

How to Get Even with the Universe
by
Getting Right with the World

Working within Sacred Space and Time



Steve Guettermann

Foreword by don Oscar Miro-Quesada

BOOK TITLE

How to Get Even with the Universe
by
Getting Right with the World

Working within Sacred Space and Time

Steve Guettermann

Copyright © 2017 Steve Guettermann

Visit the author at: www.steveguettermann.com

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form whatsoever, without permission in writing from the publisher, except for brief passages for use in articles or reviews

Cover photo and design by Bruce Park.

Contact: brucio.artisto@gmail.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication applied for.

ISBN: 0986093912

ISBN-13: 978-0986093913

Thank you, don Oscar ~ for the keys to the
Alexandrian Library.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vi
Foreword.....	ix
Chapter 1: Mystery Loves Company.....	1
Chapter 2: Good Medicine.....	8
Chapter 3: In the beginning.....	11
Chapter 4: Herding Cats	20
Chapter 5: Worrier to Warrior	26
Chapter 6: Creating Sacred Space	35
Chapter 7: Urban Ayni.....	52
Chapter 8: Answers in the Fire	68
Chapter 9: Being non-attached in a Connected Universe.....	73
Chapter 10: Pace Car or Racecar?	80
Chapter 11: Mixed Message and Paradoxes	87
Chapter 12: A Clear Choice	98
Chapter 13: Disciplined Imagination	101
Chapter 14: The Imagination – Intuition Conundrum.....	107
Chapter 15: Surrender and Letting Go	121
Chapter 16: Chaos and Order.....	127
Chapter 17: Self-activation	136
Chapter 18: Meeting Quetzalcoatl	146
Addendum:	161
Blank pages for notes	164

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I want to acknowledge, with heartfelt appreciation, the many timeless and timely gifts received, not only during writing this book, but throughout my life. If I could offer one gift, or convey one thing to others in return, it would be this: be forever in awe of the beauty and magic of this Planet. Aside from any alternate universe or numinous reality, the astounding life and consciousness on Planet Earth, which the Ascended Masters are said to call the Water Planet, boggles my mind with its creative potential and expression, as well as our joys for opportunity and wonder. I suggest we never cease to be in amazement with every step we take in the natural world.

There is wonder and magic all around. Simply imagining seeing our Planet from space shows its singular beauty and life. It is rare, if not unique, among the stars. Before we allow ourselves to be hell-bent on her destruction, let's step back and consider the possibility that what we can experience and learn here would fill countless lifetimes. To live in something other than awe is to deny our humanity and our possibility by placing ego and fear above what gives us life. In other words, physical life is beyond my creative powers to imagine. And yet here I am, so it seems.

Next I want to say thank you to some of the folks who helped me with this book. My heartfelt appreciation goes to Bruce Park, artist and friend extraordinaire, who contributed his time and talent to design the cover of this book. Bruce, along with his wife, and my friend, Genise, continue to help me explore the repertoire of the many ways of giving back to the Planet and people for their support.

I want to thank the good people who took time to review the manuscript that became this book before it was fit for public viewing. They compassionately guided me over its rough spots towards a smooth and succinct conveyance of how to get right with the world. I especially want to thank Judy Steele and Beth Walden for their tenacious and fervent scrutiny of this work, lest I remove it from the oven too soon, so to speak. A special thanks goes to doña Cindy Miro-Quesada, who brought completion of this work through right relationship.

I mention these three wise men in the book, alluding to some of the lessons they gave me: Jack Schwartz, Jim Miller and don Oscar Miro-Quesada. As I try to put *their* wisdom into action, and describe what

I've learned from them in my own words, their influence on me cannot be overestimated or over appreciated.

In a similar vein are those I often refer to as my "Sun Dance Family," the people with whom I've shared sweat lodges, vision quests, sun dances and other sacred, as well as secular, experiences. They include Skinna Akayim and Joanne Smith, Alberta Iron Cloud, Ardis Iron Cloud, Ted Hamilton, Eric and Dana Boyd, Jay Ritter, Ken Hall, Tom Savage and family, Wade Miller, George Karl, Jeff Galuza, Mark Johnson, David and Cindi Iron Cloud, Kirby Smith, Jerry Dunson, Rod Cline, Anne Rockhold, Michael and Linda Gard, Robyn Bridges, Joe Lordi, Pieter Lefferts, Wendy West, Nurse Jeri Krenck, Yola Dunne, Andula Zach, Darcy DeTienne and Irina Shiyanovskaya. The friendship, laughs, food, suffering, wonderings and wanderings we continue to share are a soul-soothing elixir.

To Victoria and Dano, I must say the love you give me is beyond any other blessing.

And finally to Deborah ~ *wopila tanka pour rêver tant du rêve avec moi.*

I love you all!

Haylli!

