

Shamanism

From: [*The Effects of Shamanic Healing and Other Healing Practices on General Well-Being*](#)

Shamanic healing has been around for thousands of years, not just in the Americas but around the world. It is sometimes dressed differently, it sometimes has different names, but the underlying philosophy remains the same. As shamanic healing relies heavily on the communing with other spirits in other realms that seems a good starting point.

Whether or not the spirit realm and spirits are real is a far reaching question for many, which brings with it complex answers and, often, inconceivable results for us as humans. The answer to such questions can have a major impact for our culturally shared beliefs, for the way we conduct ourselves in life, for how we relate to one another, to nature, and to all living things; such questions can and will impact on how we continue to exist from this point on. The difficulty we have here is that beliefs can and do change. What one believes today may not be what one believes tomorrow, and that is because beliefs are usually based on our communities' beliefs. They are often a culturally based and shared opinion that we have adopted as a child. As we grow, we often start to analyse our beliefs and throw out the ones that no longer fit our understanding of life. So we can't base all things purely on beliefs as they are too easy to change.

But what I have found is that we can base many things on our personal understanding or our personal perspective, and although the same experience will be different for all, it will nonetheless give us some central themes that we hold in common. Questions like: *do we have a non-physical aspect that interacts with or affects our physical body? Or, do we have an aspect which has the ability to move freely on the earth without a physical vehicle? Or even, do we have a non-physical aspect that we can actually converse with and be heard?* Questions such as these may seem mind-boggling to some, but are pretty elementary to others. So we need to look at why it is mind-boggling to one and not the other, and if we look deeply enough or raise enough questions, we will see it comes down to experience. From experience, I can say spirits are real. I have seen the spirits of deceased individuals since I was five years old. From a mental health perspective and from one who trained in mental health, I can say with much conviction that I am not deluded, I am not suffering with a psychosis or other mental health issue and I do not use substances to bring

about such occurrences. So if I am wrong, there must be some other reason for these occurrences. These sightings have occurred all throughout my life. I am not able to will them to happen and they don't happen all the time, but they do happen and they are natural occurrences that I have no control of. So with such experience throughout life, I cannot ever accept that spirit beings do not exist – they simply do and they exist in reality not in my imagination. To further support my theory, my experience and the theory of others, I will share one such experience which happened when I was only seventeen years old.

I was working in a nursing home for the elderly. I was working with a nurse at the time. It was late evening and we were turning an elderly man in his bed whilst changing his sheets. As I cradled the man in my arms so that the nurse could put the clean sheet under him, I felt something which is akin to a breeze when it touches your face. What I felt passed straight through my body. I felt it come out of my back. The feeling was so strong that I naturally turned my head to see what it was. At that particular time, I didn't see anything. I only felt it. I knew what it was and said to the nurse, 'You don't need to rush, he has just died.' In complete disbelief the nurse laid the man back down to check him, and upon examination she was able to confirm that the man had passed quietly away. What I felt was his spirit passing through me as it left his body.

Experiences like that never leave you. You don't forget them and you certainly can't deny them. Does this spiritual or energetic component relate to God or the Divine? I believe it does. I believe our spirit is directly related to the Divine, as we are all interconnected. Is it provable? This is where the difficulty lies. How can you prove such things other than relying on the experiences that people have? It is not necessarily measurable in the same way that science measures things in the physical realm, and we can't set up an experiment with spirit, as not all see or sense spirit and we wouldn't be able to determine imagination from reality. The current methods of studying our physical, tangible reality is so different to how we could study the spirit realm, especially as our belief systems and spiritual experiences are centered on the intangible. Assuming that we do have spirits that can communicate with us leads onto whether or not these spirits or spiritual forces can have an effect on healing, whether it be through direct techniques from themselves, or whether it occurs due to the beliefs of the practitioner, the atmosphere of the healing room or even the patient. These are all valid issues which require exploring, and through exploration, cross-cultural

studies, examples, personal experience and the knowledge and wisdom of others, I will attempt to demonstrate to the best of my ability not only that spirits are real, but also the relationship between the spiritual realm and the physical realm and how spirit informs matter. With these important issues opened up it will permit us a deeper understanding of how shamanism and other healing practices help us to heal.

Shamanism is a way of living. It was a common practice in ancient times and still continues to be practised today. Some call it a religion, while others view it as a set of techniques and philosophies; how it is viewed is irrelevant to some degree. What matters is whether or not it has a positive impact upon our being in way of healing. Shamanism is based on interaction with the spirit world. In ancient societies the shaman played a key role within the community, acting as a spiritual leader, healer, herbalist and teacher among other things. They were highly respected by the community, and their gifts and their wisdom was honoured. It has been said that shamans are a type of medicine man or woman distinguished by the use of journeying to other worlds and through their personal healing journey. They journey by entering into an altered state of consciousness usually brought about via external sound and rhythm. It is the shaman we are going to concentrate on rather than a shamanic practitioner who uses some shamanic techniques.

Agreeing that spirit is real is one thing, but can the shaman really commune with spirit in order to affect matter? This is a question that will continue to be a rhetorical question for those whose culture understands shamanism and a mystery for other cultures. Shamanic cultures believe that not only does spirit affect matter (which includes our body) but that the spiritual realm and the physical realm are reflections of one another. It has been said that to understand the law of cause and effect, look to nature. In regards to shamanic cultures, to question these realities is as preposterous as asking a priest if God exists. The answer will always be, 'Of course it does.' Every religion and every belief system has its core beliefs and convictions and to question these often seems ridiculous to those who share such beliefs.

Ken Wilbur speaks in his book: *The Marriage of Sense and Soul* (1998) about the difficulties between science and spirituality. It was thought that due to the *authority* given to scientists in empirical science that their *power* dramatically affected how people perceived the spirit realm. Anything that was not proven was deemed irrational or non-existent, and that pretty much stands the same today.

If scientists state it's real, we accept it. If they come back later and say it isn't, we may tut and complain, but many of us will then change our view and accept it because they, the authoritative ones, the ones who know, said it was so. In regards to science, the spiritual experience is often devalued; paranormal experiences, miraculous cures, or any other abnormal phenomena is often considered hype, fraud or plain ignorance if it lacks quantitative data to prove its existence. As time has gone on, and with science gaining more and more popularity for people who were or are looking for the truth, much of the ancient spiritual knowledge of how to coexist with the spirit world has been lost or forgotten. As many cultures pass on their knowledge verbally, it is becoming increasingly difficult to hold onto important truths that were discovered thousands of years ago. As with all things, over the centuries verbal instruction starts to become disjointed or confused and often loses its power and intent. For some, what was in the past is no longer relevant for today; but we take that perspective at our own peril, for there are thousands of years' worth of spiritual wisdom and knowledge that is still highly relevant for today and the future.

Shamanism has stood the test of time. It may look different on the outside when we look around the world, but the basic precepts, the basic values are the same. It has been and always will be a bridge between spirit and matter, a bridge between the spirit realm and the physical realm.

Martin Prechtel, a contemporary shaman, says in an interview with Derrick Jensen on *Saving the Indigenous Soul*: *"For the majority of human history, shamans have simply been a part of ordinary life. They exist all over the world. It seems strange to Westerners now because they have systematically devalued the other world and no longer deal with it as part of their everyday lives."*

At this point we may want to consider what a shaman actually is, and although it may conjure up many ideas in today's minds, this is what **Martin Prechtel** explains as a shaman, from the same source, *Saving the Indigenous Soul*:

"Shamans are sometimes considered healers or doctors, but really they are people who deal with the tears and holes we create in the net of life, the damage that we all cause in our search for survival. Shamans deal with the problems that arise when we forget the relationship that exists between us and the other world that feeds us, or when, for whatever reason, we don't feed the other world in return."

We need, as spiritual human beings, to remember:

It's like my old teacher used to say (says Prechtel): "You sit singing on a little rock in the middle of a pond, and your song makes a ripple that goes out to the shores where the spirits live. When it hits the shore, it sends an echo back toward you. That echo is the spiritual nutrition. When you send out a gift, you send it out in all directions at once. And then it comes back to you from all directions."

What we sow we reap, good or bad. Even the Bible tells us:

Cast your bread upon the waters for you will find it in many days. (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

Although shamanism may differ in its presentation on the outside across the globe, the techniques used across many diverse cultures are very similar and therefore considered to be *core shamanism*. It is this *core shamanism* that acts like a golden thread weaving shamans and shamanism from around the world together as one; they become the shamanic tapestry that holds the light and points the way. This macro-cultural approach is especially relevant in today's culture as it permits shamanic healing techniques and spiritual knowledge and wisdom from the past to be utilized today. In a *throwaway* culture of time, it is important that we maintain the circle and hold on tightly to the wisdom of our elders, the techniques of our ancient healers, so that we have something of quality to pass on to the future generations. With ancient history, wisdom and techniques available, it also permits those who are not born into a tribe or shamanic culture but whom feel called to such a path to be able to fulfil that calling. Practitioners such as Myron Eshowsky, Sandra Ingerman, Michael Harner and Susan Marcantonio are all on a heartfelt quest to continue to embrace and respectfully make use of, and work with, that same ancient, spiritually based, core shamanism in order to bring a fresh awareness of spirit to a contemporary world.

Unbeknown to many, shamanic healing can be used in conjunction with orthodox medicine. There are practitioners today who combine their knowledge of alternative medicine whether that be psychotherapy, counseling, massage or other healing methods with orthodox medicine and achieve outstanding results.

In different places around the world, patients with mental health issues are viewed very differently than in the western world and are treated very differently, often using power animals and/or soul retrieval. Orthodox medicine and alternative medicine CAN work together, if only we would permit it. There are tribal doctors that are certified to practice in local hospitals; in Arizona, a Navajo surgeon combines her knowledge of American Indian

culture and practices with her medical training to put patients at ease and improve her surgical outcomes.

Shamanism is an effective therapeutic model as is intercessory prayer and other natural healing models, all of which are worth investigating further. Shamans *journey* or travel to ask for help from spirits on behalf of their patients; those who conduct intercessory prayer somewhat journey, if only in their thoughts or heart, to ask for help from spirit – the Lord, the Holy Spirit, God – on behalf of their patient or fellow members. Praying in this way has been demonstrated to help the healing process. Prayer is an element of most major religions and, therefore, opens many doorways. If healing practices, whether of core shamanism or religion, can gain scientific validity it will help bridge the gap between science and spirituality; this would be an amazing milestone and one which would lead us into a brand new arena where science and spirituality could finally walk side-by-side.

Whether through prayer, shamanic healing, or other forms of alternative, energy-based medicine, the time has come to utilize all such methods and techniques to facilitate healing, but in particular, the spiritual wisdom of shamanic healing has the potential to impact our health, and these healing methods and techniques are not limited to human beings. They can be used on animals, trees, plants and all of creation.

The basic premise of shamanism is that everything is alive – with spirit. The earth we walk on, the air we breathe, the vines of the forest, the birds, the plants, the animals – everything. Even our ancestors have or are *spirit*. *Spirit* is used here to mean a spiritual aspect that is different from, but is connected too, a physical aspect; and when that physical aspect dies or withdraws from a *living state*, the spirit continues to live. But spirit is not reserved purely for that which has or had a physical existence. Shamanism also believes that there are spirits that live in an intangible world that have never lived in a tangible way. Some of these spirits may be animal totems or spirit helpers or allies. Spirit can refer to the creative force of the universe, to the concept of God, or to the vast, impersonal universe that supports all of creation. It can refer to aspects of nature such as tree spirits or the spirit of the wind. It is a widely used and accepted term.

