



Ancient Teachings for the Modern World

by Dianna Hightower

Chequeesh Auh-ho-oh shares her eleven-hour teachings for spiritual activists in a hurry.

Sacred Spirit, thank you for all the fullness and riches and the beauty and the joy and the power that is in everything that we have.

We give back to you gratitude and sacred service.

If there is anything that needs to be said, if there is anything that needs to be done, I ask you, I offer myself in service, please use me. Allow me to help in any way I can for the highest good body, my soul I give back to you. Hlo Mitakuye Oyasin.

I Purify my mind that I might see the truth; my eyes so that I might see the truth.

I purify my mind and mouth that all that comes from this place will be truth.

I purify my heart for it is in this place that I know truth.

I purify my being that I may sit in sacred manner with you all.

Dianna Hightower: I notice that you're using an unusual clay bowl to burn your sage in as opposed to the traditional abalone shell. Where did it come from?

Chequeesh Auh-Ho-Oh: This sweet thing? Isn't it wonderful! It was a gift from two little children, Maya and Celeste, part of my adopted family. Can you imagine these children taking clay that they made themselves by reaching into Mother Earth and molding this clay with their own little hands? Then they fired it in a garbage can and gave it to me. Talk about transformation!

DH: The world seems to be going through remarkable changes at a very rapid pace, more so than ever before in our history. Can we talk about this time and what you see happening?

CA: There has never been a richer time than this that I can imagine because the flood gates to the wisdom of the four directions, to every culture, every religious form and spiritual perspective are available to us. Like a great feast it's laid before us because as humanity we have evolved to a place of either imminent destruction - a cessation of the great gift - or the other side, which is a breakthrough of the darkness of fear and doubt, the desolation of alienation and a sense of being separate. Never before have so much of the waters been released for us to drink from. That's the gist of this incredibly exciting, deep, serious and joyful time. The elders say there is no more dry ground for anyone because of this river that is flowing so full and so fast. And that the people will experience this river in two very different ways. Those who know great suffering will feel as if they're being torn apart because they are trying to hold on to the shore.

DH: Meaning old ways?

CA: ...old ways, old forms, expectations of themselves and others, the sense of hierarchy - holding on to power, by those who are egocentric and think the world revolves around them and don't see themselves as an exquisite fragment in the great body of God.

On the other hand, those who will know great joy and companionship and celebration are those who even in fear will push off into the river and let go and let God... do their best and surrender the rest. We can only be responsible for our best. Anything that happens beyond that should be considered learning and knowing. I remember someone said, "Oh, please let all my mistakes be as fertilizer." Be in the river and keep your head above water and your eyes open.

DH: How do we do that?

CA: There are vision quests available to people all over are having the most extraordinary visitation by spirit, but we mustn't carry it

around like some special banner and give ourselves title because we have that which is available to everyone and which is happening to so many people. It's a time of the great turn around, a time of transmutation of straw into gold. It is the time that the coal lying deep in the ground that has been experiencing enormous pressure and stress transmutes to the diamond (something that reflects pure light and has clarity). The lessons are in nature. And if you don't understand the nature of things... if you can't go out and talk to a plant or sit for a long time and observe an anthill or an animal feeding somewhere then you don't know shamanism. You don't know true transformation because you're out of touch with the signature of God and the laws of nature, which govern everything. Anything else is artificial.

DH: The word shaman is being used quite a bit recently. What is it to you?

CA: I don't know. I shy away from using the word at all anymore because I think it's lost its meaning. It is no longer a pure form. The use of the word has been without education and almost irresponsibly used. A shaman... well, let's not talk about titles. Let's talk about us and our responsibilities now to be a part of the transformative process for earth consciousness and for the survival and continuation of life.

I trust people who say they want to serve. If one is truly into the work of serving and helping to heal, he or she will help to transform from negative, non-creative, even destructive energy into the light, into food for all. Like Sun Bear says, "If it doesn't grow corn, I'm not interested." If in our serving people we create a dependency, then we are doing a disservice. We are weighing ourselves down with baggage and robbing others of their ability to contact their own power and be self-sustaining. Show me someone who brings



plenty where there has been hunger, consolation where there has been pain, celebration and prayer where there has been desolation; someone who plants seeds in the ground and nurtures something to grow, whether it is in an earthly ground or a personal soil., one's own body, one's own life. Then I think we're talking shamanism.

DH: Basically we can all be shamans; we have the potential and the power and the responsibility to heal.