"Life is much too important to be taken seriously."
Oscar Wilde

FOREWORD

Humanly written, with humility and humor in equal measure, *How to Get Even with the Universe by Getting Right with the World: Working within Sacred Space and Time* is an enchantingly eloquent unveiling of hands-on perennial wisdom, earth honoring ceremonial artistry and soul restorative personal revelation. Lovingly gestated into being within the infinitely fertile empyrean womb of my shamanic soul brother and treasured friend *Corazón Pensante*, (Thinking Heart) aka Steve Guettermann, I'm certain the living truth encountered within the pages of this remarkable book will undoubtedly prove to be a classic in the field of neo-shamanic earth literacy and contemporary ethnospiritual inquiry. Not only is Steve's gift of storytelling on a par with the soul illuminating tales spoken by tribal wisdom keepers of time immemorial, his honestly transparent narrative style invites us to gain deeper insight into our personal struggles and existential challenges as vital preparation for walking more gently and lovingly as sacred passersby upon our Earth Mother, Gaia-Pachamama. A rare gift of inspirational word, illuminating vision and cross-cultural shamanic ritual practice, *How to Get Even with the Universe by Getting Right with the World: Working within Sacred Space and Time* is a beacon of hope for all people called to embody a beauty walk of eco-spiritual healing presence upon beloved Pachamama.

Walking in beauty is being conscious of the sacred reciprocity governing All Our Relations, deeply aware of the exquisite balance between what is taken and what is given during our passerby journey upon this good earth. This unconditional act of generosity, of freely giving without regard for receiving anything in return, embodies the indigenous ethos, the core cultural identity that has guided the lives of our traditional earth honoring peoples before the advent of recorded history. Known as *ayni* by Quechua speaking peoples of Heart Island (South America), it is widely embraced as "cosmic or universal common sense," having become an inviolate principle of right living that informs and governs every human affair and activity in a manner sustaining of deep reverence for our Originating Mystery and Great Sacred Web of Life as a whole. An authentic life of *ayni* demands visceral attentiveness to the pulses, rhythms, cycles, and perpetual ebb and flow among all things born of Creation's dreaming. A life of *ayni* is labor of

unconditional love, a soul restorative shamanic path through which our thoughts and visionary dreams, words and medicine songs, actions and gratitude dances, all find seven generation eco-spiritual sanctification in the world.

The greatest gift we humans have to offer the earth is our heartfelt appreciation for the blessing that is life. This experience of gratitude carries a quality of engagement and belongingness within it, of bringing ourselves into alignment with the rest of creation. Anytime gratitude is felt and given expression we become conscious co-creators in the unfolding journey of life. Aligned with the powers of the universe we learn to serve the greatest good for All Our Relations. In this manner expressing gratitude becomes an act of creative confidence, for emptied of the needs of our ego personality we free ourselves to come into deeply caring relationship with the whole of Creation. In essence, within our human impulse to gratitude flow the vast cycles of universal reciprocity. Through our loving recognition, the rest of the Earth achieves a deep fulfillment. Our praise and thanksgiving are as essential a part of life's "give and take," as are the cycles of oxygen and water or any other nourishment flowing through the biosphere. For everything that is taken, something has to be given in return. Life is give and take and all prayerful expressions of gratitude involve a reverent sense of belonging. Among native Quechua speaking people of Perú when we say *Yusulpayki* – or thank you – we are really saying "we belong together," we acknowledge our interdependence, meaning that we *all* belong together, that we are of each other. We belong here. Life belongs here. Belonging is the basic truth of our existence. In its deepest sense, at the heart of gratefulness, we also find this expression of reciprocal belonging known as *Living in Ayni* when we are freed from self-preoccupation and can be filled with thankful reverence for the sacrosanct gift that is life.

As *How to Get Even with the Universe by Getting Right with the World: Working within Sacred Space and Time* movingly reminds us WE ARE the Earth. Pachamama-Gaia shapes us, as we shape her; she informs our body and inhabits our soul, for what surrounds us, is us – the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, is as much in us as it is of the living Earth. To live a sustainable life of harmony and balanced reciprocity with All Our Relations – mineral, plant, animal and human, seen or unseen – we must prayerfully dedicate our dreams, thoughts,

words and actions to the wellbeing of the entire earth community. To fully live this understanding is to follow our Original Instructions and engage in the Great Work of restoring a soul animated experience of the sacred to the world. It requires us to stop, to feel, to listen, ever more deeply, to the sanctified inhalation and exhalation of Mother Earth's breathing, to the resonant drum beat of her perennial wisdom heart and soul sentience. Within the pages of this book, we are treated to a refreshingly incisive marriage of personal revelation and time honored ceremonial artistry. It is a body of work that inspires and catalyzes our human awareness of the accessible magic at play behind Creation's dreaming our world into form. Its embodied vision serves as a beautifying gift for the human soul, an opening and passageway beyond our current obsession with materiality.

