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Minding *the* Animal Psyche

My Father was a Bear: Human-Animal Transformation in Native American Teachings

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In the last analysis, most of our difficulties come from losing contact with our instincts, the age-old forgotten wisdom stored up in us. — C. G. Jung[1]

In the very earliest time,
when both people and animals lived on earth,
a person could become an animal if he wanted to
and an animal could become a human being.
Sometimes they were people
and sometimes animals
and there was no difference.
All spoke the same language.
That was the time when words were like magic.
The human mind had mysterious powers.
A word spoken by chance
might have strange consequences.
It would suddenly come alive

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and what people wanted to happen could happen—
all you had to do was say it.
Nobody could explain this:
That's the way it was.
—Linda Hogan[2]

My father was a bear. Not a teddy bear type of bear, no, he was a big, brown, muscular bear who lived in the forest—the thick, dense, old growth forest—and he knew this environment well. He knew which rivers and lakes offered the best fish, he knew the deer trails and locations of other bears' dens, he knew where the plumpest and juiciest berry bushes could be found, and he could sniff out the finest line of ginseng root in all the forest's floor. He was a fine fisher, a skilled hunter, and a keen gatherer. These skills were handed down to him from a long line of impressive bears. In fact, he came from the original bear: the great light-colored ancestral underground bear of the Menominee Indians.

The Menominee origin story tells of a time when Grandfather created spirit beings in the forms of animals and birds before there were people on this earth. One day, at a place where the Village River streams into the Bay In Spite of Itself (present day Green Bay, Wisconsin), a great light-colored bear emerged from the underworld and started traveling up river. The great bear spoke to Grandfather and when Grandfather saw that the bear was still an animal, he determined to *allow the bear to change his form*. So the great ancestral bear changed into human form and became the first Menominee. While on his journey, the great ancestral bear met other spirit beings: Golden Eagle, Beaver Woman, Moose, Wolf, and Crane. He asked them if they would join him and become his brothers and sisters. Each was also granted the ability to change into human form and they thus formed the first major clans of the Menominee people.[3]

I direct readers to view these first Menominee clans, the "little Menominee," as symbolically carved out of the trees of the Menominee forest by Menominee artist James Frechette. Note how the carvings depict the Menominee in transformational transition from animal to human. See: http://www.uwsp.edu/museum/menomineeclans/ (you must click on each individual clan to see the carvings).

Mythic stories and transformation accounts are not uncommon

among the indigenous people of this land. Nor are they mere remnants of the past, holding no use for native people today. You will notice that for the title of this essay, I chose to use the word "teaching" over myth, story, or legend as these latter words seem to imply a made-up fantasy, a falseness. And as Native American activist and scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. points out, "tribal knowledge is often regarded by many educated people as simply 'fun' or 'quaint' because it is so exotic."[4] Native people will argue that their stories, myths, and legends hold truths and teachings for them to live by. While the term "teaching" is my preference, for the sake of variety in the text, I will use all the terms interchangeably.

These teachings continue to instruct the way native people live and interact with animals. Humans' relationship to animals and our participation in their world bring forward our innermost instinctual selves and to honor this intimacy is to return the sacred to the world. Nurturing our relationship with animals through direct communication is our responsibility. "We are in need of an ancient way of being," says Choctaw writer and environmentalist Linda Hogan. "It is through our relationship with animals that we maintain a way of living, a cultural ethics shaped from an ancient understanding of the world, and this is remembered in stories that are the deepest reflections of our shared lives on Earth."[5]

Perhaps the most widely known account of human-animal transformation is that of *Pte-san Win-yan* (White Buffalo Calf Woman) among the Lakota/Dakota/Nakota *oyate* (people). This teaching tells of a spirit woman carrying a sacred bundle who appears before two young scouts. She instructs one of them to go to his people and have them prepare an altar of sage and cherry branches for her return. Once the people had followed these instructions, she returns, singing a song and carrying the sacred bundle. She gives the people the sacred *C'anupa* (pipe) that was in the bundle and instructs them in its meaning and use. She also gives them seven sacred rites to aid them in living a sacred way of life. As she leaves the people, she rolls over four times, each time changing color until she eventually turns into a white buffalo calf. Today the sacred *C'anupa* is under the care of Arvol Looking Horse, 19th generation keeper of the sacred white buffalo calf pipe; and, the seven sacred rites continue to sustain the Lakota/Dakota/Nakota nations.[6]