Faith in the existence of spirits is a fundamental principle of shamanism and many other cultures. Another word for this belief is *animism*: the belief that places, creatures, people and nature have a sentient life force, a distinct spiritual essence that animates them and makes them alive. In regards to the tangible, it is the belief that all physical beings have a

spiritual aspect that is related to and connected to the physical being until death, where that same spiritual being can then still function as a separate aspect. The physical body cannot function without the spiritual body, but the spiritual body can function without the physical body, which could be seen as demonstrating that the physical body is a mere vehicle for the *real self*.

Every level of being, from a plant to a stream to the landscape itself, has a unique spirit, and we must relearn respect for this aspect of life. Traditionally, shamans would ask the permission of a tree spirit or plant spirit before cutting it down. This was done to honour the spirit that embodies the physical aspect of the tree or plant. For the same reason, if a shaman wanted to enter a forest they would first find the guardian tree and ask permission from the guardian spirit. If they were told they must not enter the forest, they didn't. It was as simple as that! All around the world shamans rely on communing with spirits. It is an intrinsic part of shamanism. It is as normal as getting up in the morning and expecting to eat or drink. It wasn't something they did out of self-discipline, it was something they did as part of their natural life.

Serge King: *Kahuna Healing* (1983) talks about Kahuna healing and how the Kahuna (shaman) receives initiations into ancient healing councils whose powerful healing energy is channelled into the client.

Ake Hultkrantz: *Shamanic Healing and Ritual Drama* (1997) talks about the Cree's belief in the *manitous* (which means spirits) that exist universally in the natural world and how they also believe in a *Supreme Being* called *Manitou* or *Kitche Manitou* meaning *Great Spirit*. This way of thinking is called animism. Joseph Campbell describes the philosophy of animism as being: *all the forces of nature, imbued with a life force*.

In some cultures the elements of nature take on specific roles in relation to humans such as protectors or guides. In some shamanic cultures, the spirits of the sun, water, thunder, mountains, the bear and the crow are considered guardian spirits, particularly of the shaman, and although these spirits are sometimes seen with the physical eye, they are usually invisible; and for many Westerners, invisible often equates to non-existent. For shamanic people, invisible forces are often amongst the most powerful allies in their lives, believing that our relationship to spirit impacts on the quality of our life.

A harmonious relationship with spirit can be cultivated in many ways, including: honouring our ancestors, showing thanks to animals and plants that give their lives to sustain us, and

respecting our body and treating it well. Many of these qualities are missing in today's world. Often, we no longer give thanks to those closest to us never mind our ancestors. We don't show much thanks, appreciation, or respect to the animals that have been slaughtered, nor do we fully appreciate the plant life who give of themselves to sustain us. The attitudes of today are partly to blame for the lack of balance in the world and in our own personal worlds, and for this reason the shaman who masters the *human to spirit* relationship intervenes and tries to restore health and balance otherwise known as health and **well-being**.

In shamanic cultures worldwide there is a world which can be seen with our physical eyes and another world perceived with non-physical eyes. The non-physical world is of primary importance for any shaman. Some native people consider this non-physical world as the real world.

Many shamanic cultures divide the spiritual world into different realms, such as the lower, middle and upper realms. Some people call these same worlds spheres or levels, numbering them as one, two and three, with three relating to the upper realm or world. It has been my experience upon my journey that there are in fact four realms, which we touch on later. All realms are said to be intersected by some kind of axis point; for some, this is the *axis mundi*:

The axis mundi (also cosmic axis, world axis, world pillar, centre of the world, world tree, in certain beliefs and philosophies), is the world centre, or the connection between Heaven and Earth. As the celestial pole and geographical pole, it expresses a point of connection between sky and earth where the four compass directions meet. At this point travel and correspondence is made between higher and lower realms. Communication from lower realms may ascend to higher ones and blessings from higher realms may descend to lower ones and be disseminated to all. The spot functions as the omphalos (navel), the world's point of beginning. – Wikipedia

The human body can express the symbol of the world axis. Some of the *Tree of Life* representations as found in the chakra system merge with the concept of the human body being a pillar between heaven and earth. Religion regards the body as a temple, and prayer as a column uniting or bridging the earth to heaven, our body to the spiritual world. So whatever culture we live in, if we are praying we are sending prayers upwards. We don't generally think of sending them downwards, because by sending them upwards we are

sending them via the axis mundi, the *world tree*, up through the levels to God, the Divine Source, Greater Consciousness and so on. As healers and shamans, we stand as portals, as vessels, for God's spirit, the *Source of Life*, to flow down through us and out of us. This is why it is thought we receive the energy through our crown chakra. As it pours through us, it can leave our body via our other chakras or even through our hands or our direct connection to the earth, our feet.

The image of a human being suspended on a tree or a cross locates the human at the axis where heaven and earth meet. If we think back to the image of Christ being crucified on the cross (and in those days they also crucified people on trees not just a wooden cross), we can then understand that the message was pointing to the spiritual path being a life of sacrifice in order to walk closer to spirit. The cross also reflects the four directions which means many things on many levels depending on what culture we are looking at. Something we need to ask ourselves is was Christ showing us the axis mundi and was his message one of: *as human beings, we stand between the spiritual world and the physical world as spiritual pillars and that we are already connected and that we just need to learn, or remember how to make use of the axis?* Christ said that no-one comes to the father except through him – was he saying just as he communes with God the Father, so too can we? And did this image of Christ on the cross also represent Heaven (the sky – the spiritual realms, the different spheres) above us, and Hell below (Hell representing the earth, and all the trials and tribulations of living in a world without God, without the spiritual realm)? Do the four directions of the cross, also represented by the four rivers leaving the Garden of Paradise and the four directions from the American Indians, all represent that no matter from which direction you come, the directions, the paths, will still lead back to the central point which is the axis mundi? These are very deep questions that we may need to ask ourselves individually, for depending on our perception of life or the culture in which we live, we will come to very different conclusions.

One popular shamanic concept is that the shaman traverses the axis mundi to bring back knowledge from the other world, the other realms, which reflects the shaman in ascent and descent. There are other myths or stories which also reflects the need to ascend to gain knowledge. One such story is *Jacob's Ladder*. If we need to ascend the ladder, the ladder being the axis mundi which represents our journey to God, our journey into the spiritual realms of knowledge and truth, then we also need to descend the ladder in humility in order

to bring those same truths back into the physical world to help others and the world heal. But this isn't the only place we can see the axis mundi.

Plants and trees also serve as images and reminders of the axis mundi. The cosmic tree symbolizes the uniting of the three planes spoken of; the branches represent the sky, the trunk represents the earth and the roots represent the underworld.

The *Tree of Life* and the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil* in Genesis represents two aspects, with both being said to stand at the center (axis mundi) of the *Garden of Paradise* of which four rivers are said to flow; just like the cross of Christ, with the cross representing the four directions. There is no coincidence that in the beginning we were shown a *Tree of Life* at the axis point, and later on we were shown the *Tree of Christ* or *Cross of Christ* at the axis point.

Throughout many shamanic cultures worldwide, we can see a *tree* as representing the axis mundi and connecting the spiritual realms; but it isn't always a tree. Sometimes the axis is represented, as already discussed, by a ladder and sometimes it is represented as the rainbow. But what is the real message about the axis mundi if it isn't about our interconnectedness, if it isn't about the web of life that holds us all tightly knitted together, if it isn't about balance, and our responsibility as part of the cosmic whole? We will never find all the answers to all our questions, but we must not let our lack of knowledge prevent us from bravely stepping up to the challenge and blessing, of truly living as a spiritual person in a physical world. If our conviction is that all life, be it spirit, animal, human, or plant, is connected, then our actions, thoughts, beliefs and intentions towards the whole would be to live in harmony in a multidimensional universe as a multidimensional being.

The shaman honours this web of creation, this multidimensional, woven web of life; they are well aware that if the world of spirit is a tapestry, then we as spiritual beings represent the individual threads in which the shaman helps to weave into place in order that we can be woven into the best we can be. Many cultures believe we are *sung* into existence by the spirits, in which case honouring our soul's song should be the seed that pushes us forwards and upwards on our own personal shamanic path to bring change and transformation into our own lives. When we can heal ourselves we will know how to help others to heal. As always, change starts with both you and me. We must be willing to reach out and be the change we are looking for. But how can we change, how can we transform our hurt and

tears into blessings, our pain and sorrow into laughter, if not by working with spirit to help transport us safely through the realms of learning and transformation?

The *medicine wheel* or *sacred hoop* has been used for generations by different cultures but specifically by American Indians to facilitate change and transformation. The wheel or hoop can be used to facilitate healing and to seek direction not only upon our physical path through life, but also upon our spiritual path through this life. A medicine wheel can be made outdoors by selecting twelve stones (although you can also use four stones) to create a circle. You enter and leave the circle from the east side, the side that represents the road or doorway into the spiritual realm. When you have entered and blessed the wheel, when you have called in the spirit allies or ancestors, the medicine wheel is then closed by placing the last stone. You are then ready to work the wheel.

The medicine wheel is an important concept to every shaman. As the community's primary connection to the spiritual world, or the community's *axis mundi*, the shaman is required to go through arduous training, learning to move and operate effectively between the worlds. The shaman learns to speak to the plants, dance for rain, make plant medicine and find the buffalo. (S)he journeys on behalf of her patients to ask the spirits to heal their bodies and to acquire knowledge. They are often seen as the doctor, counselor, healer and leader. Shamans are well respected guides who help members of their community to navigate through life, from birth to death to beyond the grave. They are there to help in the physical world and the spiritual world; in dealing with the day to day problems of living as well as the sacred. To be considered a shaman is an honour. It is a recognition of your hard work, your devotion, your commitment and your compassion. When you truly live and work as a shaman, you live as Christ, as a servant for those who follow and trust you.

The cornerstone of the shaman's profession is the journey. The ability to journey or travel into the spiritual dimension to work directly with compassionate spirits is what sets the shaman apart from other kinds of healers and medicine people. If we go back to the *Jacob's Ladder* parable we will remember that Jacob had been sent on a journey by God, but not only was the message of the journey apparent in the physical, but also in the spiritual for his dream also spoke to him about journeying. The whole dream was a message about taking a spiritual journey and finding the Lord, or God, at the end of it. This clearly depicts (for me) that we are all called to journey into the spiritual realms of life, but that we are not all ready. The shaman stands in the gap for those who are either not yet called or not yet

ready and accesses the information for them. The shaman prepares for his journey as you would any other journey, for there are always things to put in place before you leave home. Many shamans believe that their soul or spirit actually leaves their body while they are journeying and that it voyages to different levels of the spirit realm. This is why you will sometimes hear about the necessity to keep the shaman warm whilst he is journeying due to the drop in body temperature. Many believe that the shaman's soul or spirit leaves the body but remains intact via a spiritual thread which enables him to return safely to his body. In order to journey, the shaman enters an altered state of consciousness or trance state which we have already discussed. The methods used to enter this state vary between cultures, but typically there is some form of repetitive sound causing a repetitive generating loop. Often this sound is from a helper who sits and drums or uses a rattle. Some cultures are said to *sing* the shaman into other realms. Whichever method is used, the commonality is a continuous beat or trance generating loop whilst the dreamer, the shaman, sleeps or travels. This continuous rhythm is often called a *sonic drive* and is said to help *push* the shaman into the level of consciousness required where she can perceive the spiritual realms and receive a message to bring about healing. The frequency of the sonic drive is similar across cultures, and ranges from four to seven beats per second. This range corresponds with the frequency of an electroencephalogram reading of brain waves recorded in the *theta* or *delta* state.

