

SHAMANIC PRACTICE JOURNAL

Selected Entries



Scott Schumacher
Ecoshamanism and Earth Healing

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Selected Entries of Journeys, Counterpractice, and Earth Healing

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Definitions

Shaman

One who sees, or walks between worlds. A shaman is a mediator between those aspects of the Middle World (the earth plane of our existence) and those of realms unseen - the realm of spirit, emotion, ancestors and guides - which exist in other dimensional states.

Shamanic Journey

A method of exploring the spiritual universe, making contact with spirits and guides to recover energy that may have been lost - or to gain new insights about a situation or problem, ourselves, or our very purpose.

Counterpractice

Actions that move counter, or in a contrary direction, to habitual patterns or practices. Counterpractice turns our habitual way of doing things upside down and inside out, so that we may see and feel from a place other than our habitual point of view.

The entries included are excerpts from shamanic journeys undertaken at an Introduction to Shamanic Earth Healing workshop in Northfield, MN, facilitated by Ana Larramedi. Some of the counterpractice, as well as rituals, were performed after the workshop, at a wooded cabin dwelling called “Wasafarm.” For most workshop facilitated journeys, we were invited to close our eyes and relax in a comfortable position. We would be given a specific goal or intention in our journeys in which to focus our mind and imagination. After a few moments, our facilitator would begin a steady drum beat on a hand drum, which would last between 10 and 15 minutes. When it was time for our journey to end, she would signal this time of return by sounding 6 sets of successive rapid drumbeats. We were then invited to journal our experience, and to discuss them in the group as we felt comfortable.

Meeting my Animal Guide for Earth Healing

The Migration and Evolution of Turtles

“I begin by seeing a large sheet of ice that is covering the earth. There is only ice and sea for as far as my mind's eye can stretch. Looking down to the base of a hill of ice and snow, I see the faint black specks of thousands upon thousands of crawling creatures. As I look closer, I see thousands of small turtles, marching to the beat of the drum, up this icy hill. The turtles migrate across hundreds of miles of ice, until they reach a cliff. Starting with one brave turtle, these thousands of turtles jump from the cliff, falling onto their backs into a crystal blue sea, where they must now swim. Though not knowing what they are swimming toward, they continue on. Some are eaten by sea predators, while some freeze and drown. Finally, in the distance, lies an island with sand, vegetation, and trees. Only four of these thousands of turtles have survived, and must make their home upon this island. Over time, their shells begin to soften. Large sea creatures have now migrated and evolved to walk upon this island. The turtles have learned to climb trees for safety, and have developed nine fingers with claws on each of their limbs. They grow large spines upon their shells and bodies. From their dwelling in the treetops they gain a keener eyesight to see below them, to the ground beneath the trees. To communicate, they look deeply into the eyes of their fellow tree-dwelling turtles.”

Psychopomp -Traveling the terrain of death to cross into the Upper Spirit Realm *Billions of Spirits as Light.*

Many shamanic practitioners may be called upon to assist someone at a time near death, in the hopes of helping in a person's "crossing over" of spirit - into the spirit realm, and the realm of our angels, ancestors, and guides. If we are to be shamanic practitioners to assist others, we must have experience journeying to these places ourselves. As a group, we were instructed to make a promise to return to our "middle world" earth reality, to any animal or spirit guide who would present themselves to us in this journey.

"As I begin my journey to the spirit realm of the "Upper World," I am greeted by two guides. These are very old and wise men with long white beards that stretch to their feet. They are the guides who have mapped my very soul life. They begin by showing me the maps of my spiritual life, the steps I have taken, the choices I have made, and the woven and interconnected paths of my time in the "Middle World." We embrace as I begin my greater journey."

