

TALKING STICK

THE VOICE OF METTANOKIT



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Scary Governments

Ellika recently returned from Africa. With support from the Swedish government she and a colleague were able to attend a festival of children's theatre and present some of their own work for teachers and young people in Cameroon. It seems that what they experienced has inspired her, and she is at work on new projects again for children's theater in Scandinavia.

One thing she said about the trip struck me particularly. The people, she said, are all wonderful – friendly, helpful, kind, with a happy disposition, but the government is scary.

I am thinking, isn't that an essential truth of the whole world? Everywhere people are wonderful, and all our governments, to a greater or lesser extent, are scary. Today, after centuries of struggle for freedom and human rights, most of the people on Earth are trapped by heartless, dictatorial governments. Many of those nominally termed democracies have elections that are a sham. Such blatant corruption is rare in much of the Western world where human rights laws provide a measure of protection. But even here in enlightened America we know that

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Connection As A Spiritual Path

by Manitonquat (Medicine Story)

There are many paths of spirituality, many ways to God, or Ultimate Truth. The number of paths may be infinite – certainly as many as there are searchers who seek them. There are similarities and differences to be found in them all, but the essence, of every one, I believe, is connection – the consciousness of the whole, the oneness of all that is.

The way of spirituality is the way of connection. To be and know that we are one with Creation is to go home again.

To be deeply spiritual the seeker's perception must be more than intellectual. Also it must be more than purely emotional – the wanting, the longing, the hoping, the fearing. It has to be felt

physically, viscerally, in the body as well. Psychotropic drugs can produce such effects but cannot by themselves produce a profound spiritual experience if the mind and heart are not prepared and attuned for it. They must all be connected.

This connection is a function of another faculty, neither physical, mental nor emotional. (Let us not get tripped up by semantics here – of course one can say everything is physical and be correct in that sense, also that emotional is part of mental. It depends on definition.) For me it is useful to distinguish categories of perception by "body", "mind", "heart", and "spirit". That is, sensual perceptions

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the scales of justice are tipped in the favor of those with money. There are very few rich people in prison, and they generally are in softer circumstances and for much shorter terms.

In Cameroon, as elsewhere, it is worse in the cities where the government, the police and the military are strongest. In the cities people don't know each other, are anonymous and fearful. It is not safe to go out at night, nor ever to walk alone mainly because of the military. They grab solitary people or very small groups and they disappear. Corruption is such that justice is for sale: if you are rich you can be safe through bribery.

The further you get from urban centers into rural communities the more you discover the natural goodness and friendliness of people. Fear does not sit so heavily over their every hour because the government and military are not present and people have each other for protection and support. In small communities people know each other, often from birth, and the better we know each other the more we understand and care for and about each other.

I heard an African musician on the radio say he was using music to heal the wounds of Rwanda. He said music is the soul of Africa and could heal her. His energy, his love and his joy were infectious, and I thought, yes, that is how people heal. I thought then of all the native Africans I had met in my life, and it occurred to me that joy was basic and common to them all. They have huge smiles and greathearted laughs that just pick you up and carry you along in their joy.

Then I thought, yes, but they say long ago the whole human race came out of Africa. We are all Africans, way back. What happened to all that joy? Hmmm. Civilization. Power struggles. Dominion. Oppression. Cities. Nations. War. Not much joy for most folks.

Well, you can find that joy in most indigenous societies still, where civilization has not subsumed their tribal way

of life, their closeness to one another. I have made friends with aboriginal Australians, New Zealand Maori, Pacific Polynesians, tribal people from India, and many South American as well as my own North American native peoples. The further removed from industrial and urban areas, the less contaminated by civilization they are, the greater their irrepressible sense of humor and fun. And the more they sing together. And dance together. And tell stories to each other.

Why are governments scary? Isn't their purpose to serve the people? Well, the trouble is that civilization was created or transformed in its early history out of a new economics that encouraged bigness that massed people together so their ties of closeness were lost. It became every man for himself, winner take all, with force provided by wealth. Cities became city-states, then nations, then empires, and the whole history of civilization became one of conquest, violence and greed.

Governments are scary because they are big, all-powerful. They can do whatever they want. Those who stand against them can be smashed. In their bigness they have lost touch with humanity, with understanding and caring about individual human beings, as do all institutions as they grow large: political, social, industrial, educational, medical. Even where their constitutions and laws provide protections for human rights, the institutions and their employees tend to follow other agendas which are not the agendas of their constituents.

What can be done about that?

The antidote for the inhuman, impersonal, uncaring institutions of society lies in restoring the closeness of their constituents. We must take on isolation as our primary enemy, the enemy that robs us of our power, our love, our joy, our very security. We must come together in small groups and open our hearts to one another, creating understanding, building trust. We must understand that we are all good people and we have all been hurt and damaged

by the society we have built.

