



21st Century Shamanism

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Life is a journey of becoming. The goal of the journey is not its destination; rather, it is the process of understanding and wisdom that emerges from the journey.

My hope is that as you read this article you will fill with wonder and develop an interest in pursuing further learning and experiences in shamanism. Exploring the shamanic landscape offers everyone the opportunity to discover anew what we have forgotten; by practicing shamanism, we benefit from the wisdom that is still available to us. I have witnessed the growth, vitalization and transformation of thousands of people, including myself, who have found joy, healing and fulfillment in this journey.

What is Shamanism?

I am asked this question daily. Looking back in history, shamanism is an ancient tradition that dates back at least 40,000 years and was a part of most ancient indigenous cultures. It is a healing method based on the understanding that all experiences affect one's soul; thus, all healing comes through the soul. The soul is your divine essence, the part of you that is immortal and that gives life to a body. Once the soul is healed, other healing can manifest in the physical, mental and emotional bodies. I believe this perception of the mended and healthy soul that brings healing to all aspects of one's being is truer than most people realize.

We are a soul/spirit having a human experience. When we realize this and address the soul in healing, we will be healthier in our body, mind and emotions.

What is a Shaman?

The Siberian and ancient definition of the word shaman is "someone who sees in the dark with his or her heart." This can be understood as a loving expression of service. In my perception of 21st century shamanism, I see the shaman as dedicated to the cause of helping to alleviate suffering in the world.

Some of you may have read about shamanic experiences in books such as the Carlos Castaneda series. These books describe shamans in a particular way that differs from the view of 21st century shamanism. These books are more about the ancient mystical power of the shaman and less about the shaman as healer.

The history of shamanism includes different expressions of the practice and diverse images of how the shaman exists in various cultures. All are powerful and speak to the needs of their contemporaneous civilization.

Following common protocol, you would never call yourself a shaman. It is a title given to you by your community after training, experience and proven results are recognized and valued by them.



21st Century Shamanism

For many people, images of masks, grass skirts, painted faces and witch doctor cures are conjured up when they consider the word shaman. Some of these images are historically accurate. However, there is now a 21st century version of a shaman which I use as a model for my teachings. A significant aspect of this concept of contemporary shamanism is the current context of an emerging spiritualism which provides essential answers to the seemingly hopeless and helpless situations that modern humans face in a world gone wrong. Shamanism offers a bridge from an imperfect world to a universe of perfection, where healing and a new beginning are possible.

The darkness and the heart play significant and multilayered parts in shamanic practice. When we are journeying (a shamanic style of obtaining information from the unseen realms), if there is light in the room, we use eye covers to produce a condition of total darkness. Eliminating your “ordinary reality” senses and creating a totally dark environment allows you to descend deep inside of yourself, entering an altered state of consciousness where you are able to access information from “non-ordinary reality,” using inner sight and extrasensory perception.

Core Shamanism

Shamanism, as it is taught and practiced in 21st century shamanism, is not a doctrine or a tradition,

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The emerging modern 21st century shaman is required in a world in dire need of healing and in a culture that thirsts for a spiritual reconnection to our True Selves. Thus, I see shamanism as it relates to energy medicine as existing to help relieve suffering in the world, as well as a path to individual enlightenment. One of the intentions that I personally carry is to consciously broadcast light and love into the world while experiencing joy. Light and joy are major healing elements, alleviating suffering in countless ways.

The Siberian characterization of a shaman as one who has a heart that yearns to be of service is full of significance for me. The 21st century shaman believes in quality of life, happiness and love; that everyone deserves the best possible life, including being healthy physically and emotionally; and that each person is a radiant being of light. Seeing into the dark with our hearts means that shamanic journeys will often take us into unseen realms where there is no “light” to visually see with our eyes. Yet the heart guides us with such luminous radiance that it casts its own brilliance through the strong sense of love that emanates outward, bringing different realities into view.

although it is grounded in the core concept of historical shamanism.

In the core practice of 21st century shamanism that I teach, I ask you to develop your own relationships with your own personal spirit guides. You are not asked to follow a particular tradition or set of standards. You are setting your own standards as to what is important and meaningful to you, and your choices determine who and what appears in your journeys.

In modern shamanism, reconnection to the past is for the purpose of personal empowerment. This new journey is about finding your own path, the one that works for you, while using some core concepts that are from indigenous cultures around the world. Modern shamanism owes a great debt to the past and sustains a strong connection to our ancestors. At the same time, it is also deeply embedded in the present and accessible by all people who choose to follow this contemporary path. In the practices I teach, my students and I do not abandon the current world and seek a return to the past. Rather, we draw on the wisdom of the past to help heal a present that has forgotten how to be at one with the universe and has



a need to restore inner and outer balance.

Historically, our modern culture has not endorsed the magic and the miracles of a personal connection to spirit. We have spent hundreds of years out of touch with our own divinity. Modern humans have spent many lifetimes experiencing the hardships in life – betrayal, doubt, prejudice, abuse, unworthiness, inadequacy, hatred and war. These lifetimes were not grounded in love, but in fear.

In this view of 21st century shamanism, I have come to understand that the tools for healing are vast, all encompassing and within reach of everyone. I also understand that we are the creators of the future and our tools of creation are our thoughts and words. Each person plays a vital role in the creation of his or her life, environment and world. Quantum physics has revealed that the simple act of observation has an impact on that which is being observed. In a classic study in 1998 at the Weizmann Institute of Science, scientists discovered, to their initial surprise, that their observation itself altered the observed reality.¹ Physicists have come to understand that existence itself is so highly interdependent that even the engagement of consciousness with external matter and force fields changes the nature of what they study.

The message from this for humankind is that we can truly create impetus for change by our very thoughts and intentions. We are all capable of altering the vibrations surrounding us. The spiritual forces emanating from us and attracted to us are real and ever active. This understanding of our personal power, combined with basic shamanic journey skills, has the capacity to empower individuals like never before. €



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Reference

1. Weizmann Institute of Science. "Quantum Theory Demonstrated: Observation Affects Reality." *Science News*. (February 27, 1998).