

# reinforcements



Planetshifter.com Interviews 2014 – 2016:

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eBook 28 by Willi Paul

# INTERVIEWS / CONVERSATIONS:

## **Spirit Healing -**

Maria Owl Gutierrez  
Ole Ersson and Satya  
Rev. Julia Bystrova

## **Permaculture & Nature -**

Howard Story  
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Charlotte Anthony  
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Willi Paul by Marianne West, SustainableLivingPodcast.com  
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Dan De Lion & Willi Paul  
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Dr. Jeff Hart & Willi Paul

## **More -**

Director Kim McDonald, PhD  
Delaney Pearson

## **Eco-Alchemy from the Collection:**

I was 20 when I discovered Earth-based ritual work. First through Vision Quest and then through initiating onto the Red Road with a Lakota spiritual teacher from Yankton, South Dakota. Since those days, I have done ceremony and ritual with over 15 different traditional cultures and across the board what I have learned from them is that Community Healing rituals/ceremonies are POWERFUL! And used all the time as a tool for individual and community health, resiliency and balance with the Natural World.

### **Maria Owl Gutierrez**

Our crisis is spewing forth the Prima Materia needed to bring us into a new epoch and mature us as a species. Such times call for the Entrepreneur (translated as undertaker) as an agent who recognizes what seeks to die and knows how to clear and open space to allow for that spent life force to reverently consign itself to its final rest. And then, give cover into that fecund space for the subtleties of seeds encoded with the new to take form. These are creative acts on the edge of the in breath and out breath of embodiment on the Earth.

### **Myra Jackson**

I started to see that so many myths followed patterns evident in nature each day. Multiple myths strove to define divine beings, heroes, quests, in terms of natural elements or seasonal change. Then, for me, the myths really came alive; they helped me look out at the nature around me in Minnesota and find meaning in my own life. This isn't to say that people in more developed locations cannot also find mythic meaning in the nature that still exists around them. Near Detroit, I remember finding a single tree that for some reason moved me; I remember looking forward to the intersection where this tree stood because seeing it, I could firmly see the changes of the seasons, when I might have missed them living my busy life. I think wherever you are, once you internalize the natural mythic messages that were so sacred to people for millennia, you view mythology, but also nature, differently.

### **Rachel McCoppin**

I am honored to be perceived as an alchemist! I try to transform energy where ever I go. The second law of thermodynamics is that energy cannot be created or destroyed, only transformed, so I am always trying to transform energy to a more usable form and harness it before it becomes less usable. This can apply to landscapes and social structures alike.

### **Taj Scicluna**

## Spirit Healing -



**"Grief and Gratitude"** – An interview with Maria Owl Gutierrez in Support of: **"COMMUNITY GRIEF RITUAL – Tending to our Sorrow"** with Maria and Mike Shea at **A PLACE for Sustainable Living**, May 7, 2016. 10am - 6pm. Oakland, California.

### Show Details -

#### **COMMUNITY GRIEF RITUAL–Tending to our Sorrow**

**A PLACE for Sustainable Living**

1121 64th St, Oakland, CA 94608

**DATE:** May 7, 2016

**TIME:** 10:00am to 6:00pm

(Arrive 15 minutes early!)

**COST:** \$100-150 Sliding Scale – Donate at the Door

**FOOD:** A light meal will be provided. Tea and water on site

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#### **Maria Owl Gutierrez:**

"I know that in order to stay sane, I must feel my grief - my personal grief and my grief for the world. This grief is so huge, that it would swallow me alive if I didn't consciously acknowledge it and tend to it. Feel the fear and rather than avoiding or rejecting it, walking right into it - thereby transforming it into embodied wisdom.

I feel deeply blessed that in 2003 I encountered a profoundly transformative healing practice in the form of Grief Ritual, brought to the U.S. by Dagara spiritual teachers Sobonfu Some and Malidoma Some. This wisdom combined with the profound teachings of Joanna Macy (Work That Reconnects) were my foundations as a community healer. I began leading Grief Rituals beginning in 2004, while I was teaching at New College of California. Since that time, I have led hundreds and hundreds of rituals in many different countries, for many different communities. Every single one has been transformative and powerful for people.

I feel deeply grateful for the power of community grieving rituals to liberate us from the burden and weight of our incomplete grieving. They open us, soften us and bring us home to ourselves and the sacred web of life.”

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### **Interview with Maria by Willi -**

#### **Define grief?**

What is grief? Grief is a human experience that I think opens us more into our humanity when we express it. Feeling our grief softens us and the walls around our hearts. We become accessible to our loved ones in the most beautiful ways. Recall a time when you or someone you knew was grieving the loss of a loved one, how there was a transparency and grace surrounding you/them. Grief activates when we go through a real loss or a perceived loss. When things are changing, and will never be the same again, such as the death of a loved one, divorce, abortion, bankruptcy, losing one's home, losing physical health or ability, injustice being done to us or our community that results in losing inalienable rights, ... And it doesn't just look like tears, sobbing and collapsing in sadness. Grief can very well look and feel like anger, numbness, confusion, anxiety, fear, frustration, overwhelm... Every person on Earth has a unique expression of grief and it doesn't serve us to compare our expression to others.

#### **What can happen if we hold onto grief too long?**

Grief is a pattern of emotional energy; it has a very distinct signature. When Grief arises in us, our human "natural body" needs to move the energy organically - like a river flowing stronger after a huge rain when all the tributaries are emptying into it and maybe even overflowing it. Can you imagine what would happen if we tried to dam that river? The water would pour out over the banks into surrounding areas. That's what grief does when it is suppressed. It leaks over into other areas of our life, into our relationships, our work, our self-esteem, our trust in others, for example. Instead of allowing the natural flow of tears, anger, and revelation, we lock these emotions up then blame others for the discomfort we feel.

When we let the river flow, and honor our Grief, we allow the full expression of Joy, Revelation, and the other feelings on the opposite side of the spectrum be felt too. This is unexpected for most. When I lead Grief Ritual I see people come in with such despair and through the ritual process they open to a place of spontaneous joy and connection that surprises them. Grief is an energy, like water, and like water if it is controlled through containment it will become stagnant and unable to support life. Grief energy that is not moved can manifest imbalances in the physical body eventually, because it's not being allowed to support life, so it degrades vitality. I've seen that a lot at Grief Ritual's too - people having sudden relieve

from physical pain and discomfort, even chronic allergies have dissolved. I've also seen healing happen psychologically, meaning, persistent negative thought patterns will be gone after the ritual completes. I am always in such awe at the people who attend Grief Ritual work, because I know the courage this takes.

I never showed my grief publicly until I was 25 and started my self-healing journey. I cried privately and the result of this was a pervasive feeling of "not being known", not even by my friends. "They don't know who I really am and what I'm really going through". But the choice to show them my vulnerability was too scary for me. I thought if I showed my grief, it would explode out and never stop. And then my friends wouldn't want to be around me because I was such a mess.

I was 20 when I discovered Earth-based ritual work. First through Vision Quest and then through initiating onto the Red Road with a Lakota spiritual teacher from Yankton, South Dakota. Since those days, I have done ceremony and ritual with over 15 different traditional cultures and across the board what I have learned from them is that Community Healing rituals/ceremonies are POWERFUL! And used all the time as a tool for individual and community health, resiliency and balance with the Natural World.

In 2003 I was introduced to the Dagara tradition of Grief Ritual work, through attending events with [Sobonfu Some](#) and [Francis Weller](#), and I was hooked. This particular approach to community healing was so profound, intelligent, and connecting, that I adopted it into all my programs and classes, and still do.

Today, when I experience grief, I acknowledge it as a wise teacher visiting me and I sit down to listen. Sometimes this energy invites me to dance, sometimes to call a friend, sometimes to ask for a ritual, and sometimes to write. I listen and I respond. I feel my resistance, because that still comes up, but I know the healing power of releasing grief, so I respond with trust. This is what gives me such a large capacity to hold the grief that moves at a Community Grief Ritual. I see my sisters and brothers in tears, or anger or numb... and I celebrate, because they made it to the ritual and I know they will get healing.

**“They give us a focus (the grief altar) and a container (skilled facilitators) within which to safely relax our hearts...” (MOG) Please tell us about the altar. Where does this come from? What does it facilitate?**

At Grief Rituals the container is held by many concentric circles of support. There are the skilled human facilitators, the shrines (or altars), the Ancestors, our own larger Spirits, and Creator (Source) in and through everything. As the hours pass during the ritual day, I see the attendees start to get it... How held they are, how loved they are, and they start to soften into a sense of safety.

#### **The shrines work in two ways:**

1. They are a place for attendees to focus their releasing and receiving.
2. They are "telephones" or amplifiers that open to our helpers in the Spirit world.

Let me talk more about #1: The shrines are communally created by the group. There are three: The Grief Shrine, The Ancestor Shrine, and a Gratitude Shrine which anchors us to what we LIVE FOR. We each put our meaning into them as we help build them. By the time we are in ritual space, there is a common

understanding of how the shrines support us. Attendees approach the Grief Shrine know that they can give all their grief there, whatever it looks or sounds like. Attendees approach the Ancestor Shrine and connect with the timeless wisdom and love there, knowing that these Ancestors also experiences great losses and there is a lesson there about being human, humble, and present. The Gratitude Shrine holds photos and objects that represent our joy for being alive.

Attendees approach this Shrine with a desire to feel the balance in life - yes, we have sorrow and pain, but we also have great joys and tremendous love.

Now, #2: The Shrines are "telephones" between the worlds. Traditionally speaking, when a ritual or ceremonial leader invokes the helpers at the beginning of spiritual healing work, if that leader is in integrity with those relationships, the helpers will respond with love and the doorway between the worlds will be opened. When I lead Grief Ritual, my colleague, Mike Shea, and I invoke the "elevated" Ancestors to support us, hold us and give us courage to feel our grief. Because Mike and I have daily practices of tending to our relationships with our Ancestors, these bonds are clean, clear and strong. We can feel the portals opening. We know how to create a strong container that allows in only healthy Ancestors. And I have to say, I know this is how so many people receive such deep healing at the rituals we facilitate.

### **Workshop folks are asked to bring photos of Ancestors. Why?**

The Ancestor Shrine and singing to the Ancestors throughout the main ritual is a big and important part of the Grief Ritual. This is why participants are asked to bring photos of their Ancestors. These photos are placed on the Ancestor Shrine. It is so moving to see this Shrine fully built, with flowers, candles and dozens of photos. Most moving are the photos of loved ones who have recently entered the Ancestor realm. The love between living and dead is palpable. And that supposed barrier that keeps us from continuing a relationship dissolves. I know from my own experience that to create a healthy relationship with our Ancestors makes life incredibly more joyful and rich.

### **What should we know when watching someone grieve versus experiencing grief ourselves?**

What I love about honoring my grief is that it gives me the capacity to compassionately witness another's. At Grief Ritual we explain to the attendees how to be there for each other. We tell them, "This is not a time to give advice or have an agenda for how another's grief moves or doesn't move. We are simply here to honor their process." Often when we allow ourselves to truly witness another's grief, our own grief that has been left unattended will stir up. At Grief Ritual we say, "This is a Community Healing ritual. When you go to the Grief Shrine you aren't just going for yourself, but for everyone here and for your families and communities. In fact, our releasing contracted grief liberates energy in the collective human consciousness, so the whole world benefits."

At Grief Rituals, during the main ritual work, attendees go to the Grief Shrine to release, but they no one goes alone. Everyone has a supporter who simply sits at their back. This compassionate and non-invasive support is very new to most people. I know my experience in the past has been that people were either scared of my grief and didn't know what to say, or they co-opted my grief and made it all about them. So this neutral, compassionate container and way of holding others actually invites attendees into a new relationship with the grief of others. People leave feeling more empowered around grief and holding space for others in grief.

**“Grief for the world?” (MOG) Good, Grief! How do we get at our huge, complex and slippery global sources of grief?**

According to one of my mentors in this work, Francis Weller, there are 6 Gates of Grief. And each one to some degree exists in each one of us. They are:

1. Everything we love we will lose
2. The places that have not known love
3. The sorrows of the world
4. What we expected and did not receive
5. Ancestral Grief
6. Trauma

When we begin to explore one of these sorrows, we inevitably find it is linked to the others.

"The sorrows of the world" category, for me includes Grief for the World, for Gaia - our Mother Earth and the Other-than-Human-Beings. My other mentor and teacher Joanna Macy focuses her life's work on this category, which she named "The Work that Reconnects".

I would have to write a hundred pages to do this topic justice. So, for the purpose of this interview, what I'll summarize is:

Gaia needs us to feel our grief about what's happening here - to the ecosystems, the oceans, the animals, and our own "Indigenous Souls". If we succumb to complacency for fear that this grief and rage will overcome us, then we are just contributing to the problem; to the big dam blocking liberation of creative energy and genius, rather than being a part of the change.

It's terrifying what's happening on the planet with corporations insatiably sucking up every last natural resource... But there is a power greater than that greed, and that is LOVE.

I am so grateful for those who bring this Grief for the World to Grief Ritual, because I know through their courage to feel their hearts break wide open, these participants will leave with a more open and alive heart from which to take action.

**Your forthcoming book focuses on women. Are there differences in how men and women grieve?**

If we look at the 6 gates of grief of Francis Weller, we can see/sense that each these sorrows relate to men and women. But then when we look through the lens of "Women's Grief" we see that these gates tell a particular story of pain, oppression and suffering. In particular, the 4th Gate: What We Expected and Didn't Receive. As a woman, this one hits me hard. As a little girl I expected innocently to feel safe around men, to have equal opportunities to stretch myself and grow. And as a teen, I wanted an equal voice in political conversations and how our modern society was designed and run. What I discovered is that I didn't have an equal voice or value to men. And women haven't for over 2000 years. That is a grief that can feel like a bottomless pit of despair. It connects strongly with all the other gates: Places we have not known love - Yep! Ancestral grief - Definitely. Trauma - throughout it all...



Women who have the courage to get support and walk into this pain, always find their way to a source of power they never knew they had. But unfortunately, so many women face such tremendous obstacles - psychologically from trauma, structurally with their family and work obligations, religiously with dogmas, that they never find the resources to support them.

Most of the attendees at Grief Rituals are women! As is true for most personal growth and self-healing programs, workshops, and retreats. THIS is good news for our planet! As women self-liberate, they are able to show up with unstoppable energy on behalf of future generations of all species. Yes!

You can look at the 6 Gates through the pain of men as well. It's important to explore both, I think, to see the whole picture. Men's stifled expressions of grief over thousands of years is just as painful to get real about as women's grief. I am writing about women's experience because I know it intimately.

**You use the term “ritual;” what other rituals do you lead these days and how do they integrate, if at all?**

My life is devoted to bringing these tools/ technologies of community healing into modern society: Earth based ritual, ceremony and rites-of-passage.

I've been leading all of these modalities for over 17 years and seen hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people break free from suffering and reconnect to their authentic, creative, alive selves.

After so many years of being a ritual specialist in my community I realized I needed to create a place to teach everything I know. So, with the encouragement of my community and students I founded Sacred Future School. We have a 9-month certification program in Transformational Leadership and Community Healing to support those called to step into sacred leadership to do so with grounded, high integrity mentoring. This program is the culmination of my life's work so far.

Grief Ritual is a big part of what Sacred Future offers to communities around the U.S. and we've recently been invited to facilitate this in Israel. We also offer monthly community healing ceremonies in Sonoma County, where my husband and I live. And I lead a wilderness Vision Quest (Rites of Passage) once per year as well. Right now my main focus is on my amazing students in the 9-month program. They will be the future ritual leaders serving their communities! This is infinitely important as we go forward into the future, as traditional cultures' are becoming more and more assimilated.

We must keep these powerful, healing technologies alive!

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### **Maria's Bio –**

Maria Owl Gutierrez is the founder and director of the Transformational Leadership Foundations Certificate program at Sacred Future. Maria is also the Dean of Students and a professor of Indigenous Medicine at Energy Medicine University.

Maria is passionate about creating resilient communities through bringing back relationship to the Sacred through nature-based ritual. Without planning it, her life became a study of power and the

misuse of power – starting with an abusive father who was also an affluent business owner, and then many successive memberships in spiritual and educational communities where she found herself “rocking the boat” with her commitment to honesty. She began her training as a group facilitator and speaker in 1998, desiring to understand how to truly create safe and sacred space for collective transformation. Maria has been a gifted healer all her life and has studied with native teachers from 10 different Indigenous cultures. She is an Orisha Priest in the Yoruba tradition as well as a Red Road Pipe Carrier for over 20 years.