The indigenous soul exists in all of us – we are all native children born from the miracle that is Gaia-Pachamama's dreaming. All traditional earth honoring people living today are very closely tied to critical habitat and biodiversity hotspots. They are the stewards not only of habitat, but most important, of the indigenous soul to which we are all heir and which we must reclaim. Laying aside our anger about the past and our fear of the future, both indigenous and non-indigenous people must exercise a spiritually compassionate activism as our healing legacy to the seven generations. It takes the ability to be fully alive to the present and let that earthy song come through us. In doing so, we inhabit not only the land, but the ground of our Being, where past and future fall away and we are enlightened fully, as the soul of the planet. Most earth honoring traditional people wisely proclaim that the future is behind us and that we are really moving towards the past, just as a plant during all its phases of outward growth is in reality moving toward the seed from which it originated. Or, to paraphrase Australian aboriginal elder Banjo Clarke: "Life is a *walk about* of return to our original Dreaming." The reality is that there is no "environment," save in our imaginations. Drawing from diverse sources of earth honoring shamanic medicine ways and ritual practices, we must inspire each other to walk a graceful path of healing beauty upon our beloved Pachamama, celebrating life as a sacred gift, and teaching Love by the way we live. This is my understanding of the Original Instructions bestowed upon humankind by Originating Mystery.

How to Get Even with the Universe by Getting Right with the World: Working

How to Get Even with the Universe by Getting Right with the World

within Sacred Space and Time, is a living embodiment of these Original Instructions. It is about living in *ayni*, about living in beauty, about a divinely ordained balanced reciprocity between what is freely received and generously offered forth to serve a healthful thriving of our species-wide interdependent relationship as Pachamama's children. It is a compelling invitation for humankind to embark upon a journey of inspired evolution and enlightened right action – to reclaim a soul animated time of dreaming the world into form, a prophesied time of human shamanic presence when we again shall move through a wilderness where every plant, every rock, every animal speaks to us, each embracing us in its song. For this I say *Yusulpayki*, my beloved brother, Steve, *yusulpayki!*

Don Oscar Miro-Quesada
Joshua Tree ~ January 16, 2017

Mystery Loves Company

“What you call science, I call magic. What you call magic, I call science.”
Jim Miller – Lakota spiritual leader, describing a cultural difference

Giving back is life’s most important principle for many traditional cultures. Although elaborate ceremonies have their place, this book provides a simple framework for engaging the world in more refined ways by creating and using sacred space, sacred reciprocity, authenticity and the possibilities they may create. These are things anyone can do alone or with others. Sacred reciprocity is known by Peruvian shamans as *ayni*, pronounced eye-knee. *Ayni* encourages us to become more in tune with the planet and the changes in us as we ritually acknowledge what we receive. This book invites your own experience of *soulular* growth through sacred reciprocity, and it offers ways to create and hold sacred space in which to give back. More than anything, *ayni* fosters right relationship between us and the seen and unseen worlds in order to maintain life. It’s simple, actually. When we give back to that which supports us, it responds with something more than subsistence in return. That something more is magic.

What is magic? It is the home field advantage. Magic is the amazing, the inexplicable, joy, love, compassion, timing, synchronicity and patience. Magic is omnipresent. Magic is everything that sustains

us. It is life, death, love, the coming and going of souls and spirits, and the changing passage of time, when it moves fast and when it moves slowly. Magic is miraculous healings, brought about by re-establishing right relationship. Magic is wonder. It is water. It is wisdom. Magic is what we cannot understand. Magic is what we can understand. Magic is the continuous flow and connectivity of the spontaneous omnipresent. Once we know that magic is everywhere and in everything, we begin to trust it and we begin to trust our ability to direct it because we are magic, too. Magic is what gives the hero's snowball a chance in hell. This book offers ways to recognize it, honor it, use it and say thank you.

When we approach our world through ayni, we expand possibility. My intent is to help the reader new to a spiritual path make sense of the basics of creating sacred space. It may also help the more advanced teacher or student guide others into creating that space. Although some concepts may be familiar, I will strive to put them in a new light so they have new application. On the other hand, a new idea may require a re-reading or two, but practice will help even more. There are practices and exercises at the end of several chapters for you to test the validity of what is presented. I suggest you stay open to new revelations your experiences and intuition bring you. Those will serve you much better than anything you read. The truth won't set you free, but your truth will.

How does ayni differ from other forms of saying thank you? It is really a celebration of appreciation and often takes place as a ceremony within sacred space. We give something back to the planet we have received or created ourselves. When this is done consistently within the context of sacred space, it becomes a highly vibrational relationship-shifting exchange that alters our awareness and behavior.

Here's a short story as an example.