These accounts, as well as numerous others, are evidence of perhaps

the most intimate relationships experienced by native people with animals over thousands of years. They carry a numinous quality to them. They are sacred. Some estimate that over seventy-five percent of Native American myths include animal characters. Sharing an intimate psychic and physical reality with animals provides insight into how to live in these interdependent relationships. These teachings outline an ethics of behavior that native people have followed, and some continue to follow, in order to maintain healthy relationships with our animal relatives. They teach us how to participate in the world and how to keep respectful, reciprocal relationships with other spirit beings.

The ability to transform into human or animal form might be considered highly suspicious, and one may be tempted to relegate these transformation myths as mere superstitions of a primitive people. However, keep in mind that the point of these teachings isn't whether one can actually, physically, transform into another species, but rather the insight gained as to the interdependent nature of our relationship with animals and the effectiveness of an ethics of behavior for long-term, respectful relationships negotiated with them. Having just written this, however, I would be remiss if I didn't point out that recently among the Iñupiat, an elderly man's body was found after he had been missing from camp. "He was found half-man, half-caribou and 'good, honest, praying people' saw the body." When asked about this, a villager remarked that it was nothing out of the ordinary, that he was simply "doing what Eskimos did long time ago."[7] Then too, there is Calvin Martin's story to consider. Martin had taught a class to incarcerated Eskimos. One of the students handed Martin a paper on which was written: "I am a Puffin!" . . . "I am a puffin," he repeated softly yet firmly, "from my ancestral tree and in blood." Martin described him as "a man who effortlessly negotiated the porous, wafer-thin membrane separating Homo from the Other."[8]

Believing in transformation accounts is a matter of ascendancy, according to Vine Deloria, Jr. who, in *C.G. Jung and the Sioux Traditions,* wrote: "it is only the assumption of superiority that allows western readers to doubt such an account."[9]

> Regardless of what Indians have said concerning their origins, their migrations, their experiences with birds, animals, lands . . . the scientists have maintained a stranglehold on the definitions of what respectable and reliable human experiences are. The

> Indian explanation is always cast aside as a superstition, precluding Indians from having an acceptable status as human beings, and reducing them in the eyes of educated people to a pre-human level of ignorance.[10]

Indeed, as Jerome Bernstein carefully demonstrates in his book *Living in the Borderland*, a fundamental separation and assumed domination of western man over animals seems to have been explicitly mandated in Genesis, the first book of the Hebrew Bible. Bernstein provides three common, dominant interpretations of the scripture where man is given directive to *rule* over the whole earth, have *dominion* and subdue everything that moves on the earth, and *conquer* all the animals living in sea, in air, and on earth.[11] Bernstein maintains that a split in Western ego consciousness developed from these directives and that this split has had a hold on the Western ego for at least three and half millennia. He writes,

> One primary goal of the new consciousness commanded in Genesis was the development of a *new psychic construct in human evolution*. Pointedly, the goal was the development of this unique ego structure. "Dominion over the earth" was to be the means to that end. I am suggesting that the underlying goal was not the simple control of the earth, but a *boundaried* and *contained* ego based on logic and the *logos* principle. *This* ego, unlike the ego merged-with-nature that preceded it, would elevate logic and left-brain thinking to the exclusion of the arational, the irrational, and the transrational, and the right-brain functioning. It was to become an ego that would hold logic and rational process as superior and more real than feeling and intuition. It would consider any reality other than rationality as being inferior and less real.[12]