CA: Absolutely. So I think we need to dump the word "shaman" and take on the joy of participation in the medicine wheel and sharing our truths. And listening... learning to do sacred listening. Then we get closer instead of being sidetracked in the astral, in titles and in needing to be recognized and having our authority recognized. When we continue to create or perpetuate hierarchies, then we are running counter to what this age is bringing us which is a reclamation of our own authority, of our ability to heal and our absolute ability to know God ourselves without an intermediary. Sure we have teachers, but when we really become enlightened, we realize that our teacher is every single person we pass on the road, especially the ones that make us exceedingly uncomfortable.

I'm interested in the claiming, the discovery, the love, the embrace... yes, the embrace of one's own sweet divinity. There is a humility that comes with that exaltation which is honor and respect for everyone because that seed of the infinite, the perfect, the inexplicable divine life force is in everybody.

Even the fool has a great lesson for us.

DH: How can those of us who are city dweller create a greater closeness to nature?

CA: Learn to care for a plant. Experience a deep personal relationship with it from gathering a seed to preparing the ground to talking to that seed. It holds within it a life force. The entire completed and matured plant is held within this incredible seed. Take the metaphor of the redwood tree and its seed that lies on the ground until fire comes and opens it up and causes it to grow.

Did you know that the redwood tree propagates itself by sending up little runners that are born of the original tree? It is so immense and so huge and yet it lives on surface water so its roots are extremely shallow. The manner in which the redwood tree has evolved to protect itself in storms, because they're extremely vulnerable to storm, it that it grows in a circle. Underneath the ground very close to the surface all of these roots, like a tribe or clan or family, have woven together and hold onto one another. When a storm comes and hits a tree, they have anchored themselves to one another and all their roots are entwined and that's how they hold up.

DH: Manifesting their own support?

CA: Yes! And that's what we must do. Now a fire comes and the fire destroys the tree's ability to reproduce itself by sending up from its own roots. But it has been dropping its cones and seeds on the ground which will lie there for years and years and be inactive until a fire comes.

The very fire that destroys the tree is the catalyst for breaking open the seed. Now the seeds become activated only by fire so that always there is life... always there is a seed group left over.

Perhaps it is like the Hopi say, that when the third world was ended, the earth washed itself clean and there was a seed group that went under and into the earth, then emerged, led by the messenger Maasauu.

DH: So, being in touch with the seeds and plants and herbs which grow on Mother Nature are all a part of the transformation and healing process?

CA: Yes, everyone should be a little bit of an herbalist. There are parks to walk in, there are beaches to go to. Everyone has foothills or a mountain. And, God bless, some of the most important medicinal and survival food plants are in vacant lots. All over San Francisco and Berkeley (and in many other cities) the marsh mallow plant (*malva sylvestris*) is coming up through the cracks in the sidewalk, wherever it can get through. It feeds the immune system, energizes, purifies, regenerates the immune system powerfully as well as being remarkable food that's filled with many vitamins.

It could be a perfect food for the prevention and treatment of AIDS. You don't go after the disease, you empower the body. The immune system is the doctor within. You make the individual strong because we are, within our own body, our own hospital, our own doctor. Constantly there's stuff that goes through our systems that could make us very ill, but the body is always working, every second. That's why we must love our

bodies, no matter what they may look like. We must care for them because they're this miraculous doctor that never quits until it gets overloaded or until it begins to lack in compensation and the well runs dry, otherwise it's constantly rebalancing and healing us.

So, let us say you live in an apartment, fifty stories up. Well, the first thing I'd suggest is getting back down on the ground. Nobody should live that far off the ground. Begin the process for change and for confirmation and consolation. It comes from nature, from all of our relations that the Creator gave us that's been revolving with us since the beginning of time.

So, you get a pot and prepare the soil. Clean it with your hands - get into it. If you've been feeling scattered and ungrounded, reach deep into that earth and smell the soil. There is no tranquilizer that will ever be created that will give you the immediate grounding, calming centering effect of smelling earth. You want to get grounded? Smell earth. Wear some.

If you think you're going around the bend, think you're disconnected, dig a little hole in the ground big enough for your nose and press your belly and breasts and thighs and palms of your hands to the great Mother and stick your nose in that hole and breathe earth. It works instantly! So, you have this dirt. Touch every bit of that soil in the cleaning process and you'll already begin to get better. Then choose the plant. Find out what plant will work in your environment. Your life will begin to open up as you begin to explore and ask of others who are doing the work that they love. Find a plant that you can love because of its color, its scent or because of its food, but something that you can relate to.

Then, make a ceremony. Say a prayer, sing a song, hold the force of this life within your hands. Make a hole in the dirt and place the plant in it. Pat it over and begin to keep company with this seed and this soil. Nature it; water it.