Maria received her MA degree from the California Institute of Integral Studies in Integral Counseling Psychology. Maria has taught Indigenous Medicine and Shamanism in higher education for over 10 years. She received her BA from New College of California, in Culture, Ecology & Sustainable Community with a self-designed concentration on Group Facilitation. Other certifications and trainings Maria has acquired includes: a certificate from the California School of Herbal Studies; a Master Certification in Intuition Medicine® through the Academy of Intuition Medicine®; a certification in Alchemical and Clinical Hypnotherapy through the Alchemy Institute of Hypnotherapy. She has two Permaculture Design certifications from Occidental Arts & Ecology Center and Lost Valley Educational Center. She is also deeply blessed to have trained extensively in transformational group facilitation with the creators of the Naka-Ima self-awareness workshops for over 12 years.

#### **Willi Paul Bio –**

Willi is active in the sustainability, permaculture, transition, sacred Nature, new alchemy and mythology space since the launch of PlanetShifter.com Magazine on EarthDay 2009. Willi’s network now includes multiple blog sites and numerous list serves with a global presence.

SF. Mr. Paul has released 27 eBooks, 2353 + posts on PlanetShifter.com Magazine, and over 350 interviews with global leaders. He has created 80 New Myths to date and has been interviewed over 32 times in blogs and journals. Please see his cutting-edge article at the Joseph Campbell Foundation and his pioneering videos on YouTube.

In 1996 Mr. Paul was instrumental in the emerging online community space in his Master’s Thesis: “The Electronic Charrette.” He volunteered for many small town re-designs with the Minnesota Design Team. Willi earned his permaculture design certification in August 2011 at the Urban Permaculture Institute.

Willi’s current focus includes the integration of permaculture, mythology and the Transition Movement.

#### **Mr. Paul’s eGroups -**

Depth Psychology Alliance - New Global Mythology Group Founder  
LinkedIn - New Mythology, Permaculture and Transition Group Founder  
G+ Permaculture Age Group Founder

#### **Connections –**

Maria Owl Gutierrez  
[www.sacredfuture.org](http://www.sacredfuture.org)  
contact at sacredfuture.org

**Willi Paul**

New Mythologist & Transition Entrepreneur

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**“Spiritual Permaculture”** - Rethinking Permaculture Vernal Equinox **Convergence**: Everyday Strategies for Compassionate Living. 3/25 – 27, Kailash Ecovillage, Portland, OR. Interview with Ole Ersson, Kailash Ecovillage and Satya, **Food Not Bombs**, PDX.

**Willi**: ...Do you see a place for a personal spiritual connection to land design?

**Geoff Lawton**: Only if you keep it personal and do not teach it.

(from [Planetshifter.com](https://planetshifter.com) Chat)

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**Interview with Ole and Satya by Willi -**

**When you say “spiritual permaculture”, how does religion play a role if any? Are you familiar with the practice of the Society of Friends (Quakers)?**

**Ole**: Religion, one might say, is organized spiritual practice. Kailash Ecovillage attempts to avoid organized religion, as often this can lead to divisiveness. We stick to the core values that most spiritual practices, including religion, share, without the identification with individual religious practices. In that way, we avoid the divisive aspects of religion while focusing on the common spiritual practices.

On the other hand, organized religions promote many positive and introspective behaviors among their adherents, and this is to be encouraged. The question is, can we maximize the benefits while at the same time minimizing the negatives?

For example, our values statement emphasizes the following core values that are embraced by most or all spiritual practices, including religions. We value:

- Sustainability: organic gardening, composting, local food production, frugal use of energy and resources, alternative sources of energy and water, reducing, reusing, recycling, human-powered transport
- Safety: ensuring community safety through a stringent screening process, neighbors looking out for each other, and other measures
- Respect: for other beings and our earth
- Diversity: our community includes different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, incomes, ages, family types, sexual orientations, and spiritual paths
- Children and elders
- Each others' privacy
- Honesty
- Cleanliness
- Non-harming
- Non-stealing
- Simplicity
- Helpfulness
- Vegan community gatherings and celebrations
- Education: learning amongst ourselves and teaching the larger community about sustainability
- Open-mindedness: welcoming new ideas
- Experimentation: exploring new methods of sustainable urban living

The Quakers are an organized religious practice, although, in many respects, they minimize many of the usual practices of religions, such as ownership of churches, moral dogma, etc. In that sense, they maximize the benefits of organized religious practice while minimizing their negative impacts.

**Satya:** People mean very different things by this word "religion." Originally, it means to re-connect - so in this sense it is crucial to my vision of a sustainable way of life - to feel connection to each other, to the natural world, to the universe. We obviously aren't advocating a particular religious tradition at the convergence, but we will offer some meditational practices, and talk about how becoming deeply present can foster the realization of connection, and the courage to change.

I'm a little familiar with Quakerism, and have respect for what I've heard, but have never participated in their gatherings. I wonder why you asked this last point?

**Willi:** Just a reference point. I have spent time with the Quakers.

**Food not Bombs and Kailash Ecovillage have teamed up for this unique event. What values and actions do you share together?**

**Ole:** Food not Bombs does free vegan food serving outreach events on a regular basis to many communities. Kailash Ecovillage emphasizes veganic gardening techniques as well as other sustainable and compassionate practices. Thus, one of our principal shared values is the non-exploitation and harming of animals in our activities. However, many other values are also held in common.

**Satya:** Both groups are working to create a more healthful, compassionate and sustainable culture. Reducing food waste, and redirecting it toward community meals offered free to all, is the work of Food-Not-Bombs - this practice of treating our resources with respect and care, and sharing our abundance with others is a crucial part of the new culture we seek to create. Growing our own food, and learning how to reduce the environmental impact of our dwelling places is the work of Kailash, and this, too, is an essential part of the picture. Both groups contribute to a way of living that can help us drop away our reliance on industrial and consumerist systems that are destroying the planet, and foster a new way of living that increases our joy while reducing our harm.

**Is permaculture the same as sustainability now? Can you see linkages between permaculture and what folks in Silicon Valley are promoting as “[Ag-Tech](#)?”**

**Ole:** In general, permaculture practices are designed to be sustainable. However, from the description of AgTech published on the event web page, AgTech appears to be a corporate sponsored event promoting an interest in permaculture and technology. Increasing interest of the technology sector in sustainable agriculture practices is a laudable goal.

**Satya:** "Permaculture" and "sustainability" are both very loose terms that mean different things to different people. I am interested in a holistic way of life that incorporates all aspects of one's daily practices in the direction of least harm to all beings, and the greatest nourishment of joy. For me, this means not taking from nature more than we really need, and sharing our resources with everyone. I don't find this vision very compatible with a money-directed culture bent on infinite accumulation, which is what we find as a dominant story in today's society.

I don't know anything about AgTech, but I looked at your link, and I didn't find anything particularly appealing to me, or in line with the above vision. Their approach seems firmly in the "increase profit" camp, at least with the little info provided. I don't think technological improvements are what is primarily needed in the agricultural realm - we already know how to provide for the world's population in a sustainable way - I think we just need to make it politically feasible by changing our cultural attitudes, and replacing the profit motive of contemporary big Ag with ethical and ecologically sensitive motives instead.

**Is there anything spiritual about being a consumer? How can you guide us to a more diverse and holistic Capitalism?**

**Ole:** We are all consumers, as well as producers. Contemplating our consumer habits and choosing those that are more sustainable, and compassionate, is where we need to focus our attention. We make our consumer choices based on an idea that we are increasing our well-being. Most would agree that ideally, this will not be at the expense of other beings human and non-human. That is the crux of the matter. How do our choices affect others? Do we make compassionate choices that minimize negative impact on others, including non-human beings?

I am not sure what holistic capitalism means. In general, capitalism is the practice of increasing capital, by creating a profit during business transactions. As capitalistic practices are currently conducted, there appears to be minimal attention to the harmful effects of such business practices. If a practice increases the business's bottom line, it is encouraged. If it does not, it is discouraged.

Little attention is paid to the impact of business practices on the well-being of others besides those immediately benefiting from a business transaction. This needs to change. Those practices that have a detrimental effect on other beings, and on the ecosystem, even though profitable, need to be re-thought.

**Satya:** "Consuming" (in the economic sense) tends to mean paying money for something which you are not particularly involved in the creation of, and are probably ignorant of its origins. This leads us to inadvertently support industries and processes that are unethical. Also we tend to value the objects and services less if we are not aware and involved in their creation, and we waste more. And by using money we are reinforcing the idea that we cannot freely share with each other, as most natural resources - air, sun, earth, water, plants - are freely shared in nature.

So, no, I don't think there's much spiritual about being a "consumer" - I'd rather be a creator and a sharer - but I acknowledge that spiritual aspirants in today's world might often feel the need to buy some stuff at least occasionally, while we create a culture in which that's less and less necessary.

I don't think "holistic capitalism" is possible, at least as I understand the term capitalism - in my understanding capitalism requires a motive of material acquisition for oneself in competition with others, which I see as fundamentally destructive of both nature and human society, and incompatible with true joy. As for how we may be guided to something better - see my response to your second question.

**Please discuss a few of your specific spiritual places / spaces and tell us how you came to understand these places as such.**

**Ole:** We encourage thoughtful consideration of all our practices. It is essential to incorporate full consideration of the impact of all that we do on the rest of the ecosystem. Do our daily behaviors result or depend on exploitation of other beings? We endeavor to minimize, and ideally, eliminate, any such exploitation.

Specific practices encouraged at the Ecovillage include: reducing our consumer waste through reducing, reusing, and recycling, including our excreta, encouraging compassionate consumer practices as much as possible, and embracing compassionate land use practices such as veganic gardening.

**Satya:** I try to move in the direction of perceiving all spaces/places as sacred, but I do find certain places as more conducive to realizing spiritual joy - generally those with a rich and healthy natural ecosystem, and without the domination of technological control which pervades so much of our usual surroundings. So wilderness areas, mostly, are where I go for inspiration. Also I find it easy to see the sacred in land where I'm growing food - as the miraculous gift of nature for our subsistence is manifesting. And sometimes spaces in which art is being performed.

**Any reflections to share with us on my post: "[Soul and the Spirit](#)?"**



**Ole:** We see here many common threads of interest, such as protection of nature, appreciation for the arts, and encouragement of healthy body and mind.

**Satya:** No more reflections than what I'm sharing in these other questions.

**Please define “compassionate.” Any local examples?**

**Ole:** Compassionate practices are those that fully consider the interests of other beings. In our current society, non-human beings' interests are usually minimized or even ignored altogether.

We endeavor, in our practices, to restore their interests. In practical concerns, our ecovillage practices encourage living and gardening practices, those that foster optimal vegetative growth without supporting harmful societal practices.

For example, we all excrete (pee and poop). Recycling human excreta can allow us to be self-sufficient in our nutrient inputs without participating in or supporting animal based "organic" practices. The ecovillage gardens have become nitrogen (and other nutrients such as potassium and phosphorous) self-sufficient. We have confirmed that there is no need to include animal exploitation to attain remarkable growth and productivity.

What a delightful realization!

**Satya:** "Compassion" originally means to "suffer with", but we might extend the meaning to sharing both suffering and joy with others - a process that delivers us from the prison of our own small self-hood, and allows us to realize our unlimited nature, and our profound belonging to the universe. Food-Not-Bombs is a local example of a compassionate project, as is Kailash Ecovillage. As is every act of caring for the earth, making responsible, less harmful decisions, and sharing both resources and joy.

**I often refer to these times as the “Chaos-Era.” How will you help transition Human-Nature to what you call “living in a way that honors all living beings, and all the diversity of life on our planet, as our family.”**

**Ole:** N/A

**Satya:** I don't know if these are more chaotic times than before, but they are definitely busy, with lots of people, and lots of destructive practices. I think I've summarized my vision for a way forward in the questions above.

**Are you seeking people to host a presentation or workshop at the [convergence](#)? Any details to share?**

**Ole:** We are seeking participants in our Rethinking Permaculture convergence who share our compassionate values. We encourage anyone interested in participating to contact us via our event page, or simply show up on our first event night, where we organize the events of the convergence.

**Satya:** Yes, we are hoping many people will want to host their own workshops, or work with others. The first night of the gathering we will have a time for people to suggest, and schedule in, what they would like to teach. Some more guidelines for what would fit with the vision of the gathering, and some



preliminary workshop offerings, will be posted on the Kailash website and the event Facebook page in the next few days.

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**Rethinking Permaculture Vernal Equinox Convergence:  
Everyday Strategies for Compassionate Living**  
Hosted by Kailash Ecovillage and Food Not Bombs  
<http://www.kailashecovillage.org/rethinkingpermaculture/>

\* \* \* \* \*

**Contact -**

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**“Spiritual Resilience” - Interview with Rev. Julia Bystrova, Heart & Soul Group, [Transition Sebastopol](#) - by Willi Paul, [Planetshifter.com Media](#)**

*As Transition is about creating a positive vision for the future while adjusting to a post-carbon world, an important aspect of that process is to provide for psychological and spiritual support for community members as they come to terms with changes that can often be overwhelming. Supporting each other through these changes is a vital part of community resilience. The [Heart & Soul group](#) is about addressing these needs of the community.*

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**Interview with Julia by Willi –**

**Are you reaching out to people in need - and to seniors - in the Sebastopol area?**

Yes, one the most successful heart and soul groups split off from the main group, was a group to bring together the elder culture on our area. They are still meeting on a regular basis and have a loyal following.

We tried a gift circle group to help those in need but it did not continue. We are hosting healing events where people can receive a lot of support and care that is usually beyond the reach of many people's budgets. The "era of care" is another organization that emerged out of this. It will continue to do this, but is looking at how to make it financially sustainable.

### **How does the Heart & Soul Group integrate and influence Transition Sebastopol and City as a whole?**

The heart and soul group, as well as transition group overall, originally held many open meetings and public events with different themes and agendas. Always these events allowed for conversation and interaction with the community.

Many of the folks involved, over time have gone off and created a great variety of activities that relate to heart and soul. These people and groups flourish on their own and perhaps are even spawning others. This is one way we sort of "seeded" the whole city--with many individuals becoming more active and more connected in the community.

### **How do you approach religion vs spiritual themes with your members?**

Spiritual themes are usually embraced, but the language needs to be careful and as inclusive as possible for all beliefs. We embrace all religions, but do not subscribe to anyone. There is a lot of language around the sacredness of the Earth and also of the heart and the simple healing power of gratitude.

We had a monthly circle called "**heartsing**" where we gathered to share our songs, poems, stories, prayers and spontaneous expressions of our heart--all around an open campfire. We feel people need places to go to get away from electronic media and to remember the ancient need to connect in nature and tell stories.

### **Tell us about ... your “healthy support system” for your community which is the fundamental task of the Heart & Soul group.**

Well, there are many folks now who know each other through heart and soul and related transition activities. Many of these folks have deepened in their connections and can ask for help and support in time of need, or be available for others if they need it. This is the best support system I know. It is very organic, changing and alive, not some contrived structure.

### **Talk about some of the underlying values in play for the Transition vision? Could these be a source of tension?**

Well, yes. There have been different perspectives that have created tension. There have been people who have subscribed to a dire and gloomy view of our future, prepping for a very challenging 'transition'. There are others who are more reliant on inner resources and a belief that the good in humanity will win out in trying times. The former group thinks these types are "Pollyanna's" and the later groups feels the former is way too 'doom and gloom'. And then there are many gradients of types in between.

All agree that we are in transition and/or need to transition, but for different reasons and with different responses.

### **How does the Heart & Soul group collaborate together?**

Well, this is an interesting question. We have tried to collaborate on many occasions, with some success. But overall, it seems that things get done when it is just one, two or a few who take a lead on a project, and then pull others in to help.

It is important for people to feel empowered to be part of things but I think many of us are still figuring out what collaboration really means. There are those that have a very ideal notion that we can all sit in council and work everything out altogether, but the reality is that humans are human, and there will be egos, personalities, differing opinions and energy levels, etc. We all do seem to have a strong ethic about how finding ways to work together, but many of us are clumsy in how to do that. The most interesting thing for me these days has been to explore the kinds of systems and groups that can work together efficiently and yet be non-hierarchical.

Transition hosted a training a while back on Effective Groups, taught by [Nick Osbourne](#) of the UK Transition network. Another thing I've explored is "the Art of Hosting" which is based on participatory leadership and has a variety of activities that distill the wisdom from the group.

One of the more helpful group structures I have found so far is the holographic model. I believe this holds a lot of promise in the future for helping us to work together effectively, though I believe the biggest issue we face is transition from the mindset of the old paradigm of power and control. Many of us that espouse a new way still struggle with the conditioning of the old. Power struggles and challenging ego dynamics will likely always come to play in a group, but with the right tools and structure, conflict can be channeled into positive action.

### **What is the Community Mapping process? Where are the results being implemented today?**

This was a big community event done many years back now. There were many ideas, dreams, visions and projects proposed, though as in any 'brainstorming' type of process, only a few actually stick. Some of them have been in the form of working groups that are now on their own and working quite successfully, with a lot of positive impact on the community.

### **Do the ethics and principles from [Permaculture](#) play a role in Transition Sebastopol?**

Absolutely! The principles of permaculture permeate our culture through and through!

