Loss

Common causes for breaking the sacred hoop are trauma, violence, accident, death of loved ones, divorce and so on. A whole Nation of people can have a broken hoop. The Cherokee Nation's hoop became broken on the Trail of Tears, just as the Lakota Hoop broke at Wounded Knee under the violent influence of colonialism.

Dr. C. G. Jung noted that when the hoop of a nation or a people breaks, meaninglessness, poverty, addictions, self-hatred and rage often take place....this is a condition of massive soul loss. It is the same for individual people, soul loss comes after the hoop has become violated or broken. Then the problem becomes not just to retrieve soul, but to mend or restore the hoop and regenerate the life within it.

The Personal Hoop (of the soul)

Many tribes have their own version of the personal or psychological hoop, but there is pretty general agreement today about the symbolism of directions of this hoop.

East = Spirit..... West = Physical

South= Emotional..... North = Mental

In this little scheme the 'soul person' or 'self' is viewed as consisting of four fundamental parts, and each are connected to the others. If one part gets neglected, all the other parts will become sick because out of balance. You as the person in the center of the hoop are to take care of yourself by keeping all four parts of life in balance. As David Little Elk put it:

Taking care of our four parts establishes inner peace (intimacy), and by natural law we then project (reflect) this peace outside of our bodies into the universe around us. This is called establishing the 7th Direction. “Whatever is within us is what we project out to the world around us. Likewise, how we perceive the world around us is a reflection of our current state of being within ourselves. As we change within ourselves, we are also changing the way we perceive the world around us. Whatever we do, say, think, and feel affects the universe within us and it also affects the universe around us. Thus, everything within us is connected as we are connected to the universe around us.”

For the Cherokee there are four basic values, also placed in the personal hoop, to help guide the living of each person. Each value has a place on the medicine wheel, and we can present them in dynamically related polar opposites, both poles needing to be justly expressed to be in balance.

West-Independence... is balanced against... the **East-Belonging**

South Mastery... is balanced against... the **North-Generosity**.

Cherokee medicine, values and principles give great emphasis to the polarity of Belonging and to Independence. A community with a truly healthy and a vibrant Sacred Hoop is made up of strong individuals who live in reciprocity and co-creative participation with the community of humans and non-humans. Too much independence risks imbalance (e.g., disregard for communal needs, for the value of others, isolation) as does too much belonging (e.g. co-dependency, external frame of reference). The balance between strong and heart-centered individualization, and communal and earth honoring participation (belonging) is necessary to keep the sacred hoop of your life intact.

Likewise, the Cherokee have always placed great emphasis upon Mastery in balance with Generosity. It is natural to follow your heart in directing your talents, ideas, and visions into actual works of beauty, turn them into real achievements in the world. But Mastery needs to be held in balance or tension with Generosity of heart. A person with a generous heart is giving of its best, of talents, blessings, materials, wisdom, resources and so on, so that others (human and nonhuman) life may benefit. An imbalance in the direction of Mastery leads to over-achievement and self-importance, status seeking, and looking for recognition outside yourself (external frame of reference). It discounts and diminishes others. Likewise, an imbalance in the direction of generosity could lead to self-neglect and poverty, and not developing one's own powers and gifts, while being a giver to others. This will just as surely lead to a breaking down of the hoop.

Each of these principles applies to the multiple dimensions in which we live. We Belong to the Spirit, we belong to our families and communities, we belong to Mother Earth, we belong to the wider landscape on which we depend and from which we draw sustenance. We are not simply independent, we are interdependent and this must be acknowledged and enduringly expressed in our way of living. We also belong in a certain line of work or creativity, that towards which we are drawn naturally by our hearts (NGS).

Restoring a Broken Hoop

When a hoop is broken, the integrity of the life within is fragmented, and depressions, addictions, low-esteem, hopelessness and despair result...all symptoms of soul loss. Before shamanic soul retrieval can really be a solid option, the patient must begin rebuilding or mending the broken hoop, by returning to the teachings and wisdom of the sacred hoop. Without this basic action, there is not enough support for soul retrieval.