Medscape states: The electroencephalogram (EEG) is the depiction of the electrical activity occurring at the surface of the brain. This activity appears as wave forms of varying frequency. EEG waveforms are generally classified according to their frequency. The most familiar classification uses alpha, beta, theta, and delta. Most waves of 8Hz and higher frequencies are normal on a waking adult.

As spiritual beings made up of vibration and sound, it stands to reason that when we align our vibration with a certain trance state that we will naturally flow into that state. On a larger scale, if we know the frequencies of that which we desire and align our frequency to it, we will become it. Bringing this information together with Jacob's Ladder gives us a fresh understanding, that as we climb or ascend the ladder to spiritual enlightenment, spiritual knowledge, we change our rate of vibration in alignment with that which we are connecting with, the end product being when we reach the top of the ladder to where it was said the

Lord or God, or spiritual enlightenment is, we become that which we have connected with or that which we have synchronized our vibration with.

It is said in physics that kinetic energy is the energy of motion. An object or matter (body) that has motion, whether it is vertical or horizontal, has kinetic energy. There are many forms of kinetic energy – vibrational (the energy due to vibrational motion), rotational (the energy due to rotational motion), and translational (the energy due to motion from one location to another). Kinetic energy is defined as the work needed to accelerate a body of a given mass from rest to its stated velocity. Having gained this energy during its acceleration, the body maintains this kinetic energy unless its speed changes. The same amount of work is done by the body when decelerating from its current speed to a state of rest. Can this be applied to our spiritual life? To journeying?

If we think back to the famous Einstein equation of:

$$E=mc^2$$

We will remember that (m) **matter** multiplied by (c) **speed of light squared** = (E) **energy**. *Why would you need to multiply matter by the speed of light to produce energy? The reason is that energy, be it light waves or radiation, travels at the speed of light. That breaks down to 186,000 miles per second (300,000 kilometres per second). When we split an atom inside a nuclear power plant or an atomic bomb, the resulting energy releases at the speed of light. But why is the speed of light squared? The reason is that **kinetic energy**, or the energy of motion, is proportional to mass. When you accelerate an object, the kinetic energy increases to the tune of the speed squared.*

Could this be why or how shamans are said to be able to journey from one location on earth to another location? Can shamans travel at the speed of light? Could this be what enables the shaman to leave their body and traverse into the spiritual realm? Could this be what enables the shaman to spiritually travel to another persons body in order to bring healing? These are all valid questions.

The notion of a particular repetitive sound to affect the mind we can believe, it is consistent with scientific fact, but what leaves us questioning is whether or not the shaman's journey is a function of the internal workings of the mind or whether it is an external journey, where (s)he somehow leaves her physical body to traverse a non-ordinary reality, the spiritual realms.

Shamans are said to be able to travel long distances. They can be gone for hours, even a few days, and return with detailed descriptions of places they have not visited in ordinary reality. In many shamanic cultures the ability of the shaman to journey was not just a test of his abilities but was also a survival need for the community. The shaman would journey to find the location of the bison or deer so that on his or her return, she was able to instruct the hunters where to find food.

Once on the shamanic journey, the shaman will meet one or more helping spirits or allies. Some of these spirits she would have already have built a relationship with over the years. The spirits are compassionate and willing and ready to help the shaman bring healing into her own life and the life of others. The spirits can be in many forms; they may be animal, human or even plant, they could be ancestors from generations gone by. But a notable similarity between the traveling shaman and Christianity, and other religions for that matter, is that the shaman appears to *not* connect directly with God, the Divine Source, but with intermediaries. Christians pray to God through Christ. They don't tend to pray directly to a God Source, even though Christ is said to be the physical manifestation of God. My suggestion is that once a person either reaches the top of, or near the top of Jacob's Ladder, they will reach a place where they no longer converse with intermediaries, as their rate of vibration would have attuned itself to the Source, and therefore will have no more need for intermediaries. I believe the intermediaries are there to help people on their personal spiritual quest, but then there will come a point where personal and spiritual transformations have elevated the individual to a different sphere. I believe the top or near the top of Jacob's Ladder is the starting point, the gateway, the portal into the fourth dimension where God, the Source, abides. We speak more of this later on. However, intermediaries or not, the shaman is careful to show respect and pay tribute to the spirit allies; it is not uncommon for shamans and other medicine people to leave tobacco as way of saying, 'Thanks.' It is a well-known fact that when taking or cutting plants, a medicine person or shaman will often give thanks and leave tobacco or some other gift as a sign of respect to the spirits that are helping them. If the spirit is an animal, the shaman may imitate the animal's movements as a way of communicating to it and showing respect for it. By dancing the animal or imitating its moves, it is said that the shaman *calls down* or *calls in* its power and wisdom.

Stephen Larsen's *The Shaman's Doorway* (1998) speaks about the relationship of shamanism to both our psyche and society as a whole. As a psychotherapist with a vast knowledge of shamanic traditions, Larsen shows the relevance of the shamanic path to our modern world. He talks about how *Life dismembers us* and how ancient shamanic techniques can alter consciousness. He talks about how our *demythologized* and *industrialized* environment can and often does lead us to alienation and confusion.

As we have already seen, shamans interact with the spiritual world or non-physical world. They interact in order to bring about change, healing, transformation, not only in their own lives but in the lives of others, in the lives of the whole community. Community is important as we are all part of the sacred hoop of life. When one hurts, we all hurt; when one is blessed, we all are blessed. The river of life runs deep through each and every one of us, all entitled to the same respect, all endowed with the same spirit of love. Shamans are catalysts, drawing things to them, instigating change, bringing what is under the surface to the surface, linking the physical world to the spiritual world. Shamans create balance and health from imbalance or disease, but their work doesn't just stop with the people. They are caretakers of the animals, the plants, the whole of creation whether seen or not seen; they bring healing to the world, and to the earth. Their aim is to positively impact the physical world by bringing rain when it is necessary, leading hunters to the bison, healing bodies but not just the bodies of the two-leggeds. They work extensively to bring about harmony, balance and peace in a world that is often hostile with hurts and deep pain.

In today's culture we tend to view the physical realm and the spiritual realm as two completely separate places unaffected by one another. How wrong that is! It couldn't be any further from the truth. Many of us think, 'How can beating a drum, shaking a rattle, singing a song, chanting, praying, dancing, performing ceremonies bring change? Surely they can't really make a difference? Surely it is only in the minds of those that believe?'

We can look to science for the answer, but it does not have the answer; and how could it? How could science know how spirit, ritual and ceremony can affect the material aspect of life? How it can affect matter? But these questions and their answers are elementary to the shaman, to shamanic cultures worldwide. When we stand at the edge of a lake and look into the stillness of the water, we can see all that is around us; the sky, the trees, the birds, even people, and it is said that that is how it is in the spiritual world. The physical world is the

lake and it reflects back to us the spiritual world, if only we would take time to see, if only we would take time to listen and hear the message that nature has for us. But we must not listen with our ears for we will miss the message. We MUST listen with our heart, our soul. When we look at a coin we see one coin, one coin that has two sides. When we look at the world we must see one world, one world that has two sides; neither side is bigger or better than the other. They can't be, because they are both equal parts of the same coin, the same world. It is impossible to have one side bigger than the other, for then we would have created an imbalance. If the coin or the world is not balanced, it will not spin as it should upon its axis point. Balance is key to all things and key in all things. By delving into the spiritual realms and requesting help and assistance from spirit, the shaman acts to create harmony. Where there is harmony there is health, no matter which realm we are in; harmony is the key to true health and well-being.

As traditional holistic practitioners, shamans recognize the oneness of all life. They recognize how the body and mind are connected but not just at an individual point, but interconnected to other souls. They recognize that although we all live within our own small matrix with our families, that we are still part of a greater matrix, a matrix that includes the natural environment, the thoughts and intentions of others, as well as a host of other elements, all of which can and does affect individuals in different ways. So when you go to a shaman for healing, they look at the condition of your body, mind and spirit, they look at your personal matrix and whether it supports you. They look at all things, but they also listen. They listen to what you say and what you don't say, they listen to what your consciousness permits you to speak whilst hearing the voice of your unconscious.

So do the shamans actually do the healing? Some will say, 'Yes, with the help of the spirits.' Others will say, 'No, they are only vessels, they are instruments within themselves and that healing is always from spirit, from God.' I feel there is truth in both. The shaman is definitely a vessel and an instrument, and ultimately the healing does come from God, but he/she still is required to follow intuition and at times use physical techniques such as extraction. In the least, I would say the shaman is partaker of the healing. The shaman acts as a portal for the healing energy to flow through, and she accesses the portal in order to be able to fly to other realms.

Shamans are not orthodox doctors. They do not treat the heart, the liver, the lungs etc. They do not treat the disease as such. They treat the cause behind the illness. They track it back

to its roots, they work with the root cause to deal with the problem, recognizing that sickness in the body is still a reflection of a sickness or imbalance in the spirit. They recognize that there is a problem in part of the physical body, but that is not what they treat. Orthodox medicine isolates body parts to the extent that at times the patient no longer has a name but a condition. Shamans do not isolate any part of the patient. How could they when they know that each part is part of the whole? What affects one part will have a ripple effect on other parts.

In Hawaii, their traditional medicine believes that cures are said to be most effective when people are engaged physically, mentally and emotionally in their own healing process, and I couldn't agree more. I purposefully engage the patient in brief counseling in order to put them back in touch with their mind, their body and especially their emotions. I have found that as soon as we hit the emotions that is the best time to start the deeper healing practice. Whilst they remain in touch with their emotions, they find it easier to feel the pain that needs to heal, feel the pain that they avoided or have buried, feel the wounds that require healing, but *without* reliving the trauma. My client or patient's beliefs, attitudes and willingness to cooperate with me, the extent of their engagement on all levels of the healing process is indeed one of the most important aspects of their healing. It is definitely crucial to the success or degree of success of their treatment. Healing must be tailor-made to the individual because we are all different, and even if two patients had the same complaint, their treatments would still need to be different. Why? Simply because we are all different and all have different needs.

In an ideal world, with ideal habits and good mental health, we would all be preventing illness.

We would all be living our lives from a preventative perspective; but we don't live in an ideal world where we can always maintain perfect health, and with so much pressure on us in today's world, there is no wonder people fail to maintain a healthy, happy body and prevent illness.

If we look back at the last time we visited an orthodox doctor, I am sure we will all remember the experience of the orthodox way of care. We all realize and have learnt to accept that the cure often comes in tablet form, and then when we have side-effects to the medicine, we take more medicine to help with the side-effects, and then more to help with the next set of side-effects and on we go. Lifestyle, obesity, hormonal imbalance, age, stress, these are all

factors that are often used to explain away the difficulties we are having which often isn't really helpful at all. Changing these factors for some will make a huge difference, and for some it will make a minor difference and for the rest, there will be no change at all and they will often be left to their own devices.