We have tended to support our social structures blindly and blame people for the way they have been hurt, or to rebel and tear down these structures and replace them with other hurtful systems without understanding the root cause of their destructiveness in separating and isolating us. Compassionate conservatism, a sound-byte political phrase with no reality to support it, could truly be a possibility.

Any system could be compassionate if we don't let the labels set us against each other, but come together to listen and discover the core of our humanity. We are compassionate people, when we heal our hurts, resolve our conflicts, dissolve our fears and are able to trust. Consider what compassionate communism could be, compassionate capitalism, compassionate anarchism, compassionate democracy.

The terms are emotionally loaded now, but if we really came together, forgot the labels and really listened, if we took the time to understand and feel our common struggles, we could make real change. Our minds would be clearer, freer, seeking solutions to our common problems and interests.

Nations are also scary because, in their concentration of power, people in government often invest their personal distress rather than their human qualities. Fear, greed, racism, vengeance for old hurts, these are motives we can easily read behind the headlines and the rhetoric of the political leaders. People wrap their identities and all their rage and sense of impotence in the flag of their nation – or of their football team.

America wants to export and spread democracy in the world. A good idea. It would be even better if America had the humility to understand it did not invent democracy, nor has it perfected it. Here in New Hampshire we are mostly rural and small towns, so we are relatively more democratic because the state relegates most of the decisions to the towns that have annual town meetings where everyone can be heard and decisions

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Changing the World

by *Manitonquat (Medicine Story)*

“I want to change the world,” she said, her eyes shining with youthful confidence and hope as she confronted me. I had said those words in my lecture, and it seemed to have resonated with all the High Mowing Waldorf School students who were now lining up to thank me personally and invite me to hold a weekly class with them.

“I want to change the world.” For many years I have been saying this as I travel, in interviews, lectures and seminars throughout North America and Europe. Hoping to inspire others to join me in that purpose.

Post election in America was a low point for many of us. For decades the industrial nations had been drifting to the right, the rich getting richer, the poor poorer and the gap between widening. Depredations of the environment increased at an alarming rate. Exploitation of third world countries, support for dictatorships and attacks on Vietnam, Panama, Tripoli, Grenada, and Iraq fed into mounting suspicion, fear and hatred of the U.S. in the rest of the world. The universal sympathy that arose for America after the September 11 attacks evaporated after it invaded Iraq under false pretexts. The dwindling ranks of terrorists suddenly increased.

Amazingly the administration was able to convince over half the voters that it was the best one to get them out of the mess it had itself created by its arrogant folly.

After all the campaign work we had done (we were successful in my state of NH, though) I decided what I must do is to get back to writing. That a lot more communication and dialogue would be needed. In my study I nurtured my little flame of hope. Then I was asked to speak to the peer group at High Mowing School. When I saw those alert, inquisitive faces, wondering perhaps if I might have some key they had not yet discovered, a new surge of hope arose in me. I told them I had only forty minutes to try and give them the essence of what I wanted to share and only hoped it might be enough for them to want more, because I knew there was a lot of important work we could do together. I told them I wanted to change the world. That they could do that. That together there was nothing we could not do.

I told them they were all absolutely good – loving, caring people, intelligent, creative, and powerful. I described how that was our basic human nature, apparent from birth, and how various hurtful rigidities of the institutions of

our cultures militate against that nature and hamper it with destructive patterns of behavior, the ultimate causes of the stupidity and destructiveness of human society. I said that the worst part is how these patterns isolate us and make us fear each other, because the one thing that can save us is our coming together and getting close to one another.

I told them how that worked for societies in the past, in which communities were small enough that everyone knew each other well, all were considered to be equal and precious to the whole and every voice was heard. I told them how it works in the international camps we conduct that teach tribal living in a circle, how the circle works in our prison groups for the men to support each other's goodness and recovery. And I told them about the great world community of co-counselors who are recovering their humanity, their power and intelligence and love, by coming closer to one another, caring for and listening to one another. I said that if we were to work together in the coming months, they could experience some of this in themselves and learn the tools with which to help others in the future and bring people together to take on whichever part of the world they wish to change first.

How I love people in this period of life! Young adults, just lately out of the struggles of childhood and puberty, who have begun to understand with shock and revulsion the full enormity of the oppressions, the violence, the waste and stupidity that the adult world seems to have tacitly accepted and decided to ignore. Adults smile indulgently at these youth, remembering when they went through that idealistic phase, before reality set in and they grew out of it. Only it was not reality that set in, but a feeling of impotence and hopelessness. Nothing seems to have worked. Corruption infects and destroys socialism equally

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reported to the brain by the nerves and cells of the flesh, ratiocination exercised by the brain, moods and emotions transmitted principally by the limbic system, and a faculty that stands outside of all that, perceiving unity, not only among them, but also with all that exists beyond them – infinity, eternity, all Creation, or however you want to name it.