Permaculture is a term that is now being used in social systems as well as natural. We look at how we can work together in a way that enhances our natural gifts, that brings needed tasks and our individual functions together more efficiently (i.e. - stacking). Bringing the gifts and natural inclinations out in people is a way to bring sustainability to this long term, often daunting project of transitioning our culture to one based on taking care of each other and the planet.

Permaculture is also a way of looking at life as a whole, how we are all connected and everything we do affects the system. It's an important concept that needs to be widespread and part of our thinking if we are to steward our resources properly and apply the wisdom of nature to all our challenges in life.

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## Bios –

**Rev. Julia Bystrova, MA.** has been working in the field of health and healing for over 20 years. She has produced and facilitated numerous events with health, healing, community, sustainability and inner resilience as a focus. She is also a poet, a performance artist and a mother. She has been a leader in the [Transition movement](#), and specifically in Heart and Soul and Healthcare initiatives. Her latest work has emerged out of these efforts-- the new “[Era of Care](#)” which promotes events and services for inner and outer healing for communities.

Julia is an ordained Interfaith Minister with an interdisciplinary degree in science and philosophy. She is deeply engaged in the convergence of science, spirituality and community activism, especially as they relate to understanding and catalyzing the shift needed in human consciousness on the planet today.

## Permaculture & Nature –



"Permaculture is stand-alone design science, there is no spirituality side to it." - Howard

**"My Quick Permie Asia Chat"** with Howard Story, Founding Director / CEO at Permaculture Institute of Asia

**Willi:** You write: "We live in a time of disruptive change,...." How is permaculture a disruptive force? Examples?

**Howard:** Permaculture teaches sustainable living and growing your own food. This is very disruptive to the current industrial, chemical food system. Growing your own healthy food is unusual and not the norm.

**Willi:** Can you teach permaculture online?

**Howard:** Yes - the ethics and principals of Permaculture can be taught online. also all the theory, but at some time a Permacultureist needs to attend a Permaculture demonstration center and get hands on experience.

**Willi:** I imagine that access to agri-land is an issue in Asia as well as in America. Can you live a permie life without land?



**Howard:** Yes - you can take all the principals of a Permaculture life and apply them to urban living. This includes balcony gardens, roof top gardens, and Bio-intensive gardens, which all allow the growing of food in small spaces.

**Willi:** Tell us what we should know to actionize [UN Agenda 21](#) and the UN Millennium Project and its Eight MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS to eliminate global severe poverty completely by 2030.

**Howard:** We need to use Permaculture and its associated technologies to lower energy use, build soils, improve crop yields. Also the to empower social inclusion in all areas of the globe.

**Willi:** Is there racism in permaculture in Asia?

**Howard:** There is system of racism in Asia. However, this is changing. Remember many cultures in Asia are over 4000 years old.

**Willi:** Is permaculture a sustainable life for communities in Thailand? Do folks live off the land there?

**Howard:** N/A

**Willi:** What are some early lessons from WWOOF Thailand?

**Howard:** The average age of farmers around the world is over 60. WWOOF is akin to an organic agricultural extension service. It is a testing and training ground for young farmers.

**Willi:** Can permaculture and spirituality combine? How do Asians see this intersection?

**Howard:** Permaculture is stand-alone design science, there is no spirituality side to it. Although some include Yoga and meditation in some centers.

**Willi:** Please share some new permaculture stories / songs based on your work there.

**Howard:** We just completed our 4th Annual Permaculture Convergence in Thailand. It was great to see many youth involved and interested in organic farming.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Contacts –**

### **Howard Story**

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**“Our Fire Circle Reformation”- Interview with Erik Ohlsen: [The Permaculture Skills Center & Permaculture Artisans](#), Sebastopol, CA by Willi Paul, [Planetshifter.com Design](#)**

[The Permaculture Skills Center](#) is a 5-acre demonstration site and educational institution dedicated to sharing regenerative land development and management practices. They are located in the Laguna de Santa Rosa watershed just south of Sebastopol, in Sonoma County, California. The site is also the home of our partner organization, Permaculture Artisans.

The Center offer diverse programs for everyone, from those who are interested in home gardening to professional farmers, landscapers and land managers. Some of our offerings include: the Ecological Landscaper Immersion, Farm School, Open Design Consultation, and Day-long workshops.

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**Interview with Erik by Willi**

**Question on naming: ecological landscape design sounds like farming that relates to permaculture? Help!?**

Regenerative landscape design? Restorative landscape design? Natural landscape design?

**One of your missions is to create local livelihoods. Do you mean just the Permaculture Skills Center community or in other towns in your area? Any examples?**

Let’s first look at individuals who come to our center. A key part of our mission at the Permaculture Skills Center is to develop career pathways for people in the realms of permaculture, ecological design, and all



the subsets of those. At this startup organization we are developing models that integrate education with business incubation (Ecological Landscape Immersion program, and the Farm School).

To support people in developing their right livelihoods, it takes responding to inherent design challenges in personal, economic and social relationships. Part of what we would like to show over the next five years is an education to career model and runway that empowers individuals through a vocational learning environment that engages their dreams, passions, strengths and helps them get through obstacles to their success. In an environment like this we can support budding new leaders and entrepreneurs in developing a right livelihood for themselves and others.

It has become clear that the success of someone's endeavor to create a livelihood for themselves in regenerative relationship to the planet rests in that persons willingness to do the personal and community work necessary to advance their plans into reality. Our goal is to provide the tools that help people get there.

In the development of our vocational education and business incubation programming we are working towards providing livelihood models that can be replicated around the planet. Many of our students are coming from out of our region and we are providing training through mentorship for them in developing the businesses they're creating. Our lofty goal is to have a global reach in the design and development of regenerative economies that are rooted in local bio regions and developed and implemented locally by those communities.

At this time we are only working in the phase one of our successional plan with last year's implementation of the training programs described above. For phase two we are currently working on an affordable and online educational platform that will provide the same types of advanced training and services to people all over the planet. Launch date is tentatively expected fall of 2016.

From a community and bioregional point of view we have developed the beginnings of what I like to call a "Permaculture Business Guild, PBG". Between the Permaculture Skills Center, Permaculture Artisans, LEIP LLC(property owner), and a host of joint ventures that we are hosting at our five-acre site, we are creating a family of businesses that share resources, personnel, and generate marketing opportunities for each other.

This dynamic integrated business model that we're forming is providing new opportunities for people to find meaningful work in the regenerative economy. We are developing this model through self-experimentation and working the kinks out within our pilot business guild. The PBG model is another aspect to our general goal of creating right livelihoods and a regenerative economy all over the planet. Our hope is to eventually model a successful PBG structure that has potential for replication elsewhere.

As you can see we are very much still in experimentation, research and development. So far over the last three years we've experienced a lot of great successes and quite a few failures in this startup phase. This is a natural process of discovery as we work towards the development of regenerative economic models that are viable and implementable for other individuals and communities.

**What is your policy on recreational growing and use of marijuana?**

At the five-acre Permaculture Skills Center we are not growing cannabis either for recreational or medicinal use. That is not because we have any ethical issue with doing so. The only real reason is because the laws are too interpretive right now and the risk would be too great. Additionally, it's not the kind of business model that we are developing although we are happy to see so many viable business models for the growing industry in cannabis developing throughout California and the United States.

Personally, I'm 100% against the drug war, it's unethical, unnecessary and destructive to our communities. Especially as it relates to incarceration rates for nonviolent crimes most notably associated with marijuana, it's an unjust, unfair and vile system of racism and oppression that needs to end now.

I'm encouraged to see the cannabis legalization successes that are happening across our country. I'm hopeful that legalization will come to California in 2016. I think it's becoming more and more clear that the cannabis plant is one of the more important plants to human civilization. Humans evolved with this particular plant for thousands and thousands of years. It provides a medicine to so many of our ailments almost as if it's meant to be in partnership with us. We have to remember as well that hemp provided the basis for great evolutions of human civilization throughout history as it provides a rich source of food, fuel, and fiber.

In both cases cannabis can be grown and processed easily in peoples yards and farms(unlike fossil fuel and pharmaceutical products). This kind of empowerment could devastate the fossil fuel and pharmaceutical industries that run our economy. I think years from now we will look back at this era of cannabis prohibition for what it is, a divide and conquer, profit over people attempt at controlling and capitalizing on people and the environment.

**Please give us one or two lessons from your ongoing Open Design Consultation, interactive consultation course?**

The open design consultation program has had limited success so far. It's a really great program for building community, making design consultations affordable, and educating folks around permaculture design strategies and techniques.

The structure of our open design consultations are such that we first choose one or two members of the community who are looking for an affordable design session as our subjects. We hold an evening event where members of the community can come and pay very little to experience a couple hours of discussion and professional consultation around somebody's property. Often the consultants focus on incorporating advice that benefits all of the observers.

We've only had a couple of these and although they worked really well, the time it took to prepare for them and the return on the investment financially didn't make sense for us to continue doing so this year. We're still in a startup/growth phase and have limited capacity for endeavors that are not going to pay the bills. As our main programs solidify and we feel a stronger level of financial security we will bring the open design consultation program back as they provide great value to the community and make professional consultations affordable to folks who may not be able to afford them otherwise.

**Is the current pace or expansion of the permaculture movement good enough?**

The first response to that question is no. Clearly the permaculture movement itself has failed to make a viable case for its adoption in mainstream society in the United States. This is troubling as Permaculture offers a design frame that could seriously help implement solutions to current crises at large scales. That's my first reaction to this question but that's not the whole story.

A deeper look shows me that in fact in the last 10 years, many people in the permaculture movement have been actively developing an enormous diversity of platforms to implement permaculture design in social, ecological and economic systems. I believe we're in a research and development phase in the movement and in the next few years we will see many more scaled solutions and new permaculture models become implemented and adopted throughout different levels of our society. It's sort of like we've been in deep planning mode and the fruits of our labors haven't quite been realized yet. I think many seeds of permaculture have been planted throughout the planet and like a young fruit tree just we need just a few more years before they will bear large yields.

It's a very exciting time, and much is going to emerge and when it does it will happen very quickly. So although the movement has been slow in its first three decades my guess is in the next 5 to 10 years it will speed up exponentially. With that in mind I think it's important that people position themselves for success in this work and try not to get discouraged if ideas and planning doesn't work out at first. The Permaculture wave is still coming and when it does it's going to be fertile and it's going to be massive.

**Do you see as many female students as male students in your courses?**

Unfortunately we are not seeing the same amount of interest with women as men in our programs. In general an approximate average would be about two-thirds men and one-third women. It could be worse. We are actively researching how to make our programming more accessible to women and people of color and as we are still in beta form we're very open to critique and feedback to help us offer programs that are accessible and desirable to everybody.

We have a pretty well gender balanced teaching staff and have a clear and strong sense about equality and respect of all people. If I was to speculate as to why more women were not taking our programs it would be that for one, the landscape program sounds like it has a "trades" focus to it. This is partly true. The reason why that may turn some women off is because in the United States trade industries are heavily patriarchal and sadly not always healthy and safe feeling environments for women. Hopefully, we can help make change on that front through more openness and discovery and development of new women driven businesses.

**Will the profit-motive remain in place at the Center for the foreseeable future? Do you have a vision of an alternative economic system?**

The term "profit-motive" can be misleading. While we are not officially a nonprofit organization our LLC business structure provides for the opportunity to develop social benefit based ownership and services business models. What's key to the model we are creating is that we understand it's going to take money to incubate and develop a regenerative economy. We feel strongly that focusing on financially viable business models allow for those businesses to thrive, and therefore care better for the people involved.

We will continue to grow our companies in order to provide a larger economic base for people to get paid right livelihoods while healing the Earth. This is why I think “profit-motive” can be misleading. Yes, we seek to make profit(generate funds beyond breaking even) but not for the sake of filling up some bank account coffers. But for the intention to quickly develop more and more viable regenerative businesses to scale up the implementation of solutions across the globe.

**Which is more important to you? Promoting the Center community itself as the hero or individual leaders as heroes?**

At this point in time we have to promote the center itself otherwise there will be no center. Being that we are still in the startup phase we haven't yet reached the place where our programming and other offerings are covering all of the financial needs of the center. We are being as generous as we can and we see the success of anyone who comes through our programs or works with us as part of our success.

Part of our longer-term planning is to develop a business incubation fund that we can actually provide startup capacity level grants for people to start their new program, businesses or new endeavor. If we are able to get ourselves to a place where we can provide this kind of support then our focus will shift to promoting individual efforts as the heroes.

I'm constantly asking myself the question about how we can get ourselves to a wider audience in order to speed up the process by which we can offer our programming and business incubation models. When you're in a startup phase you often have to reach for the low hanging fruit to keep going. Right now we're using whatever we can to get our name out there and get our programs filled because every time we run a program there is an opportunity for incubating the next leader. This is the kind of momentum that will help us get to that goal of having the financial base to provide startup capacity for individuals.

**How does immersion relate to resilience? How does Transition relate to permaculture?**

When we talk about immersion as part of our programming we are describing an experience where students spend a significant amount of time together with mentors and each other over long periods. What this does is create an incubation period, wherein students can have life-changing and life-affirming experiences. This also allows for competency building within the subject matter and a sufficient amount of time to develop a new life plan for their future.

We are creating sustainable communities during these immersions and this I believe is a foundation for resilience. Relearning how to work, interact and play together in society is a vital part of creating communities that can care for themselves and their surrounding environments. To do this work collectively with others creates an unforgettable skill set of learning how to facilitate oneself, learning how to work towards consensus and learning how to support your friends and family when times get tough.

This is part of the fabric of creating a resilient society. I like the concept of transition because it gets very real about the kind of times that we're living in. It's a very practical way to describe the need to transition out of the current economic and social paradigms that are so destructive to ecosystems and human communities and move towards a more egalitarian, peaceful and ecologically based human civilization. In order to get to that ideal though there is a transition time which we are in now. This

requires a set of pioneers, a lot of courage, risk-taking and ability to survive and thrive during times of major change.

Permaculture provides us with the design frame to get us through the transition towards an ecological and peaceful society. This is why transition and permaculture are hand-in-hand concepts. Permaculture provides a design approach wherein we look at the status of our current design situation be it social, economic or ecological, and utilize resources in an efficient manner to re-organize elements and systems in a way which increases health, relationship and resilience for the planet Earth and human civilization. This is the kind of transition we need and are implementing now.

### **Are you creating a small town at the Center?!**

I'd call it a village and a business guild. LEIP LLC is the company that owns the property. LEIP's property management model is to create a community of tenants, joint venture and incubation projects that model closed loop symbiotic ecosystems. Already a higher level of efficiency and diversity of yields is being experienced between the various companies, farmers, and students operating on-site.

Another beautiful pattern that is emerging now is that the site is really turning into a "cultural center" as many different groups and individuals, school classes, and other associates of the site use the space for cultural and educational experiences.

We're open to the public so the goal is to provide an experience where people feel welcome and at home and they can autonomously relate to the space within a set of respectful conduct guidelines.

### **Looks like a family vibe there. Yes?**

We want this to be a family centered place in many ways. Myself and many staff onsite have young families. There is also a wonderful family living on-site who provides care taking services to the center and works with Permaculture Artisans.

To go a little bit deeper, we identify that the only truly sustained shift we can make in transitioning to a regenerative culture is to bring the children into that culture now. We also have to make a concerted effort to make the center a place where all kinds of different people feel welcome and engaged. It would be great if folks felt like they were coming home when they visited the Permaculture Skills Center.

Our goal is for people to use this as a place where all kinds of communities and families can join together, celebrate, learn from each other and share skills and resources that build our local economy and strengthen our networks.

### **What rituals and traditions have sprung up at the Center?**

A few ongoing cultural connecting themes have come up over the last couple years. We have a lot of Latin style barbecues, parties, fire circles and community councils.

I would say the fire circles and community councils became a foundational piece of the last Ecological Landscaper Immersion program. These were opportunities where we came together not to learn about things but to deeply connect with each other, provide a space for listening cultural mentorship, healing

and celebration. In many ways it's the glue that keeps these communities together and moving forward on their collective paths.

We recently purchased an amazing Italian brick oven on a trailer. It's very high-quality and lovingly named "La Rossa." We have been having a lot of amazing wood-fired cooking gatherings, and farm to table dinners utilizing La Rossa and the land, it's been fabulous.

We hope next year to host a series of farm to table dinner nights and movie screenings to develop consistent cultural experiences here.

### **Have the hard times proven to be just as important to your growth as the good times?**

I look at the hard times as important and strategic indicators of the health of the companies, an assessment of the direction we've taken and an opportunity to tweak the design for viability into the future. Hard times reveal the most important data for making the business successful. That being said, sometimes the hard times are bad enough that you start questioning whether you're on the right path at all. These are the toughest times to get through because you start to lose morale and wonder if it would just be easier to stop what you're doing. In those times of deep reflection I'll often find some golden gem idea where I can apply some sort of least change for the greatest effect approach to utilizing the resources at hand to create something successful. To make that shift it often requires pruning attachment to something that's not working anymore.