There are four acts of power for mending a sacred hoop. 1. Turn to the East (Spiritual), admit you are wounded, out of balance and need help. Ask the Great Spirit to help you rebuild your hoop and regenerate the Great Tree of your life. 2) Turn North (Mental) and consult the wisdom of the Elders and Ancestors, use the principles for self-examination, and identify your problem patterns and what needs healing. 3) Turn to the South (Emotional Healing of relationships) on the hoop and go to anyone you have harmed while your hoop was broken. Apologize and ask forgiveness, and forgive yourself. 4) Turn West (Physical Realm) to walk your talk and enact your new vision and principles in the world. Once the patient is in process of mending his or her sacred hoop and is again 'making the rounds' of the four directions like this, a solid basis for soul retrieval has become established.

Understanding Shamanic Soul Retrieval

Soul retrieval is ultimately about regaining the lost parts of you, of soul energies and potentials that have fragmented or split off when your sacred hoop broke.

The breaking of your hoop and resulting soul loss can be caused by your own neglect in maintaining balance and centeredness, but it generally is caused by traumatic forces in life that break the hoop. A big force is Modern culture itself. The hoop of Modern peoples is broken by the "out of balance" way of life, with its values of greed, domination, exploitation for profits without concern for the wellbeing of others. When greed and the pursuit of riches, unbridled pleasure, power and social status become that major determinants of life-purposes and identities, then abuse, exploitation, fear, violence, hatred and blame arise. These are forces that engender hoop breaking and soul loss. SOUL LOSS BEGETS SOUL LOSS. BROKEN HOOPS ENGENDER THE BREAKING OF MORE HOOPS. MODERN CULTURE NEEDS TO MEND ITS BROKEN HOOP.

In my consulting work most of the causes of soul loss, in addition to modern culture, can be traced to events of abuse (emotional, physical, and sexual) in the context of dysfunctional families, significant loss (divorce, death of loved one), accidental injury, heart-break, financial collapse and poverty.

Soul Retrieval is ultimately about taking back control of your life, mending the hoop, bringing all of you back on line, re-gathering all of you back into the sacred hoop, so you give live well and walk in beauty, and benefit others.

As mentioned previously, one symbol of the soul or essence of a person (or of a tribe or nation) is the symbol of the Great Tree which lives inside the hoop. The sacred tree is rooted deeply in Mother Earth, reaches upwards to the heavens, branches out in the four directions, grows and expands from its core...offers sheltering care and its fruits to other creatures. This symbol of soul-Fullness is the opposite of soul loss. In soul loss the symbolic tree of soul is withered and in need of care and nourishment, its branches fragmented and lost. The hoop around it is broken.

Signs of Soul Loss

The most pervasive sense of soul loss is that you feel you are not whole. You are not all 'on line' not able to be and do all that you could. You may feel like you are a detached observer on life, your living may be fear-based rather than love-based. You may lack courage, self-esteem, you may feel stuck and un-free. You are out of balance and can't find your reason for being here.

You may have worked hard in counseling or psychotherapy and grown a lot, still there is something that won't move or grow or budge, something you need, some potential or natural human power that just isn't happening for you.

You may be in prolonged grief and unable to heal after a loved one died. You may feel you gave your heart to your former lover or spouse and now you have never gotten it back: "She stole my heart and I've not been able to really love again since she left."

One sure sign of soul loss is that you continue to revisit some painful event in memory, or you may return, again and again physically to the place where some painful or traumatic event occurred. These are signs or clues.

Let us list some of the signs:

Feeling something important is missing (not on line in your living).

Feeling disempowered, stuck, unfree from something (habit, some emotion, another person)

Memory Blocked or Continually Revisiting painful memory.

Flashback memories & recurrent nightmares.

Detachment, noninvolvement with life.

Depression, despair, hopelessness

You get sick a lot (not in balance).

Unusually Prolonged Grief.

A feeling of “He still has my heart ..after...”

Chronic low self-esteem.

Dependency feelings.

Dissociation

Too much worry about Criticism what others think.

Held back by fear.

Not having a voice due to fear, not accomplishing something because of fear.

Lots of blame of self or others.

Get sick a lot.