It appears that this spiritual faculty is encoded in our genes and is something we inherit, and that its strength and presence varies greatly among individuals according to that inheritance. It is also true, however, that people who possess little of that inclination at birth can develop the faculty through practices such as meditation and study. The desire may arise through grief, fear of death, or attraction to a spiritual teacher, a lovely soul, or a community expressing its faith through ceremony, beautiful art, and meaningful and joyous music.

It is also true that spiritual experiences and development are good for us as individuals, healing us emotionally and often physically, and satisfying our longing to understand ourselves and our purpose and place in existence. The spiritual experience is good as well for society. It enhances relationships and communities and provides common ground for social constructs.

This is where humankind has stumbled badly in its history, however. Bringing communities together for their survival, spirituality became institutionalized into religions. The intention may have included wanting to bring people together, but the effect was to create separateness, divisive opinion, arrogance, righteousness, demands for conformity and conversion. The extreme results have been religious wars, crusades, jihad, the Inquisition, execution or ostracism for heresy, witchcraft, sorcery and infidelity.

It is interesting that one of the punishments of the church is called excommunication when communication is the heart and soul of spirituality. A

spiritual person is one who seeks to be connected, to the earth, the winds and waters, trees and flowers, all that creep and run, swim and fly upon and among them. A spiritual person seeks to be connected not only to his family and his religious congregation, but, as exemplified by Jesus, to the poor in wealth and spirit, the meek, the halt, the blind, the leper, the foreigner, even one's enemy.

Connection is the path. It can begin anywhere. It starts most often when our consciousness is captured by something outside of ourselves. It might begin early in life, perhaps with admiration and devotion to a parent. Human beings need to love, and they will often find ways to love even very difficult parents, but where that becomes too difficult a child will find another object for her affections. A grandparent or sibling, perhaps an animal, a pet kitten or puppy or bunny. Later it may be a friend, even an imaginary one may absorb all the child's interest and affection. In adolescence may come another love, involving deep emotional longing, devotion and powerful new bodily sensations. The birth of our children can be the strongest spiritual experience of our lives if we are awake and present – it is a deep connection to the mystery of existence.

Attractions in the world beyond the human may capture our delight and wonder at any age. The ethereal expanse of azure skies, the steady distant beckoning of the myriad stars of night, the first buds and shoots of spring, expanding into new shapes and sweetness every day, the timeless crashing of ocean waves upon the sands, the graceful soaring of birds upon a wind, the rolling horizon that reveals and then later swallows the sun and the moon.

In our fascination we are pulled out of ourselves for a time. We may forget our own needs and concerns as our consciousness fills with the wonder of the marvel before us. This connection we have encountered is only the beginning of the journey. For spiritual awareness

to continue to develop we must follow it further. The love of a parent, a child, or a friend will take us through many changes, conflicts, struggles, anger, fear, grief, as well as joy. But if we persevere in our intention to stay and strive to be ever closer, our spiritual consciousness is continually exercised, growing in size and strength, in breadth and depth. As we bring this love further into the world, encompassing ever more people, it continues to grow.

To gaze long at a newborn baby is to be slowly overtaken by love. You can't explain it. There are no words. You say, "Aw, look at those tiny fingers," or those little pink feet, or those soft round cheeks. "Aw," is all you can say, "Aw! How sweet!" You look at those wide shining eyes and are pulled into that gaze. A connection is made.

The baby is looking for the connection. Some profound communication you can't express is going on. You want to get closer, to hold and caress the baby. The baby grasps your finger and your being is thrilled at a mysterious level.

Connect long enough there and you have fallen in love.

Oh, it's a very special baby! Yes, of course. But do it again with another newborn unrelated to her or you, and it will happen again. Your heart will open a little more and another little human being will creep in. Do it again and again as often and with as many babies as you may, and you will wonder at the perfection and the humanity and the sacredness of each. You will fall in love with every one. After enough of those experiences it might come to you, "Wait a minute! If they are all like that, humanity itself must be basically sweet and good and sacred. And if they are all like that, could I be the only exception?"

"Could it be that I am also sacred and perfect?"

Surely Creation loves these wonderful beings as I do. Must not Creation love me just as much? And must not the intensity of love I cannot help but feel for these



little ones be the Creation acting in me?" This line of speculation may stimulate a new thought. If I am born with such perfection, if I, like everything else, am a sacred being, if I have in me the love of Creation, then why do I do so many stupid, unloving, hurtful things? Why does anybody? And why do I feel so bad about myself?

A fair question.

It's a world of great complexity we are born to. We have the faculties we need to navigate it and keep our bodies, minds and hearts nourished and strong. We don't need divine intervention, and we don't need it to be easy. But, here's the big thing – we can also make it too hard. Without ever realizing we are doing it. We make it too hard on each other. That is why the Buddha taught wisdom and compassion above all else. If one has the wisdom to see the perfection of Creation there is nothing there to disturb the mind. As Thich Naht Hahn says, "This is a wonderful moment." And if one has understanding, one must then love all beings and be compassionate for all struggles – including one's own.