KIM

It takes days of hard work to get the grounds ready for a Sun Dance, a prayer ceremony of many North American Plains tribes. There is a lot of good food and company, too. Sweat lodges are built, the arbor in which the Sun Dance takes place is built or repaired, the land is cleaned up, firewood is cut, sweat rocks gathered, tipis put up, last year's Sun Dance Tree is dug out and cut up and the hole readied for the new one.

There's usually an *inipi* – sweat lodge ceremony – each night after the day's work is done, too. When all is ready, the new Sacred Tree is sanctified, ceremoniously cut down the day before Sun Dance starts, loaded onto the shoulders of the men and brought into the arbor. The hole for the tree is prayed over and fed sacred food. The dancers tie their ropes and offerings onto the tree. Then the supporters tie on their offerings. Finally the tree is slid into the hole and raised. When I danced, I couldn't wait to start the Sun Dance, praying it would be easier than getting ready for it.

Sometimes it was. Sometimes it wasn't.

In my experience, the Sun Dance season starts at the summer solstice and runs for about seven weeks. The four day Sun Dance is a time of renewal for dancers and supporters, a time of prayer and vows, a time of release and receiving. It's also a time of great thanks. And it's almost always hot. (One year there was a Sun Dance north of Calgary, Alberta, Canada when we danced in freezing rain, but that was unusual. It's still known as the Ice Dance.) Dancers don't eat during the four days; we usually got water at night after we came out of the sweat lodge. Some don't even get that. We sweat in the morning before the sun comes up. Then dance. Then sweat after the sun goes down.

It was really hot one year. During a late afternoon break, a supporter sent in a bottle of very nice organic aloe vera lotion. There were maybe 30 dancers who shared it. When I got it the first time, it was slightly over half full. When I got it the second time, it was slightly over half full. When I got it the third time, it was slightly over half full. I couldn't believe it. I squeezed a bunch in my hand to see what would happen. When I turned the bottle upright, it was still slightly over half full.

"Another Sun Dance miracle," I thought.

Does an endless bottle of aloe have practical application? When the summer sun baked us like cookies and rocks glowed red hot in the fire for the sweat lodge that we'd have later, yes, an endless bottle of aloe has endless practical application. And that is magic.

After the Sun Dance I tried to find who sent the aloe in. Organic aloe vera doesn't just show up by itself...or does it?

My girlfriend said, "Oh, Kim sent that in."

That made perfect sense. Kim was likely one of the sweetest people on earth and the wife of a very good friend of mine, another dancer.

It was tough when Kim passed. She was so authentic, happy, kind and generous. I can see her smile and hear her laugh as I write this. She and my girlfriend were best friends. In time, my girlfriend and I went into the mountains near where Kim and her husband had lived as ranch caretakers to do a ceremony for Kim a few months after she passed. She had a lock of Kim's hair and wanted to release it into the creek where all of us used to go together. As we said prayers, a whirlwind kicked up. It circled around through the trees, crossed over the creek, and then whirled around where the two of us sat and settled on us, whirling without moving on. But this whirlwind didn't carry dust. All it carried were open cottony seedpods from the cottonwood trees. We were positively smothered with little downy puffball-like kisses, especially the ones that hit our faces. The whirlwind spun around us with thousands, maybe tens of thousands of kisses, and then slowly stopped. The seedpods settled onto the ground or floated away in the creek. We sat there quietly for the longest time.