“Doctoring for the Big Black”

How Soul Retrieval Is Accomplished

There is an ancient Cherokee shamanic chant for soul retrieval, in which the Great Spirit sings through the mouth of the shaman. The formula for this soul retrieval is called “The Big Black” which signifies the Western direction in which the lost soul was generally located, as in the land of the dead, a ‘twin of the night’. With the Great Spirit’s help the shaman sings the soul through

the sacred hoop to the East, making it a Twin of the Day, a new beginning for it. Thus the Great Spirit would help bring it to the East, the color Red, signifying new life for the returned soul. Once the soul was returned to life and body, the Great Spirit announced through the shaman's chant: "You and the Sun are Twins! You and the Moon are Twins! These two orbs suggested the returned soul piece was no out of the realm of the lost (symbolized by the Dark) and now in the realm of the found and alive (symbolize by these light orbs).

I was trained in shamanic soul loss and extraction by my Cherokee-metis teacher, Ai Gvhdi Waya, herself in a Cherokee lineage of healers stretching back over many generations through her family line. The details of how I journey are closely kept secrets within this lineage and are available only to apprentices. I can say that in my lineage we do use the Great Tree as a point of departure to ecstatically drum journey. The different roots lead to different dimensions of the lower world, and the branches carry you to various dimensions of the upper world, and serve functions in the middle world. The mythic symbol Great Tree becomes transformed and interiorized as a central mystical 'road map' for the shamanic journey, which orients us and helps us keep focus as we work ecstatically with our spirit-guides and our clients. The shamanic journey method itself has great affinities with the active imagination technique devised by C.G. Jung, wherein he paid regular visits to his gnostic guide 'Philemon,' an 'old wise Man' with whom Jung held lengthy conversations.

Part II.

Jungian Psychology & Shamanism

Shamanism and Jungian psychology, while outwardly different, have much in common inwardly. These ancient and modern paths of healing both require the healer to be Called in some manner, to have a true vocation for the work, and both require an Initiatory ordeal which involves a confrontation with one's own sickness and wounding, and death and rebirth from a false to a truer self. Sacrifices are made in the process, and a strong and heart-centered way of life emerges.

Both shaman and Jungian psychotherapist have descended deeply and confronted their own truth and pain, and this experience serves as a kind of database for their efforts to help others. Both view the Spiritual to be at the heart of the healing process. Both give great respect to dream and vision, and to direct interaction with numinous spiritual presences (guardians, intelligences, helping-spirits). Both have great respect for Mother Earth ("the Great Mother") and advise us to live in harmony with Her. If the modern western mind has been outwardly focused on sensory based experiences alone, the indigenous shamanic mind has been focused on the invisible interiors and unseen dimensions. Jungian psychology integrates both the primal mind of the shaman, and the modern mind of the psychologist.

Shamanic experience and Jungian psychotherapy can be a very natural fit. Persons who undergo the analytically assisted individuation process in Jungian psychotherapy go through many shamanic kinds of experiences, including all we have mentioned above—not for the purpose of becoming shamans, but for the purpose of honoring the call to their true individuality, recovering soul and practicing wholeness. These are just a few of the major commonalities between shamanism and Jungian psychology.

Mandalic Core Beliefs and Principles

C.G. Jung discovered that the ‘Sacred Hoop’ is a widely recurring pattern around the world, and much of his cross-cultural and historical research has shown us how it shows up amongst Chinese Taoists, Tibetan Buddhists, Navajo sand paintings, Australian Aborigines, Peruvian and Ecuadorian Kichwas, Mexican Mayan, and Nahuatl-Aztec peoples, amongst the mystically inclined, and amongst the mentally insane. Jung saw that people in crisis often experience a spontaneous dream or vision of a mandala, as if the Great Spirit were pointing the way towards healing and wholeness.

Jung viewed the mandala as a sacred circle -- an elegant, composite and multilayered symbolic map of the psyche, whose purpose was to help the beholder and contemplator direct his or her energies towards the center, the origin and font of the Divine Spirit, of life, and towards the four quadrants, reflections of fundamental archetypal components of personality, which we embrace from our central core for purposes of growth, balance and expansion of personality, and the achievement of wholeness and a irreplaceably unique expression of our true identity.