It comes as no surprise then that this assumed superiority over nature and animals by Western Europeans allowed for the over killing of many species, driving them to near extinction. The fur trade nearly exterminated the beaver, and the desire for buffalo hides caused the uncontrolled slaughter of over 50 million buffalo. While some scholars would ascribe the wildlife decimation to Indians, Calvin Martin's work on the fur trade tells another story. Martin carefully examines what the fur trade meant to Indians from within their own cultural context, a perspective sorely lacking in previous literature. By exposing the

"Western bourgeois'" imposition of their marketplace theory and their assumption that "impotent aboriginal technology" was inadequate, Martin shows how these explanations were used to discredit a hunting and gathering way of life and undermine a traditional religious belief system. Instead, Martin explains,

> The single most important deterrent to excessive hunting, . . . was the fear of spiritual reprisal for indiscreet slaughter. Prior to European influence, these Indians of the Canadian forest were on amicable terms with the spirits of the game, . . . and it was the vivid, daily awareness of this courteous relationship which more than anything else precluded overkill.[13]

It also comes as no surprise that how European immigrants historically have treated native people has striking similarities with how they treated animals. In G.A. Bradshaw's work with elephants, she notes the twin genocides of wildlife and Indians and the similar treatment elephants and Indians share. "Both elephants and indigenous peoples have formed an Other in the eyes of the colonizers—appealing to their dominators because of their desired qualities and annihilated for some of the self-same qualities."[14] Like animals, native people were viewed as less sophisticated, "primitive,"[15] and inferior, and massacres against them were common. Just as buffalo robes were a valuable commodity, money could also be gained by proving an Indian had been killed. To receive payment, one needed only provide the "redskins" of the hunted natives. The need for land also provides evidence of the similar treatment natives and animals endured by their European neighbors. Natives have been forcibly removed, relocated, and allotted to live on undesirable lands, ultimately restricted to small reservations. Likewise, many animals today no longer have a natural habitat to live in and instead are restricted to small unnatural environments: zoos, circuses, pens, cages, and worse.

What we see in western culture is a strong dissociation due to its assumed superiority over, and separation from, nature and its own natural instinct. Jung also recognized this:

> Our intellect has created a new world that dominates nature, and has populated it with monstrous machines. . . . Man is bound to follow the exploits of his scientific and inventive mind and to admire himself for his splendid achievements. At the same time,

> he cannot help admitting that his genius shows an uncanny tendency to invent things that become more and more dangerous, because they represent better and better means for wholesale suicide.[16]

Gregory Cajete, Tewa, describes the dissociation in this way:

> The once sacred Earth community that nurtures human life has become "outside," a place filled with malevolent natural forces that must be controlled or otherwise guarded against. Fear, control, and exploitation of the "outside" or the other as enemy is deeply embedded in the psychology of Western society. To this end, much of modern science and technology has been mobilized to guard against or to war against the other, be it a mountain, a forest people, a religion, or a world of insects.[17]

For native people, this "war on nature is a war on the psyche, a war on the soul,"[18] and not only on the human soul, but on the animals' as well. In her keynote address at the Global Forum on Environment and Development for Survival, Audrey Shenandoah, Onondoga Clan Mother, explains "there is no word for 'nature' in my language. Nature, in English, seems to refer to that which is separate from human beings. It is a distinction we don't recognize."[19] Yet this distinction persists in western ideologies. It is engrained in psychology, environmental policy, education, and most other fields.

The belief that animals also have soul is embedded in most traditional native views. Interestingly, Deloria points out that the buffalo nickel, which has an Indian profile on one side and a buffalo on the other, "curiously represents the Sioux Indians' belief that in a higher cosmic dimension they and the buffalo are one spirit, split into two separate entities upon taking physical form."[20] And that "first and foremost in the Sioux mind was the idea that other creatures were 'peoples' like us."[21] For the Osages, the closest living relatives in this world are their sisters and brothers, the buffalo and the corn.[22] For the Menominee, the animal clan you are born into is your brother or sister. Native people make less of a distinction between human, animal, and spiritual realities. These realities interpenetrate one another and share a common heritage. Transformation teachings then, and other native myths that include animal characters, are critical to honoring our shared realities. These stories help us "take back the soul, the anima, which

has stepped away from our bodies and hidden in fear from what it has witnessed and endured. It is through such relationships that we return to a respect and love for life and other species."[23]