"I feel a rapid, rising, sucking feeling - beginning at the point of my right temple on my head. It is from that point on my body that I am sucked into a tube filled with a tingling and electrified wind. After traveling through this wind for a time, I see what appears to be a paper thin barrier. It looks like a slightly crumpled and creased topographical map of the Earth. I break through the paper barrier, and into a dark realm, that is only a night sky above, and a rippling dark sea below. In the distance, the largest ship I have ever imagined is approaching me. The ship is thousands of feet in height above the water, and I am unable to see the its top in the darkness of the night sky. I board the ship, which continues its journey down the vast darkened sea. After encountering, then traveling through a misty white fog; on the horizon of the glassy water is a large and shimmering sun! It appears to be made up of billions and billions of smaller lights."

"I travel into this light, and find it to be made of even more, smaller particles. Every color that I have ever imagined is represented in all of these shining and shimmering points of light. I soon become aware, that these lights are in fact, all of the souls of the universe, who have been long awaiting my arrival."

"I finally come to rest in a cocoon of white light. I feel as if I am being held by many many hands. They are the hands of pure love. A comfort pours over me that I have never felt before."

"After a time, I am transported to a wooded area, near what looks to be a campfire. My father is there waiting for me, stoking the fire. We simply sit and watch the flames together,

smiling and laughing. Then, as I walk further, I am in a cave-like area, where I am greeted by my friend, Becky. She is dressed in an angel costume, and is dancing about. She leads me through this dark cave for many miles. While walking with Becky, I reflect on who I have seen thus far, and feel a strong longing to see my mother. Have I crossed over before her? Why do I not see her?"

"Moments after these questions, I hear the distinct sound of my mother's voice. Her voice is singing out to me, just like my first memory of her in my childhood. She is singing to me from all parts of the heavens. Her voice is the very sound of my final home, where I am cradled in love for eternity."

Terrapomp - Mapping the terrain to the Underworld - A place deep in the earth where energy can be transformed

The Sacred Well and the Tree of Life

Note: Some controversies exist within shamanic communities with regard to "Terrapomp." While many lineages affirm a crossing over into the "upper" spiritual world at the time of death, some feel that this paradigm of the transition of death still serves to reinforce a dualistic "Heaven and Earth" or "Heaven and Hell" notion that is held in predominantly Judeo-Christian belief. Other lineages are now exploring a more earth-centered death transition paradigm. Terrapomp serves to map an alternate death transition, where our essences are cradled from deep within the earth, then transformed into a new existence within the greater Circle of Life.

"I fall through layer upon layer of solid rock, deep into the earth. As I reach an orange, almost gelatinous layer, the Orca, one of my animal guides, begins to swim with me. As we swim downward through dark waters, we enter a new layer of water, where shimmering blue-white bubbles float and rise upward around us. We finally arrive at this ocean's underground floor, which illuminates a shimmering brown and sandy texture. Upon this ground are clear, blue, glassy stones, scattered in paths along the sand and rock. The blue trails stretch as far as my mind's eye can see."

"As I follow a trail of blue stones at my feet, I come to a stone well, that opens to a deeper realm below. The waters in the well are shimmering red and purple, and seem to flow underneath the ground, like a river. I look up from the well to my right to see a tree appear before me. The tree is about my height, and although it contains no leaves, golden apples grow upon its branches. From a place unknown within my heart, I hear a voice - 'This is the World Tree, where the rivers of energy and transformation flow beneath her roots.' Beyond the tree, along the horizon, I see a wide beam of scattered red and purple light, shimmering as it flows upward."

“As I look to my left, I see a guardian spirit. She is the guardian of the well. She holds in her hands, a large white pitcher. The waters of her pitcher, she pours into the well. I cannot see her face, as she wears a large mask. She tells me that the mask is for her, as it is not her place to look upon the essences she pours into the well that await transformation. As she pours her liquid into the well, the lights of the horizon change from red and purple to a shimmering, glassy, blue light, which shines high above to illuminate the surface of the earth. The Tree of Life grows more fruit, as shimmering stones of glassy blue rain down upon the surface of the ground beneath my feet.”

Three Guided Journeys into Shadow - The Earth and our Many Lives

Journey #1 - Journey to the lifetime where you abused and disrespected the earth the most. Be shown what you did and why you did it. Examine your belief system. What was your benefit? How did these actions serve you? Finally, have a power animal do a healing for this action.