We knew it was Kim. And I know that somewhere, that bottle of aloe is sitting behind the mirror in someone's medicine cabinet, still slightly over half full.

~~~~~

These stories within-the-story told above suggest that the beauty and magic of sacred space can take many forms. When we show up with ayni, magic shows up. We'll get into this more, but sacred space is not so much a confine as it is a state of energy. It can be mobile, it can be fixed, but it is always conscious. Through ceremonial interactions with and within the three dimensional sacred space of physical reality, we can access the fourth dimension of sacred space/time and beyond. In these other dimensions there are new rules on top of the 3D rules. When these rules collide, they are often referred to as paradoxes. They can make us question what is really going on, and they should. We may find that old patterns don't work, but we can't explain or accept new ones. However, rather than experience a paradigm shift as an irreconcilable collision of confusion, we can choose a wiser path. That path allows new experiences and realities to build upon one another as we rebuild ourselves.

When we first enter sacred space and perceive it to be in a neutral and nascent form, anything can happen. Just as Thomas Edison finally used a neutral filament between a positive and negative charge to

create a long lasting light bulb (rather than the rapid burnout he kept having) our initial neutral, receptive presence can yield an enlightened response in harmony with the dynamic positive masculine and negative feminine energies of sacred space. A positive masculine energy simply means energy that gives form, and a negative feminine energy is a releasing or outward expressing energy. Both are necessary to sustain form. One is not better than the other. These energies are part of the beauty of sacred space that beckon us to explore the interplay of infinite possibility. And what about that neutral filament? Metaphorically, it represents our role as the true maestro of sacred space. How we orchestrate these different energies can create and maintain a space that serves us, others and the planet for the highest and greatest good of all. This is the essence of sacred reciprocity. It's a gift to give back in such a way.

Evidence suggests that the first musical instruments after the human voice were percussion instruments. People made music beating on a log, for example. Then came flutes. True drums followed about 37,000 years ago, as people learned to stretch animal hides over a frame. After all that time, there is no end in sight or sound to the potential music that can come from a drum or flute. Even as a beginner, the never-before-heard music we can make with a drum or a flute is inexhaustible. Now imagine we learn to play a piano and our skill progresses from chopsticks to Chopin. Even as a concert pianist we still haven't dented all that is possible. The point is, whether we know a little or a lot, there is no limit to what we can do or experience.

Sacred space is the same. We do not need to know much to attract endless magic from our relationship with sacred space and reciprocity. Magic shows up when we do. But as we get more skilled, we have more fun. We can also attract a larger orchestra. In regards to sacred space, this means we attract beneficent spirit guides and allies. Thus whether our offerings emulate beating on a log or the music of the spheres, when we give back with a good heart, denizens of both seen and unseen realms will sit with us, listen and applaud.

Mother Earth, Gaia (Greek), Pachamama (Quechua), Maca Unci (Lakota), all of these terms acknowledge our planet is a living and conscious being. A pervasive indigenous belief is, "Everything is always watching." This isn't meant in some creepy, perverted or Big Brother sort or way, but from the perspective that everything, including stones,

plants and animals, has some degree of awareness. If we had no awareness of being received by something other than ourselves, there would be no sense in giving offerings and attempting to connect with something other than ourselves. For our offerings to be received, obviously something outside of us must be aware and sentient. Seen and unseen worlds hold individuals and individual energies, combined into an interactive web of omni-responding consciousnesses of multiple generations and dimensions.<sup>1</sup> Ayni helps us become sensitive to them and creates a greater sense of self and a greater understanding of self through our connection to the whole. Some people call this nature. Some call it the web of life. Some call it creation.

We live in a universal ocean of energy where both opposites and likes attract. Our happiness, fulfillment, expression and health depend upon how we use this energy and give it form. They also depend on how we transform and shapeshift that which has form. Transformation is magic, too. The task is to live within the parameters of physical and non-physical realities, and create our own reality from them. For example, it makes no difference whether the glass is half empty or half full. What matters is we drink and we enjoy, knowing that whatever filled the glass in the first place can refill it again. Ayni triggers the refill because it brings balance. Apparently ayni also works for aloe.

This book is not for the scientist, the believer or nonbeliever. It is for the *imaginator* who questions, observes and does something with questions and observations. While it is true that ayni leads to and yields magic, there are even more benefits. Sacred reciprocity leads to joy and purpose, belonging and connection, laughter and amusement, and is an antidote to feeling adrift and powerless. It restores beauty and grace, which is our natural movement within the sea of seen and unseen realms. It elevates and shapeshifts giving back into a sacred relationship of connection with all that is. Not only does everything see us; everything hears us. Once we begin to hear the universe and life, what may be their infrequent whispers become louder messages and the signs become clearer. So you will likely hear voices in your head. Is this a

---

<sup>1</sup> Geobiologist Yann Lipnick has developed a thorough classification system of subtle and spiritual life forms based on his observations. He teaches his techniques to others with a good degree of success. Most of his work is in French, but there are English translations of two of his books available from iTunes.