The relationship of humans to animals as outlined in the Genesis creation story, and as evidenced in events of history, differs markedly from those delineated in native creation stories. Whereas Western Europeans assumed human superiority over animals, natives viewed animals as their equals and acknowledged relationships that were reciprocal. It is common in native creation stories that humans were among the last creatures created, after animals had already been engaging in the world. In fact, "it is believed that the animal nature helped to create humans and that animals have always served as humanity's mentors in coming to know the nature of the world."[24] Humans therefore did not assume any special status above animals. Rather, being the youngest and most ignorant of living in the world, humans petitioned animals for their friendship and for help with the daily hazards of living in potentially dangerous environments. The Sioux felt that "animals actually chose the people they wanted as human companions."[25] In general, American Indians "understand that all life forms not only have consciousness, but also have qualities that are poorly developed or entirely lacking in humans."[26] Therefore, any hierarchy of being that might have existed placed humans at the bottom, in need of guidance and knowledge. Animals were at least equals, as many native cosmologies show, and in some instances, more intelligent than humans, as Kills Straight, member of the Lakota Buffalo Caretakers Cooperative remarks:

> If you communicate with a buffalo you'll see that they're much more intelligent than a human, just that they can't articulate it as humans. Our lives as humans rely on the buffalo, as long as the buffalo live, we can also live. For spiritual reasons we rely on the buffalo and consequently take care of them.[27]

Reciprocity is essential in human-animal relationships. However, Deloria warns that these reciprocal relationships "would be difficult to fit into a Jungian context in which there is not a mutual exchange of knowledge but merely symbolic relationships and the assumption of human superiority and animal inferiority."[28] Transformation and other animal stories illustrate occasions when humans receive items,

knowledge, and specific instructions from animals about living in this world. These might include sacred bundles containing power, herbal remedies for illnesses, songs, dances, and rituals to be remembered and performed, or even admonishments of improper human behavior with demands for corrective action.

Over the years, the relationships native people have with animals have changed. The intimacy that was once typical and common has weakened considerably. Some say this intimacy came to an end when humans began to be disrespectful to animals. Certainly, tribes participated in over killing animals too, in taking more than what they needed, and in violating their covenant with their relatives. Today, in an attempt to reclaim the knowledge shared with us by animals and to strengthen these relationships, more tribal people are returning to culturally informed ways of living in the world. Hunting rituals, ceremonies, dance, and applying tribal worldviews to business ventures all offer ways to rebuild relations with our animal relatives.

Counter-intuitive and contradictory as it first seems, the archetype of the hunter offers a contemporary framework in which to maintain an intimate, direct, and reciprocal relationship with animals. The Hunter of Good Heart, a symbolic metaphor among the Pueblo and found in many other native hunting cultures, represents "a way of living, a way of relating, a way of ethics and proper behavior, the foundation of teaching and learning about the relationship to the animals."[29] The act of hunting brings the hunter and the community into direct contact with the reality of life and death, with the reality of how our lives are dependent on animals, and with the need to maintain proper relationships with them. Hunters understand that animals need to be treated properly and great care taken to perpetuate the covenant created with them. Animals are seen to possess special qualities and powers that they may share with humans if they are treated properly. Therefore, adhering to proper conduct is essential as hunting rituals are reenacted and performed. Hunting rituals cultivate a spiritual quality to the act of hunting as animals are seen as "gifts" that willingly and consciously give themselves to hunters who respect them.

> When a buffalo is killed, traditionally there is a ceremony. In Lakota culture, the Buffalo Kill Ceremony is to offer prayers and talks to the spirit of the animal. Then, and only then will the

> buffalo surrender itself. That is when you can kill a buffalo. To kill incorrectly, the elders say, disrupts life.[30]

I recall a story my father told me about a porcupine who agreed to give its life for food. My father and his uncle were out collecting firewood in the woods and came upon a porcupine that was high up in a tree. My father's uncle proceeded to talk to the porcupine, make tobacco and prayer offerings to him, and ask him if he might give himself over for food; that he was needed. The uncle then carefully built a small fire at the base of the tree. The porcupine slowly descended whereby the uncle hit him on the head with a piece of wood and took him to my aunt to be used for food. The uncle explained to my father that the porcupine was his brother, that he knew he was needed, and so he sacrificed himself.