That is why Jesus urged love and forgiveness. Why Confucius said we should not do to others what we would not have done to us. When we are centered only in ourselves we make it harder for others, and they make it harder for us. We are strong enough if we are not interfered with. But living is a struggle that requires our attention, some clarity of mind, some equanimity of emotion. We are not invulnerable. We break down under severe strain.

We have seen what extreme fear, grief, or rage can do to the human consciousness. It breaks out in acts of violence against the self or others, in war, terrorism, and hideous cruelty. We have seen the results of torture in breaking the mind and spirit. These are the extreme incidents. But what about a life lived from the first with only small incidents of coldness, selfishness, blaming, physical and emotional mistreatment? Just an ordinary childhood in many of our

cultures, with little or no redeeming love or comfort, no encouragement or support or appreciation, no teaching or examples of compassion and caring. No tenderness, no sweetness, no fun, no laughter, and little hope that there ever could be.

The great majority of people in the world today live in abject poverty, with less than adequate shelter, nourishment, or medical care. In rural areas where people gather in small communities they tend to be more open with one another,

more supportive, sharing and kind, and tend to be good humored and laugh a lot.

But the world is becoming urbanized, and where the greatest populations are mashed in on one another, there is where the anger and fear are hidden behind protective masks of aloofness and indifference. There the isolation is endemic and in that separation and loneliness what is bred is greed and a need for a sense of power or notoriety. Which further breeds trickery and lies, violence and

SCHEDULE 2005 MANITONQUAT & ELLIKA

Date	Place	Contact
MAY		
4	We return to Copenhagen	(45) 32 571 471
12-16	Bear Tribe Medicine Wheel, Germany	(49) 3341 300873 www.baerenstamm.de
19-22	Mini camp, Mölln-Panten, Germany	(49) 4542 86492
27-29	Heckenbeck Workshop, Germany	(49) 5563 6170
JUNE		
3-5	Toscana Workshop, Italy	(39) 02 348 2261999 or 0564 980231
10	Talk in Växjö, Sweden	(46) 471 50450
11-12	Ecumenical Talks, Mundekulla, Sweden	(46) 471 50450
17-19	Workshops, Copenhagen, Denmark	(45) 32 571471
23-25	Keuruu, Finland	(358) 040 838 5321 or 01 473 6573
30-July 4	Umeå Camp, Sweden	(46) 90 29066 or 90 135004
JULY		
6-10	Mundekulla Camp, Sweden	(46) 471 50450
25-30	Tamera, Portugal	(351) 283 635 306
31-Aug. 14	Althymen Camp, northern Germany	(49) 0234 958 6098 www.international-camp.de
AUGUST		
15-21	Camp Piemonte, Italy	(39) 0564 980 231 or 032 822 68032
22-28	Camp in Austria	(43) 699 17888877
SEPTEMBER		
1-4	Workshop Kiel, Germany	(49) 431 561 541
9-11	Bayreuth Workshop, Germany	(49) 921 150 1143
16-18	Extertal Workshop, Germany	(49) 5262 992133
23-25	Workshop, Wietzow, N.E. Germany	(49) 399901 369820
OCTOBER		
9	Return to USA	

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with capitalism, democracy equally with autocracy. Greed and fear finally trumps all movements of change. Sheer bigness drains human intelligence and compassion from governments, industries, unions, educational and medical and even religious institutions.

Like us, our young people have grown up in a world in which naked greed and fear have been adorned with denial. "Change the world?" the adults say, "well, come, it's not so bad. You'll get used to it. You can't fight city hall, you know. Get with the program. Get an education like we did, find your place, make money, survive, don't cause a fuss. Well, of course you might change a few little things. Slowly. Carefully."

That's what fear does to us as we get older. We get cautious. We don't want to lose what little we have managed to get. The very notion of change is frightening. Tinker a little, okay, but change the system? They will smash you.

Nature School

The Nature School is operating on our land now. It is so wonderful to meet with the children that come from schools and camps and other programs to learn about our woods and fields and about the love of Indians for the earth and all our relatives. You should see their big eyes when we take them to the pond and show them the beavers and the otters, when they see the wild turkeys, the partridge, pheasant and quail, and we show them the tracks of the deer, the moose and all the other denizens of our woods. There is still much to do on the house, and we want to construct an eastern woodlands Indian village, so any donations would be most welcome, tax-deductible of course, to Nature School Foundation, (a 501.C3 non-profit corp). www.natureschoolfoundation.org

It is true that the movements and revolutions of the past eventually soured as anti-human elements of domination and greed took hold. But we can look at history with ever new eyes to understand what went wrong and not make the same mistakes. We can see what has pulled our stories away from the teachings of our great sages and teachers, away from compassion, from mutual support and caring, from truth and justice, towards the illusions of power and wealth and away from the true riches of joy and love in the human heart. When the youth begin to see what's really going on and are told it's okay, that there's not much that can be done about it anyway, they get confused. Is it true? Is it hopeless? Do we have to accept all the horror and idiocy and just fit in?