When shamans look for the cause of illness they look to the spiritual, for it is recognized that physical manifestations of illness or injury are usually due to a spiritual imbalance. This doesn't prevent them from addressing the signs and symptoms but it does mean that they are going to look for the deeper meaning in the imbalance. They will look at the past and the present, they will look at what led to the illness or injury as well as what you may be doing consciously or unconsciously to hold onto or cause the illness. When we intend to bring healing to another we must be willing to work with their energetic body, knowing that spirit affects matter; in other words, tangible things are impacted by intangible forces and both coexist. We also have to look at the rest of the personal matrix in order to address imbalances and disharmony on all levels.

This in-depth shamanic healing method helps with the cure and with prevention of further illness. When we can prevent unwanted illness or injury from occurring, we can continue on in balance. When the shaman journeys to find the answer, it may not be what we want to hear, it may not be what we thought it was and it may be on a deeper level than what we currently understand. If we are willing to see the journey that the illness or injury took, we can often see at what point the reality of it kicked in. If we have a chill today, it may not be because it is cold but because three days ago we were caught in the rain and remained wet for four hours. Upset intestinal activity may not be the extra piece of chocolate cake you ate today but may be the burger you ate yesterday. We can't just assume that what is today is to do with today. We must be willing to travel back in time to source the problem. The burger you ate yesterday may be because you were stressed or feeling anxious, so the stress or anxiety would need to be dealt with to realign and rebalance the entire energetic system on all levels. Everything we do we are doing for a reason and sometimes it is just a question of being mindful and aware of what is going on at all times within our body, mind and spirit. So often we spend our days rushing here, rushing there, grabbing this to eat, grabbing that to eat. We fail to notice our needs, and when we do notice them, we are so often too busy with life, so we fail to make time for those needs; and then we wonder why we become ill, why our body parts break down. Many of us would never treat our cars how we treat our

body. We would never treat another like we treat ourselves. We go through life acting as if our body is this indestructible vehicle when the reality is that it is a finely tuned instrument which needs treating with respect and care.

When we are born, we are usually born in our natural harmonious state without disease, and interference of any kind can impact that same harmonious state, eventually bringing disease. It matters not what the problem is; what matters is that it is dealt with as soon as possible. Interference could be on a physical, mental or spiritual level. This could be spiritual intrusions – whether of the individual or the place they live, cultural pressure and expectations, loss of aspects of our soul, old hurts, our lifestyle, a poor diet, poverty, the list could go on. It is all relevant to our health and wholeness.

Building a solid foundation for health and engaging in regular practice in such things as meditation, yoga or tai-chi as well as building and maintaining a relationship with the Divine, God, the Source, even with our Mother Earth, will help in keeping us on the right track to freedom, freedom from ill health and injury. The Ojibway culture includes the observance of rituals such as taking a bath, making offerings to spirits, acting ethically, nurturing others as all part of their healthy lifestyle; these are all practices that we could all include into our daily lives. We just need to make that choice. The Ojibway and many other Native cultures ensure they are respectful to the animals they eat, often praying for the animal spirit and only taking as much as they require; this is a common thread that tends to run right through the shamanic world. Lack of respect in these areas could be seen as one reason for illness, and most illnesses are considered to have a physical, psychological and emotional aspect. If we want to heal the whole person we must start to look at all levels and resist the temptation to look at only one level of existence.

In all forms of medicine, when a patient comes with a problem a diagnosis must be made before therapy or medicine is prescribed; and for a shaman, this is no different. Usually, this phase of treatment involves talking with the patient about their physical symptoms, as well as their emotional and/or psychological state of being and making observations of any signs. This way of treating is often akin to today's holistic practitioners and can also include talking about family history and any significant circumstances of their lives.

So what is the difference between a shaman and an orthodox doctor? Apart from the obvious differences such as training, etc., the key difference lies in their approach to diagnosis and treatment, which also includes a more in-depth discussion about symptoms,

psychological and emotional health and of course, their spirituality. The shaman also discerns the energetic aspect of the condition or person, remembering that many physical manifestations arise from energetic or spiritual issues. This discernment is often, but not always, gained whilst in an altered state of consciousness; in other words, whilst journeying, and the ability to enter this altered state and travel into other dimensions to engage with spirits is crucial to the shaman's success in healing.

Journeying is the shaman's gift which entails a high level of responsibility and commitment to their own walk, commitment to their patient and to their community. The ability to be able to *divine* or see an illness is an important part of treatment, some shamans can also analyse the patients energetic body, some see the colors of the aura, and this is used to determine the nature of the illness.

It is important to remember that in shamanic healing the spirits are often said to be the ones who actually perform the cure. According to **Jeremy Narby: *The Cosmic Serpent*** (1998) in the Amazon region:

"It is the invisible, life-creating maninkari spirits who walk to Ashaninca shamans in their visions and tell them how to heal."

A shaman is said to be a conduit or vessel to the spirit realm, permitting the power of the healing spirit to flow through them in order to facilitate the healing. It is said to be very tiring to be a conduit and at times dangerous, especially when working with techniques such as extraction. If shamans are not careful and fail to take the necessary precautions, they are said to be at risk of being possessed by harmful spirits which have been removed from their patients; they are also able to take on their patient's illness. Although taking on another person's illness is a common thread that runs through much shamanism, I personally don't feel you have to take on another's illness or disease in order to bring healing – what sense is there in that? If we are working on a spiritual level, which we are, then there are ways and methods to remove illness without causing yourself harm. I knew one shaman who took pride in taking on other peoples illness; he saw this as a gift to his clients, even though he was perpetually ill himself. One has to raise questions here about the sense of deliberately taking on illness (assuming that is possible) and the place of pride! It seems senseless to heal one and harm another – even if it is yourself!

Spirit allies are said to be protectors of the shaman. This is why a good strong relationship with the spirit allies is critical. This is all part of the journey, and once you learn to manage

and work with what could be the scary world of spirit, you start to realize and see that this scary spiritual world is, in fact, reflected in the scary world we live in; surrounded often by negative energy which affects us all differently and on different levels. This experience and revelation then prepares us to go to the next level of learning, where we no longer require the help of the spirit allies but are ready to connect directly to the source.

During some types of healing work the shaman actually merges with her helping spirit, embodying the abilities of the spirit in physical form. If the spirit is that of a previous human, such as an ancestor, the shaman's voice may change in tone or sound as it embodies the voice of the other. There are times when the shaman will dress in a costume depicting the spirit she intends to embody. It is from this ritual that the merging often occurs. The shaman will dance, sing or imitate the spirit in order to merge, especially when the spirit to be merged with is an animal spirit. For many of us, these methods of healing would be very scary. For the shaman, this is a normal way of being, a normal way of life. It isn't extraordinary, it is simply ordinary.

However, there are different ways to merge with the spirit world. **Michael Harner:** *The Way of the Shaman* (1992) talks about how:

"The Beast Gods are summoned by dancing, rattling, and drumming, and the dancers work themselves into a frenzied condition in which they imitate the actions and cries of the animals. Those dancers assuming the personality of the bear, may even wear actual bear paws over their hands. But this dance of the Beast Gods is more than simple imitation, since the Zuni dancer, like a North American Plains Indian doing an Eagle or Buffalo dance, is striving to go beyond imitation to become one with the animal.....a Zuni dancer wearing a mask of one of the kachina gods is doing more than impersonating the kachina. Transported into an altered state of consciousness by the dancing, drumming, rattling and whirr of bull roarers he becomes for the time being the actual embodiment of the spirit which is believed to reside in the mask."

Extraction is a method that is commonly used by shamans. It is not a new technique by any means and is considered to be very effective. Why do we need extractions? Throughout our lives, we are exposed to negative thoughts and feelings. They may be our own, or they may be from others. It is a natural part of life to deal with such negativity. However, sometimes for various reasons we may not have dealt with the negativity that surrounds our life. This can in itself cause ill health on many levels.

When negative emotions and thoughts have not been dealt with and have been held in the body or spiritual body for a long time, they can become toxic, and can cause what is called a crystallization of energy. This is when the negativity crystallizes and forms itself into a solid form of some sort which embeds itself in the body. This doesn't have to be a *literal* solid form in our body, but it doesn't mean that it can't be; but it is often on a spiritual level. Some clients actually sense it as if it is a solid form, they sense it as if it has materialized physically; this may be felt or seen as a stake, or barbed wire, or even a knife, or it may be seen or felt more as a mass of darkness which often has a color to it.

Just like our immune system can usually eradicate toxins, so can our luminous energy field usually manage to destroy and eradicate the negative emotions that we have either hung onto or that have been aimed at us from others; like anger, jealousy or hatred. When under a constant barrage of negativity, the defence systems of our luminous energy field can become overwhelmed and toxic and unable to eradicate all the negative energy, leaving crystallizations. These negative crystallizations need to be removed, and they are usually removed via extraction. If it isn't removed, sooner or later it will create ill health and a body that is out of balance and struggling to function as it should.

Shamans track down negative energy that is stored in the luminous energy field, chakras or physical body, where it can be carefully removed once a cleansing has been performed. The cleansing is to assist in the loosening of the dense energy which is found either as a mass within itself, or a mass surrounding a crystallized object. It is this same dense energy that holds the crystallized object in place. As logical beings, we must resist the temptation to think of it as not *real* just because we cannot see it in the physical sense of the word, and we must resist the temptation to become apathetic, thinking of it as harmless. It *is* real, it is just that it is in the spiritual realm, and for that reason the shaman must take great care in extracting the dense energy or crystallizations and ensure that it is all removed safely. Great care must be taken so as to not *drop* the crystallization into other parts of the body or into another chakra which could then cause other physical, psychological or even emotional problems and illness.

Sometimes the client or patient can feel the process of the extraction physically. Sometimes the client will start to recall pictures, feelings, etc. of past events or past lives that may be related to the dense energy or crystallization. The shaman may know what the crystallization represents, or where it came from. He may know why it became crystallized

in the first place, but this isn't always necessary. It isn't always necessary for the shaman to analyse the energy, it is more important to remove it. During or even after an extraction, the client may feel nauseated or shaky. They may feel somewhat different and not be able to articulate the feelings, and sometimes they will have this inner knowledge of what it was all about which will assist them in putting the issue to rest; or it may come on their way home. They may even dream it or see it during a quiet moment of contemplation. Shamanic healing will be different for everyone because we are all different and will all respond differently, and have different needs. To work holistically, we need to treat all of our clients or patients the same, and we do that by treating them differently, treating them differently because as individual drops of the same ocean, they all have their individual needs. When we treat the individual in order to bring a full and comprehensive healing, we treat them all the same.

Negative or toxic energy is often attracted to us and sometimes this is because of an affinity, just as we are attracted to certain types of people. Therefore we need to be aware of and careful of what we draw to us. Energy has frequency and vibration, so when anger, for example, lives in us that same vibration and frequency can be drawn to us. If we have self-hate, the vibration of hatred can be drawn to us. For this reason, it is not always enough just to perform an extraction. Sometimes there needs to be healing brought into our life on other levels. If the crystallization was to do with anger, then the anger needs to be dealt with in order to prevent further and future crystallizations of anger. Many people who work in the healing field focus on one aspect; surgeons focus on the physical level, therapists may focus on only the psychological or emotional level, but to bring about a full healing we need to tackle the problem from all angles: psychologically, emotionally, physically, spiritually and historically.