Recall that the Sacred Hoop has four quadrants or directions organized around a sacred center in which You, the center-point or 7th Direction where the Great Spirit dwells, balance and integrate each of these directional principles in your everyday living. Jung created a scheme is similar to a sacred hoop (mandala) to show how to practice and achieve wholeness through using and integrating what he called the “Four Functions”:

North---Thinking ... balanced by ... **South—Feeling**

West—Sensation ... balanced by ... **East—Intuition**

Dr. Jung had a 5th Function which integrates all these and all opposites, which he called the Transcendent Function, which for the Cherokee comes from the 7th Direction, and is a gift of the Great Spirit in your heart.

The process of using and living the Mandala was called the “individuation process.” By this

term Jung meant a deep transformative process of the personality whereby we dis-identify from the persona (the social roles and masks we wear, and the false self-images) and embrace the shadow-side opposite qualities within us, as well as masculine and feminine opposites. Union and integration of opposites is a major theme of the path of individuation. We learn to withdraw our projections onto other people and take responsibility for facing our own inner content (emotions, feelings, desires, blaming, etc.). The process, often assisted by an analytical psychologist (analogue of a shaman or ritual elder), results in coming to find and live from our true psychic core and center, that 7th Direction of the Sacred Hoop. In short, it is an initiatory process whereby one is Called to one's true and unique identity and wholeness, and to creatively express it in the world. Wholeness is not lived apart from the world, but gathers the whole world into its circle.

In this process one separates from the habitual and everyday world and view of things, and makes a deep descent towards the center of one's being. An archetypal process of death and rebirth takes place, and a new personality is organized around this sacred core, of the Self, which, in our discussion, is at once your essential identity and the dwelling place of the inwardly inspiring and guiding Great Spirit. This inner guiding and inspiring function is what Jung called the "Spiritus Rector" (directing Spirit at the center of the psyche).

With these core concepts of Jungian psychology in mind, it is not difficult to make the transition to the shamanic concept of the spirit world. For Jung this is covered by the term, "the collective unconscious" which includes forward moving instinctual energies, inner spiritual direction, and various numinous (holy powers), known as archetypes. Jung left room for discarnate spirits and divinities beyond the archetypes too. The collective unconscious has various dimensions of depth, including ancestral and pre-human layers. Jung's own analogue of the Great Spirit is called the Self, for short, and it includes the archetypal and visionary powers, the inner directing Spiritus Rector, and the Great Mother, his analogue of the Earth Mother, which it was very important to live in alignment with. Jung often referred to the Great Spirit as simply "the Self", for the short of it. Soul loss was a dissociation or repression of various facets of yourself into the shadow realms of the unconscious. Soul Recovery was any psychological action which brought these contents back on line, so that you regain your wholeness, balance, and power.

The Context of My Clinical Practice

From the first meeting with a new client, I focus on the 7th Direction, as the other six will eventually come into play. But we begin with the 7th. So I am especially interested in whether or not the client is living a vision from their heart (The response to the Call of the Spiritus Rector) and if not, how to help them listen and honor it, and if they are, then we are looking anything which might be blocking or hampering their steps. Usually this will be some problem or challenge which is "in the way", an autonomous complex, 'a little devil' as Jung sometimes called them, and who thwart out best intentions. They are analogues of the shaman's diagnostic category of spirit intrusion) or something not on line that should be (soul loss).

My consulting room reflects the two ‘worlds’, of shamanism and Jungian psychotherapy. There are the usual couches, chairs, computer, diplomas, and appointment book, and overflowing bookshelves. But there are also many earthy things, animal hides, primitive masks from around the world that entice the imagination, kindle the heart, and speak to the collective unconscious soul of humans. There are artifacts from my Indigenous American Ancestry, and there are ritual objects, sacred herbs like cedar, sage, sweet grass, sacred stones, Indian Blankets and a few crystals, a drum and rattle, and prayer flute—sometimes also a prayer pipe. Usually the stereo play nature sounds, with a little prayer flute or drumming softly in the background.