sign you are going crazy? I don't know, but I do agree with don Oscar Miro-Quesada who says, "First you have to lose your mind in order to come to your senses."

Or we can say, "Oh, what a web we weave when we first practice to receive." The web is spun when we consciously, sincerely, ritualistically and happily give back in honest appreciation to the magical forces that influence our life. Ayni helps us connect, whether it be with a sparrow, a stream spirit, a mountain deity, our higher self, other people, guardian angels, power animals, a blessed virgin, god, or the god or goddess within. There is only one thing we have to gain and only one thing we have to lose by learning the ways of magic. Everything.

## 2

---

### Good Medicine

*“The greater the scientist, the more he is impressed with his ignorance of reality, and the more he realizes that his laws and labels, descriptions and definitions, are the products of his own thought. They help him to use the world for purposes of his own devising rather than understand and explain it.”*

Alan Watts – The Wisdom of Insecurity

The Law of Attraction gets a lot of coverage these days, so I won't add much. I feel ayni provides more encompassing answers to life's more ponderous questions. It encompasses attraction, gratitude and more, including a shapeshifting of vibratory consciousness, which is key to spiritual evolution. However, for a better understanding later, I will highlight a few related concepts.

Manifesting energies are subtle. Science had, and still has to a large extent, a “Yes, but...” relationship to them. For example, on one hand science confirms that our bodies are electromagnetic and send emotionally charged energy into the environment. On the other hand, science says that force is too meager to have any real impact on anything because it quickly dissipates and is overwhelmed by stronger forces, such as electromagnetic interference in buildings. The dissipation is attributed to the Law of Inverse Squares.

In terms of both light and an electric field, the Law of Inverse

Squares states that an electric field twice as far from the source is spread over four times the area, hence it has one-fourth the intensity. This also applies to sound, gravity and radiation. So those who quickly dismiss the impact of ayni, magic, intent, prayer, the Law of Attraction and related phenomena use this law to override intended manifestation being possible because, according to the Law of Inverse Squares, any such field would quickly dissipate. Yet science cannot refute that every single thing man has created was first a thought. Anecdotally, this can be tested with help from that old song, “When You’re Smiling, the Whole World Smiles With You” by Louis Armstrong. In other words, it’s easy to impact reality. It seems that although we may not fully understand how reality works, holding on to laws and beliefs that don’t hold up should not hold us back. Even that practical and imaginative wizard scientist, Albert Einstein, acknowledged what he called “spooky action at a distance,” despite the fact he could not get himself to fully believe that energy particles separated by large distances could share information. But they do, as quantum physics confirms, although not all scientists accept this.

Consequently, it seems wise to seek environments that are complementary to our vibration so our web of influence is greater and more easily manifested. In a complementary environment, our energy won’t dissipate so quickly. And, once we reach that energetic integration where we and the environment resonate together, then there is no difference between the sources – the outer source and the inner source resonate in harmony – creating a creative connection. Don Oscar refers to something similar as, “Creativity creating creation,” which is a beautiful corollary to spooky action at a distance.

Let’s go a little deeper. A double-blind study is a study in which both the investigator and the participant are blind to, or unaware of, the nature of the treatment the participant is receiving. Double-blind trials are thought to produce objective results, since the expectations of the researcher and the participant about the experimental treatment do not affect the outcome. Triple-blind studies are common, too, in which data collectors do not have enough information to impact the research. Blind studies are used to eliminate researcher or subject bias, be it intentional or unconscious. Consequently, researchers are very occupied with assuring intent does not adulterate experiments. Their actions support the idea, or fear, that intent is a force to be reckoned

with. So while double and triple blind experiments guard against the possibility that experiments can be manipulated by the conscious or unconscious bias of researchers and subjects, the Law of Inverse Squares “confirms” intent is not strong enough to have any real impact.

Wow. Imagine that. Although unconscious bias may influence scientific results, science won’t acknowledge that conscious intention influences reality. No wonder laughter is good medicine. The double talk is hilarious.

But there is even more to it than that. One of the most profound scientific discoveries of the last millennium occurred in 1999. Basically, through repeatable experiments, it was scientifically validated that the answer to the question, “Is the observer effect real?” is an unequivocal “Yes.” This means it has been documented that the person who observes scientific experiments impacts the results. This is known as Bell’s Theorem. In other words, all of us impact reality. Quantum physicists, theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, the Dalai Lama, Louis Armstrong and many others agree. When we use this power within sacred space, we can have far reaching and multi-dimensional impacts.

### 3

---

#### In the beginning...

*“Let the water ground you.”*

Thoth

**M**y first time in a sweat lodge I was with a Lakota named Wallace Black Elk and about fifteen other people. As we sat quietly in the dark, Wallace said, “When you come in here, you are in kindergarten.” I immediately thought, ‘Aw, c’mon, Wallace. I’m at least in first grade.’ I thought I was that spiritually advanced. He kept talking as the hot, red-orange glowing lava rocks were brought in. The lodge warmed up, but I did not understand real heat until the lodge was closed and Wallace poured water on the rocks and steam hit my body. I remember thinking, “Oh, my god. This is what they are talking about!” The native people sang, but I couldn’t breathe. I thought the skin would blister off my back. How could he do this to a first grader?

I now realize Wallace was being kind when he said we were in kindergarten. These days I don’t feel I’ve passed pre-school. And for that, I am eternally grateful to him. There is so much to learn.