Just recently I spent two weeks at home on the reservation. It was a time when my brother and cousins were out hunting everyday. When I asked if they offered tobacco and prayers before their hunt, their reply was immediate, firm, and affirmative. In fact, I was looked at as though I was crazy to ask such a question and was reassured that prayers were also offered on behalf of other hunters. Offerings, prayers of thanksgiving, and other rituals are still made to animals prior to and after a hunt. These rituals are old and are founded upon an understanding of animals' behaviors and ways animals should be properly used and treated. For example, George Tinker, when writing about buffalo, says that buffalo gave "permission to humans to engage in hunting and eating them—as long as the hunting and the consuming was always done in a sacred (i.e., ceremonial) manner."[31] And Lame Deer recounted:

> When we killed a buffalo, we knew what we were doing. We apologized to his spirit, tried to make him understand why we did it, honoring with a prayer the bones of those who gave their flesh to keep us alive, praying for their return, praying for the life of our brothers, the buffalo nation, as well as for our own people.[32]

It is also understood that the spirit of the animal is not destroyed when the animal gives itself for food and is taken in a proper way. This is clearly illustrated in a prayer offered at a Northwest Salmon Ceremony:

> Old friends, thank you that we meet alive. Now we pray you, supernatural ones, to protect us from danger, that nothing evil may happen to us when we eat you, supernatural ones, for that is the reason why you have come here, that we may catch you for food. We know that only your bodies are dead here, but your souls come to watch over us when we are going to eat what you have given us to eat now.[33]

But not all native hunters adhere to cultural and behavioral ethics when they hunt. In 1996-1997 several elder grandmothers of the Makah tribe, who themselves came from whaling families, spoke out against their tribe's return to whaling at the International Whaling Commission in Scotland. There was conflict between traditionalists of the tribe and young business leaders who were negotiating contracts for profit. The elders recognized their behavior as a breach of tradition, breaking a spiritual law. "Shooting a whale with a machine gun is not a spiritual way," said one of the elders. A long, well-prepared ceremony is required. They explained that no longer did anyone in their village still have a direct relationship with the whale; that using the argument of "subsistence" was a lie since their people hadn't used or had whale blubber since the early 1900s. Exercising treaty rights, another argument council members made, was also shown false in the way the tribe was sidestepping the law and misrepresenting their intent. Angry council members tried to silence the grandmothers. One woman was hand-delivered a resolution that stated she could not speak about whaling or even make an appearance, or she would be arrested. These elders remind us that long before there were humans and treaties, there were whales; that new considerations must take into account that whales are our elders and that to further endanger them is no longer a human privilege; that we must reckon with the spirit of the whale and reestablish a relationship based on mutual respect.[34, 35]

I offer here my father's story as an example of consequences that can result when a hunter fails to adhere to established cultural and ethical codes of conduct. My father was a skilled hunter. Early in his hunting career he killed a screech owl, the mythic messenger of death to the Menominee. He had the owl stuffed and placed in an upper corner of our living room ceiling. The owl remained perched there for years and as a child I swore I heard it flying about the house at night. One day, my father's aunt came to visit our house. When she saw the

owl in the living room she immediately left the house and demanded my father remove it. She cautioned him that harm would come to him and that she would not return to visit unless the owl was removed. My great aunt, Jane Neconish, was a medicine woman in her own right. She refused to speak English, lived in a one-room dirt floor cabin, knew how to use plants for healing, strictly followed Menominee/ Potowatomie cultural practices, could make fire without flint or matches, and could tell you things before they would actually happen. Because my father refused to remove the owl from our home, my aunt never came to visit us again. If we wanted to see her, we had to go to her.