“I was in the desert - alone. I had nothing to eat but sand. As blackened beings approached me, I could not see their faces. They frightened me, as their faces appeared to me only as black and gray smudges. In fear, I took an axe that lay beside me, and I swung to chop this being’s head off of his body. More beings would appear, and I would continue to chop one of the beings’ heads off. These beings would stream in, running to me, as I would swing in a circle to slice off their heads. Never seeing their faces, I continued to eat sand. As I wielded my axe to kill the inhabitants around me, I grew larger and stronger, until I was the largest being in the desert. I monstrously towered over this realm, yet the beings of this land would run to me in swarms, and I would devise more efficient

ways of killing. In my mind, I was the ruler, and the world was MINE to conquer.”

“Finally, from the sky above, my whale guides swam to me. The whales restrained me with rope until I could not wield my axe, and finally could not move. I was kept in restraints until I could see the faces of the other beings around me, and until I allowed them to sit beside

me to share their food. After a number of meals with these new friends, I no longer ate sand.”

Journey #2 - Journey to a lifetime where a death, injury, or serious loss took place as the result of a natural event; where you blamed the earth for this incident or tragedy.

Note: *I believe this journey represents my childhood of this very lifetime. I am the son of an only child. My father was a twin, yet his twin brother died at birth and was never named. His mother lived her first week of life without a name. My father's Aunt and Uncle had a stillborn child who was never named. My mother also had two stillborn children, years after my birth. The deaths of my brother and sister in my childhood, as well as the grief I experienced as a result, have most definitely shaped my adult life. There may be additional shamanic work to be done in healing this situation for me.*

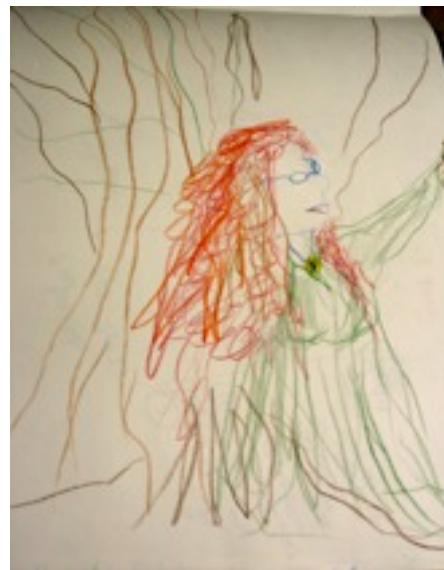
The earth had taken my brother and sister from me, and I was running. Running from the Earth. As I ran, the ground behind me was shaking, folding, collapsing, and disappearing. The Earth was chasing me. It wished to envelop me, but I escaped its clutches. All through my running I would yell and scream - “Why? Why? Why? Why?”

“You took my brother and sister, and now they sit in the earth!”

“Born, then buried, they sit within you, in vaults, embalmed, with monuments above them, resting upon you!”

“I will spite you, and live to be 100 years or more! I will continue to run, to fight, and to escape you!”

Just then, a new, green-colored whale came to dance with me. He showed me the ways of shape-shifting and transformation. Then the whale took me on a journey into the Earth, where I was shown the spirit of a young woman with long and flowing red hair. I believe this spirit to be that of my sister, who died when I was only 9 years old. She was studious, wise, and at peace with the Earth. Living among the trees she would sit and read, reach out to the birds, and sing.



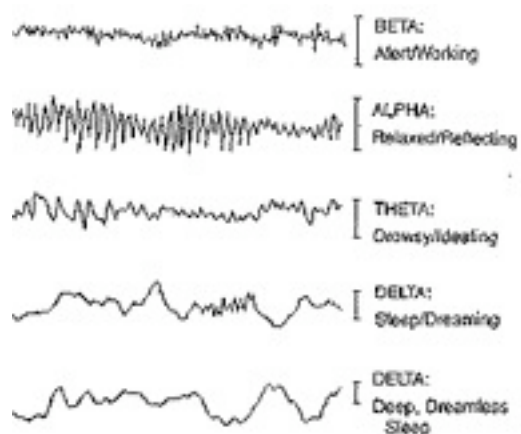
Journey #3 - Journey to the lifetime where you lived most in harmony with the Earth. What was your life like? What did you do? What was your belief system in relation to the Earth?