But we don't need to just worry about crystallized energy and it being embedded within the body, we also need to deal with and heal any intrusive entity or intrusive energy as this type of energy embeds itself within the central nervous system.

Alison Skelton, on *Shamanic Extraction Healing* says:

“Intrusions are more able to take hold when there has been loss of power or if the Soul is fragmented and depleted through Soul Loss. In a previous article I invited you to imagine the Soul as if it were like a school of fish. We can see that if enough of the school is missing, the system is more vulnerable to further loss, and to opportunistic energies which may move in to

fill the void.....they can just as easily be self-created thought forms that have become toxic over years of negative self-talk and poor self-image, or from living in a spiritually toxic environment.”

Intrusive energies or entities, which can be referred to as *intrusions*, are not managed using the same techniques as what is used for crystallizations, as they are fluid and able to move around. Both crystallized energy and intrusive energy or entities can cause and exasperate psychological and physical problems which can often lead onto depression, anxiety, addictions, mood swings and chronic fatigue syndrome to say the least. In fact, many *inexplicable* illnesses of any sort could be caused from either crystallized energy or an intrusive energy or entity.

Intrusive entities attach themselves to a chakra which then gives them access to your central nervous system where they live like a parasite sucking you of your vital energy and life force. This intrusion may not intend to harm you in any way, but the sheer fact that it is living off you will, undoubtedly, bring harm in one way or another in time.

Intrusive entities could be someone you know, or it could be a lost, discarnate spirit. Either way, the intrusive entity needs to be extracted. Intrusive *energies* are removed via extraction with a crystal and then released with fire, back into the universe where the energy is assimilated into nature. Intrusive *entities* are also removed with a crystal, also released with fire, but are taken to the spirit realm, to the light, by luminous healers.

Crystals have the ability to convert energy, which means they are able to easily convert negative energy into something else, such as positive energy. Clear quartz is considered to be the best crystal to use for the extracting of intrusive entities or energy because of its stability. Many people use the Vogel crystal, as it is known for its purity and its power to execute the job and its ability to hold a soul. Due to the stability of the clear quartz, energy is naturally drawn to it which makes the extraction process easier. The ideal extraction crystal is thought to be a flawless double terminated quartz which would be approximately four inches long without any surface fractures. When the crystal has fractures, the energy can leak out and could affect the shaman, and if the crystal has inclusions, clouds, or intersecting planes, the intrusive entity is said to be able to experience great pain when inside the crystal. No matter how negative an intrusive entity may be, the role of the shaman is to heal not harm and every entity needs to go to the light and receive healing. Intrusive entities are usually lost souls seeking healing and direction but not always, and not all

discarnate spirits enter your luminous energy field. It is more likely to be those that you have an affinity with such as family, friends, patients or those with an emotional affinity. Once the intrusive energy or entity has been removed the client will need to go through an illumination process to bring healing and the intrusive entity or energy will need to be released.

Shamans perform much of their work with their hands. They track and manipulate energy within the client's energetic body. As with all treatments, the shamanic extraction is no different. It commences with the shaman examining the client and making a diagnosis. The shaman reads the client's vibrational body to feel for interruptions of the natural state.

Shamans work in collaboration with their spirit guides or allies whilst performing extractions, with some believing that these helping spirits sit in the mouth of the shaman, especially if the shaman is sucking the energy or entity out of the body. Keep in mind that spirit guides are energetic beings so do not have to be the size of a human being. The sucking technique is said to be dangerous and requires the shaman to be able to put full trust in the allies. Many believe that the shaman is so completely merged with their allies that the allies are able to ingest and transmute poisons without the shaman coming to any harm. We will sometimes see the sucking technique depicted in movies or even documentaries, where the shaman draws out poison whilst the allies neutralize it before the shaman spits it out; although effective, this technique can cause nausea and vomiting. *Sucking* isn't the only technique used by the shaman, but it is one that is considered powerful.

Dr Fred A. Wolf, a physicist, said of his shamanic-extraction-healing experience with a Peruvian Shaman:

"He took some of the perfumy liquid that he carried with him in his mouth and spat it on my head. He then put his lips on the top of my head as if to kiss me there, then sucked on my head, drawing the liquid up into his mouth. He turned to the side and spat it out on the ground. He repeated this specifically at a place on my forehead, and then around my sinus regions on my brows."

The dark liquid so often referred to in such shamanic extraction techniques is believed to be tobacco juice, animal blood or even the shamans own blood. This is not to trick the client or patient into believing that the substance itself was sucked out of them; it is to represent the illness being removed. This technique can have a powerful result on many levels. We so

often believe what we see, so to see something physical, to see something with our very own trusted eyes being removed, can have a huge effect on our perception of the healing and our recovery.

No matter what technique is used, no matter what tools are used, the shaman has to listen to the voice of the spirit, the voice of the allies, the inner-voice, the greater voice. It is a journey of subservience for the shaman and not all people are open to holding a servant's heart. There is no room in shamanic extraction healing or any other healing for the ego. The egocentric healer is more concerned about their opinion being heard, how good they look and what others think about them. The path of the shaman is as a servant, following the promptings of spirit to bring about change and transformation to the individual who has placed their trust in them.

When a shaman diagnoses part of the soul or spirit as being lost, you can nearly guarantee that it will be accompanied with some form of psychological disturbance such as depression or low or no self-esteem to say the least. This diagnosis is referring to a fragmented mind, a fragmented psyche. It is a well-known theory within shamanism that as a result of some pain or trauma, past or present, a part of the psyche can splinter off, otherwise known as *soul loss*.

Whereas extractions are to remove things from the body, soul retrieval is, as it says, to retrieve something, to bring something back; in this case the soul or and aspect of the soul that has left. When an aspect of the soul or psyche splits off, it is usually for self-protection and preservation, but the client suffering such loss is in danger of never reintegrating that lost aspect. It could, if not found in time, be lost forever. Soul loss can leave the individual feeling numb, incomplete, detached; the loss can manifest itself in many ways, including through depression, addiction, immune disorders, lack of energy, lack of self-esteem, lack of will or determination, leaving the client with feelings of hopelessness and at times suicidal ideation. When the client has reached such a low and is in a place of suicidal ideation, they are at risk of unconsciously drawing negative energy or entities to them. These same negative energies will whisper in their ear; they are spirits who will infiltrate their mind with ways of committing suicide. Only a strong person will be able to resist these pressures, these voices, especially as they are already wishing they could die and leave the pain of this world, or at least the pain of their personal world.

Here is one such true story:

Mia was a middle-aged woman. She made the best of life and situations as they arose, she had a heart to help others and took opportunities when they arose to be the difference in other's lives; she was a natural healer. One day, suddenly, an unexpected twist in life happened – LOSS. It came out of the blue. It was the loss of her two children. It was a tragic event, leaving Mia feeling and thinking like her world had ended. As the grief began to take over her life, she found herself feeling down, very down; some would say depressed. On the surface, all was fine. She used the distraction of daily activities to stop her feeling the pain, or at least some of it. She was aware of the feelings inside and how she felt life was over. In order to cope, she put her heart and soul into inspiring others, helping others to heal, to get through difficult situations. She helped people to overcome their grief, but her own was still there, like a whirlpool in the quiet moments of her day. Nothing seemed to help her, even though she had made such a difference to others. After about five months, the feelings of suicide had become very strong. She was finding it difficult to block out the voices, the voices of negative spirits instructing her how to end her life. Everyone around her, except for one, thought all was okay; but Mia was good at that, not sharing with the world her pain, because she felt people had enough of their own pain without carrying hers. That one close friend became increasingly worried but didn't know what to do or who to turn to, knowing that Mia would not appreciate her sharing her pain with others. What Mia didn't know at that time was that a piece of her psyche had split off. A piece of her soul had broken away, looking for somewhere to hide, somewhere to find safety. Mia felt numb. She felt dead inside, she felt depressed and suicidal. She even looked into assisted suicide because she knew she wasn't *brave* enough to end her life herself. Over the next several years, Mia worked on herself to bring healing back into her life, her heart, her soul. She did all she could do to make life worth living again. But despite all she did, there was still a numbness, a lack of vitality for life, a lack of enthusiasm. On the surface, all looked fine, but underneath, deep, deep down, there was still an underlying feeling of loss, of being *down*. She still couldn't help remembering the children's birthdays, which was always a painful reminder of her loss, bringing tears but no release from pain. She was a prisoner, a prisoner of grief, wrapped in the chains of torture which were holding down her heart and soul. One night whilst drifting into sleep, she caught a glimpse of a female spirit. She just saw it as it floated past her and disappeared. She couldn't see the spirit properly. She could only see what was, for her, a white dress flowing behind as the spirit went by. She thought no more about it. A

couple of weeks later whilst away from home, she saw the same spirit again, at the end of a corridor. This time she could see it more fully, once again in a white dress. She recognized her, but wasn't quite sure and asked her who she was; the spirit replied with, *'I am part of you, I broke away because of the pain.'* It was at that point that Mia realized why she had felt like she did for so long. She knew she needed to retrieve this part of her. Just as she was thinking to ask if she was ready to come back, she saw the spirit whiz towards her in a blur and it somehow went straight into the top of her head, through her crown chakra; she knew it was back. She felt nothing happen inside. There were no amazing feelings, nothing; but she knew, undoubtedly, that that part of her was back. The next day, she felt different, her words were, *'I feel as if I have been resurrected. I feel back to my normal self, I feel excitement, I feel happiness, I feel enthused, I feel whole.'* It was at that point that Mia realized that she had unwittingly gone through a soul retrieval.

That was the beginning of the rest of her life.

Mia was a very fortunate person. The lost aspect of her soul had healed over time and was ready and willing to be reintegrated into her. She didn't have to go looking for it. A shaman didn't have to go and find it, which is what happens most of the time. This piece of Mia had found *her* and taken the opportunity to leap or fly back into her being, bringing hope and wholeness. Not everyone is so fortunate. Had Mia not continued to work on her grief, work on her forgiveness, work on her whole being to bring healing on all levels, perhaps this outcome would not have been the same. We can all learn something from Mia. We can all learn about our own personal responsibility to look after our own being. It is all well and fine visiting the shaman or any doctor, but we must take responsibility for ourselves and not completely leave our own healing, whether of body, mind or soul, to another. We must put in the work and do as much as we can to help ourselves. Not only will this raise our consciousness, raise our rate of vibration, not only will this raise our self-esteem and confidence, but it will also help us to heal the greater consciousness, and help us to heal others. One thing I have learnt on my path is that we cannot direct a traveller on a road we haven't travelled. We can point them in the general direction, but we can never bring healing like we can if we can share our own journey, our own healing process.

If a shaman diagnoses soul loss, his role in that healing is to seek, find, heal and return that lost aspect safely to the client. This is a complex process. The shaman may need to travel in time and space to find the lost soul. She may need the guidance or assistance of her allies,

but once the piece of soul is found, there needs to be some healing. The soul piece may require lengthy conversation with the shaman about the situation, about what happened, about its feelings, fears, grief, etc. The lost piece needs treating just as the shaman would treat the physical aspect of his client. Healing is paramount. The lost piece needs to be healed, needs to desire to come back. It can't be made to come back, otherwise it could just break off again. When both the shaman and the lost piece feel it is time, the shaman gently guides it back to its home, back to its place of origin, back to the soul that awaits it. On arrival back at the physical body, there can be reluctance to return, as the lost soul remembers again the pain, the heartache. If there is reluctance, the shaman must work on the lost soul piece and the client to bring healing. The client may need to ask for forgiveness from the lost piece for what could seem to the lost piece as a *failure to keep me safe*. The relationship must be rebuilt. This is paramount in order for the lost piece to feel secure, to feel safe, to feel confident about returning, knowing that the soul's home will keep it safe from future trauma as best it can. This can be envisaged as a relationship between a parent and a child; the child ran away because it didn't feel safe and was scared, and now the parent needs to reassure it that all will be okay.