As a member of the bear clan, my father was forbidden from hunting bear. Unfortunately, he ignored these rules, passing them off as mere superstitions, and insisted on hunting his brother. To make matters worse he sold the bear's gall bladder, violating even more deeply this long-established cultural taboo. As fate would have it, and as my aunt predicted, my father became seriously ill, having to undergo surgery to remove *his own gall bladder*. He then developed diabetes and had several fingers and one of his legs amputated. One time, after one of his surgeries, he had a sudden and clear change of heart about the bear he hunted. He promptly asked my mother to remove all the bear meat we had in our freezer and any other bear parts in our possession. He asked that they be out of the house before he returned home from the hospital. After years of suffering from his disease and on an evening when my mother and father had returned home from a dialysis treatment, my mother noticed that the owl was no longer perched in the living room. Somehow, it had fallen (to this day, no one in the family has figured out how this happened) and was lying on its back behind the television. As she approached the bird, my father stopped her and told her not to touch it, to leave it be. A few hours later my father died suddenly in his bed, lying on his back, in the same position as the owl. When we buried my father, we buried him whole, with his fingers and leg that had been taken from him, in the hopes that his journey would be easier. As for the owl, under strict instruction from tribal elders, my younger brother offered prayers to it and buried it in an appropriate and respectful manner.

Many might take this as purely coincidence: that the owl, the messenger of death, and my father both ended up on their backs, absent

of life, on the same evening. However, similar to Jungian synchronicity, from a Menominee perspective, we understand that this is a teaching; that this tragic event was due to a violation of a covenant between the ancestral bear and his younger human brother. To kill your spirit brother is taboo and doing so will cause harm.

Today hunting has become a multi-million dollar recreational *sport* and since certainly not all native hunters adhere to traditional ways of hunting, tribes have found ways to adapt and yet maintain their values with respect to hunting animals. Many tribes enforce hunting regulations and game management systems. Some tribes allow only one kind of game to be hunted during a season. Regulations restrict the gender of the animal hunted and the number that can be harvested at any given time. Hunters too, in talking with one another about their hunting experiences, informally keep each other "in line" with current (and traditional) hunting behaviors. My cousin explained that when he hunts deer, he doesn't shoot indiscriminately. First, he offers prayers to the animal. Then, when seeing a deer, he ascertains if it is female, if it has babies, if perhaps a buck will be following, and if he has a "kill shot." He explained that he usually avoids killing female deer and he never kills one if she has babies with her. If he doesn't have a "kill shot", he won't fire because the shot will cause the deer never to return to that particular place again and the deer will become skittish and anxious. If he encounters a bear while hunting, he'll shoot his gun in the air to scare the bear away. He doesn't kill for sport. He hunts for food for his family and to maintain a relationship with the animals he hunts.

My brother spoke about another younger hunter who killed a small doe. He explained how other hunters relentlessly teased him. They insisted he had killed one of their dogs rather than a deer. This teasing directly lets the young hunter know that in the future he needs to be much more selective of his kill. Elders too will reprimand hunters for inappropriate behavior, as we saw with the Makah grandmothers. To be reprimanded by an elder in a native community could prove so shaming to the hunter and the hunter's family that he or she may choose to stop hunting altogether. The community will hold this story in collective memory and will call for it, when needed, to serve as a reminder to others who go against cultural ethics.

Hunters are patient observers in their environment. They see, hear, smell, and witness animals interacting with one another and a bond is renewed between the hunter and animal. Hunters share their observations of animal behaviors with family and friends, usually with a keen sense of respect for the animals and with knowledge gained about how to live in community. This deep respect and sharing of experiences has influenced entire communities to fight for the preservation of the land the animals inhabit. Tribes have spent time and resources fighting mining and lumber companies, power plants, and other industries that seek to exploit the resources found on many reservations today. "Who will speak for the wolf?" was a common campaign slogan that tribes in the Midwest used when fighting mining companies in the 1980s and 1990s.