The great challenge as designers that we have is to be creative and innovative enough to push through the truly difficult tasks that are ahead of us. Often in permaculture we want to design systems that work for the planet and people and end up doing it while inside of an economic and political structure that controls many facets of people's lives. The design challenges may seem insurmountable and impossible but one thing history has taught us is that change can and will happen eventually. The best we can do is continually receive feedback, input, and look at hard times as ways to constantly redesign, adjust, and tweak. Accepting feedback will reveal pathways to successfully restoring the planet and creating healthy thriving communities for everyone.

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### **Bio - Erik Ohlsen**

Erik is the Executive Director of the Permaculture Skills Center, a vocational training school which offers advanced training in ecological design, landscaping, farming and land stewardship. He is also the Founder/Principal at Permaculture Artisans, a fully licensed contracting firm specializing in the design and installation of ecological landscapes and farms throughout California.

Erik is an internationally renowned certified permaculture designer/practitioner and certified permaculture teacher. He is a well-known and seasoned activist organizer, and has been working within permaculture and activist movements since 1998.

In the field of ecological land development and management, Erik has extensive experience with projects that range from small urban lots to 100+ broadacre design and implementation. His many years of experience observing and listening to landscape patterns, and managing installation crews and design teams, have led to an extensive knowledge of all aspects of ecological land development and planning.

He is a specialist in water harvesting systems, food forest design, community organizing, facilitation, vocational education and much more.

Erik is known for his ability to inspire masses of people through his teaching style and ability to weave together complex issues into cohesive narratives that can be acted upon. Erik has worked throughout the world and currently resides in Sebastopol, California; managing his homestead, running his businesses and raising his young family

#### **Connections –**

##### **Erik Ohlsen**

Executive Director

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Owner/Principal

[Permaculture Artisans](#)

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My Quick Permie Chat with [Geoff Lawton](#), Permaculture Educator and Businessman by Willi Paul, [Planetshifter.com Magazine](#)

Geoff is Managing Director of [The Permaculture Research Institute](#), [Permaculture Sustainability Consulting](#), and [GeoffLawton.com](#)

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I recently sent Mr. Lawton some questions via LinkedIn. Here is the Q & A. -

**WP:** The classic landfill on the outskirts of town. Rising higher and higher. Leaching chemicals. How can permaculture values revitalize this mess?

**GL:** We can harvest some gas from these sites and we can lock them up into forest planting.

**WP:** What do you mean: "lock them up into forest planting?"

**GL:** Yes just that.

**WP:** What is your experience with fracking? Have you repaired toxic aquifers?

**GL:** We have helped protest fracking. If we installed enough water harvesting aquifer re-charge earthworks at the surface we can add continuous downward pressure on the aquifers.

**WP:** Cool. Please give us a URL to a fracking protest that you participated in.



**GL:** You look it up on [permaculturenews.org](http://permaculturenews.org)

**WP:** One of my interests is new community rituals that re-connect community with the sacred. Two such rituals are sharing expos and fall harvests. How do you see old and new rituals?

**GL:** We work with traditional tribal people on permaculture aid work projects where processes and protocol give people the ability to manage the inevitable dramas of life in a unified and predictable way.

**WP:** OK. So, in general, you believe that traditional tribal people do not practice rituals?

**GL:** I said what I said - please read it.

**WP:** After the “swales and cob benches” are done, driven by low-tech design principles, permaculture comes down to love to me. How do you express love for the land and your clients?

**GL:** Appreciation of natural abundance in beautiful form.

**WP:** Is there any news on permaculture-driven alternative medicines that you know of?

**GL:** Yes we have a large plant data base on alternative medicines through our long-term working partnership with the late [Isabel Shipard](#).

**WP:** Since my PDC, I find myself integrating other ideas and values with permaculture, like mythology and alchemy. Do you incorporate other things into your practice that are outside of permaculture? If so, why?

**GL:** We stick to proven science and not included meta-physics.

**WP:** That seems to be the standard permaculture line. But do you see a place for a personal spiritual connection to land design?

**GL:** Only if you keep it personal and do not teach it.

**WP:** Can permaculturists run and win local governmental offices? What is your political commitment(s) to date?

**GL:** No and none.

**WP:** That is a short answer, Mr. Lawton! Why can't permies run and win local governmental offices?

**GL:** I have no political commitments. Sorry I am very busy with many things and may have read your question too quickly. So yes they can but I believe it is a waste of time to enter into a corrupt system and expect to be able to change it from within.

**WP:** Permaculture doesn't advocate storing food and weapons in a bomb shelter! But what are the main differences between permaculture and survivalists? Have you taught students from the survivalist camp?

**GL:** Yes we consult and design for survivalists.

**WP:** Please name a specific project and explain how your consultations differ?

**GL:** [Jack Spirko](#) is my biggest connection in recent years, I have (worked with the) Y2K crowd ..., they are really just precise designs with survival oriented design elements.

**WP:** Can you share any permaculture inspired games, songs, and myths?

**GL:** We do have great participation parties at the end of PDC's.

**WP:** California is in a long-term drought. How would your firm go about producing a sustainable solution?

**GL:** Good permaculture design solutions.

**WP:** Please offer up one specific solution to the CA drought and give us details.

**GL:** N/A

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#### **Other permaculture interviews by Willi**

[Interview with Koreen Brennan, Co-Organizer: 2014 North American Permaculture Convergence. Harmony Park, Clarks Grove, MN, 8/29 – 31, 2014.](#)

[Seeds & Ladders. A Conversation with Permaculture Designer Jenny Pell, Pacific Northwest.](#)

["THE MOTHER WHO PLANTS TREES." An Indiegogo Agroforestry Project in India by Permaculturist Charlotte Anthony. Plus an Interview with Charlotte.](#)

["Alley Allies Project" : Interview with Katie Hughes, Mill Street Community Planning, Portland, OR.](#)



Ananthi and pandi's wife (our farmer) in a Kanahambaram patch for Ley flowers. They take less water than vegetables



Elephant Yams interplanted with tender Coconuts



Cotton trees are a prime intercropping species



Ananthi and Charlotte plant Moringa & medicinal herbs in first field

**“THE MOTHER WHO PLANTS TREES.” An Indiegogo Restorative Agroforestry Project in India by Permaculturist Charlotte Anthony. Plus an Interview with Charlotte by Willi Paul [Planetshifter.com](http://Planetshifter.com) Magazine**

## **Project Overview**

### **An Indiegogo Restorative Agroforestry Project in India**

**Charlotte:** As I was traveling in India I met many farmers who could only continue farming by digging new bore wells every 2 years or switching over to dry land farming. Some had switched to dry land farming and were not getting enough rain for their crops. New bore wells cost thousands of dollars and so not doable by subsistence farmers. This problem extends across many states in India.

The problem stems from several things (among many others I am sure):

- 1)** cutting down the trees for thousands of years to cook their food,
- 2)** dams that were built that divert the ground water,
- 3)** the green revolution where thousands and thousands of acres of agroforestry were taken out to make way for monoculture, hybrid plants fed by chemicals which take 3 – 4 times the amount of water used for open pollinated, diversicultured organically grown plants.

Permaculture water solutions combined with restorative agroforestry was the perfect solution. I had seen in a U tube about Don Tipping's farm in Williams, Oregon, that when he built his ponds, the wells of his neighbors filled up. And the question then became how to get the farmers to adopt what worked. The answer seemed simple. It is to make it financially worthwhile for them to plant the trees and replenish the water.

The farmers like our ideas, interplanting the existing trees with medicinal herbs, vegetables, and fruits, planting diversified new trees on key lines along with open water sources etc. They want a demonstration. The chemical establishment still holds sway telling them that any auxiliary crops will take away from the main crop and moreover will steal their expensive chemical fertilizer from their crops.

We are cataloging the many demonstrations already available here in India in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and making posters of them for our presentations. There is a long history here of diversified tree plantings mixed with herbs, spices, vegetables and fruits. Unfortunately these magnificent food forests that remain are being undermined by the chemical industries need to find markets for their products. This long term will kill the soil, the goose that lays the golden egg.

How do we find the villagers who want to work with us. We based our model on Navdanya (Vandanna Shiva's organization): We are doing presentations in the surrounding villages looking especially for subsistence farmers who are willing to convert to permaculture and natural farming practices combined with Restorative agroforestry. We are also contacting government offices, NGO's and local networks for contacts with subsistence farmers.

We will provide information and consultations about their crop and water needs and we will and buy their produce from them as incentive. This is a great opportunity to do restorative agroforestry. For these Indian farmers the rubber is meeting the road. They are not in the theoretical phase where if they do nothing, they will continue to have food.

To see more about our project please go to our [crowd funding site](#).

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## **Interview with Charlotte by Willi**

### **Tell us about your history of interplanting crops with trees?**

In permaculture we routinely use polyculture. For example, we might take one plant, say kale in a 20 x 20 area, planting kale at the typical 24 inch spacing for kale and then filling in between the kale with lettuce, onions, beets, peas (examples, the specifics vary with what we need at the time). We like to mix nitrogen fixing plants, roots with green leafy plants. Rather than taking away from the kale the diverse plants actually nurture each other. Different plant roots feed from different root zones. Most plants bring up some minerals and the plants can circulate the minerals as needed, especially if there are mycorrhizals in the soil. In a viable ecosystem there will always be mycorrhizals in the soil. In Eugene we imported mycorrhizals from Paul Stamets, Fungi Perfecti. Here we will just make mulch piles which will attract the mycorrhizals, just as laying out compost in Eugene attracted red worms. A soil rich in microbes creates the NPK which allows the plants to grow.

The NPK story is a story of our culture. Scientists look at beautiful vegetables and think they can analyze the soil ingredients and then proclaim that it was the NPK that made the beautiful plants, when in fact it was all the microbes that made the NPK which made the beautiful plants. Of course this is the innocent version. We know that there were chemicals left over after World War II and rather than destroying them someone came up with the idea to use them for food.

In my food forest plantings we put in trees and then put in herbs, clovers, annual fruit and vegetables to feed the soil which feeds the trees. The food forest concept as taught in permaculture comes from food forests around the world especially in tropical and subtropical climates. Organic matter in the soils in these climates are used up quickly by the soil life. Trees put down leaves which continually feed the soil life. The interplants bring up minerals. In permaculture we would also plant nitrogen fixing trees, in the northwest maybe autumn olive, or alder to use as chop and drop, meaning to make sure that we can keep a mulch on the ground without the hassle of collecting it from outside the food forest. This mulch promotes the soil life which again nurtures the trees.

Bashkir Save is India's Gandhi of agriculture. Fukuoka visited his farm and said it was better than his own. A Vision of Natural Farming was written about him. I recommend this book highly. Mr. Save says that the soil is the goose that lays the golden egg. Except for sun and a little water, everything the plants needs come from the soil. When you use tilling, chemical fertilizers, too much water and mono cropping, you deplete the minerals those plants need. When you use no till or very light tilling, organic materials, little water, and polycultures you do not kill the goose that lays the golden egg. He also believes that well established trees do not need feeding, just like your adult children do not need feeding.

### **How does your Northwest USA Permaculture influence your work with Indian farmers?**

In the PNW there is a long tradition of dry land farming especially in the eastern section of the Oregon and Washington. If you can get crops such as beans, tomatoes, potatoes, established before the rains stop in April or May, they will produce. In India there are two monsoon seasons, and so you can grow 2 crops a year with dry land farming. Using minimum water, as with minimums of everything else is an ongoing interest of mine. I worked as a chiropractor before this farming stint and working with people, I found minimums worked best for healing. We respect the living ecosystem by interfering as little as possible.

When you look at a forest, driving along the road in Eastern Washington, you see lots of young trees, growing from seed where there are 10-15 inches of rainfall a year and no rain in the summer. There is a lot of water hydrology to explain how these trees get their water, (covered in The Vision of Natural Farming), but the one I like best is that the mycorrhizals that interconnect throughout the forest distribute the water to the baby trees.

### **Is a food forest a new concept in India?**

India has a 10,000 year history of sustainable agriculture. Food forests or agroforestry was their primary way to farm until the British colonization came along followed by the green revolution. Farmers were told that if they cut down their trees and planted field crops in monoculture with chemical fertilizers they would make more money. They were told the NPK story line which is that NPK and not the soil fed the plants. The corporations got to off load their chemicals, many of which were being banned due to toxicity in the U.S. and Europe. Mostly they did not make the expected money. Many had borrowed money from the banks in order to buy the new hybrid plants, the chemicals, the machinery and they lost their land. Most of you know about the hundreds of thousands of farmer suicides that this caused.

There is a 1000 year old food forest on tribal lands in Kerala. I am excited to be visiting this. In the rest of Kerala, though there are very old food forests everywhere, mainly they are now using chemicals all through them. The reason these food forests still exist in Kerala are that the land is too steep to do traditional mono cropping and also a lot of the herbs and spices that they grow need to have a shade. Like own Native Americans the old ways have been mainly lost here in India just in the last 60 years or so.

### **Your Indiegogo site touts the benefits of reservoirs to restore ground water and rainfall? Please explain this?**

Long before I came to India, I looked at [Andrew Millison's](#) YouTube video of the water conservation work of Tom Ward and Don Tipping in Southern Oregon. The thing that struck me the most was that Don Tipping's neighbors reported their well levels rising after Don had put in his ponds. Simply put, having some water and organic material in the air, actually is needed for rain to coalesce. In my conversations with farmers here who have the ponds, it looks like a small reservoir (40 ft. x 40 ft.) works for a 20 acre area. 2 farmers have told me that they have seen the edges of the rain at the outside of the 20 acre areas. The interrelationship between rain, groundwater and reservoirs is complicated. There are simple explanations of how this works in The Vision of Natural Farming.



**I understand that your outreach program is based on demonstration or pilots to overcome the farmer's fear of something they do not understand. How is this proceeding?**

It is very difficult in India to find farmers to let us use their land, mainly because leases are limited to less than 5 years. The chemical consultants have drummed into them that this much fertilizer must be used to get this much crop. So they believe that interplants will steal the food from their trees, rather than as we know interplants or any kind of diversity, actually increase the yield of the trees. Also there is a law in India that says if you lease a property for 5 years it is essentially yours (after legal maneuverings). No one will let us have a 5 year or more lease. Everyone assures me that folks are greedy here, so even the best of them if they see we are making good money on the land for the first 5 years, will want to not renew the lease and keep our profits from the perennial plantings for themselves.

Navdanya, (Vandanna Shiva's group) has found many hundreds of farmers to convert to organic by giving them seeds which they then pay it forward when they harvest their crops, a lot of advice and hand holding. We are now following this model, looking especially for folks who do not have enough water to continue with chemicals. We want them to convert to organic to save water, to plant trees and do what they call here water conservation strategies, ponds, swales, etc. Our goal is to have 100 of these farmers before the monsoon starts in June. We have only one farmer so far. He owns 6 acres of land and has water for only 2 acres. He is excited to try our approach. We are looking to partner with other organizations, such as BAIF who I found today has many of our similar goals and practices. They are working in other states and hopefully they will help us find the water starved farmers who want to work with us.

Joshua my overall coordinator needs to make an income and today we came up with the idea that he would be our marketing agent, buying the organic crops and selling them for a little more so he can pay for his living expenses.

**What is the role of women in your vision?**

In India women and men are fairly separate. we would like to have separate farm workshops for women. One of my teammates is a woman who wants to teach other women to farm. When I ask the mainly men farmers what will happen to their land if the water keeps going down, a man who said he is now earning a great income, almost 8,000 an acre, said that he would sell his land and do something else. I said wow this land has been in your family for hundreds of years and you would just sell it. He said yes if he could not make money from it. Many of the men are saying this to me.

I expect that women with children would better understand the need to grow food and do what has to be done to bring in the water, rather than moving on.

**Tell us about the status of organic farms and foods in the region that you are working in?**

There was a man here, Nammalvar, who has brought a lot of awareness about organic farming to the area. He has left the body, but still many people are following his vision. Several organic shops have sprung up here. There are a group of organic farmers who meet to talk about how to get better results, by that I mean especially how to make the same amount of money that the chemical people are making. Organic farming per se is very new here. Very few people have heard of permaculture or natural farming. They do not know about hedgerows to allow havens for the insect predators and consequently

have a lot of insects coming in from their neighbor's chemical fields. Again like in Pennsylvania, there are hedgerows all over India, but the knowledge seems to have been lost about their purpose.

When I say organic farming is new here, I mean folks who would know about these particular words and the particular practices we associate with it, like worm castings. Many people who cannot afford the chemicals are still farming organically. And again, there is a 10,000 year history of sustainable agriculture. By setting up a marketing arm, we hope to give these folks a better price for their produce. We will also be establishing a food processing plant so that we can make some organic powders for which there is a demand in some of the cities. (And old people like me who have moved to India need to take to keep healthy).