Soul retrieval is not a *mind-thought* application. It *isn't* a placebo effect or a *make believe* occurrence. It is real, it is powerful, it is the coming together of soul, spirit and a lost part. It is ultimately the road back home, the road back to healing and wholeness.

Most shamanic traditions believe that the soul piece needs to be blown through the crown chakra and the heart. Mia's experience was that it went straight in through the crown chakra of its own accord. She never felt anything to do with the heart until the next day. She wasn't aware of anything entering her heart chakra but she was aware of its return, as in the heart she was now endowed with feelings of joy and love.

Not everyone needs soul retrieval and not everyone will be willing to undertake a soul retrieval, but one important clue that shows the shaman that soul retrieval is necessary is when the client speaks of the trauma and states, '*I have never felt the same since,*' or when they experience *a piece of them as missing or a deep numbness*. This was exactly how Mia had felt. She felt at the time of loss, the time of grief, that she had lost something critical to her existence, her words were, '*I have never felt the same since,*' and had never felt the same until that lost piece was retrieved.

Technically, someone who has died has complete soul loss, as their entire soul has left their body and crossed over into the spirit realm. It has been said that in the past, shamans have chased after the soul, venturing into the land of the dead in order to find the soul and return it! This raises many questions about ethics, about whether that is right, about whether we all have a time to go and whether it is a case of when it arrives it arrives. One such story was in relation to a young boy who had died and the shaman travelled to the other side, the spiritual realm and apparently found him playing with other boy spirits and had a hard time persuading him to go back with him!

Like all doctors, shamans are expected to heal and help or even save lives, and I guess each case would merit its own investigation and conclusion on whether it would be ethical to bring back a soul from the dead or whether it is okay to bring back anyone from the dead. Personal choice, quality of life, these are the types of things that would perhaps require looking at; but I guess we would have to trust the shaman and trust as to whether or not his/her allies have said for him to bring them back. As with all things, this seems to be a very grey area. One thing we need to remember also is that in many soul retrievals the journey itself is metaphorical as opposed to literal. Mia's case was different. Her lost soul aspect revealed itself not metaphorically but literally as a spirit.

Soul retrieval can have a major effect upon the physical, psychological and emotional aspects of the individual. This profound effect is what brings shamanic healing and psychology together. Although the two are definitely two extremes and come from two very different places, there are some commonalities such as the belief that those who have suffered a severe crisis require a holistic package of care, and the recognition that the anguish felt is far deeper than just in the physical body. Psychology today has a much deeper understanding of the psyche and how it reacts or responds to pain and trauma. Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist who founded *Analytical Psychology*, also known as Jungian Psychology or Jungian Analysis, speaks about the unconscious, with him defining the individual or personal unconsciousness as complex mental activity which happens without the person being aware of it. Jung also coined the term collective unconscious, a term introduced to represent a non-personal form of the unconscious where parts of the mind, although containing memories and impulses of which the individual is not aware of, belongs to all of mankind as a whole. Jung believed that the collective unconscious is very much distinct from the personal unconscious which arises from the

experiences of the individual, whereas the collective unconscious also contains archetypes, or universal primordial images and ideas.

With this in mind, we can see the relevance of ministering healing on all levels. Soul retrieval and other shamanic healing works to bring the personal unconscious activity into consciousness; by doing this, the shaman can work with the individual to bring healing. When the personal unconscious receives healing through conscious connectivity, it helps to heal the whole, not just the whole being, but the whole of the universe. It helps to bring healing to the collective unconscious. When we start to look at our being as a whole being we can then start to address the issues that would otherwise not be noticed.

Both shamanism and psychology agree that a person's psyche responds to severe pain, and here we are not necessarily talking about physical pain. We are talking about trauma which includes emotional and psychological trauma. It is agreed that it responds to pain by avoidance, by separation. In shamanism we call it soul loss, in psychology it is called disassociation.

Transpersonal psychology or therapy is another branch of psychology which blends very well with and has many similar if not the same techniques as shamanism, albeit under a different name. Transpersonal therapy explores states of consciousness, transcendence of the individual, transpersonal experiences in regards to the spirit realm, calling on the deeper levels of the patient's mind and soul and pulling them together to bring about change and transformation. Having trained in psychiatry many years ago and as a trained integrative counselor, as well as having two decades in the healing field, predominantly the shamanic field, I can understand the need to blend the distinct paths in order to offer a full comprehensive package to healing and balance. All parts of our being must work in synchronicity in order for us to be the best we can be at any given time. Once we drop the illusion of being one dimensional beings and realize just how deep we run and the magnitude to our existence, then and only then can we even hope for, least of all perform, a holistic healing that is not only mind-spirit-body altering, but offers a healing so deep it changes the being for ever.

Plant medicine has been around for thousands of years. Even if you had never heard of shamanism or shamans, you would have heard of plant medicine or herbal medicine. Traditionally, shamans were expected to know their herbs, especially local ones, in order to help the community. Often, this knowledge was passed down from the wise ones, the

elders, the previous shaman, and often this knowledge was learnt by the observance of nature, by watching which plants the animals used and when, and at other times the shaman would practise on himself. Plant medicine is also used for its spiritual component, not just its physical ability to heal. It is the indigenous healers' knowledge of plant medicine that has contributed extensively to the development of modern medicine; that is, orthodox medicine. Plant medicine is one such healing method that orthodox doctors are more readily accepting, probably because it can be tested scientifically, but even now much of the plant world is left in the dark because of lack of scientific evidence.

For years herbal remedies or folk medicine have been used. Slippery elm is well known for helping balance digestive upsets. Valerian is well known for inducing sleep, peppermint for food induced migraines, chamomile to soothe skin irritations, myrrh to heal wounds, frankincense to open spiritual awareness. This is just a handful of uses which doesn't even scrape the surface of what is available and their healing properties. Plant medicine has been used since the beginning of time. Even the Bible mentions them, and all around the world you will find people with knowledge of plants and knowledge on how to use plants medicinally.

For many, the plant is just a plant, and just as one reaches out for an aspirin without any due thought, so too do some people reach out to plants without any due thought. The plant is treated as a resource to bring relief or healing to a sick or out of balance body. To the shaman, the approach is very different. To start with, the shaman would approach a plant and first ask permission to take it or some of it. If the answer was *no*, it was *not* taken, as simple as that. Great care would be taken in the cutting of the plant and ensuring enough was left for the future. This was of great importance. Thanks was given to the plant or bush and often a small offering of tobacco was left. The plant was treated with respect. It was treated as a sister or brother would be treated. It was treated as part of the shaman's life, not just a plant. For the shaman, the plant has a spiritual aspect. It has a spirit and you can talk to that spirit and receive information on its healing properties. Shamans are required to know the exact part of the plant to use. They are required to know when they can use it, how to prepare it, what it is used for and to be aware of any side-effects. They were known to be as knowledgeable in their world of plants as any pharmacist is of their world of chemicals. Yet in today's world, so much respect is given to the pharmacist, and none or very little to the shaman when it comes to the medicinal world. Much of today's natural

healing methods are still considered *quackery*, which leaves many wonderful methods of healing in the dark struggling for the light. It was the indigenous people that taught Western medicine about aspirin. It would be wise for Western medicine to remember its roots and to put more finances into the testing of such medicine.

Some shamans hold some specific plants in especially high regard due to their sacredness. These plants were known to induce a heightened state of awareness and knowledge when ingested. These plants were said to communicate with the shaman, imparting wisdom and knowledge for healing once they had been ingested. These sacred plants are best known as hallucinogenic plants. The hallucinogenic plants which were used ceremonially were said to change the mood but also change the shaman's perception. Colors would be enhanced, spirits may appear, especially the spirit of the plant which would have been invoked through ceremony. At times, the sacred plant could even appear to be god-like; and whilst under the influence of the hallucinogenic plant the shaman would ascend into the spiritual realms, but the conduit may be the plant. This way of experiencing specific hallucinogenic plants was not for recreational purposes. It wasn't a *chill out* time. For the shaman it was a journey or experience taken in order to learn and bring transformation to the community. In today's world, you often read about so-called *shamans* or *healers* offering retreats and leading groups of people to ingest such plants, often bringing much harm and at times fatalities. This is the usual misuse or misdemeanours of something that was meant to be held as sacred and certainly NOT to be confused with true shamanism.

The shaman's responsibility for his patient does not stop at death. If someone is known to be close to death the shaman would work with the soul and ensure its readiness for the next journey in life – death. But death is not the end as many believe. Death is merely a doorway to freedom for your soul, whether this is for eternity or whether this is until it is ready for a reincarnation; either way death is the release of what is often a tired or malfunctioning body and a release for the soul. The shaman is active in ensuring there is a peaceful transition into the spirit realm. The shaman or psychopomp acts as a guide for the souls of the deceased, guiding them through the spirit realm to a place of rest. It has often been said that sometimes the individual at death can become confused or lost and unsure of where to go. This is said to be the case in sudden, unexpected deaths where perhaps the person was not ill and not expecting to die, such as in a fatal car accident for instance. The shaman does not think twice about coming in and out of the spirit realm. It has been said that he

lives with one foot in each camp, one foot in the physical realm and the other in the spiritual realm. That is not how I experience it. To live with one foot in each camp depicts someone split between two realms. For me, the shaman lives in the spirit realm, offering his physical appearance here on earth; and even though he is present in the physical body, his mind, his heart, his emotions, his intent, his entire soul is still in the spirit realm.

Ceremonial healing is a naturally interwoven piece of shamanic healing. Most everything about and in shamanic healing is ceremonial or ritualistic, it is part of what sets it aside from many other practices. Although some ceremonies are fairly consistent throughout certain shamanic cultures, you will still find that each shaman has her own unique signature on the ceremonies that she performs. Just as in all things, we may all follow the same path, but we will follow it differently because we are all different. Even if the shaman was to copy exactly a set ceremonial routine, it would still be a different experience and bring a different experience to all who partake in the ceremony, simply because each shaman engages with their own allies, their own spirits, and each shaman has her own personality and preferred way of working, their gifted ways. Individual shamans have their own rites, their own songs, their own dances but there is still consistency within that culture. There are many ceremonies, rituals and dances throughout shamanic cultures. Many will have similar goals whilst many will be very different in their approach, desire, and outcome.

One particular ceremony or dance is the *Hopi Snake Dance*, which is said to be the most widely publicized ritualistic dance. The performers dance with snakes in their mouths, (rattlesnakes – and no anti-venom is taken prior to this ritualistic dance). This dance requires two weeks of preparation and was thought to have originated as a water ceremony, as snakes were the guardians of springs. Now it is used as a rain ceremony and to honour the Hopi ancestors. The snakes are considered the tribe's brothers, relying on them to carry prayers requesting rain to the gods and spirits of their ancestors. There are many ceremonies, rituals and dances performed throughout shamanic traditions. Here are just a few: The Sun Dance, The Stomp Dance, The War Dance, Death Ceremonies, The Green Corn Festival (which includes the First Fruits Rite), Healing Rituals, Peyote Worship, Pow-Wows and Vision Quests to say the least.