I woke up from sleeping in a cave. The rain was falling outside my cave home, which opened into a land of rolling green meadows, tall trees, rock-filled streams, springs, and brooks. Each day, as I exited my cave, I would honor and love all of nature that I encountered, by drawing and painting my memories on my cave wall. I drew and painted all of the people I loved, all the events that took place, every walk in the woods, and every celebration of every day. My drawing and painting was my only vocation. My only goal was to share my story, so that one day others could catch a glimpse of this beauty that was my life.

I feel that this was a very short lived life, yet it was very rich and sweet. I did not have a name to call myself. Nothing around me had a name, but I painted all of Nature upon the walls of my home. All was love. All was joy.

Counterpractice

Many of the forms of counterpractice illustrated serve to put the practitioner in a different state of awareness. Throughout our daily lives and tasks, we are often so focused on one specific thing, that it consumes our entire focus, as if we have blinders on the sides of our eyes. Ana Larramendi explains, that while we are in these states, our minds are in a Beta Wave pattern. Beta waves are characteristic of a highly engaged and focused mind. Nature however, operates on a more relaxed, Alpha wave pattern - unless a threat is perceived. The purpose of shamanic journey work and counterpractice, in relation to Earth Healing, is to bring us into this Alpha wave state. When our brain patterns are more more closely aligned with nature, we may be able to gather information from the whole - more in harmony with nature.



Counterpractice Exercise #1

Concentric Rings and Finding a Baseline

All of the activities and the events which impact nature, travel out in an energetic pattern called Concentric Circles. Much like when a pebble is dropped in a pond, there are waves of energy that travel throughout nature when any event transpires. Shifts in weather patterns, changes in barometric pressure, and especially - traumatic events - create concentric circles of energy that ripple through the air. Animals, birds, insects, the rustling of leaves, and all of nature will respond as these concentric circles are detected. Nature has a way of communicating with itself through this very energy.

As I was guided by Ana Larramendi, I found a spot in a clearing in nature, where I was to lay down for an hour. During the hour I would simply close my eyes, meditate, and listen to all of nature around me. Was it quiet? Was it noisy? Would I notice any changes, and could I detect their effect upon the sounds and happenings in nature? Would the sound level increase or decrease?

As I began my meditation at 2pm in the afternoon, I tuned into the sounds around me. This time of day seemed very loud and active to me! Winds would originate from miles away, as I could hear them whooshing and rushing through the open field that lay down the hill from me, and then into the leaves and branches of the trees nearby. I could hear the creaking of trees as they swayed in the breezes. Birds would chirp and sing, and insects in the ground were singing as well. The rustling of the grass began to come through to my hearing as well. This symphony of nature lasted for what seemed like 30-40 minutes. Suddenly, I felt a breeze on my skin that was distinctly colder than the breezes that were originally washing over and around me.

As these new breezes continued, I noticed the intensifying sounds of the wind high above me. The gentle breeze on my skin seemed a precursor to these stronger winds. The insects in the ground soon grew quiet, and I heard the sounds of birds flying overhead, traveling upon the winds.

Counterpractice Exercise #2

Wide Angle Vision and Fox Walking

Just as the pattern of nature is that of a more relaxed, yet aware Alpha wave, when animals walk, they do so by seeing in a wider, more relaxed view. Instead of focusing on one specific destination, their vision is softened and broadened, bringing in a wider view of nature, as if on a wide and flat screen in front of them. As they tread the Earth, they make very little sound.

According to Ana, animals can detect the states of consciousness we humans may be in as we approach them. When humans walk the forest, our Beta wave of intention as we travel; stomping through brush, chatting with friends, etc. - creates its own Concentric Ring, alerting the animal world of the presence of a potential threat. The practice of Wide Angle Vision and a new way of walking - Fox Walking - serve to keep one in more of an Alpha state of awareness while walking in nature.