I do have to warn people about organic food in India. There are organic certifications and these are very hard to get, taking months of paperwork and lots of money. The people that get them according to my sources have a lot of political pull. the practice usually is that they have an acre or two or solid organic plantation and then get that certified and then sell from their other nonorganic thousand acres as though it is organic.

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## **Bio -**

Charlotte Anthony started out as a biodynamic farmer more than 45 years ago. Currently she is spearheading The Mother Who Plants Trees in Tamil Nadu India. Charlotte's philosophy is that most of us long for connection. "I live with the earth, the plants, the trees, the animals the people around me. They tell me what they need and, by providing it as I can, I receive a sense of belonging." In 1974, she planted a biodynamic fruit orchard at a farm in New Hampshire which is now in prime production 40 years later. Soon after working with Charlotte on her organic orchard, her mentor, a commercial apple grower who learned from his trees, became one of the first commercial apple growers to use integrated pest management, with good returns. She was asked to present on organic apple growing at several events of the New England Apple Growers Association and the New Hampshire Extension Service.

In 1975 she was called to diversify her skills by attending chiropractic school and learning to work with human ecosystems. In 1980 just before she started practice as a chiropractor, she did a landmark project at a farm in New Hampshire for her spiritual community where she fed 5000 people with most of their food in July after starting that spring. Having all this food ready in July which was unheard of in New England where common wisdom says no gardening until June. Charlotte started her chiropractic practice in 1980 in Oregon. She had great success rates in chiropractic, receiving referrals from medical doctors and helping people with end stage cancer. She had a strong sense that patients would do better if they learned to listen to their intuition and not yield authority to a doctor.

Charlotte did a large CSA in Paonia, Colorado. In 2004 she went to New Orleans to serve after Hurricane Katrina. In addition to working on a bioremediation project, she became the on-site coordinator for the permaculture gardens which had been severely damaged after Katrina, working with as many as 80 volunteers a day. Charlotte began the Victory Gardens for All project in Eugene, Oregon in 2008. It was a volunteer based group based on a pay it forward system, the people who received gardens planted the next ones. A no till gardening system was used. Compost, all the plant starts and seeds needed to be eating out of the garden within 3 weeks were brought in and 4-6 hours later the garden was finished.



Through November of 2011, 650 gardens in the Eugene area were completed as well as 7 food forests in Oregon. Charlotte has written two books: **Surviving Health Care in America** and **101 Ways to Supercharge Your Energy**.

### **The Mother Who Plants Trees**

Just before my 69th birthday I awakened in the night hearing a message which said I was to be in India by November 22, 2013. I had less than a month to get ready. One miracle following another I got on the plane for India on November 25, 2013. Once here, I was led on an odyssey crisscrossing India many times leading me to farmers who were running out of water to farm. I realized that my whole life had led me to this point where I had what they needed. They could stop using chemicals, use permaculture and natural farming, plant trees, and practice what is called water conservation here (swales, key lines, ponds, etc.) This is called restorative agroforestry. I joined up with a local Tamil Nadu person, Joshua who is an amazing being, with English translator skills, marketing skills and a passion for the mission of helping India grow healthy food. Together we have created an organization, the Mother Who Plants Trees...

### **Contact -**

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**"Permaculture. Racism. Oakland."** Interview with Troy Hudson, Organizer, **Town and City Permaculture**

**Town and City Permaculture**, along with some allies who care about diversity in permaculture more than just lip service are putting together a permaculture meet and greet/"social" for the purpose of bringing people together; to broaden the Permaculture scope and infuse some diversity.

Our focus is to bring working-class youth, people of color, indigenous folks, food workers and elders into the fold.

This event will be held at Qilombo Community Center. There will be good food (bring potluck dish), conversation, brainstorming, and work on solutions to fix the lack of diversity in permaculture. Come on out and show your support! - Troy

**What:** Town and City Permaculture Community Social

**Where:** **Qilombo Community Center**

2313 San Pablo Ave. @ West Grand, West Oakland

**Date:** Sunday, Feb 21

**Time:** 1 to 5 pm

## **Interview with Troy by Willi**

**One of the challenges in the permaculture dream is access to land. Is this part of your struggle to grow and share with your community?**

Yes we are currently struggling with access to land, especially land where youth can use as a sanctuary and place to practice permaculture. I recently reached out to some folks at a dilapidated and neglected community garden. I observed it in this condition for a few years. But they declined to let me bring youth in to the garden for rejuvenation. Hayes Valley Farms was shuttered for condos. So access to land is definitely a major effort.

**How does permaculture promote art and stories?**

Permaculture gives us different lenses to view our world and environments through and it tells you that you don't necessarily have to be getting your hands dirty in the soil to practice permaculture ethics. In that way I see people deciding to build community through dance, hip hop, murals and other forms of art; to express themselves and give back. Since permaculture was founded on the study of ancient and indigenous ways, a lot of learning is passed through stories of these histories.

**Where do you get seeds for your projects?**

From seed swaps, the Richmond seed library, B.A.S.I.L. at the East Bay ecology center, and Merritt College Horticulture Dept.

**Racism is deeply embedded in American culture. How does this dark force work inside and outside of Town and City Permaculture (TCP)? How are you counter-acting it?**

There are allies within the Permaculture movement. But permaculture is very much colonized. At many permaculture events I've been to, I've been the only person of color. And definitely the only black man in attendance. That's why we're gonna strive at Town and City Permaculture to give poor working-class and people of color exposure and access to their legacy - which is Earth Care and connectedness to the land!

**What are the values of the Qilombo Community Center (QCC)? It is a safe place to educate and entertain?**

Qilombo is for "the people" and has a vision of establishing a thriving [AfrikaTown](#) in the community. They are politically radical and are demanding access to land and resources for the uplifting of black folks, as well as indigenous and other oppressed people. They continue to create safe environments for the community.

**What did you learn from Christopher Shein of [Wildheart Gardens](#)?**

I continue to learn from him. He is a walking permaculture encyclopedia. I began to learn permaculture theory from "Bluetape" Jay over at Hayes Valley Farm. I learned much of my practical know how in applying permaculture principles from Christopher.

**Your Feb 21 event at QCC will focus on the lack of diversity in permaculture – to “broaden the Permaculture scope.” Please explain the problem and offer some insights into possible solutions.**

Well there's the high cost of PDC's, so people of color are typically in the lower income brackets and often excluded due to cost. Then there are the people who are currently holding the keys to Permaculture. They need to learn how to practice Fair Share. Like at a permaculture guild meeting I attend, it's basically co-opted by white males who run their agendas first. These guys have no qualms with scheduling a work-party event on the same day as our diversity event at Qilombo.

I've been to various events and volunteered which have been dominated and operated by white folks. None have come to our events. That we typically put on our agenda: "permaculture for the people."

**Do you think that permaculture can solve the gun problem in America?**

Permaculture is definitely a better solution than any put forth by our governments. Permaculture shows people how to work on themselves and their environments. And gardens and urban farms are typically peaceful.

**You write that: “It takes a village” on your web site. What are the emotional and geographic boundaries of TCP?**

Emotionally we just have to use permaculture to work on ourselves: Zone 0. Geographically there are really no boundaries. Our vision is to assist the people in accessing land and permaculture, wherever possible.

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**Troy Hudson Bio -**

I was born and raised in East Oakland. Grew up with my neighborhood ravaged by the crack epidemic. As kid's we found solace in hunting out the neighborhood fruit trees. As I grew up I became disconnected from the land. Growing up in what many call the concrete jungle and even the killing fields! I didn't get back into nature and the land until I stumbled across the Hayes Valley Farm in San Francisco. That's where I was introduced into permaculture. And fell in love with the idea of Earth Care, People Care, and Fair Share. From there went up to Merritt College to get my there PDC.

I also received PDC's from Living Mandala and Daily Acts in Petaluma. I've worked with Christopher Shein of Wildheart Gardens. Installing permaculture landscape and gardens. Currently focused on bringing permaculture to poor and working class communities. In hopes to get people from these demographics. To become more in touch with their own roots and the land. One of my main focuses right now is bringing permaculture to Qilombo community center and the disadvantaged youth in the surrounding Oakland/ Bay Area.

**Connections –**

**Troy Hudson, Organizer**  
[Town and City Permaculture](#)  
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**“Permaculture, Rewilding and Herbalism” – Interview with [The Perma Pixie](#) (aka Taj Scicluna), Dandenong Ranges, Melbourne, Australia. By Willi Paul, [Planetshifter.com](#) Media**

“I started practicing Earth-based spirituality quite young, when I was about 11 or so I brought my first book on Witchcraft. It stirred something in me, and I realized that I had been practicing this instinctively anyway. Now that I am a Permaculturist, the two seem to go hand in hand. First of all, let me mention that Permaculture has no religious or spiritual connotation, it is a Design Science based on Systems Ecology. There are many ways to define Permaculture, and I do not think one definition is 'right'. Permaculture is many things, and has now been taken and adapted by many different cultures and

people. My definition of Permaculture is 'Careful Research, Planning and Design of Social, Building or Landscape Systems which mimic Nature for Maximum Efficiency'.

Permaculture considers each element and its relationship to all other elements within that system, aiming to create a multi-functional, closed loop system. To me, Permaculture is common sense. So it may be a shock to some saying that Earth based spirituality and Permaculture are elements which combine fluidly in my life. Sometimes talking spirituality (and having dreadlocks) somehow means you are taken less seriously. I do not believe science and spirituality are mutually exclusive, and if Permaculture looks to many ancient cultures for its inspiration, we are truly missing the myth, story, culture and spirituality that often accompany these ways of life. We have lost our sense of ritual in many aspects. Now we have other rituals, whether it is our morning ritual of brushing our teeth or making our coffee... but these do not necessarily connect us to the land."

-- [thepermapixie.blogspot.com](http://thepermapixie.blogspot.com)

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### **Interview with The Perma Pixie by Willi**

**One of the first impressions of you in your community is as alchemist. How do you transmute soil and people into new realities?**

I am honored to be perceived as an alchemist!

I try to transform energy where ever I go. The second law of thermodynamics is that energy cannot be created or destroyed, only transformed, so I am always trying to transform energy to a more usable form and harness it before it becomes less usable.

This can apply to landscapes and social structures alike.

Soil can be transformed by harnessing the energy of microbes, and giving soil vitality and life. I build as much compost as I can, and am on the path of studying microbes to ensure that our soil is as nutrient dense as possible, thriving with life.

As for people, my goal is to invite them into a completely different atmosphere. I take care when preparing for Herbal and Wild Food workshops to bring all my wooden bowls and jars of herbs... everything is wrapped in twine and printed on brown post-consumer recycled paper... I like to see people's faces light up, for them to feel their life is an amazing and magical place.

My goal is to have an Education center that is a little cottage, with a fire place and a constant cauldron of soup, books lining the walls, many cushions and a massive garden to step into to learn about Permaculture, Herbalism and Rewilding.

**What direct experience / lessons from Australian indigenous people have you integrated into your permaculture practice? Are there any conflicts with traditional permaculture methods?**

One main conflict that I have experienced is that although developed in Australia, most Permaculture Systems use European plants and animals, unless it is in a zone 4 or 5 system. I understand that this is mainly because most of us eat a diet now that relies on these plants and animals, and because they obtain high yields. I have become a lot more interested in Indigenous food, medicines and management practices, and I believe they have a place in Permaculture design. I like the idea of establishing ecologies that are threatened, whilst still providing food and soil nutrient.

I have now started practicing indigenous fire-making and studying fire ecology and the way landscapes were managed pre-1788. I am hoping to incorporate more of this into my designs and workshops.

### **Are you balancing activism with making a living?**

This is a very interesting question, and I think it fluctuates. It is quite difficult to find that balance, as my goal is to make a living doing what I am most passionate about, and this includes making Permaculture, Rewilding and Herbalism available to people of different social and economic statuses. I do not want to fall into the trap the Western world has of overworking ourselves, as I feel this takes away from being in tune with Nature and understanding the Earth provides all we need, but I am a very hard worker and like to express a lot of 'fair share' in my work, which means volunteering my time.

It's very hard to make a living as a Permaculturist sometimes, and I try to remember I do not 'need' everything this society tells me I do. Obtaining an ethical income is very hard in this society, and I am still trying to find the right balance for me.

### **Tell us about your spirituality! How does your spirit-force fit with the traditional permaculture view of "no spirit allowed?"**

For me, there is no separation. I am co-teaching a course at the moment called 'Sacred Ecology' which is a seasonal exploration of the elements through Permaculture, Primitive Living and Ritual. I am careful not to label it a Permaculture course, and I do really respect the intention of Permaculture having no spiritual or religious connotations, as it is based on an Ecological Science.

Many Permaculture methods and practices have been taken from Indigenous cultures around the world, and most (if not all) had a deep spiritual connection to the land. I do believe that in modern Western society we have lost this connection.

Spirituality is different for everyone, but for me, it's the Earth... its every atom, particle, light wave, frequency, pebble, waterfall, amoeba, bird, moss, microbe.... It's having a deep respect and appreciation that the Earth provides me with all I need to survive, and that it is part of me and I am part of it. There is no separation. I think this connectedness is my Spirituality, and Permaculture has helped me connect deeper.

### **Folks are headed to the caves, old rocket tubes condos, PDC classes and vegetarian cookbooks in an attempt to get ahead of a crash. Are we in the Chaos Era now? Are you a survivalist, too?**

I tend to stem away from problems and focus on solutions. I understand peak oil, peak food and peak soil, but I will never make these a primary focus when teaching. I think there are already enough things that make us feel dis-empowered, and I like to provide solutions for people. I am not saying that there is



one answer, or that I even have the answers, but I do believe someone is more capable of making change through love and motivation rather than fear and desperation.

Ever since I was younger I have felt like I have been running out of time. I had no idea why until I really realized the state the planet is in. I do believe we are running out of time to make adequate and appropriate changes to ensure that many kinds of life can continue to exist on this planet. I guess part of the reason I am interested in foraging, fire-making, reading landscape and herbal medicine is that of survival- but it more so stems from an interest to help others, which is why I love educating people about these kinds of things.

My relationship to the Earth and all these practices has not stemmed from a need to survive in an unsure future, but from a deep respect and appreciation that I am alive to experience in the first place, and a want to protect what gives me life.

**Are there any special struggles or barriers around being a woman in permaculture?**

Yes, there are. Being a woman is one thing. Being a woman with dreadlocks and piercing is another. I have actually had people tell me to my face that they were surprised I was intelligent and focused after speaking with me. People judge at face value all the time, and I feel if I changed myself to appeal to a wider audience then I would be perpetuating the discrimination.

Men are taken more seriously in a lot of areas than women, and this is true in Permaculture as well. A lot of men within the Permaculture movement are very intelligent, incredible, extremely practical people, and deserve to be recognized for their expertise. Many leadership skills are actually male traits, and so women do not appear to gain as much exposure as men within the industry.

One of the main barriers is talking to earth-movers and surveyors- very male dominated industries- where your opinion as a women is not taken on board with as much acceptance and respect. I am hoping that things become a little more balanced in future.

Although I am professional with my work, I do approach course participants with warmth and even nurturing, and that is something I am proud of.

**Talk about ancient / new folklore and mythology in your bioregion? Have you designed new songs, dances and poetry with your communities? Examples?**

My community has been the [Dandenong Ranges](#) for many years, and I feel we have created new songs and processes through the Permaculture Courses that have been held, that hopefully spill into the broader community.

I write poetry and spoken word myself, which expresses how I feel personally about environmental degradation, but I have not designed poetry or song that the community has taken on. I do however, design Permaculture games and processes for teaching, and use story and some indigenous folklore to describe landscape management strategies in a more digestible and interesting format.

**One of the many key permaculture / transition movement concepts in my quiver for years is localization. Is this a political process?**

The answer to many Permaculture related questions is; it depends. It can be political, and most of the time when dealing with invisible structures such as economics, community and legalities, politics and planning are a large part of this. I believe just as a landscape should have a design, so should a business, social structure or economy. This is where social Permaculture plays a part, and is a facet within the movement which I have become increasingly interested in.

When dealing with landscapes, often there is a predictable action - reaction process. It can be quite easy, with research and design, to shape a landscape and encourage an outcome. When dealing with people and concepts however, things become more complicated. I do believe that in order for us to localize our food and economies, we must learn to accept and respect a wide range of people, and be open to educating one another.

Localization can be taken into the hands of the community, and in many ways we need community backing in order to stabilize our food supply and deal with legalities that do not take environmental rights into consideration. This could well be a political process, but how that process is designed and its outcomes are up to the community.

### **Taj's Bio –**

The Perma Pixie (Taj Scicluna) is passionate and motivated, aiming to inspire and educate people to live more nourishing and sustainable lifestyles using Permaculture, Awareness and Compassion! She has completed two Permaculture Design Courses and a Permaculture Diploma. Taj has run Permaculture Design Courses with Co-Teacher Tamara Griffiths in the Dandenong Ranges, which incorporate interactive and creative teaching methods for all kinds of learning styles. Taj has completed two Permaculture Teaching Trainings, with both Robyn Clayfield and Rosemary Morrow, and self-studies Facilitation and Social Permaculture.