Then maybe just one adult comes along, one adult like Gandhi, say, or M. L. King, Jr., or Nelson Mandela, and says, "I want to change the world," and hope and belief rise again in people's hearts, especially the young, and the world changes a little once more. The changes we long for are the ones embedded in the cry of the French Revolution – "Libertè, Egalitè, Fraternitè." Freedom, Equality, and Human Closeness. Perhaps today we might add a commitment to other species and to the Earth. But sloganeering by governments and institutions do nothing to effect these qualities. It is only the activity of true closeness, in small groups and one to one, in circles small enough that each heart and mind can be heard and felt and understood, that can manifest the compassion and creativity we need to become a truly human society.

Young people ask, "Why shouldn't every person have equal access to the resources of the Earth? Why do so a few people own most of the world and are obscenely rich with more wealth than they can use while most of

the people are malnourished or starving, live in substandard or no housing, have no access to medical care or education? Why is there so much violence when we know how to resolve conflicts, so much emotional stress and mental disorder when we have the knowledge to reduce them?" Adults say, "It's complicated, you don't understand yet." But it is the adult world that doesn't understand. And so my hope is with the youth. "I want to change the world," Rosie said, grinning at me with all the exuberance and clarity of youth, and my heart soared. One by one the teenagers came by to shake my hand and tell me how eager they were to get on board this train to a positive future. The hope I offered them they were giving back to me. My spirits, which had retreated into the quiet of my study and my books, began to rise and sing of the indomitable conscience of humankind still untrammled in these young adults and still shyly hidden under layers of distress in every human heart.

So, let's start again. Let's get together and get it on. Happy New Year Everybody!



Changing The World Part 2: My Own Vision

by *Manitonquat (Medicine Story)*

In order to have a truly happy life we probably need to address three areas, at least, that affect our well-being. We need to feel good about ourselves, about our relationships, and about our society.

We need to feel good about ourselves first, to believe we are living our lives to the fullest, using all our potential talents and creativity toward some worthwhile purpose balanced with fun, learning, and growth – a sense of always becoming more than we were.

We also need closeness with other human beings, relationships that are supportive and caring, in which we continue to learn and grow and expand our horizons. For myself, I discovered twenty-five years ago that the tool of co-counseling contained all I needed to work both on myself and on my relationships. It has also been easy to teach others and perfectly fits my worldview of a benign Creation in which all of us can learn to live in a good way.

We also live in an organized society which exerts a great deal of power over our lives and fortunes. The majority of people believe they have very little control over the organization of that society, and they just try to get along in it without calling attention or injury to themselves. On the other hand, my work with prisoners shows me that an increasing number of people are targeted for destruction by this society, and very many are destroyed by it. Others, who would like to change the organization of society to rid it of injustice, oppression, violence and domination, are drawn to various avenues of change like education, political lobbying, demonstration, civil disobedience, outright rebellion, and so on. You could help to change the world as a teacher, a preacher, a politician, an artist, or by joining or organizing a liberation action group.

I want to tell you about my way to change the society.

What's wrong with society, in my view, is that it is organized as a pyramid, with power coming from the top down and the fuel that makes it function is fear. We who were raised in this society do not find that remarkable. Like goldfish raised in a bowl, we cannot imagine another possibility. The bowl gives them order, definition, safety. Anything beyond is unknowable, hazardous and threatening.

A society without a hierarchical power structure conjures chaos to our minds. Without an executive authority and a military or police to enforce that authority, we would live in continual fear of encroachment by others, of the loss of possessions and even of life or limb. But throughout history and before it, and down to

this present moment, there have been innumerable cultures and societies that lived and live now in freedom, equality, and safety. I'm not going to take time in this short essay to go into that further – that's for a whole book, which I am currently writing. I just hope you can open your imagination to the possibility when I tell you that I myself have not only visited many such egalitarian, cooperative communities, but have lived in some for many years, and that thousands of them around the world really comprise culture of their own contrary to the dominant culture of society.

This is certainly, it seem to me, a movement, in a broad sense, not rebelling but evolving. National governments like the USA promise democracy, liberty, unity, and a generous hand to the poor and oppressed. The politicians and their parties and the heads of industries seem to have convinced themselves that the nations make good on those promises. But those things are precisely the things the nations lack. They tell their citizens that their country is better than all others and they have the best possible system. Neither of these is true.

This alternative culture has been slowly growing since the end of World War II. At first it was tiny, only scattered searching. Many were attracted to socialism, and the relentless forces of anti-communism in the 50s hurt and confused many of that small movement. But it continued to seek and experiment, fed by that very need for democracy, liberty, equality and fellowship that the dominant system denied. My generation, known as the Beat Generation, added new vigor and sass to the movement, which mobilized the following generation in the 60s. That outpouring was so strong – for civil rights, feminism, nonviolence, free speech, and against the Vietnam War – that when it settled to find quieter, independent expression, the public

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brutality. The models before them in the public media are the very few wealthy who own most of the world and cavort in nightclubs or on the sunny beaches of private islands. It is a tribute to the strength of our humanity that with all this there remains as much sanity, as much kindness, as much hope, as much laughter and devotion as still exists in the world. If only we can educate ourselves we can restore the promise that lies in the shine of every newborn's eyes.