As you do this, the plant becomes the metaphor for your own life. As the seed begins to grow, open, seek the light and become more that which it will be, so it is happening in your

own life. Let this plant be your process as well. It will teach you everything you need to know. I don't think there is a greater teacher in all life than a single plant. We learn to slow down and observe. We learn to know wonder and gratitude. It's from a place of gratitude that all true wealth is experienced.

DH: Let's talk a little about wealth. I've recently heard the expression "right livelihood." What does that mean to you and what part does it play in our lives now?

CA: This business of accepting money for spiritual things, well, there really is no division between physical and spiritual. It must become all spiritual and if we use the lessons of nature to tell us, we'll get it. Seeds aren't going to grow unless somebody waters them and there is this symbiotic relationship. You take care of someone and they take care of you, then you can continue caring. We must all take care of each other.

With all those drinking at the well, if there was no water coming back in to replenish the well, it would soon run dry. Who does that serve?

Right livelihood is a wonderful term. There is a direction in teaching the Tslagi dance of life, what I call the 7-point empowerment and balancing prayer. In the West, one of the things that's experienced and that you begin to manifest is your spiritual life and your spiritual gifts manifesting your right livelihood. We go through a lot to be able to be of some resource to other human beings and there is an exquisite compensation. It's not pain; it is supporting those who have water for you to drink.

DH: Again symbiotic.

CA: Absolutely

DH: Will you talk a little about medicine wheels?

CA: The medicine wheel is everything. Think of it, everything on our human body and immediately around us is a medicine wheel. All the roundnesses: our eyes to see, our nostrils which take in breath, our mouths, our ears which take in sound. Cells are round; veins are round; the heart is a whole bunch of roundnesses; and hair follicles are round. Our pupils are circles within circles.

Then, think of the cycle of one's life: conception, gestation, birth

and death. Also the medicine wheels are the separate components, each a truth in itself that fits together to make the whole. There is no mystery about medicine wheels. A medicine wheel is all the things that we must experience step-by-step in order to come to fullness and completion. A medicine wheel gathering could be any accumulation of conscious being who come bearing their truths. Now if only one person talks and the rest listen, that's not really a medicine wheel. Unless at that point on a medicine wheel you're into just listening. But for me a true medicine wheel gathering and a mending of the sacred hoop - which was broken because we stopped listening to each other and the truths became fragmented - is repairing that fragmentation by coming together in a circle where there is no one higher or lower, no one first or last, no beginning or end. It is complete unto itself and each person is a component of the sacred alchemy of that circle and each is allowed to speak their truth. Everyone speaks, and everyone learns to listen.

Twylaah Nitsch Wehwehnode, a Seneca grandmother on the Cataraugus Indian Reservation on the East Coast, teaches about medicine wheels. She has amazing, remarkable earth walks. She says that American Indian people have what is called an earth walk chart. Although it has to do with the time of birth, it's not based on the stars. Now, I believe I came in at either trust or love. Boy, did I have to learn those. She teaches how to chart your medicine wheel and your earth walk. I recommend to those with an interest in charting an Earth walk that they contact Twylaah of the Wolf Clan teaching lodge (Seneca Indian Historical Society, 12199 Brandt, Reservation Road, Irving, New York 14081) and perhaps in some way contribute to her lodge being able to continue, in exchange for the Earth walk knowledge.

I think that we must be very, very stupid compared to the ancient ones, because they lived in a tribal way yet realized that they were part of the whole and what was an experience for one became an experience for everyone. Our elders passed down to us - generation, to generation, to generation - what they

learned and what they had seen and what their elders had shared with them. They did this not as a lecture but as a sharing of experience in parable and personal history.

Everything can be challenged and tested. I don't talk about things for believers. A person must test, must try, must discover what is their own truth. Otherwise you will never know. If you go by somebody else's truth and experience, you will own nothing and you will be dependent on that person forever.

DH: What can you share with us about our present service here on Earth?

CA: We all must be like pioneers right now, starting all over again from scratch. We're discon-

nected from our elders. Our parents talked at us – not with us. We probably did ourselves a great disservice, but out of emotional survival we learned not to listen. So, we come absolutely naked... no sacred clothing that has been woven by our ancestors to wear to protect us and help us shine.

DH: But if we believe many of the ancient teachings, don't we have it all inside of us already?

CA: Yes, but we can have access to it much faster once we realize that everything is scared and start behaving that way.

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tion. She also studied the Zen Buddhist, Tantric and Taoist ways. She studied with the Hopi, being trained by tribal "keepers of the flame" and the San Carlos Apaches. She was trained as a midwife and herbalist and is the mother of three children. CheQueesh can be reached at Box 51580, Pacific Grove, CA 93950.

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