Taj Scicluna is a current Director of [Permaculture Australia](#), and the Board Representative for Accredited Permaculture Training. Her other passions include Herbal Medicine, which she studies, and Spoken word poetry, and she aims to bring back peoples medicine, peoples food and peoples freedom not only through a passionate tongue, but through individual action and community empowerment.

Being introduced to the world of Permaculture in 2007 changed The Perma Pixie's life forever! Through participation in her first Permaculture Design Course in 2009, she felt as if she had finally found something that she could direct her energy to make a difference to the devastation that was happening to the Earth and its inhabitants.

Taj has continued both her formal and informal study of Permaculture, taught Wildfood, Natural Cosmetics, Edible Weeds, Soil Understanding and Herbal first Aid Workshops at CERES Environment Center, facilitated her own Permaculture Design Courses with Tamara Griffiths and Ducky, Attended the first ReGrarians PDC with Darren Doherty, Designed and created the 2013 - 2015 Rainbow Serpent Permaculture Garden and completed Robin Clayfields 'Dynamic Groups' course, focusing on how to teach Permaculture creatively.

During early 2015 she lived as part of '[The Simple Way](#)' Project, to explore Permaculture techniques, Simple Living and Community Involvement. The Perma Pixie has recently completed Rosemary Morrow's Teacher Training in Tasmania, and an Advanced Permaculture Design Course with Dan Palmer. The

Perma Pixie has participated in various Bee Keeping, Long-Bow Making and Natural Building courses, interested in the techniques as well as the strategies of Permaculture and Rewilding.

Although her biggest passion is Permaculture Education, aiming to empower others enough to make changes to more sustainable ways of living, she loves to get her hands dirty by designing and creating lush edible wonderlands! Caring for the health and resilience of Bee's and Seed Sovereignty are among her other passions and she wishes to explore and develop her activism regarding these issues.

**The Perma Pixie believes in creating a fertile, abundant and diverse planet, one backyard at a time!**

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **Connections –**

**The Perma Pixie** (aka Taj Scicluna)

Thepermapixie at gmail.com

[www.thepermapixie.com](http://www.thepermapixie.com)

[thepermapixie.blogspot.com](http://thepermapixie.blogspot.com)

[Google +](#)



Matt Bibeau

**“Permaculture Teachers & Transition Schools.” Interview with Matt Bibeau, [Mother Earth School](#) (Portland), by Willi Paul, [Planetshifter.com Magazine](#)**

“Young children are deeply aware and impressionable. It wouldn't be fitting to try to teach permaculture to them in the same way we think of teaching adults. It has to be embodied. It has to be built right in to the experience. The very design, approach and learning environment should communicate the principles of permaculture at work, and demonstrate nature's efficiency, functionality and beauty.” (MES)

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Intro to Permaculture for Youth & Child Educators**

#### **Course Topics:**

- \* Applying PC Principles to Teachers & Teaching
- \* Therapeutic Effects of Nature-Based Activities
- \* Permaculture Classroom Management

- \* Bringing gardens to schools & schools to gardens
- \* Plus a hands-on activity and more if there's time!

TaborSpace  
5441 Southeast Belmont Street, Portland, OR  
Thursday, December 12, 2013  
6:30 PM to 9:00 PM  
Registration: \$25.00/per person

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Interview with Matt by Willi**

#### **Define permaculture vs. sustainability in this post-occupied world?**

In order to give my perspective on this, I would like to look back a bit farther to the emergence of modern environmentalism. I can remember in the late 1990's and early 2000's, as an environmental science major, when the term "sustainability" began to come into widespread use. It was a refreshing departure from all terms that started with "environmental" because of the polarization that existed most prominently since Rachel Carson's publishing of Silent Spring and the initial divergence of economic and environmental interests at a national political scale. Environmental defense strategies and socio-political interests clashed often since, and the era of David Brower-style environmentalism found some success at the expense of a widening of the gap between perceived eco-minded and econo-minded. We have to keep in mind the role of the media in perpetuating and exacerbating this divide, but it existed nonetheless. The stone of David in his battle with Goliath was the endangered species act, and it was leveraged for all it was worth. And without knowing much about birds and forests, plenty of folks loved or hated the spotted owl. The battles between essential habitat and logging interests are one of many such battles.

Sustainability has multiple embedded meanings. Its success as a meme can be attributed to two main realms: that it evoked a call for balance—a carrying capacity—as a strategy for social and environmental change, and it included economics back into the fold in a way that was palatable enough for policy-makers at varying levels of commitment and integrity across the globe. Its offspring were many. Google search sustainable or sustainability to see what I mean. What I observed during my years in grad school in the mid to late 2000's was that academics rushed to brand their intellectual incarnation of it, some with more of a longing to be published on the topic than to have any helpful role in collaboration with wider efforts. In my experience, the city/university institutes and collaborations in Portland, OR happen to be the shining example of a seizing of intellectual ownership of sustainability while failing to address some of the most very basic and home-hitting phenomenon that might give the movement credibility among the disenfranchised Americans, and with those anywhere else in the world, most especially in countries whose poverty levels and access to essential goods and services are far worse than even the most underprivileged in the USA.

In my experience, the Occupy movement represented a national and international news media event that drew its fame from its most basic message that the majority of Americans—and the majority of global citizens as well—have such a minute amount of the overall wealth that our effectiveness in most corporate and political challenges—and therefore our very rights—are undermined by this inequity

alone, and that a shift HERE would empower the lower 99% to actually even afford to compete legally, politically and otherwise. Even for the Americans who didn't camp out or take to the streets, the famed slogan of "We are the 99%" offered a clear, newsbite-worthy glimpse into the gross misappropriation and inequitable distribution of wealth in our country and around the world. A recent study of 5000 random Americans conducted by a Harvard professor and economist revealed that not only does the general public desire more equitable distribution from where we think it is currently, but that the actual distribution is immensely far from where those who were polled think it is (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPKKQnijnsM>) (<http://www.businessinsider.com/inequality-is-worse-than-you-think-2013-3>).

While I certainly would not argue that proponents of the sustainability movement ignore this disparity, I do believe that in compromising the harder realities of the situation and changing our diets to "consumption LITE", the sustainability movement has rendered itself largely ineffective in influencing change at a scale that might address the most severe issues before irreversible damage is done. And there are a growing number of professionals who are now maintaining that we may have already passed the point of no return where significant warming, ice melting and massive disruption and displacement of human populations is inevitable (and indeed is already happening at a smaller scale).

If one thing is clear to me from the perspective of the "post-occupied world" (while also acknowledging that much of the world continues to be under occupation of colonizing cultures), it is that people are suffering. They are grieving. The American dream has become a nightmare and the solutions are mostly weaker versions of the problem. And whether it's the academics, government agencies or corporate policymakers that are taking a turn at defining it, the lot is so often tangled in the political cobweb that the edges of the movement (the radical stuff) have become faux pas topics and receive little or no attention.

As sustainability transitioned into another way to talk about development and to recruit students to remodeled college degree programs, a whole huge group of people were left with a whole lot fewer folks in positions of stature, tenure and the like working daily to make their lives immediately better. There are undoubtedly some fantastic organizations and efforts out there, and many worthy efforts whose scope is focused wider than the local scale, but for every one rooting for the folks who live day-to-day, paycheck to paycheck, there are probably 100 or 1000 that have nothing to do with it. Amid all the fanfare of conferences, summits, and countless eco-promises and sustainability statements, there's too little action reaching too few people, and a lot of reasons why people are understandably struggling or in distress. And an increasing number are desperate to varying degrees, and therefore willing to take desperate measures, which some of us witness in our homes and communities and others see nightly on the evening news.

I think that the most tragic error of the sustainability movement has been its infatuation with working with the strongest and most socially and politically comfortable links and leaving far too much on the wayside. Occupy brought attention to the edges but also branded itself as edgy, and while it experienced relative success in drawing unlikely supporters into the streets in numbers for a common cause not seen since the Vietnam era, it also lost the majority of its base with the dissolution of the camps. And while many new groups spun off from that first tidal wave of action and attention, they seem to be having a more difficult time keeping supporters engaged and maintaining common cause among the causes.

What permaculture has to offer, in my opinion, is a design to find and strengthen the common cause, and open up opportunities for action that can be initiated right at home, in the yard and around the neighborhood. Permaculture is immediately relevant to those who bear the burden of the current imbalances, injustices and a shortage of access points to correcting them. As a design approach, it focuses on the weak links first and offers guiding principles for how to strengthen them locally and responsibly. As a movement, permaculture has the potential to draw together the households, neighborhoods communities and so forth in a way that takes most advantage of matching needs and resources, as opposed to all having the same needs and relying on the same outside entities to supply them to us. We're not going to drop natural gas tomorrow, that's understood, but even the skill sets of improving the energy efficiency of homes would be a service in the community, and the local barter and trade economy would be like a neighborhood version of Craig's List.

Permaculture as a movement has yet to see its most glorious days. The work ahead of us is to demonstrate to our friends, neighbors and communities that we in fact CAN meet more of our needs locally, be they culturally or agriculturally, and in so doing, we can discover new ways to leverage our collective power and inspire others into action. A necessary ingredient to this success will be the acceptance of wherever people are in their journeys of learning their impacts and changing their patterns, and focusing more on the direction that we need to be going in terms of reducing certain things and increasing others, and arranging ourselves and our surroundings to the greatest benefit based on the nature of the intended design and function.

I believe that the overwhelming sense of grief, urgency and desperation that many are facing will be well served with the kind of action that puts more of our own lives in our own control, while also improving the condition of our surroundings (at first) and others, if the excess of local resources enables us to broaden our work to wider horizons. I believe that the fruits of our labor can speak louder than any talking head of any department or movement ever could, and be more effective in implementing long-lasting change for the widest possible audience than any demonstration ever could. As world history has shown us, interrupting business as usual—or even overthrowing the government—is possible, and has been done, and the value of mass demonstration has been proven many times, but the trouble has ALWAYS been in creating a lasting change. It has happened, but is rare. The pattern has all too often been that the new system falls into the same patterns as the one that came before because we never strengthened our roots and built up appropriate communities of support. Permaculture's likelihood of establishing new patterns that meet the needs of the people in a way that is life-positive and politically neutral seem to be very promising, and worth ample discussion on how it can be implemented with this very goal in mind.

**Many in the permaculture often focus on food production and related politics (i.e. land rights, toxics and sharing). Are you teaching teachers, parents and children to build resilience and take to the streets if needed?**

In my own permaculture teaching, I start off with clarifying for people the wide reach of permaculture, paying homage to its roots as an agricultural design and offering numerous cultural examples, including but not limited to education, finances, business, and policy. From my time working with the non-profit, [The City Repair Project](#), I learned—and now teach—a form of taking action that is based on designing at the scale of homes, neighborhoods, schools and communities, and inviting the broader community to participate in the reclamation and recreation of our own places; places of living, of learning, of converging. And so in this tradition, taking to the streets is either to meet neighbors and invite them to a

potluck, to ask for chicken manure and offer apple pie, or to assess what services are wanted and provided locally to share locally.

This community-based work also aims to inform and empower local groups of people to envision what they want to change locally, providing some of the training and resources to help them make it happen. The Village Building Convergence is an urban permaculture strategy that has seen relative success and is known internationally. Its design always has room for improvement, and with any system that is finding fertile ground socially, the incorporation of the feedback is one of the most essential parts of the process.

**How do you suggest we organize and fund folks, many without soil to grow a yield, or things to share, to seed local permaculture projects?**

I believe that everyone has something to share. Some are just in more immediate need than others and are unable to contribute in their current set of circumstances. Some people have sunny yards, some have fruit trees. Others can't grow much at all in the soil, but can learn ways to take advantage of potted gardens or systems of barter and trade that share. The organization is most effective in small enclaves at first, and as a universal design principle for building an inclusive movement, we have to design for the audience we're hoping to inspire into more collaboration and action. If we're hoping that folks are going to be interested enough to inquire and practice some of these strategies and techniques, they have to be able to recognize enough of what's happening first.

My teachers have instilled upon me that the question with the most relevance in permaculture is, "What are you designing for?" Trying to maximize the food grown on your lot while creating new habitat and other ecological services is a worthy goal. Doing it in a way that inspires several other homes on your block to sheet mulch their own lawns and have a go at it is even better. Figuring out whom on your block knows how to help you frame your greenhouse and trading some veggies that they don't have or can't grow takes it to the next zone of effectiveness and empowerment. And on it goes...

**What core training and experiences make for a successful permaculture teacher?**

Having a relationship with nature since childhood got me off to a pretty good start. As much of a privilege as it is, being able to spend significant amounts of time in nature for much of my youth developed my keen interest in the natural world and supported me in deciding to pursue a profession that included youth and nature. Since permaculture draws so heavily from the patterns and processes found in and cycled through nature, exposure to these patterns and processes is the most efficient way to learn to see, apply, and then teach the application of them to our human-built world.

While many people are effectively practicing sound permaculture design in what they do, the permaculture design course marks the beginning of the awareness of this unique field of design, so that we can become more intentional and skilled at it. The PDC summed up much of my undergraduate and grad school learning in about 72 hours, and left me hungry for learning more. As an educator by profession, I was naturally drawn to a permaculture teacher training, which helped me to grasp the sheer magnitude of the application of permaculture, beyond what was offered in the introductory PDC. This also inspired a lot of the work of creating a teacher training for youth & child educators, because not everyone is going to take on teaching adults through the design course curriculum as a day job.



Aside from the value of fitting your permaculture glasses, so to speak, which I believe happens in the first weekend of a PDC or in a shorter introduction course, the rest of the work is in taking as many opportunities as you can to practice. Failures make for good stories too. And for those who don't have access to classes, having access to projects and initiatives that demonstrate good permaculture design can help inspire one's own practice of trying things out and seeing what works. Some of the most well-known permaculture teachers had no formal training in permaculture. They were usually very connected to nature, successful at implementing some of nature's secrets in their farming, and were discovered and celebrated by the international permaculture community. Remember, WWND?

**Please offer some insight into your call that permaculture teaching and design “demonstrate nature's efficiency, functionality and beauty?”**

Nature has no waste, and thus offers us the greatest challenge to design systems that approach this level of efficiency. Where do we see room for improvement in the efficient and effective use of resources in how we plant and maintain our garden? Build or retrofit our house? In how our children receive an education?

The rich learning accessible to us through observing and interpreting nature goes well beyond the recognition that it has no waste. It's that this great recycling of energy and matter—if left up to its own devices—will support diverse species and function as habitat for multiple species. It is intrinsically highly functional. That doesn't necessarily mean maximum number of species, but it does mean maximum number of interactions and connections. Sometimes a mature ecosystem has less tree species diversity than its earlier stages of succession, but those trees that stand are literally growing up in the soils of past forests and, if undisturbed, are connected by a network of soil life so complex that we cannot recreate it. We can learn from it though, and bring aspects of what nature does so well into our design, and hopefully, get positive results. And if not, we try a different method or technique; try to understand a little bit more about how nature does it so well, and keep on trying. What are we overlooking? It can be great fun unlocking these secrets of the natural world and putting them to good work in support of a very simple set of ethics.

From classroom design and behavior management to community-based learning and everything in-between, finding the balance between designing for efficiency (creating more work to expand the learning edge can be a good thing), beauty (we want to be naturally drawn to what we're creating, not deterred by it) and functionality (the better it works, the less you have to!) are all key. Whether it's the garden we grow or the style in which we teach, permaculture design can demonstrate the wisdom found in nature and be utilized to improve the learning environment.

**What did Marisha Auerbach pass on to you that you would like to offer to students in this course?**

The offering that comes to mind was asked as a question to her in a class that we were teaching together. “How did you get into permaculture and gardening?” “I started eating flowers”, she replied. So in every course, at one of the potlucks, we always have a salad with many edible flowers in it. Many folks are so surprised and amazed that they are not only edible, but delectable and nutritious! I hope to help spread the permie/green thumb bug as well as she has, and I don't leave out the flower salad. Learning how much of what is around us can be beneficial to us and learning how to use it is the skill of the ages, whether you're making a salad or trying to figure out how a closet of boring classroom supplies or a patch of yard outside the classroom can be used to experiment and inspire.

## **Is permaculture a component of the Transition Movement?**

It absolutely is. I recently had the privilege of hearing Rob Hopkins speak at an event that was organized as a “Permaculture & Transition Convergence”. Rob is credited as being the founder of the Transition movement. He shared that transition was born out of “viewing peak oil through permaculture glasses”. I often use the ‘glasses or ‘lens’ metaphor in my own teaching because it gives a more accurate sense of how permaculture is utilized to help us ‘see’ a better way to meet our needs.