The world is very kind to me, too, to absorb my delinquency and truancy, for I’ve been less than a dedicated learner of the mysteries and possibilities so generously offered me. It’s taken me years and many sweats to begin to understand the *ceremony* of the sweat lodge, the *inipi*, which means breath of life. This book is not about the *inipi* either, but it is about sacred space, which spiritual ceremony enlivens.

Around the same time I met Wallace, I met Jack Schwarz. I write about Jack a bit later, so won’t say much about him now other than he was highly revered as an intuitive and psychic by his students, whom he amazed, and by scientists who studied him. I will share my first meeting with him now, though.

My good friend and business partner, Sandy, with whom I owned

and operated a martial arts studio, saw Jack one night at one of Jack's public lectures. Sandy called me the next day and said, "I met don Juan!"

I thought, 'What the hell?'

Sandy said Jack Schwarz was like don Juan, of Carlos Castaneda fame, and Sandy wanted me to go with him to Jack's lecture that night and take Jack out for coffee. According to Sandy, Jack wowed the audience the night before with his perceptions of people's energy fields and Sandy knew he had found a "real McCoy" at last. I didn't think there was a chance of Jack going for coffee with us, but Sandy and I went to the lecture. This was a few days after I had a rare telephone call with one of my sisters, who really wanted to know why I lived as I did. I was somewhat reclusive at the time.

To my surprise, Jack and his wife had coffee with Sandy and me that night. Sandy and Jack did most of the talking, but then Jack turned to me and said in his thick Dutch accent, "Vell, Steve, you don't say much, but I can see there's a lot going on there. As a matter of fact, I would say you like trees better than you like people."

I looked at him aghast. He gave me an amused look I would come to know well. That was exactly word-for-word what I had told my sister on the phone several days earlier, not the type of thing one says in casual conversation. Jack had my attention from then on and with good reason. Over the years I watched him continually baffle people with his abilities to perceive intricacies of their energy field, without ever indulging intimacies. He didn't say general things that would apply to just anyone. There was a lot of "you like trees better than people" specific stuff. I also saw him demonstrate his own ability to rapidly heal himself. His demonstrations and explanations taught me a lot.

Sandy and I both studied and worked with Jack at his Health, Education and Research Training – H.E.A.R.T. – Center near Ashland, Oregon. I also co-authored one of Jack's books titled *It's not what you eat, but what eats you!*

But my heart clamored for Montana, so I left Oregon and ultimately settled in Bozeman. Montana was losing population at the time. I had no idea that meant the economy was in the toilet. I was unfazed. I told myself, "I can write. I can teach. I can work construction." I had no idea I would have to do all three at the same time. I consistently worked 60 to 80 hours a week. I was a spiritual

being having a financial collapse. It stressed a weak marriage that ultimately dissolved. There was no sacred space. No getting right with the world. And no getting right with each other.

1999 was a rough year. Despondent over my divorce, likely more due to ego than lost love, I had also lost my job when the herbal company of which I was general manager sold, and I broke my back on Valentine's Day doing squats. I was down and drinking heavily again. I needed something to move me in the right direction. In June, friends got me in touch with Jim Miller, a Lakota spiritual leader from Porcupine, South Dakota. He invited me to participate in a *hanbleceya*, a vision quest. After several years of going on the hill, as it's also known, I began to Sun Dance with Jim and others. I danced for seven years and assisted for at least four more, at which time I felt my commitment was complete.

Some people have amazing experiences on the hill or during Sun Dance. To be struck by lightning is among the most profound. This is an honor, a sign of acceptance by the Thunder Beings for a special role. There is evidence some indigenous people harnessed lightning, directing it into the earth to fertilize the soil and to create atmospheric conditions conducive to health. They knew how to create all they needed from a union of the earth and sky. Ceremony teaches us to develop this union in physical and nonphysical ways.

I haven't been hit by lightning yet, but I saw and heard spirits, heard native children laughing who lived at least a hundred years ago, and witnessed the screams and destruction of an Indian village of which I was a part when soldiers attacked it. These may be interesting, but the real thing is how ceremony begins to infiltrate day-to-day behavior.

First, it is important to understand that Jim Miller was not always a spiritual leader. A product of the reservation system and Indian boarding schools, Jim experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, drug abuse and cultural depredations. A decorated Vietnam Combat veteran, he also was in the federal prison system after being captured by U.S. Marshals following a shootout at Wounded Knee in 1973. His story has evolved from hate, anger, pain, addiction, violence and hopelessness to love and compassion. The risks he took to open his ceremonies to all people are evidence that he truly walks the Red Road: the road of consciousness and strength. His experiences shaped mine through reconciliation with others, as well as with my own heart.

In my first sweat with Jim, he gave those of us who would go on the hill instructions on how to prepare. The preparations included getting materials needed for the *hochoka*, the sacred altar space. These preparations protect a person when on hanbleceya. I needed to understand I was going before forces and spirits normally not sensed during daily Western life. Being exposed in such a way during days of fasting and prayer calls these powers in. Just exactly what they may do, one never knows. Hence, one must prepare for anything. Jim runs hot sweat lodges, too. That did not dissuade me, so after the lodge, I went home and got ready to go on the hill.