Fox Walking, often done barefoot, is a way of walking in nature to make no sound, and to completely feel and sense the path traversed. As you take a step forward, keeping your weight on your stationary foot, you place the outside edge of your foot down onto the ground in front of you. This serves to make one aware of any obstacles, rocks, or obstructions that may be in the way. Next, the foot is rolled toward the inside ball, where the inside ball of the foot touches the ground beneath it. Finally, the heel and toes come down simultaneously, as weight is finally committed to the front foot. Then, bending the front knee, the back foot moves forward to the front of the body to repeat this process.

While doing this exercise in a group, some of the participants noticed that they became much more conscious, that the muscles they would normally hold onto when walking in their day to day lives, now seemed more relaxed. Another participant stated that this type of walking took significant pressure off her knees. Myself, I seemed to lose track of the distance I traveled while walking with Wide Angle Vision. To me, it seemed that I had walked approximately 100 meters. However, when looking back at the finish of the exercise, I had only walked perhaps half of my perceived distance.

Counterpractice #3 Blindfolded Tree Sensing

In pairs, we were led to the edge of a wooded area. One person was to be blindfolded, while their partner would walk them to three different trees.

For this exercise, our seeing partner was to bring us to one healthy and vibrant tree; one tree that seemed strained, diseased, dying, or dead; and then a tree of their choosing. Those blindfolded were instructed to place their hands on the tree; to feel and sense any energies coming through to



their hands; and to pay attention to any feelings they may have. Is the tree healthy? Are there high branches or low branches? Can you sense its root system below? What feelings do you have?

Surprisingly, when going to each individual tree, all of the workshop participants were able to sense the quality of the trees that were weak or dead. I was able to sense the high branches in a healthy and vibrant tree that were far overhead, and could even sense which side leaves and branches originated. The air pressure and wind above my head seemed to tell me if branches and leaves were immediately overhead, or if none at all were above me. At times I could feel a subtle pulsing of energy from within a tree. At one of the trees, I perceived a strong pulse from the energy field beside it. My feelings about this sensation seemed to tell me that another tree or trunk should be present. Upon taking off my blindfold, I noticed the tree was leaning to the side of my perceived pulsation, and the area of that energy seemed to travel like a straight line, upward from the ground, to where the highest leaves and branches grew.

Counterpractice #4

Blindfolded Fox Walking - Wasafarm Trail and Labyrinth

Some time after the Shamanic Earth Healing workshop, I traveled with my partner to “Wasafarm” the name given to a 53-acre wooded piece of land owned by his family. Miles of trails have been mowed and maintained over the past 10 years, and a stone labyrinth lies in between the cabin and the mobile home where we spend much of our time.

I began by walking one of the shorter trails of about 200 meters. This trail originated from behind the cabin. Its path traveled into the woods, winding between trees, until it finally reached a large and open meadow. I walked this 6-foot wide trail blindfolded, while practicing a quiet and slow Fox Walk.



I placed my hands out to my sides, palms forward - then began my walk. The air around my hands and body, as well as the texture of the ground at my feet, seemed to guide me well through the woods. I imagined the trees and brush on each side of me, and could feel the sun's rays of warmth on the top of my head. When I did brush up against vegetation or more rocky terrain, I simply adjusted my course a few feet to the other side, then continued forward. I was amazed at how quickly and safely I was able to walk this trail to reach the

other side, and to the wide expanse of the meadow. More importantly though, with my eyes open, I do not believe I would have paid any attention to the texture of the ground below me, the wind around me, nor the vegetation I might have brushed against.

Another effect of this practice, which I felt almost immediately that evening, was that I was much more confident walking the property at night. The darkness was not as much a limiting factor, as I could let my other senses guide me more, and I did not have to be afraid of the dark!



