

SEEING THE VOICES OF YOUR HEART: THE VISIONARY AND ARTISTIC FOUNDATIONS OF TRIBAL EDUCATION

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In the unfolding of indigenous Tribal Education, the visionary and artistic contexts share a mutually reciprocal relationship. Indeed, they inter-penetrate one another in their sharing and elaboration of the same vision, image and creative response. Their forms of expression may differ but their meaning always stem from the same myths - spiritual roots of a tribe. Both reflect and honor an inner alchemy of the visionary/artist whose task becomes that of representing, sharing and/or celebrating the "dream", the essence whose spirit, thought and action transforms both visionary/artist and user in some significant way...through the communication of some significant meaning. And in keeping with the underlying purpose of Alchemy of "bringing to completion or perfection an inherently natural process of development and learning," Vision and Art reflect the reality of humans as imaginative and fully creative beings.

The tracks of Vision and Art trace directly back to the realm of dream and myth as the origin of motivation and creative expression. The first visionary, the first artist was none other than the first human, who sanctified and legitimized his/her vision by dream and myth.

"The Blackfoot Indians tell us that it was Old Man who showed them how to make everything they needed. 'Always at the bottom there is a divine revelation, a divine act, and man has only the bright idea of copying it'... The first god-begotten hero- king of all nations and races- like Osiris in Egypt and Quetzalcoat in Mexico, was the one who taught the arts and showed people how to make tools." ("Alchemy and Craft," Parabola Vol..3, Nov..3, Aug..., 1978, p.24)

Indeed, it is to the "first Shaman" that the guiding visions, the sacred arts, the knowledge of medicine, hunting, building, learning and living in one's environment are usually ascribed. The shaman was the first dreamkeeper, the first artist, the first hunter, the first doctor, the first dancer, singer and teacher. And while the shaman personified the archetypal visionary and artist, the visionary and artist are potentials which abide in each and every one of us, every man, every woman and every child. Tribal people understood and honored this "potential", this "calling" as an integral part of being and becoming complete. Through encouragement, through ritual, through training and practice, tribal people formed and guided this reflection of the divine in each other.

This lecture follows the tracks of the visionary/artist of indigenous tribal America. The first track reveals the nature of dream and vision as viewed through the eyes and words of American Indian visionaries and artists, both past and present. The second tracks explores the central role of vision in the context of tribal educative endeavors. The third track reflects on the alchemy of the creative process from the perspective of transformation and orientation. The fourth track enters the realm of the Ceremony of Art as both a process and context for deep learning and understanding among Indigenous peoples.

From each of the aforementioned tracks radiate concentric rings which overlap not only the other tracks but the previous foundation of myth, which is the other complementary dimension of the inter-connected triad of the "Winter" (Yin) portion of Indigenous education. The triad of myth, vision and art echo the other foundations of the environment, affective and communal, which form the "Summer" (Yang) portion of indigenous Education.