The spiritual path then must lead us back to ourselves. Not ourselves in isolation, struggling alone against the onslaughts of greed and hostility, of blaming and humiliation, of coldness and indifference. It means seeing ourselves as incredibly wonderful beings, beings of great physical beauty, creative intelligence, warm-heartedness, and indomitable spirit.

You are the Crown of Creation, do you know that? Has anyone ever told you that? Has anyone looked at you with awe and wonder for just how splendid you are, in every way? Have people rejoiced that you have battled your way through all the vicissitudes of your life and kept so much of your humanity intact? Have they cheered your victory?

If they haven't it's only because they are temporarily befuddled by their own battles, and they haven't gotten all the necessary information yet. Now that's the spiritual task that lies before us. Before all of us who see the human situation as it is. We must pass on this information as quickly and thoroughly as we can. There is such a weight. Millennia of misinformation obscuring the vital needed truth: we must set about to re-educate the world at once. Here are the important facts. The universe has everything required to function well under its laws, the Original Instructions of Creation. Human beings, as necessary parts of Creation, have everything required to function well under those instructions.

Those instructions for human beings include staying very close to other

human beings in order to learn about and preserve their humanity. It is only by being intimate and interacting with others of our kind that we get to know and be completely human.

We must continually teach and reveal to others their humanity. At every stage of life, from birth, childhood, adolescence, maturity and old age, we must respect and revere them and show them by our love how loveable they truly are. We must admire their beauty and how they carry it, so they will care for their bodies and shine ever brighter. We must pay attention and listen and note where their thinking is sound and constructive. We must open our hearts to as many as we can and engage them in kindness and laughter, affection and appreciation. We must show our delight that they exist and that they are a great gift to the world and to us.

It's a tall order, this spiritual task. But I don't see any other way around it. If just a few of us can start really working at this with each other, what a difference it would make in our lives alone! If we can agree with a few friends, with our sweethearts and spouses, with our children, we would get, with practice, stronger and better at it, and it would start to spill out on others, on associates and colleagues and complete strangers.

Imagine a world in which all the children grow up thinking they are completely good and loveable, smart and creative and funny and wonderful to be around. Where they have not ever been judged or blamed, ignored or abandoned or sent away. Where they have only been appreciated and all they have seen around them is respect and kindness and warmhearted affection. Imagine a world in which you could travel anywhere without fear, where people would greet you with openness and curiosity and friendliness.

I think that would be a world in which people would know their worth and that of others. They would know that being with each other gave infinitely more joy than accumulating toys and gadgets and overpriced luxuries. I think

that would be a world in which people would rather enjoy being with each other, engage in talk, creative activities, games, sport, laughter, touch, dancing, singing, storytelling, than stare at distant strangers performing on little lighted tubes. I think that would be a world that would get its priorities straight. The obscenities of disgusting wealth and shameful poverty would be a thing of the past, and every baby born would have a fair share of Earth's resources for basic human needs.

When I read of some of the spiritual folderol that many people seem to be buying and selling today, I think they have become victims of a selfish and materialistic society. All kinds of products are offered the spiritual consumer: incense, oils, art, rugs, stools, teas, herbs, exotic lighting, sound equipment, music and spoken recordings, and many machines to massage the body and the mind and guide the seeker into other realms. The fascination seems to be only with one's own consciousness. There is little to suggest or enhance closeness with other human beings (apart from a thriving segment of instructions and goodies for sexual enhancement, which lends readily to a focus again on the self rather than the partner, the communication, and unity).

If you are part of a spiritual group devoted to providing basic human needs to those who do not have them, working for peace, for justice, for the environment or the like, you are well along on the spiritual path. In that outreach you are certainly connecting. To go further on the path we must only press ourselves to make deeper and wider connections.

We need to ask ourselves how close our relationships are with fellow workers, – do we share our inner selves, our deeper thoughts, our fears and confusions, our dreams? Do we strive to know them well, to understand and support them on their separate journeys? And what about people we tend, feed or shelter, what about prisoners, guards, police, lawyers, politicians, brokers, bankers, teachers, doctors, social workers, everyday people you meet –



do we seek to know them more, to show ourselves and extend hands of friendship without an agenda of converting them to our paths?