In today's medicine there is neither time, space nor understanding of the power of ceremonies, the power of ritualistic dancing. The closest one is likely to get to a ceremony is a support group, a group of like-minded or like-sickness people drawn together perhaps

weekly or monthly in order to offer support to one another. This may be coordinated by a counselor or other professional. It may even be patient led; but this is nothing in comparison to calling on God, the Spirit, the Life Force. This is nothing in comparison to the power created in a tribe of spiritually organized faith and beliefs. Despite the fact that much tradition has been lost over the years, tradition still has much going for it whether we realize it or not; today, shamans still practice traditional ceremonies, recognizing their importance in healing. Ceremonies and rituals are something that can be taught to all in order for the individual to partake in them at home; by bringing ceremonies into the lives of our clients, our patients, we encourage spirituality and oneness with life – a gift that is worth giving.

If the world was said to have been spoken or sung into existence, then we must conclude that sound has a creative force. We must conclude that creating through thoughts and visualization is not enough, otherwise the world could have simply been *thought* into existence. Now, obviously not everyone believes the world was spoken or sung into existence and that is fine, but what we can take from this is that all those years ago, when the Bible was first being transcribed, someone felt it was important to share the idea that *sound* is a powerful tool. In other societies we can see the power of sound through the use of mantras, words that have been built on power and vibration, words that may not make sense in the English language but have been built from the meaning of letters and sounds that have been put together. We know only too well that words can and do hurt and can and do heal; the result being partly about the intention behind the words and partly to do with how it *sounds*. Words, musical notes, vibrations, they are all part of the healing power of sound.

Singing bowls have been used for centuries. They are used to create a sound that can resonate with different aspects of your body, of your chakras. Sound healing is a therapy in itself where the client can lay down and have specific singing bowls placed at different places around them. The singing bowls have different *notes*, just like any instrument, and depending on what your body requires for healing you will be drawn to a specific note or notes. If you have ever been into a healing shop and experienced the very large crystal singing bowls, you will know that you can run your finger around the rim and that is enough to have the bowl sing, and the resonation and vibration is absolutely amazing. You can feel the vibrations penetrating your entire being, truly magnificent. On a small scale, but still

worthy of mention and still effective in healing, are the singing bowls that the Buddhists use. Small but effective.

Going back to the Bible, God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. Light was created from sound, from vibrations. Light was created through voice, through speaking out the desired *thing*; this clearly reflects the importance that sound has for healing. Thought may be an important factor, but sound and vibration seal the deal! First we need to dream up our creation, or think our creation, then we need to send out the vibrations of sound, permitting the vibrations of thought or inner seeing to merge with sound. Sound carries the thought and through vibration it manifests itself into being. We live in an amazing world, not separate from it but part of it. We must start to realize our own potential in life.

The difference between some shamans from the past and the present day shaman is often witnessed in the lack of sound during their ceremonial healing practice. Whilst many shamans today will still use rattles, drums, herbs, feathers, wands etc., many do not engage in the singing of healing, the chanting of the healing. Traditions show shamans chanting or singing whilst healing. Today, many have lost that art and fail to grasp the true healing power of sound. If you sing or chant whilst your intentions are strongly fixed upon the healing, you are channeling your thoughts through the voice and into the song or chant which vibrates throughout the universe; the ripple may be small, but is heard or felt by all, consciously or unconsciously.

Science Kids states:

- Sound comes from vibration. These vibrations create sound waves which move through mediums such as air and water before reaching our ears.
- Our ears vibrate in a similar way to the original source of the vibration, allowing us to hear many different sounds.
- Dogs can hear sound at a higher frequency than humans, allowing them to hear noises that we can't.
- Sound is used by many animals to detect danger, warning them of possible attacks before they happen.
- Sound can't travel through a vacuum (an area empty of matter).
- The speed of sound is around 767 miles per hour (1,230 kilometres per hour).
- The loud noise you create by cracking a whip occurs because the tip is moving so fast it breaks the speed of sound!

- When traveling through water, sound moves around four times faster than when it travels through air.
- The scientific study of sound waves is known as acoustics.
- Although music can be hard to define, it is often described as a pleasing or meaningful arrangement of sounds.
- The sound of thunder is produced by rapidly heated air surrounding lightning which expands faster than the speed of sound.

So in other words, we need vibration and sound and if we can send that vibration via water, it will travel four times faster than if it travels through air. So instead of vibrations traveling at 767 miles per hour, they will be traveling at 3,068 miles per hour. With that in mind, it is hard to say that what comes out of our mouths does *not* affect the world! If we can accept that although vibrations are not seen by the naked eye unless captured on a monitor or a device they are in fact real, and without them, without vibrations, there would not be any sound. Imagine, a world where we didn't hear the wind, where we didn't hear the tiny drops of rain, the rustle of the leaves, the howl of the wolf, the flap of wings, the meow of the cat, the laughter of the baby; vibration is responsible for much of our pleasure in life. So if we can take those vibrations consciously into our healing, we have an amazing power, an amazing gift at our disposal.

The Bible teaches us to speak out that which we wish to create. We can do this via traditional prayer, mantras, singing, speaking; there are so many ways to utilize this gift. We can encourage through talk (vibrations) our clients or patients to speak out that which they desire from their healing.

As bodies that are made up of so much water, does it not stand to reason that as we pray, as we chant or sing, that those same vibrations will transmit themselves through our entire being, traveling faster due to our water content? The amount of water in the human body ranges from 50-75%. The average adult human body is 50-65% water. Infants are around 75-78% water, which drops by the age of one to around 65%. Although these measurements vary according to gender, age, fitness and body composition, in regards to adipose tissue or lean muscle, they still serve to reflect just how much water we are, and just how much amplification we have when vibrating and creating sound. As vibrating beings, does it not stand to reason that perhaps the more we can assist our body to vibrate, or the more we

are able to increase our rate of vibration, that we will also be able to intentionally create much faster that which we are trying to heal?

Looking at a growing foetus who is surrounded by water, we can assume that it does sense and later hear the vibration of what the mother is saying, not just what she is feeling; it is thought that a foetus becomes aware of vibration at sixteen weeks' gestation. With that in mind, it reminds us that during pregnancy we have an optimal time to send vibrations of love and acceptance, of reassurance and compassion to another part of the universe, a growing microcosmic amoebae within.

Many ancient shamanic healing practices are based on using sound to induce certain states of consciousness, or certain trance states in order to precipitate healing. The shaman calls or entices the client's consciousness into a different state, a state where it can receive, a state where critical thinking is temporarily switched off. The shaman is aware of his power, he knows what he can do from a spiritual perspective, he knows the force behind him and within him, so he can go forth creating with healthy, positive intent. If we look back at the Bible, we can see that Christ commanded the winds to stop, He commanded the seas to calm; now this could be about Christ being God, or it could be about Christ living in recognition of who and what He is or was – a powerful, vibrating being, who could control the weather through intention, vibration, and sound!

From a shamanic perspective, we could still say that Christ spoke to the spirits in connection to the elements and commanded those same spirits to stop and be calm. No matter how we look at it, the message is still the same: we have the power to change the unthinkable, through vibration and sound. Incredible!

We are so much more than what we think we are. We are actually the universe, learning and experiencing itself. So often we look out, we look out towards what we perceive as the universe, when in reality we must all learn to look in, look within, because that is where we will find the answers. The answers to life are held within each one of us. We must learn to open the box, the lid to knowing, and without fear dare to dive into the unknown, which isn't really the unknown but the forgotten knowledge of life and creation. We spend so much time facing the wrong direction, living in an illusion of the world being outside of us, when the reality is we are the world, we are the universe, the cosmos, and as we come together in unity, our vibrations will resonate and create an orchestra of sound; and that

same unity, that same sound, will create something beautiful which will be reflected in or manifest in the physical world and our individual worlds.

Shamanic chants are used to invoke healing, but they are not used parrot fashion. They are not used like a magic stick. They are used with wisdom and knowledge, wisdom and power. They are used with faith in the power of language. As speaking or singing is formed by the stringing together of words to create sentences, and words create sound, and sound is created via vibration, then we can rest assured that no matter what cultural language the shaman chants in, the desired affect will be the same. You don't have to understand what the shaman is doing in order to receive a healing. Your mind may not understand but your soul, your spirit, your inner being will be able to respond to the vibration of which the shaman chants. The understanding will be on a deeper level. Through singing, storytelling, chanting, through speaking and praying, shamans from around the world bring harmony and health. They bring balance and well-being into the lives of others. The vibrations and sounds of the rhythmical drum, the rhythm of the rattle and the voice of the shaman are all used as hypnotic tools that can either push the shaman to other worlds or push the client into other realms of consciousness.

Our language creates the world, whether we speak it, sing it or chant it. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to create the world responsibly. When the shaman works with spirit, they do so responsibly and with integrity. Together, the shaman and spirit create the perfect symbiosis. The shaman's symbiotic relationship to the universe or with the universe and all in it is linked to the power of sound, and through that sound comes the power to nurture, restore, heal and sustain. Why does the shaman or anyone else go to such extremes? Because of the inner love of not only humanity but of all of creation.

Love and compassion are fundamental elements of spiritual healing, whether you be a shaman, a healer, a Buddhist monk or even a priest; without love and compassion we have nothing. But this love and compassion does not stop here. It expands into other realms, into the spiritual realm where spirits abide. We rely on love and compassion from the spirit world in order to care about our needs, and desire to help us heal. Just like us, spirit is not obligated to love us and have compassion for us, it comes down to choice for us all, and that choice is dependent on how we have evolved and where we are on our spiritual journey. But what is compassion if it isn't sympathy? The difference between sympathy, empathy and compassion is quite simple. When the shaman has sympathy for us, he or she

feels for us; they can see that we are suffering, they feel somewhat sorry for us. When the shaman has empathy, he can actually feel our pain, he can feel our suffering not just see it. But neither of these require action on the shaman's part. But compassion, compassion is much more active. Compassion is seeing the pain (sympathy), feeling the pain (empathy) and *choosing* to do something about the pain in order to lessen the affliction. It is fairly easy to show love and compassion to those whom you already love, but the test of a great shaman is to show love and compassion to those who they don't naturally feel close too. The shaman may not particularly *like* the person who has come to him for treatment, but he must learn to put aside his feeling, he must learn to overcome that worldliness in order to be able to offer love and compassion.

Every shaman has gone through their own suffering. Just because they are called to be a shaman does not protect them from hurt, pain, grief, trauma, anxiety, depression, loss etc.; these are simply part of the learning of being human, these are the knowledge paths that shape us, buffet us, make us strong and shine the light of love. The pain we all suffer in life can do one of two things; it can destroy us or build us. The choice comes down to us. We must all choose to rise above the pain and be the best we can. The shaman stands in the gap for us all to help us overcome this pain. They themselves are said to have walked through their own gates of hell, dealt with their own demons, many of which may have been self-created, and once they have defeated all, they come out the other side, transformed by the fires of life, the creative force of chaos. Just like stars are born from chaos, so too are we born (if we allow it) into a greater version of ourselves, if we can love ourselves and treat ourselves with compassion. We must all face our own fears, deal with our own torment if we wish to grow and heal.