A week later, we met Jim for another lodge right before we went up. It was even hotter. Knowing I would be without water for up to four days made me more attached to the sweat flowing from my pores. Jim said someone would get us when it was time to come down, and we'd go back into the lodge for another purification. There, we'd say whatever we wanted, then have a meal and a shower.

I soon realized how much support we receive in ceremony. The support – which is the energetic support of a greater collective, connected consciousness – came through family supporters, spirits, sights, sounds, feelings, dreams and perceptions. Despite the support, I suffered. I spent hours kneeling in my hochoka with my face to the ground. There were moments of pure bliss, too. Moonlight. Starlight. Incredible peace. One night I was kept company by the most beautiful bird sounds I'd ever heard. When Jim came to get us, I asked him what kind they were.

He shook his head in disbelief and quietly said, "Birds."

'Ohhhhh,' I thought to myself as the light came on, 'they were spirits.'

My hardest hanbleceya was when I was alone on the west face of the Bridger Mountains in Montana in July 2010. I had some shade, but it was really hot. It was the only vision quest during which I did not recover during the night. What made matters worse was that my hochoka was above a cool mountain stream I heard below. Thirst was truly maddening.

Why do this? To show the spirits we are serious about the vows we make, whether they are for us personally, for loved ones or for something else. Basically, we ask for two things: help and health. Engaging in ceremony can bring about the space and conscious action

more conducive to fulfilling such requests and living our life's purpose. Central to all of this is the ceremonial space in which we offer heartfelt and heartfelt gratitude for what we have received to be where we are at that moment in time and space.

Enter don Oscar Miro-Quesada. Don Oscar is a Peruvian shaman and so much more. I first heard don Oscar speak during a webinar with Barbara Marx Hubbard in 2012 and thought, 'He seems authentic.' Consequently, my antennae were strongly activated, to discern if he was what he seemed to be. When I heard don Oscar was going to do an online shaman course, I thought, 'Oh, no. Not you, too.' I was dismayed he would disseminate his knowledge that way. But I soon had another thought. 'Well, if anything is going to be transmitted through the online ethers, it may as well be shamanism.' So, I enrolled. Later don Oscar expressed the same misgivings about teaching online, and then had the same change of heart, so to speak. Although I immediately accepted his information, I still was not sure about the man. I have authority issues.

The real test came the first time don Oscar and I met face to face at a retreat he offered to about fifty other people. It was well over a year after my initial virtual encounter with him. I still wasn't sure if he was all he seemed. Early one morning I went into our altar room without anyone there. I had no preconception or thought. I just wanted to be there alone. Once inside, I was encompassed by the most embracing, compassionate energy, coming from everyone's personal altars, as well as don Oscar's altars.

'This is real,' I thought. 'This can't be faked.' I felt sacred space before, but never like that.

Things got more real. Late one evening, don Oscar led us on a shamanic journey of death and rebirth. I soon was joined by one of my animal allies ~ a cougar. I became one, too. We ran together through the night desert. Once we stopped at a frozen waterhole. I saw our images reflected in the ice. We scratched it up with our claws. Then I was on my own. I ran. And I killed. I killed every animal I came across. I ran them down. I ambushed them from the trees. Every kill was like catnip on steroids to me. I reveled in knowing everything was afraid of and ran from me. Consumed by and confident in my power I attacked a grizzly bear. I jumped on his back. I hooked my claws into his muscles and sunk my teeth into his neck so deeply I felt his fur in the

back of my throat. Retractable claws have to be one of the greatest adaptations in nature. Then a funny thing happened. He killed me so fast I have no idea how he did it. He buried me under a pile of leaves and loose dirt. I was dead. Deader than dead. Nothing. I completely decomposed into a void.

At some point I heard don Oscar's voice telling us to come back. I didn't want to. Somehow I reassumed my human form and became aware of lying on the floor. I finally sat up. Each person in the room seemed to be in a various state of return. What eventually brought me back to full consciousness were really stinky feet. The smell came from the man sitting to my left. I wondered why I didn't notice it before. I discreetly leaned toward him, only to find the smell was not coming from his feet. It was coming from the woman on my right and getting worse. I leaned toward her to make sure I had found the offender, but no, the smell wasn't coming from her either. I looked down at my feet. 'No!' I thought. As I bent over to check mine out, my nose passed over my cougar tooth necklace. That was it! I had decomposed so completely my cougar tooth necklace smelled rotten. I had to get out of there. I went to my room as quickly as possible.

The smell was nasty. My chest reeked, so maybe it came from the inside of me. I thought my heart had gone bad. I put Florida Water on the tooth and more on my chest, then showered. By morning the tooth was only faintly offensive, but I noticed some of the outer enamel was gone, which may be a testimony to the realness of the experience.

Thus began a more committed relationship to don Oscar and what it is I am supposed to do. For me, the lessons have come more from reflection rather than revelation. Voices or visions are not necessarily important. What is important is how the impact of ceremonial experience builds over time as one takes appropriate action. I have highlighted some of those impacts below. Each is offered more fully in subsequent pages and how they support a life of ayni and magic.