This is the setting of my clinical practice, a modern context in the city where I practice my shamanic healing craft (but not the only place). Those clients who are aware of the shamanic see this reflected in the furnishings and objects in the room. Those who are unaware and feel they are just seeing a psychologist, perhaps think I am interested in collecting “primitive art”. Regardless of the client’s initial orientation, in this consulting room it is clear that this is a special space, evoking the power of a healing and transformative vessel. With each client who comes through the door I try to clear myself of all my own concerns so that nothing is between me and the client, or between me and the Great Spirit. To help, I smudge myself with sacred herbs, often sage or Palo Santo, and do the same for many of my clients. With some clients, where appropriate, I may begin with an invocation or a chant. The sacredness of the space and the hour is established in this way.

The first thing I do is try to find my client, that being inside looking out through a pair of eyes—the 7th Direction. That soul person and its wellbeing are my principle concern...the reason we are together. Once I have connected with the person in there, I then open my heart and listen intently. With open heart and use of my heart’s navigational system, I call it the NGS, I also attune to the Great Spirit, often through one of my Helpers, that I call my Chief Guide or CG. I want to listen, See, and respond from Its greater and more holistic and truthful perspective. I am essentially seeking to see my client through Spirit’s eyes. This is the action of becoming a “little hollow bone.” I lay a little ground work for my clients by teaching them basic principles of the Sacred Hoop or the mandala wisdom of Jung, stressing the role of balance, center of heart, and how to listen and speak from the heart. I lay this groundwork through some discussion, and suggested readings, and if they are familiar with Jungian psychology, we already have a language filled with the perennial wisdom of sacred hoop and mandala wisdom.

Most clients do not know how to listen to and honor the heart and the voice of the Great Spirit guiding them there, so one of the first strategic things I do is to actively teach my clients to find and listen to the heart---to learn about how it speaks to and guides them. Then I teach them how to bring what it wants on line, and how to protect that while it is a new green shoot and very vulnerable. Once a client knows how to follow and honor their heart, many growth steps and new life comes from there. Over a few months of weekly sessions, I can witness many potentials and parts of themselves coming on line. I let them know exactly the development and

growth steps I see, and celebrate these growth steps with them. Over time I look carefully for what is not budging or growing or coming on line...it is usually something the client has complained about and stated as a reason they came into therapy. We plot growth lines on a chart (GLR) and occasionally rate the progress. This helps us visually see what is not yet coming on line.

At this point I may introduce the concept of shamanic soul retrieval, and depending on the cultural and mental context of my client, I may discuss it in clinical terms like imagery work, hypnosis, with reference to the ancient shamanic methods. But many clients today who have been referred to me come because they know of my shamanic and Jungian work. For these clients I will frankly discuss the shamanic soul retrieval and extraction process, and after a period of solid preparation for that sacred ceremony, we schedule it. This SR/E work can be done in my office, or now with the medicine society at Crows Nest, called the "Little Hollow Bone Circle." When other people are present and supportive, this can be a very powerful healing rite. But for other clients, I do a guided soul retrieval, or what I call "self-parts reclamation work", the whole thing framed in more modern secular and psychological dress, yet with transpersonal overtones. For my part, I still call on my Spirit guides for help in doing parts reclamation work, and often they will help me design a soul retrieval practice that will work for this particular client.

In conclusion, I have had to represent the ancient shamanic wisdom the Native American context, and the Jungian and professional context in large broad strokes that conceal many intricacies. Still, I hope it is of some use to you, and seeing ways the shamanic and modern worlds are being brought together today.

Note

Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being.

And I say the sacred hoop of my people was one of the many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy...

(Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux, 1863-1950, n.d.).

There are innumerable variants of the motif...all based on the squaring of a circle. ...The energy of the central point is manifested in the almost irresistible compulsion and urge to become what one is, just as every organism is driven to assume the form that is characteristic of

its nature, no matter what the circumstances.Although the center is represented by an innermost point, it is surrounded by a periphery containing everything that belongs to the self—the paired opposites that make up the total personality. C.G. Jung 9i par 634 [Berlin 1930]

The words of two contemporary visionaries, one, a Lakota holy man from North America, another European, pioneering depth psychologist from Zurich. Both men whose lives spanned the years between 1860 and 1961.