When the shaman truly touches your soul, communes with your spirit in a spirit of love and compassion, it is not unusual for the shaman to cry, for they are feeling your pain, sharing your grief, cradling your heart in their hands. Compassion is a beautiful gift if only we would choose to hold it and embrace it.

Here is a beautiful true story of love and compassion:

It was a few weeks before White Eagle was due to go aboard ship. She was engaged in normal daily activities when she experienced the vision. It was of herself standing at the back of a ship with an older gentleman. He was going on the ship to scatter the ashes of his late wife.

Several days into the cruise, having forgotten about the vision, she met an elderly gentleman wanting a massage. As his massage commenced, there was music playing softly in the background as the ship rolled gently back and forth. White Eagle poured a little oil into the palms of her hands and gently rubbed them together to warm the oil and release the aroma of the oils; she lay her hands gently upon his back and was suddenly struck with grief. She knew it wasn't her grief. She knew it was his. With tears rolling down her cheeks for feeling his grief, she said to him, 'What is all this grief?' But before he had a chance to answer, she remembered the vision and said to him. 'I know why you are here. Your wife has died and you are here to scatter her ashes.' Needless to say, he swung his head around in disbelief, complete shock, and said, 'How do you know that?' White Eagle replied, 'I had a vision of you before I came to the ship. I didn't know what you looked like, but I knew why you were going to be here.' By this time, the man was sobbing. He used to come on cruises with his wife, but now she had died he wasn't going to come anymore. He wanted to come one last time in memory of her and scatter her ashes at sea. The turmoil leading up to him coming had made him leave the ashes at home, but what White Eagle felt to offer him was a simple ceremony at sunset that day; they would meet at the back of the ship and would offer a prayer and say farewell to her in order to assist him in letting her go. As he did not have the ashes, water was used to symbolize the ashes, the letting go, the returning too, where her spirit came from. The water represented the fluidity of life and love.

They met just before sunset. It was a beautiful evening, the sky was still blue, the orange from the sun was painting a beautiful picture on the horizon and they spent a few quiet minutes before they commenced. White Eagle said a few words and he said his goodbyes and with a few more words and a blessing, they poured the water overboard to release not only her but also his grief.

Later on that night, White Eagle spent several hours grieving, crying, sobbing, and although they were her tears, it was not her pain. It was the pain she had taken from him in order to bring some relief to him. She shared his grief so that he did not have to suffer alone. She took it upon herself to lighten his load. After she had released all the grief she was carrying she fell into a deep sleep where she could go through her own healing in the arms of Spirit. When she woke up, the grief was gone.

She saw him briefly the next morning as it was time to disembark. She had gone to look for him to ensure he was okay; they shared a few last words and she reminded him that he still

had reasons to keep going, reasons to live. That was the last White Eagle ever saw or heard from him again.

Love and compassion requires action!

We can look once again to the Bible to see the non-judgemental attitude of Christ's love and compassion to healing all people no matter what they had done. We can see that same loving intent, that same selfless attitude within Buddhism. It doesn't matter from where we come, where we are going, what we believe; what matters is our intentions in life, which should be not only for the shaman but for all, and that is the intention to bring peace, calm and love, not harm. If we evolve our inner being to a place where we can offer love and not harm, the world will naturally be a different place.

The shaman reaches out to all. He does not choose who he will work with or heal depending on what they have done in life. He is not called as a judge but as a healer, knowing that even the most brutal murderer will be carrying the pain of what he has done, even if he is not aware of it. The shaman reaches out to all, knowing that no matter how bad the person may seem, they are still part of the circle of life, still part of the sacred hoop, and still a part of himself. We all make up humanity, and we are all responsible for what we do with our piece of it. It is this same connection that permits distant or absent healing to work, this same connectedness that permits remote healing to be affective. Love transcends all, if only we permit it too.

Without love and compassion, whether from a shaman or any other type of healer, healing is nothing more than a technique. It is bound to have some effect but not the all-encompassing effect it would have otherwise had on all levels if offered with the giver's heart, good attitude, good intent and compassion.

The shaman's love is not just for humanity but for the entire universe and it is this that drives him onwards and upwards, it is this same love that encourages him to always bring healing into his own life.

When we remember that we are all part of one, all part of the sacred hoop, all part of a greater consciousness, then we remember the inherent capacity that lies within, whether we acknowledge it or not, to affect another. Just as a stone thrown in water sends out ripples affecting water that is further away from the point of the stone's entry, so too does that which we throw or place into the greater consciousness send out ripples affecting aspects of the greater consciousness that is further away from ourselves. We can see this as

a fact. If you blow into the air, the air that is currently present, prior to your blowing, will be changed; it has to be, because the circumstances have changed. Your breath has influenced and moved what was already there. The air had no choice but to flow in the direction it was pushed. If the air was blowing towards your breath when you blew out, then your breath would have gone in a different direction because of the force of the air coming towards you; these are basic facts. This is simply how nature works, just like yin and yang, moving backwards and forwards, filling voids and creating change.

In the same way, we can expect prayer or distant or remote healing to do the same. We aren't talking about controlling another. We aren't talking about magic tricks. We are talking about basic energetic movement. Our prayers, our thoughts, our intent, our healing is the stone in the greater consciousness, being directed to one specific point. So I don't have to be at the point I wish the stone to fall, I don't have to get in a boat to paddle ten feet out to drop the stone. If I can throw it, I can throw it from the shore. Likewise, we don't have to be with the client in order to send healing (just throw the stone).

For many, the shaman passively offers herself as a channel whilst spirit works through her, and I do believe this is sometimes the case. But I also believe that many times the spirit is working with the shaman, not just through them. In Reiki, yes, it is widely accepted that the Reiki practitioner or master is a channel – end of. Shamanic healing isn't Reiki and doesn't work in the same manner. Shamans rely on spirit to inform their work, but much of the work is done via the shaman, whether using drumming, journeying, extraction, soul retrieval, crystals etc. The work is still being applied via the shaman who is working with the spirit.

Prayer is considered a passive healing method, and although some groups pray fervently and with much authority, it is still considered passive with the supplicant asking for healing for the client and then leaving the outcome to God. Other healing practices can also be considered passive, but with much of shamanic healing it is much more active in its delivery, with the shaman taking a much more hands on approach.

Larry Dossey at dosseydossey.com speaks of one mind proposing that:

"...consciousness is not confined to one's individual body. An individual's mind may affect not just his or her body, but the body of another person at a distance, even when that distant individual is unaware of the effort, illustrating the trans personal effects of mind which implies that there are no boundaries to consciousness, that it is infinite in space and time. If our minds are unbounded, then they must unite or come together at some level. This means that in some

sense we are literally one. The implications of this unity are profound. If our minds are connected, then we can, and do, share any and all experiences. All the joys and sorrows of life can be mutual affairs. This means we are never alone, which relieves the twin burdens of loneliness and isolation, two major factors in illness.

Dr Ernest Holmes in his amazing book: *The Science of Mind* speaks extensively about *Divine Limitless Potential* and also talks about this same greater consciousness, this same *one mind* that we all engage in whether we recognize it or not. When we fail to understand our depth, our divinity, our greatness, we run the risk of creating much unnecessary harm to others. When we become enlightened beings, knowing what we are made of and knowing the creative power that lies within, albeit dormant in many of us, then we become the amazing, limitless, creative potential we were or are designed to be. How exciting!

In 2014, I had been contacted by a young lady whom we shall call Ruth. Ruth was in her late twenties. She visited Sri-Lanka six years previously, where she was a volunteer for eight months with a center that helps street kids. Whilst over there she picked up the herpes virus. The virus came up in her eye and glands, leaving her with scarring to the cornea, ulcers in the eye and nerve damage, all of which had caused the loss of most of her sight in that eye. After unsuccessful treatment, she was offered a cornea transplant or six-to-twelve months of antivirals which she was told could cause kidney damage.

Needless to say, Ruth did not consider this a viable option. There were too many risks involved, so I offered her some remote healing. After only four sessions Ruth was due to go back for a hospital check-up. This is part of what the text she sent me said, after her check-up:

I went for my check-up. Three out of four ulcers in my eye have gone. Thank you, and my scar over my cornea has reduced in size so thank you again. All I can say is a whole-hearted amazing thank you.

I continued to use remote healing on Ruth and on the 10th June 2014, only five days later, Ruth sent me another text after her check-up which said:

Eyesight is better, it was 0.2 and is now 0.6 which is amazingly better as there has been no improvement since October until your healing. Still got a tiny bit of one ulcer left and the cornea is thinning too. Thank you again for all your support and your healing as it is definitely working.

Brilliant; I continued on with the remote healing. Then, on the 19th June 2014, I was pleased to have news about Ruth's next check-up. It had been nine days since her last check-up and I had continued on with the remote healing. The text Ruth sent after the check-up was this: *Yippee! The virus has gone, feeling loads better. Scarring has reduced in size. A huge thank you and blessings. ALL the ulcers are gone, and the scarring has reduced in size so my sight is clearer. Yippee – Thank you.*

Now, I don't know about you, but I was well and truly blessed by such a report. Some of you will think it is a coincidence, others will believe it to be a miracle. I support the latter! But at the end of the day, it matters not whether it was or is a miracle OR a coincidence (cooperative incidence). What matters is someone who had been suffering for a very long time was healed.

In the **Journal of Scientific Exploration**, in an article by **Dean I. Radin et al**; titled – *Anomalous Organization of Random Events by Group Consciousness: Two Exploratory Experiments*, collective consciousness is explored by a group of researchers who outlined the following definitions of consciousness in relation to non-local mind, the greater or collective mind.

Non-local consciousness extends beyond the individual. It is an ordering principle which can insert information into disorganized systems creating a higher degree of order. Awareness and consciousness are not the same thing; the ordering power of consciousness can occur outside of awareness. Individual and group consciousness can insert order into the world as well as being able to extract or receive information from the world (which re-iterates what we have already looked at in regards to there being a greater consciousness of which we all use whether we are aware of it or not).

With this in mind, we can look once again to healing and prayer, and both are founded on the same concept which is that we are more than just our physical body, and that our consciousness, our intention, and our focused efforts can affect the material world, without being limited by space, place or time. But not only can it affect the material world, but also the spiritual world, which is why absent, distance or remote healing can and does work if done appropriately. This also reflects that the same is true when working as a group or community in unison; even the Bible states: *where two or more are gathered together, or in unison, there I (God) am also*, so even the Bible is talking about collective intent, collective consciousness. With this in mind, that also means that consciousness, with intent to heal,

can be transferred onto objects which can then be used for healing; so such things as crystals, medicine bags, drums, wands and even handkerchiefs or prayer cloths can be conduits for healing with the healing transferring to the individual in receipt of the object. It is nothing new for charms or talismans or medicine bundles to be used to bring forth healing. It isn't necessarily the object itself, but the intent that has been consciously put into it that matters. This healing work is about people either singularly or communally calling on a higher power – spirit, God, or the patient's higher self – to bring about balance, bring about healing. These experiments show us what many have believed for thousands of years, which is that we are all part of the same greater consciousness, and all able to affect a non-local aspect of that same consciousness through love and compassion. If this teaches us anything it must be that we truly do need to take responsibility for our thoughts, our speech and our actions.