Ceremony is another means by which human-animal relationships continue to be honored. Tribes understand that ancient knowledge can be assessed through proper ceremony and that animals will make themselves and their knowledge available when treated with respect. In particular, medicine men rely on animals when conducting ceremonies. Accounts of medicine men performing ceremonies sometime describe them as metamorphosing into the shape of their animal helper/protector and that this transformation is explained as movement of soul, spirit possession, or knowing how to use "medicine" properly. To the Iñupiat of Alaska, this mobility of soul is as old as time and is referred to as "time out of mind."

Countless ceremonies performed today require animal participation. Whether an animal-calling ritual is enacted, animal hides or bones used, or whether animals appear in visions or dreams imparting knowledge, it remains that information is shared, insight is gained, and relationships are strengthened.

> In ceremonies, birds and animals could substitute for each other and in visions they could transform themselves into each other when the occasion warranted. …we often find several changes from bird to animal to human and back again. People cherished these changes because they gave the vision questing individual an insight into the larger cosmic world of the seen and unseen.[36]

Some ceremonies are essential for the continued survival of our animal relatives. People living on the Menominee reservation set aside

time each spring to celebrate the sturgeon, an ancient fish, sub-clan member to the ancestral bear, and protector of the wild rice beds. The Menominee chose their present day reservation during the treaty-making era, in part, because of the annual sturgeon migration up the Wolf River. Usually in April, people gather at *Namae'o Uskiwamit* (the place where sturgeons come home), as small fingerlings are placed in the river with prayers for their return and continued survival. Then, specific fish dances are performed and songs are sung that speak to the sacred relationship that exists between the Menominee and the sturgeon. A sturgeon is sacrificed and its oil is offered to elders for its medicinal uses and a feast of sturgeon ends the day's ceremony. The Menominee are committed to restoring the sturgeon to their original homelands and are dedicated to maintaining an environment that not only welcomes their brother home, but also keeps him there.

Ceremonies are also enacted when the need arises. In 1997, after years during which hundreds of buffalo had been shot and slaughtered near Yellowstone National Park for roaming off park lands and crossing the invisible border onto state lands, a small group of people, including Arvol Looking Horse, gathered to offer their prayers. Rosalie Little Thunder, a Lakota grandmother and advocate for buffalo, was warned about trespassing onto private land where the buffalo had been killed. Disregarding the warnings, Little Thunder, like her buffalo relatives, crossed the imaginary boundary and went to pray for the slain buffalo. Little Thunder was handcuffed and arrested. Like the 50 million buffalo that had lost their lives without the benefit of a ceremony, their spirits left to wander, Little Thunder and others saw the need to offer the Yellowstone buffalo a ceremony for the return of their souls. By engaging in the appropriate ceremonies, Looking Horse, Little Thunder, and others are able to ensure the physical rebirth of the animals hunted or killed. "The renewal ceremonies practiced by tribes are specific expressions of the human responsibility to preserve, protect and perpetuate the life of the animals."[37]

Dancing is another way humans transform into their animal relatives and learn about our interdependence. Today, contemporary social gatherings such as pow-wows provide ample opportunity to witness and participate in this phenomenon. Pow-wows are celebrations where dance, song, and ritual come together. Tribes from across the nations gather to celebrate, share stories, renew and create friendships,

and practice cultural values. In ceremonies and at pow-wows, dances that have been given to the people by the animal being honored are a physical enactment of humans' responsibility to maintain a respectful relationship with animals. When dancing, humans are not merely acting out a role. At a much deeper level, it is believed that "those who enacted the ritual became identified with the power of the animal persons, spirits . . . who were responsible for the original gift to the people."[38] Any observer at a typical tribal pow-wow is bound to see dancers wearing animal skins or carrying other animal parts as pieces of their dancing regalia. For example, the feathers, talons, and wings of the eagle will be used while dancing and, when used ceremonially, will bring "the power of the eagle into the ceremony for healing and help."[39] And, if you watch carefully, you will see a good dancer transformed into their animal host when captured by the rhythmic heartbeat of the drum and the collective voice of the song. The dancers relive the myth, become the animal, and invite us to become active participants. These dances, in mythical and very real ways, ensure that our collective memory of our relationship and responsibility to our animal relatives is maintained. By dynamically "dancing the inner, subjective experience, a re-intensification of it results, and the larger social group is able to participate. This helps to influence the young people toward this quality of experience and so to preserve the central values."[40]