I realize how difficult all this is when, in my relations with my wife Ellika, the closest person to me, the dearest and best friend I have, I find myself sometimes blaming her for some little thing, with no thought for her, saying things which are most unsupportive. Oh, I have much work to do! To follow the spiritual path I know is right. Again I must profusely and sincerely regret my patterned folly and determine to be more aware of that old trap and avoid it. By getting closer to her and opening my deeper feelings of ancient betrayals and disappointments. By giving all my attention to her and to our oneness. In counseling people I often hear them say they must set limits to other

people. They must find and defend their borders. At a certain point in their growth this is entirely appropriate. Connection also means we must be connected to ourselves, to our own integrity. It means having a sense of who we are as individuals. I encourage everyone to find his or her special gifts – we are all different, special.

There's never been anyone like you before in all Creation, and there never will be anyone like you again. For that we must celebrate and give thanks.

And when we have realized our own value and sacredness in Creation, we must widen our consciousness and see how we are connected to everyone and everything else, to the whole of existence. When we have discovered who we are and what our gifts are, that is not the end of the spiritual journey. Our connection

to the whole suggests that what we have been given is not to hoard to ourselves alone, it is to be given away. When we at last know and respect our borders we must begin to break them down. The next part of the journey requires us to begin to dismantle our walls, remove all our limits, and in all our nakedness and vulnerability seek connection. What is cosmic consciousness, after all, but coming home? Connection, that is the spiritual path all right. Let us help each other out here. Let's attack our barriers, our borders and resistances and get closer.

Let us remind each other how good we are, and caringly attend one another. Let us join hands as together we move out on the rest of the world.

GOVERNMENTS cont. from page 2

worked out together. It would be even more democratic if the towns made more opportunities for people to come together regularly through the year, to listen and come closer and understand each other. If the urban and suburban areas could create within them communities small enough for people to come together and learn about each other democracy would also fare better there.

The best democracy I have learned about was that of our traditional native people in North America. There are many variations, of course, but basically people lived in communities that were interwoven with kinship and people knew each other and supported the community as the community supported the individual. One for all and all for one. There was security for each one from the cradle to the grave. They gathered in families and in small groups, clans or societies, and in these they shared their lives, their stories, their struggles, their dreams, and their desires, as well as their spirituality, their ceremonies and the tribal legends, songs and histories. Because of this closeness it was not too difficult to

come to one mind. There was enough trust in the people and their ways that when differences existed they could be put aside when necessary in the interest of unity and harmony. A check against the tyranny of the group was that serious attention must be given to any dissenter until the differences could be resolved.

Traditionally the people would come together often, both in their clan meetings and as a whole community. There would be ceremonies as well as socials for dancing, singing together, listening to elders. There would be times when people would share their dreams and their stories, speak of their desires and their fears. And there would be a lot of joking, games and fun and laughter.

Like the Africans Ellika met, our people still laugh a lot, are friendly, kind and helpful to each other – and to strangers. But they have learned to distrust the government, the wealthy and powerful. And with internalized oppression and estrangement, too often native people also are mistrustful of each other. In former times there was a lot of trust, and a lot of joy – the natural birthright of human beings. And no

scary government. No big institutions. Just people. Close to each other, to their children and their elders.

That's how it was, for us, for the Africans of old, for your ancestors too, before bigness and nation-states and greed and isolation and fear infected us all. We can't go back, even if we wanted to, and with the richness that civilization has provided in the arts and sciences we would be foolish to want to. But we can figure out how to organize our world and our institutions around closeness in our groups and communities. How can we create small communities in our cities? Can we come together and listen to each other's stories and dreams? Can we come together with our children and our old ones and listen to them? And dance and sing? And play games and laugh? And celebrate our joy in life and in each other?

Can we not create governments which are not scary, but helpful, human, and compassionate?



WORLD 2 cont. from page 7

thought and still think of it as having died there.

But it continues, taking on new approaches to activism, to health, to community, to spirituality, to environmentalism. There are hundreds of writers, teachers, and books to guide people in a bewildering array of disciplines, ancient and new. And like all movements it has engendered its own examples of commercial venality and outright silliness, as well as a strong backlash that ridicules the ideals and the people who hold and practice them. Yet the movement continues to grow. More and more people are seeking and learning about alternative medicine and therapies, healthy diets, meditation and movement to reduce stress, group activities, singing and drumming, playful parenting. Liberation support groups, grassroots political groups, environmental groups, educational and arts groups, all are informed by new ways of thinking that began to take hold in the last half of the 20th century.

The notion of living together in more communal closeness has also been growing in the past decades, after a temporary revulsion from the chaotic confusions and dissolution of many of the communes of the 60s. New, consciously designed communities are flourishing. A phenomenon known as co-housing is on the rise, and ecovillages are appearing everywhere. Networks of communication among all these are broadening.

This is the area I feel has the most promise for changing the world. I do think the movements for peace and the environment are absolutely essential and need also to be at the center of our concern and action. But unless society changes utterly from its foundation in power over others, in punishment, in violence, in the amassing of hegemony through the wealth of the few in the oppression of the many, unless we can breathe freedom, equality and fellowship in every breath we take we will not be all that we want to be in human creativity,

love, and joy.