Permaculture is also part of the sustainability movement, and the Occupy movement, and other movements as well. Permaculture has the unique ability to be a design approach as well as a movement. We can look back in history and see how Greek architecture was both design and movement, and permaculture shares this trait with architecture in that it’s not so much a thing, but a way to approach doing a thing. Transition has celebrated great success with its model of regional, national and international organization to effectively shift the conversation around the impacts of and alternatives to fossil fuel use over a very large area. There’s an opportunity for a feedback loop here, where the permaculture movement can learn from one of its offspring movements.

## **Tell us about your Heros and villains in the sustainability movement and please share a story about this from your community work.**

I’ve been a bit critical of the sustainability movement in this piece, but that’s mostly because I want to challenge it to pay more attention to the edges, and to the people who are most in need. The truth as I see it is that sustainability has been an essential a stepping stone—a tipping point—on the journey towards being able to have our impact be a regenerative one. Many fine folks have dedicated their work and their lives to bridging the vast gaps between polarized interests, and this has been no easy work. All of these movements ride on the shoulders of the sustainability movement to some degree.

My heroes are those who risked their own egos and senses of self to break down internal barriers that cause harm to our friends, families and colleagues, and together, constitute the fibers of the blanket of oppressive culture that remains heavy upon most gender identities, most non-European cultures, and those who are politically or economically disallowed from the same opportunities that their more fortunate counterparts inappropriately leverage to maintain this inequity. It is this personal barrier-breaking work that will support the healthier functioning and the effective collaborations inside and between the many organizations that have an important role to play in what is sometimes referred to as the “Movement of Movements”; the school of fish that chase away the shark or the flock of chimney swifts that scare away the hawk. We’ve got to change the direction of some pretty big systems with pretty well-designed mechanisms for remaining in place and in power.

As far as villains go, it’s anyone who works inside of the cause that perpetuates the same kind of BS that we’re working so hard to change, mostly in regards to communication and the dominating opinion/put-you-down-to-lift-me-up phenomenon. That said, the opposite is also true (remember that principle?)...Inauthentic communication, as gentle as it might be crafted, is also detrimental to the cause because when real human emotions are happening, ‘cool, calm and collected’ can be very offensive and in some ways, passive aggressive, and when human emotions are not given a space to be expressed, they harden and cause dis-ease.

In almost every organization I've worked in, I've witnessed and been a part of both of these extremes. What seems to be in most need is for a greater willingness to be vulnerable, wrong, and sorry. I'm sorry it took me over 30 years to begin to figure some of this stuff out, and for all of the BS I've perpetuated in the struggle to have my own ideas heard and my ego protected. It's a life's work, this journey of self-transformation. A healthy community is one that creates the conditions for these transformations to occur.

### **Do you agree with all of permaculture's ethics and principles?**

I think that the simplicity of the ethics is its greatest strength. I've seen different lists of principles and whether the list is 10 or 40 principles long, they all have value and create edges for inquiry, exploration and (self) reflection. As principles, however, they are simplified and sometimes worded to rhyme and to be remembered, as a literary device. The real work is to find ways that the principle could be true, because it is the exercise of applying them—first in concept and then in practice—that will develop your skill set as a designer. Thinking of ways that they might NOT be true would be a fun exercise too. I'll have to try that sometime.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Bios –**

**Matthew Bibeau** is the Executive Director of Mother Earth School. MES is an outdoor preschool through 3rd grade located in Portland, OR. The school also offers adult education programs, where Matt teaches [Permaculture for Youth & Child Educators](#) with Kelly Hogan. Matt is an active permaculture teacher, youth mentor and community organizer. He holds a B.S. in Environmental Science from the University of New England and an M.S. in Leadership for Sustainability Education at Portland State University, where he studied under renowned permaculture author and teacher, Toby Hemenway and specialized in the development of garden-based education programs within the city. Matt has worked extensively with the City Repair Project's annual [Village Building Convergence](#) and currently serves on the boards of the Learning Gardens Institute and the Oregon Sustainable Agriculture Land Trust.

**Kelly Hogan** is a co-founder and lead teacher at Mother Earth School, as well as a mother of 2 middle school-aged children. She received her Waldorf teacher training from the Micha-el Institute in 2006 and her PDC in 2009, and has been weaving together the teachings of Rudolf Steiner and Bill Mollison ever since! Kelly and Matt also pursue training in nature crafts and homesteading skills and enjoy passing what they learn on to the children in their school and summer camp programs, as well as to the adults in their courses such as the upcoming permaculture teacher training for educators scheduled for July 20-26 in Portland, OR and June 15-21 in Taos, NM.

### **Connections –**

**Matt Bibeau**

[Mother Earth School](#)

[MES on Facebook](#)

## Transition Movement –



Interview with Transition North Brooklyn ([TNBK](#)) Organizer Charlotte E Binns by Willi Paul, [Planetshifter.com](#)

"I came to Transition because, as an agnostic without a church, I have craved community with purpose my whole life. I believe the Transition movement, with its unique community-focused model, has the potential to meet that need.

I want to start with the caveat that our group has had a total of 3 exploratory meetings. Most communities have many more than that before they start to really embark on any plans. We have not had a chance to do much yet but start to figure out what we might want to be, and who is even at the table. But we have had some very good conversations, so I have an idea of where we are heading. "

- Charlotte

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Please enjoy the following interview with Charlotte by Willi -

**Please define prosperity and resilience?**

To me, people have achieved prosperity when their basic needs are met such that they can have a healthy work-life balance. I get my nourishment from good work as well as community relationships.

I consider resilience a lack of dependence. There are degrees of this of course. On the one hand, one does not want to be resilient in isolation like the Domsday Preppers. Not only is that lonely, but it is significantly more difficult. On the other hand, our current reality makes us utterly dependent on so

many complex external systems that can be devastated by foreign powers and corrupt bankers. A course correction towards a middle path would encourage more local economies and discourage unnecessary and excessive environmental destruction in the forms of resource depletion and shipping to name a few. Then we are thinking in terms of not only local resilience, but planetary resilience.

**Is sharing and re-using resources part of the TNBK action plan?**

Our action plan is still being formed, but this is certainly in line with the ethos. Our latest conversations have been about how we do not want to repeat the work that other organizations are already doing - how much overlap there already is and how preferable it would be to try and create bridges and collaborations. Our group happens to be made up of a lot of marketers, so our thought is to offer value by aggregating, editing and marketing all things sustainable in the neighborhood - businesses, talks, events, opportunities to volunteer etc. We want to create a hub for existing resources. I suppose you could call that re-using resources.

**You write: “Transition is an entirely volunteer-run grassroots movement to form resilient communities in the face of climate change and economic instability. “ Would you consider a corporate sponsor like Coke or Nike?**

I would be surprised if Transition groups ever have direct relationships with big corporations. Something like this might come to pass, however, by way of collaborations with other organizations and events.

**What kind of disasters are you working to support? Does this not require multi-governmental resources and planning? What resources do you need to have in place?**

We are not a government body. We are a grassroots movement, not unlike Occupy. Our main method for preparing for a crisis is in building community connections. Through my Green Block Party initiative, I have already met dozens of neighbors that I never knew before. It is through knowing our immediate communities that we will know, in the time of a disaster, where the doctors are, who has the generator and who needs help getting down the stairs.

And I would like to think we would emulate or team up with Occupy after the next disaster. After Sandy, it was Occupy who quickly organized and brought food and supplies to the people and projects in need. While government bodies and big nonprofits were chasing their bureaucratic tails, Occupy was nimbly delivering results.

**What is included in your Neighborhood Resilience Map & Plan?**

We are just beginning to work on it, but we want to start by recognizing the good work being done by nonprofits in the area. We want to map and list businesses and restaurants with sustainable practices. We want to aggregate event listings for all things sustainable so that we can begin to focus attention and dollars on the local endeavors that foster resilience.

Thanks to our many industrial warehouses, we happen to have an extraordinary amount of rooftop gardens in Williamsburg and Greenpoint, so we punch way above our weight for an urban area where food-growth is concerned. And the local hipster culture seeks less commercial and more “authentic” products like second hand cloths and locally sourced and minimally-processed foods. So there is already

a lot of movement away from the highly dependent, disposable, mass consumerist culture, and so lots of resources to add to our map.

### **What forces if any are working against TNBK?**

New Yorkers are largely over-worked all day and then spoiled for choice of potential activities at night. It is very challenging to get attention and commitments. But we are developing a plan of engagement, including a speaker-series and social documentary screenings. We have teamed up with a local community organization [Town Square Inc.](#) to help put on the [Go Green Greenpoint](#) festival, an annual centerpiece of all things sustainable in North Brooklyn.

### **Have the Green Block Parties proved successful?**

We have not had one yet, but I have reached out to everyone on my block to organize the first one this summer and that has already been a joyous experience. My son now has a new friend for playdates that does not even require him to cross a street! And I found support for my local PB efforts.

### **How will Participatory Budgeting (PB) Work for TNBK?**

I took up volunteering for PB because I think it is a tremendous exercise in democracy - allowing the local community to decide on how to spend \$1M of their own tax dollars. It should be said that the Transition movement prefers to stay away from government and the TNBK group at large did not get involved in PB. Rather, I built the website for TNBK and added [project pages](#) where I posted my PB proposals. I did this because PB is a brilliant way to build local community. Many PB groups will organize around shared environmental concerns, so that is a natural place to get the word out about Transition.

Indeed, by creating proposals for the ballot and then working to get out the vote, I connected with hundreds of people on the streets of my neighborhood who expressed great appreciation for the work. In short, you are offering people city funds for their local senior centers, parks, roads and schools and all of them have to do is vote. I met and talked to so many people that I would never have otherwise. People who looked scary or wary when I approached them but were soon warm and fuzzy. I tell you, it was a love fest.

### **Are there incubators in NYC for social service groups, like the ones in the profit sector?**

Very good question. Can anyone tell me? That would be wonderful.

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### **Charlotte's Bio –**

Charlotte E Binns is a social entrepreneur with a passion for community-building.

She has been featured in numerous publications including the Huffington Post for a spotlight on Benefit Corporations. AdAge described her company, Call2Action, as a top woman-owned tech start-up, and Fast Company's Allyson Kapin named it one of the "25 Women-Run Startups to Watch." Charlotte has spoken on numerous panels including at Columbia University, Techweek, the European CSR Awards and

the Social Venture Network on topics ranging from Leading Trends in Digital Philanthropy to Innovative Online Marketing for Socially Responsible Businesses.

Most recently, Charlotte was the founder and CEO of Call2Action, a SaaS platform that offered advocacy and marketing tools for social issue campaigns. Clients included the APSCA, Participant Media, March of Dimes, Susan G Komen for the Cure, VFW, CARE, Oceana, The Humane Society, Feeding America, Chrysler, National Down Syndrome Society, Columbia University, VFW, GLSEN and others. In May of 2014, Charlotte sold Call2Action. Call2Action was one of 13 pioneering companies to become a Benefit Corporation in the State of New York. Prior to Call2Action, Charlotte worked in advertising and documentary for 7 years and wrote, directed and edited several award-winning shorts. She also worked in new media building innovative, educational websites for Columbia University, her alma mater, where she graduated magna cum laude.

#### **Connections –**

##### **Transition North Brooklyn sites:**

<http://www.transitionnorthbrooklyn.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TransitionNBK/>

##### **Charlotte**

Charlottebinns at gmail.com





**"Transition Streets Launches in America!"** Interview with Carolyn Stayton, Executive Director of Transition US by Willi Paul, Publisher and Transition Consultant at [PlanetShifter.com](http://PlanetShifter.com)

#### **The Transition Streets Approach -**

**Save Money and Resources:** Transition Streets provides a curated guidebook to change, empowering neighbors with proven actions to conserve energy & water, reduce waste, & save money.

**Build Community Resilience:** As we face the increasing impacts of climate change, now is the time to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels by taking local action to create real global change.



**One Street at a Time:** Transition Streets brings neighbors together to implement simple household changes, turning fear into action & building community street by street.

Get the [Transition Streets Handbook](#) and organize your neighborhood!

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**Interview Carolynne by Willi -**

**Is Transition Streets (TS) considering input from local Government and corporations? Are there conflicts?**

We welcome input from local governments and hope to work with local jurisdictions to help spread Transition Streets. Many municipalities have ambitious, water-, waste-, or carbon- reduction goals and are scrambling to find ways to meet them. We see Transition Streets as part of the **portfolio of initiatives** that governments will want to support to help catalyze citizen action and change behavior. And not only does Transition Streets change participants' behavior, it also raises general community awareness, so that ambitious carbon and water reduction policies are more readily adopted. Another outcome is the **social cohesion** that develops from neighbors getting to know each other. Transition Streets forms a solid foundation for times of crisis. This makes the job of first responders much easier.

In terms of business, we would love to see business owners bring Transition Streets to their employees. We imagine that in time we will develop an adaptation for businesses, too. Perhaps "**Transition Businesses**"?

**Many are fearful of the unknown impacts from climate change. How does TS approach this topic?**

Transition Streets largely takes the fear out of climate change by moving people into action. One of the greatest antidotes to fear is doing something positive and moving from paralysis into action. Transition Streets engages others in the process (a handful of near neighbors generally do the 7-session project together) and that amplifies the process and **turns fear into more of a party.**

**Competition for both resources and solutions abound in the sustainability sector. Where does TS get money and what is your organization budget?**

We built Transition Streets on more of a wing and a prayer, to use an old idiom. The curriculum was adapted from a project of Transition Town Totnes in England by chapter editors in the US we crowdsourced. Volunteers helped craft the new website, chapter images, and outreach materials. Twelve volunteer groups across the country (with approx 6 households each) piloted the early version between January and March of this year. So most of the work was adapted, crowdsourced and made possible through volunteer community leaders. In April we integrated feedback and edits into the version that we launched a week ago at [Transition Streets.](#)

In terms of the budget of Transition US - it is approx \$150K (and we run other programs too!). We do hope that Transition Streets strikes a chord with funders though. Imagine what we could do with funding!

### **Is the neighborhood the “best demographic” for getting folks together?**

I don't know if the neighborhood scale is the "best" scale for getting folks together or not, but that is the focus of Transition Streets. As mentioned earlier, neighborhood engagement has other advantages like social cohesion. Someone you recognize walking to your front door after an emergency is a welcome sight.

At Transition US we are working on a number of other projects, too. One project called [REconomy](#) uses a different lens in building resilience. It focuses on building businesses that are both resilient in themselves (meaning they have a low energy, water, and waste footprint) and they build resilience within their communities, too. By this latter I mean that REconomy businesses provide a service or function to the community that strengthens the fabric of that place. They bring more wealth into the community (i.e. profits might go back into the community, or the businesses might be structured as coops or worker-owned collectives). And they also enrich other enterprises by their presence in the community. But that is another story! We have a number of case studies coming out about this soon so stay tuned!

### **How does TS deal with [natural disaster planning](#)?**

Currently Transition Streets helps build social cohesion almost as a by-product. We will be adding an optional emergency preparedness module to it - so look for that in the not-too-distant-future.

### **Do permaculture tools and ethics play role in your program? Any examples to share?**

Yes they do. The [Transition Towns Movement](#) (now in over 50 countries!) was founded on Permaculture design principles and these are present in all aspects of this work. Instead of looking at a landscape as Permaculture generally does, the Transition Movement looks at human settlement and observes its assets and flows. From that perspective it is easier to see the design or re-design possibilities.

"Stacking functions" is a Permaculture principle and is evident in the Transition Streets transportation chapter in this one example, which encourages participants to think ahead before making single errands to consider what else might be accomplished in one outing. Also the social cohesion mentioned is a result of participating in Transition Streets and could be seen as "stacking functions".

### **We are a consumer society (and planet!). What are the underlying values of “credit, spend, and throw-away?”**

Credit, spend and throw-away don't really fit in a transitioned world where we live within the means of the earth's resources, where resources are truly cherished. We can see that more and more clearly in California, just how precious water is!

### **What lessons did you learn from your collaborative crowdfunding campaign?**

Collaboration may take more time and considered action on the front end, but on the other side the network and relationships are much stronger. Also, it is great to create a campaign where there are lots of winners.

### **Who are the local volunteers these days? What are their needs?**

Transition efforts are in more than 150 locales across the US, all in different stages of evolution and working within varying conditions. I encourage people to plug into a local Transition Initiative if there is one or consider starting one. Transition Streets is a great beginning to that.

### **What is the “spirit of TS” like? Who or what do you gain strength from these days?**

Transition Streets is positive. It is collaborative and allows participants to shine in so many wonderful ways. It also lays out a clear action plan with low-cost or no-cost options and over 7 sessions to help make changes.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Carolyn Stayton Bio –**

Ms. Stayton holds a MNA (Master of Nonprofit Administration) and is a dedicated community-builder and problem solver. With almost thirty years of working with nonprofit organizations and educational institutions she has successfully galvanized communities around various social issues by anchoring community vision to pragmatic, tangible steps. She has particular expertise in program development and participative leadership and cherishes “learning” organizations.