A common dance at many pow-wows is the snake dance. No snake is needed for the dance nor is any part of a snake used. Rather, the people collectively become the snake as the dance unfolds. Together, while dancing, we coil and uncoil, we shed our skin, and we cross over the river to another realm. We acknowledge our relationship to the snake, the wisdom and guidance it offers us, and we come to understand that this expression helps us become more fully human.

Our relationships with animals are informed by our myths, our ceremonies, and our lived experiences with these spirit beings. Similar to how ancient Greek myths give us insight into our own and collective psyche, so too do these transformation teachings keep us keenly aware of our intimate relationships with our animal relatives. They help us adhere to and maintain an ethics of behavior, they provide information about ceremonies, rituals, and medicines, and they have implications for our knowledge of self in relation to other beings. Profound myths

of animal-human transformation ultimately ensure continued survival of our own and animal species.

As tribes work to maintain reciprocal and respectful relationships with our animal relatives, direct knowledge of the natural world is nevertheless still rapidly being lost, and indigenous people are not entirely free from fault. It is therefore necessary that tribes do not remain alone in these efforts. Depth psychology has much to offer. Jerome Bernstein has outlined a phenomenon of the collective unconscious he calls the Borderland. "It is an evolutionary dynamic that is moving the western psyche to reconnect our overspecialized ego to its natural psychic roots."[41] G.A. Bradshaw and Mary Watkins, faculty in Depth Psychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute, remind us that "psychology, by maintaining an agenda of speciesism, violates one of its central projects: individual development of moral consciousness." They propose a trans-species psychology "that eschews the assumption of human ascendance" and allows for "other species as partners in decision-making, culture-making, and community meaning making."[42] Jung pointed out that

> it's the intellect that is making darkness, because we've let it take too big a place. Consciousness, discriminates, judges, analyzes, and emphasizes the contradictions. It's necessary work up to a point. But analysis kills and synthesis brings to life. We must find out how to get everything back into connection with everything else.We must resist the vice of intellectualism, and get it understood that we cannot only understand.[43]

And Vine Deloria, Jr. also noticed:

> There must be a great kinship between Jungian psychology and the American Indian traditions that has been emerging, will continue to develop, and is worth the time and energy of our investigation. A major component of that kinship is Jung's strong sense of a dissociation in western culture due to its separation from nature and the Indian psyche that has never experienced such a separation and for whom nature is a living experience and spiritual presence.[44]

But Deloria also cautions us as we attempt to form cross-cultural exchanges. He emphasizes that efforts must be made to carefully and accurately translate from one context to another. One cannot

immediately apply Jungian concepts to indigenous philosophies—as if to assume that one understands indigenous ceremonial and religious beliefs. To do this would risk perpetuating a long history of cultural appropriation. Instead, Deloria suggests that Jungian ideas could be critiqued from American Indian perspectives and "ideas of the larger culture critiqued by those of the smaller in such a manner as to help create a new intellectual framework that partially transcends each culture."[45]

There is cause for hope. Bernstein, Bradshaw, and others are opening doors for us to participate in transrational and trans-species realities. My brother is showing more bear-like qualities each year as he takes to the woods. And just a couple of months ago while back home on the reservation, I pleasantly delighted in my six-year-old niece's new discovery. Having been playing alone in the woods for quite some time, and not culturally raised in Menominee traditions, she came to sit on my lap, slung her arm around my neck, earnestly looked me in the eye, and emphatically stated: "Auntie Jeannie, all those animals and creatures out there, *they really are our brothers and sisters*!"

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Psychology

Minding *the* Animal Psyche

VOL. 83, SPRING 2010

Table of Contents

ARTICLES

FILM REVIEW

BOOK REVIEWS

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