I also walked the labyrinth at Wasafarm while blindfolded. The curves in the labyrinth, as well as its turns inward and outward seemed challenging at first, but became easier as I found myself more engaged with the terrain under my feet. This was also seemingly an exercise to focus my mind on forward momentum. Many times in the labyrinth, I felt that if I were to turn back, I would become lost in, and it would take much more time to come back out. This was an exercise in trusting the stones beneath my feet. When I veered slightly off course, a stone would guide me gently back to the center of the path.

Counterpractice and Ritual

Communicating with Tree Spirits - Deer Hunting - Clear Cutting - Saying Goodbye

Over the past two years, my partner and I, as well as his family, have begun to create a very spirit-centered place at Wasafarm in Sandstone, MN. The area has become a place of spiritual respite and renewal, nature walks and dreams, labyrinth building (there are now three labyrinths on the property), and nature observation. After learning about the spiritual and emotional imprints left on the land when a trauma occurs, my partner and I became weary about what we could do in the wake of two events that were about to take place.

Deer hunting season was approaching. In addition, the county would be cutting down trees before winter to the immediate north of the property, to sell as timber. Michael's father had previously agreed to let a select few neighbors hunt on the land during deer hunting season. His rationale was that if he did not, then he would not have the friendliness of his surrounding neighbors that he had come to enjoy and count on in many times of need. They would be hunting this season. We had no control over this reality, nor the cutting that was to be done to the north.

We consulted with Ana Larramendi about this situation and what we should do. We quickly learned the difference between shamanism and “sorcery” in her advice and insight. Trickery, obstruction, deception, and any secrecy that we might employ could leave its own negative mark upon the land, and in our relationships with people. Did we want to invite the spiritual karma of sorcery, if we were to engage in activities that would obstruct or undermine what was already going to happen? As well, regardless of our feelings about hunting, many of the deer population would die out in winter anyway.

“Hunting season is also one of the few times that some men actually give themselves an excuse to be in nature for long periods of time,” Ana explained.

Ana suggested a ritual healing, where we might communicate with tree spirits to release themselves from their tree dwellings before the cutting, and one that would serve to communicate to the deer in the area of the impending hunt, of possible deaths.

“Ask to let those deer who are weak and do not have the strength to survive winter to come forward to protect the others. Send a message of safety and love to those strong deer who roam the forests. Journey to them as well, to ask them what they may need.”

She also suggested working with the hunters themselves in the future as a possibility. Perhaps we could give hunters small bags of cornmeal, and have them agree to sprinkle it upon the land as a blessing at any site of a deer kill. Perhaps they could agree to read a poem or prayer, giving thanks for the life that was sacrificed. In doing so, they may begin to honor the deer, and forge a more direct spiritual relationship with them.

While we are yet to decide on speaking with the hunters in the future, we did construct our own ritual, which we performed on the property, near a tree.

Retrieving a wind chime on the property, we approached a tall and powerful tree. We used the chimes to call in the four cardinal directions of East, North, West, and South, circling the tree as the chimes rang out. We then placed our hands on this tree to speak our hearts, in hopes that the spirit of this tree would carry our message to the rest of the forest, the deer on the property, and to all of Nature in the immediate vicinity.

“There will be cutting of many trees to the north. We ask that the tree spirits to the north release themselves and come to dwell among the many trees at Wasafarm. We are sorry for the loss that will occur in the coming months. We are sorry. We love you.”

“To the deer, we ask that you prepare for the time of hunting and possible death and bloodshed. We send our intention and hearts desire for your safety and well being. To any deer spirits who may be harmed, we are sorry. We love you. In the

years ahead, we will work to make this land, a land of peace, where all of Nature can dwell without the threat of this kind of death. This is our deepest intention. We are sorry. We love you.”

“To this tree, we send our message to you. Through you, our old and true friend, may you feel our love throughout the winter months. While we will not be with you for some time, know that we are with you in spirit, and we will return to be your caretakers. Look over the trees and all of the creatures and spirits who dwell here in our absence. We wish you peace, and a cleansing and restful winter. We love you.”

We then rang the wind chimes in the four directions once again, thanked our wonderful tree friend, and said our final goodbyes to Wasafarm, before leaving for winter.