I could participate effectively through any of dozens of communities I know that have invited Ellika and me to join them. But I have a few ideas and wishes born of my experiences with community that are different enough for me to want to begin again in this movement with developing a model community from my vision.

This mission has carried me far through the world in the past 37 years, and the focus of it just now is centered on a group of summer camps that we have been creating for nine years in Europe. In those camps people experience a modern version of tribal life, life lived in a circle. Everyone belongs to a small circle we call a clan. The clan is the heart of camp, where people open their hearts and express their truth, where they work together for all their common needs, play together, create arts and ceremonies together. They find out how to decide their lives together, support and appreciate each other.

A few of those clans have come together after camp, and at least one camp built their own house and still live together. At the end of camp most people say they can't wait until next year's camp. They wonder why it wouldn't be possible to live this way for twelve months of the year. A few people have begun to meet regularly to talk about finding some land on which to build their own village. A Circleway Village, which would be organized on the same principles as the camps.

To me that is the next step in changing the world. Changing us together by changing our small society to one that is egalitarian, respectful, supportive, cooperative, where people help each other and appreciate themselves and each other, where they address the problems of community and relationships by coming closer to each other. By reminding ourselves and each other of our complete goodness and pledging to listen carefully until we really understand each other; by reminding ourselves that there are no problems that do not have at least



Manitonquat in his birthday outfit.

one elegant solution and that cannot be solved by coming closer to each other.

It is my fervent hope that this dream will be realized – in my lifetime (I'm patient, but I am 76 this year and I want to have time to work on this!) I hope some folks will be bold and brave enough to give it a try, to begin to build our own Circleway Village. When that happens you know I will be there to help. Ellika and I will be resident grandparents. We will work to establish our own cottage industries, or common gardens, our own arts center and schools where the spirit of play guides everything, as in camp.

Such a village could be a model and a beacon to the world. We could have visitors' programs, conferences and camps to show it off, to teach the circle way. In my dreams I see Circleway Camps rising in every land across the world, and Circleway Villages growing from them until, little by little, the presence of people living truly free and equal, truly human lives of love and closeness, safe and peaceful and playful, begins to win society over to the circle again.



Birthday Report

Thanks to the so many of you who sent me welcome wishes for a happy 75th birthday in July. I'm sorry if you couldn't make it – you were all remembered there. The prospect of so much, too much attention made me very nervous beforehand. But it turned out to be one of the sweet occasions in a life already overfull of wonderful days. Over 60 people showed up at the reservation, many coming the night before and camping to be ready for first light ceremonies. The circle beginning at midday the 17th went on until late afternoon. People were there from many of my varied activities – from schools and organizations where I have taught or lectured, from environmental and organic farming movements, members of our former Mettanokit community,

writing and storytelling colleagues, prison volunteers, people of many nations, even my regular tennis partner, and a Rainbow brother all the way from Wisconsin. Each one spoke with the talking stick about how we were involved, and of our many struggles and dreams to make the world better.

Most memorable to me were the six ex-prisoners, the oldest one ten years out of the iron house, the most recent only released the month before, who in their turns described with deep emotion how our circles in the prisons had rescued them, turned their lives around, gave them new lives, and how grateful they were to be able to come there and say that to everyone.

I expressed my thanks for my 75 rich eventful years blessed with the most wonderful loving family and so many dear friends around the world,

and with a work that brings me so much joy and inspiration. As a small part of my appreciation I made a give away to everyone there of a story I had written and illustrated in a small booklet. Then we had a great feast, with a surprise cake inscribed to me in icing by Chief Windsong's own hand! Later I told a few stories before the young people went to bed, and the party went on late into the night. After the next morning's first light ceremonies, brunch and clean up and one more thanks to Sue and Jeff, Ken and Deb, Anne and Horse, Sly Fox and Claire and their helpers and all who helped prepare and make it work so well, I went home with Ellika in a glow knowing it was a time I would keep warm in my heart for the rest of my life. But I don't want to fuss with a birthday again – at least until I'm 80!

Native American Teachings and Stories for Healing Ourselves and Our World

Books



The Circle Way Medicine Story
Story Stone Publishing, *Paperback* (90 pgs.) (adult)
A manual of how to start and enhance circles of any kind.

Return to Creation Medicine Story
Bear Tribe Publishers, *Paperback* (175 pgs.)
(gr. 7 adult) [ISBN 943404-20-7] Using the history, traditions and prophecies of his Wampanoag ancestors and other native peoples. Medicine Story illustrates common human values and offers solutions to the problems confronting people today of all ages and cultures.



Ending Violent Crime Medicine Story
Story Stone Publishing, *Paperback* (71 pgs.) (adult)
A concise report on working prison program circles which focus on a violence-free society.



Children of the Morning Light
Medicine Story, Simon & Schuster
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Illustrated collection of Native American tales and legends of the Wampanoag Native of southeastern Massachusetts.

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Newsletter of Mettanokit Outreach
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