Her background includes serving as Director of New College’s North Bay Campus of Culture, Ecology and Sustainable Community, an innovative educational institution that promoted advanced studies in leadership, community-building and the nation’s first “green” MBA program. Currently Carolyn is the Executive Director of Transition US a national nonprofit that helps communities rebuild local resilience. Carolyn resides in Sebastopol, California where she participates with others in building the future we want to live into.

### **Connections –**

#### **Transition Streets –**

**Transition US** is a nonprofit organization that catalyzes and strengthens a national network of citizen-powered groups who are building local resilience through community action. TUS works in close partnership with the Transition Network a UK based organization that supports the international Transition Movement, now in fifty countries.

<http://www.transitionus.org>

#### **Carolyn Stayton**

Carolyn at [transitionus.org](http://www.transitionus.org)  
(707) 824-1554

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### **Other Transition Interviews by Willi Paul -**



# Transition Streets



photo: Transition Media, PA

“Building Our [Transition Streets!](#)” Interview with Maggie Fleming, Co-Director, Transition US by Willi Paul, [Planetshifter.com Magazine](#)

“This fall, neighbors across the country will be meeting in each other’s homes to support each other in reducing their reliance on fossil fuels, building social cohesion, and strengthening their community’s resilience. [Transition Streets](#) brings together small groups of neighbors and supports them in taking effective, practical, money-saving and carbon reduction actions. A workbook helps each person to build their own action plan that improves household energy efficiency, minimizes water use, reduces waste and consumption, explores local transportation options and promotes local food.” – Maggie

**PLEASE SUPPORT** the Transition Street [Indiegogo Crowdfunding Campaign](#) to get this project off the ground.

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview with Maggie by Willi

Please define “neighborhood.” Are there different approaches for different places / populations in the program?

Transition Streets is designed to be implemented by people living within close proximity of each other. This could look very differently depending on where the participants live. For example, it could be residents of an apartment building, people living on the same block, or people living a few miles from each other. It's up to the groups coordinating the project in their community to define what a neighborhood means to them.

The Transition Streets curriculum and model is open for adaptation, so some coordinating groups may decide to re-envision who participates in the Transition Streets groups. For example, instead of relying on the proximity of the participants' households, they may want to implement Transition Streets to groups comprised of members of a specific faith group or members of a workplace.

The curriculum is meant to be applicable for audiences/populations throughout the US. There may need to be additions or modifications to the curriculum to be relevant to specific audiences (for example, renters or people living in rural areas). As Transition groups pilot this project, Transition US will support them in adapting the curriculum to be appropriate to the audiences in their communities.

**Talk about some of the underlying values in play for the Transition Streets vision? Could these be a source of tension?**

Transition Streets is aligned with the broader values of the Transition movement, which include reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and strengthening community resilience. My assumption is that groups that self-select to participate in the project share these values. In this first year of piloting this project, Transition US will work with local Transition groups to gather feedback on the project. I imagine that any tensions that may arise related to the values of the project would provide important insights for the project evaluation process.

**“Transition Streets is a project proven to reduce the carbon footprint of entire neighborhoods and save hundreds of dollars on energy bills.” Food, energy, water, housing, and waste issues are often “in friction” with City politics and government rules. Your feedback on this?**

Transition Streets curriculum focuses on individual and household actions that result in direct savings and a reduction in green house gas emissions. The project offers numerous action options, many of which wouldn't be regulated by local policies/laws. For example, in the unit on energy, participants learn to read and monitor their gas and electricity usage, tracking it throughout their participation in the program. They're then given resources and ideas for ways to reduce their households energy usage. If there are specific actions (either suggested in the curriculum or suggested by a member of the group) that are in friction with local policies and government rules, this could be an opportunity for participants to work on supporting policy/legislation changes in their community.

**“Transition Streets provides an empowering format and an enjoyable process for working together to significantly increase individual and collective impacts, and really make a difference.” This rings like a campaign ad! Pick a difficult meeting topic and explain how a Transition Streets group would tackle it.**

Yes -- it is quite a positive promotion, isn't it. What we're trying to get across with that description is the value of "positive visioning," which is one of Transition's guiding principles. The Transition movement's primary focus is not campaigning against things, but rather on creating positive, empowering possibilities and opportunities.

Another important part of Transition's approach is that while the work to create more resilient communities can be challenging, it can also be fun. The social connections created by the Transition Streets model is a key part in making the process enjoyable, therefore drawing in more people that want to participate.

That being said, yes, you are correct that some of the conversations may be difficult for participants. However, what one person considers difficult might not be so for others, so it's challenging for me to say which meeting topics will be difficult. So I'll give one example of a topic that some might find difficult, which is food. Some aspects of this topic that I can think of that participants may have differing opinions on include: whether or not to eat food that's lower on the food chain, organic, produced locally, and/or in season (or what percentage of these foods to eat out of your overall diet); what conveniences are you willing to forgo when it comes to food packaging; we know that growing our own food increases our access to food, but what are the tradeoffs/benefits in time spent vs. money saved for growing your own food.

So how would Transition Streets groups tackle these potentially difficult topics? The Transition Streets model, which includes group discussions, gives participants a chance to explore other opinions and perspectives that they may not have previously considered. The Transition Streets curriculum provides data and resources to support participants in making their own decisions for all of the questions posted above. The curriculum also supports participants in creating their individual food action plans and offers suggestions for using the group for support and accountability in implementing these plans.

**Do you envision that Americans will have a different perspective on the process than folks in the UK? Do you have examples?**

Yes, I think Transition Streets when implemented in the U.S. will have an American-flavor, though what exactly that will be is yet to be seen. It will also look differently depending on where it's being implemented. Local groups will be able to adapt the curriculum to make it more relevant for their particular audience. You'll have to check back in with us after the pilot for specific examples on the different perspectives on the process between the U.S. and the U.K.

**Admittedly I have not seen the “user-friendly workbook” that supports the neighborhood planning process but it sounds rather archaic for folks with two TV’s and four computers at home!? How much of the Transition Streets process is web-based? Is this an “open-source,” transparent process?**

The curriculum will be available to download and view online (or groups may choose to print out hard copies). There's lots of room to make the workbook and additional Transition Streets more interactive in an online and/or mobile format. We'd love suggestions, ideas, and funding to help make that happen.

Our intention has indeed been to make this process open-source and transparent. The decision for Transition US to do a national rollout of the project actually came from Transition leaders, who asked for this resource and support in our annual survey. Transition US has hosted several calls with Transition leaders across the country over the last year, inviting their input and participation in the project. There are two Transitioners taking the lead on adapting the curriculum, plus a larger group of Transition leaders who will be reviewing it. There is a hosting team of Transition leaders that determined the content and format of our crowdfunding campaign. Transition US has been updating our network about

this process through our online communications, with an open-ended invitation for feedback/input/participation.

Once the curriculum has been adapted, it will be available at no cost. It will be open source in that Transition groups will be adding modules to make it more relevant to their particular audiences. For example, we've already heard interest from Transitioners in the North East that want to add a module on emergency preparedness.

### **Do the ethics and principles from Permaculture play a role in Transition Streets?**

Yes! As a model, Transition explores how to apply permaculture principles at a community level to redesign entire food, energy, and economic systems. Transition Streets embodies the principle of applying small, slow solutions, focusing on Zone 1, the household. There's also a strong emphasis on catching and storing energy (through energy efficiency improvements) and valuing renewable resources and services (solar, composting, and regenerative agriculture). And of course, participating households obtain a yield in terms of cost savings on their energy bill, relationships with their neighbors, and greater access to high quality food.

### **Planning can be a frustrating, joyless and tedious experience - but we just love actionizing at the end! Can you elaborate on how the program will be evaluated?**

We will be working with local Transition groups to track project results including numbers of participants, average household savings, and self-reported reductions in CO2 emissions. We'll also likely collaborate with Transition groups in doing a survey to measure the impact of the project. A survey done in the UK showed that 85% of Transition Streets participants stated that their personal changes made during the project will be sustained beyond the project. In the same survey, 98% of groups said they'd keep meeting beyond their last 'official' meeting. And they found that beyond the scope of the Transition Streets curriculum, Transition Streets groups went on to initiate a wide range of unanticipated activity such as a community film club, a community orchard and a 'wheelbarrow market' in a drive where neighbours swap unwanted stuff. We'd love to partner with a university to develop a more robust evaluation plan to measure the impact of the project -- so feel free to send contacts our way if you have anyone in mind.

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### **Maggie's Bio -**

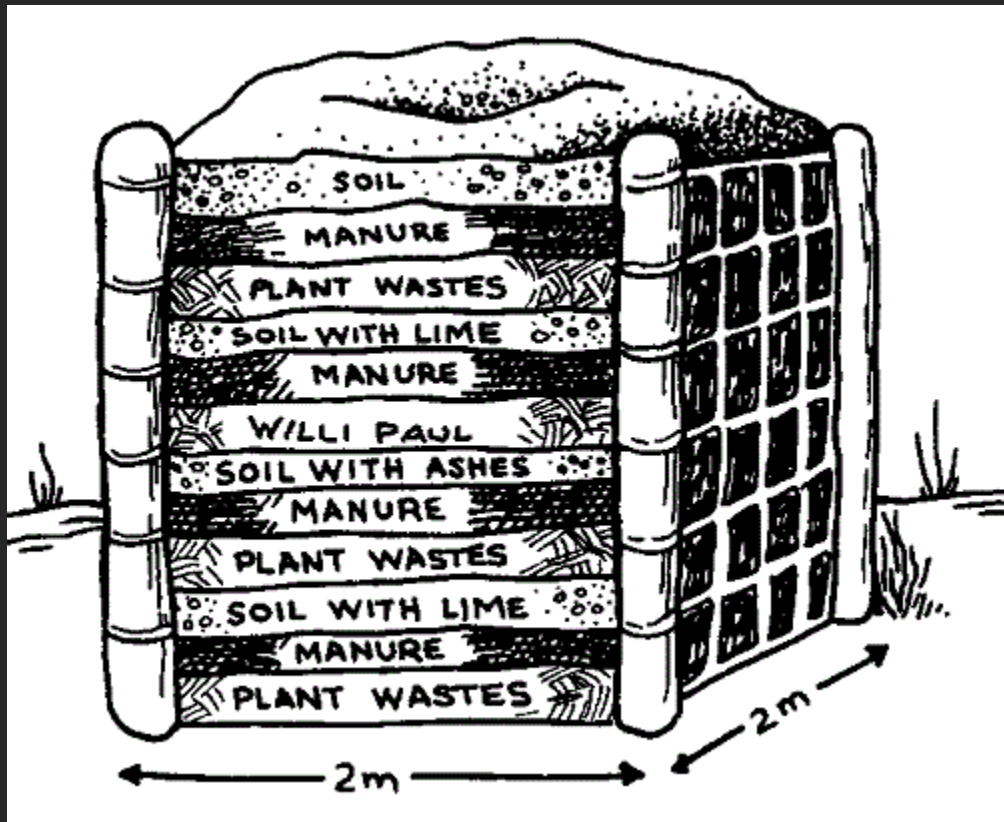
Maggie is passionate about community organizing, youth and leadership development, and environmental activism. Her experience in nonprofit leadership includes currently serving as Co-Director of Transition US, the US arm of the worldwide Transition movement. Previous leadership positions include Executive Director of EarthTeam, a regional youth environmental education and leadership organization, and Senior Development Associate at Earthjustice, an environmental public interest law firm. Maggie is a fellow of LeaderSpring and the Leadership Institute for Ecology and the Economy.

### **Connections –**



Maggie Fleming  
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## New Mythology -



**“Heaven is a Compost Pile”** – Podcast Interview with Willi Paul, Planetshifter.com by Marianne West, [Sustainable Living Podcast.com](https://sustainablelivingpodcast.com) (Audio + Transcript)

[Listen to the Podcast](#)

**Read the Show Transcript:**

**Marianne:** Welcome everybody to the Sustainable Living podcast. This is your host, Marianne West, and I am here with Willi Paul. Welcome, Willi.

**Willi:** Well, Hi. Good to be here.

**Marianne:** Excellent. Excellent. So Willi, first of all I would like to introduce you, and I’m actually going to ask you to do a whole bunch of introducing yourself, because what I know about you I gathered from your presence online, which you’re very prolific online, and you founded a magazine, The PlanetShifter magazine. Right?

**Willi:** Yes.

**Marianne:** And I’m trying to, you know, usually people like to define themselves with something. I am this. And I am having a hard time finding one name for you, because it looks to me like you’re an artist,

you're a philosopher, you're a writer, you are a coach. (Chuckle) All kinds of things. So I thought I'd let you do that part for me.

**Willi:** Okay. Well, I'd like to think of myself as a teacher first.

**Marianne:** All right.

**Willi:** And that's my – my main priority is to help others find their way and offer them tools and writings that might help them as a map. So as a geographer, sort of a mythologist, I make the stories and I introduce them to people, and then they can take off and see where they would land, and maybe I can help them in the end find a next stop.

**Marianne:** Okay, so your magazine is called PlanetShifter.com Your focus is on helping people shift reality as we know it know, in terms of ...

**Marianne:** ... I'm seeing a lot of work, we are on the Sustainable Living podcast, right?

**Willi:** Right.

**Marianne:** So a lot of this seems we're talking about is like we are seeing a problem in the world, and I don't think this is new. I think people have always seen that there might be a problem and we need to better it. So we are just in a long line of people being concerned. But there are certain problems we seem to need to address more. And from your writing, I see you're writing about trout. You're writing about all kinds of different nature related things and community related things, right?

**Willi:** Uh-huh.

**Marianne:** So you mentioned myth. And I was very fascinated by seeing what you do with that. Would you explain what a myth is? And what a new myth is? And how you're working with that?

**Willi:** Yes, I'd love to. I think I'd back up slightly and let your listeners know that I'm using permaculture and the transition movement as a basis for new mythologies.

**Marianne:** Mm-hmm?

**Willi:** These are, well, agricultural movements, political movements, energy saving movements, in the case of the transition people. So these are ripe picking for me to then look at symbols, and ritual, and new stories to replace the old ones. So Planet Shifter really is all about creating new mythology when the old ones are lackluster or have indeed faded away. So that's one of my charges, is to replace those and to reenergize mythology with current forces and symbols.

**Marianne:** We are talking about rewriting the story in many ways, right? Or working with storytelling as a teaching tool, would you say that's correct?

**Willi:** Yes, I have done a lot of videos and done a lot of experimental videos with text and sound, and some themes. Yeah, that's the primary thing for kids. It is about fables and story, right. But I wanted them to write them themselves. I'm not somebody who's like Disney or somebody whose creating all

this material. I want them to work with it and mold it themselves. That's one of my goals is work with kids and help them do it themselves.

**Marianne:** Which, you know, kind of in the olden days, stories were the way we were learning, and the stories changed with new tellers and with new events being added to it. So you were saying you're working with kids. And I saw that some of your stories or myth came out of some roundtables. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

**Willi:** Yes, I went out on the road, which is a classic compelling process of finding out. So I went to find out what the other people around here were thinking about mythology. And I did a lecture series, you can call it a roundtable. I went to Santa Barbara and Davis, and – the Bay Area, for instance. And I presented and then we worked with the concepts and the questions. So that was a very interesting process for me to do. And I met a lot of good people doing that, so it was well worth it. The roundtables are like the roundtables of old, where the folks come from far and wide and they discuss the problems and they make solutions. So that was a similar analogy, I guess.

**Marianne:** You said you presented. What did you present? Like a problem you were thinking about? Take me through a roundtable. So you went to Santa Barbara, right? And people showed up by invitation, I'm assuming. And then what would you do?

**Willi:** Well, in a nutshell, I had about 15 illustrated boards, which were about 11 x 17 and they all had a specific image that I picked out. I used those images as a stepping stone for the discussion.

So these images could've been about tradition, a new tradition or an old one. A danger out here, like in HMO, or GMOs or, nuclear power or other things. It could've been about old or new symbols as a trigger for discussion. So those artboards were key to how I did this.

**Marianne:** So then the roundtable, basically, developed a story out of that describing the problem in story form and kind of coming to a solution? Is that kind of correct it that way?

**Willi:** Yes. I've also done similar work with the permaculture community. These are convergence events, where they have an annual gathering. And so typically when I would do similar presentations and discussions, I then would take the feedback and write an actual new myth or story from that experience.

**Marianne:** Okay.

**Willi:** So yes, that's – those are better places to do it. It's less formal.

**Marianne:** Okay. So solutions are coming actually out of the community and you are kind of a facilitator to bring those solutions into the minds of people, yeah?

**Willi:** Yeah, that could be a shamanic process. I acknowledge that that's partly what I do is take things and transform them and give them back. That's a shamanic idea. But otherwise I just have this heartfelt need to process and to produce. So that's what I do normally. Yeah.

**Marianne:** Okay. I wanted to talk a little bit more about the myth because that's something I haven't seen anybody else do. And I feel like when we think about living and living in a sustainable way, to me this is a lot of community building; having stories, you know, stories have been vital to communities, and creating new stories, I feel, is vital to creating a new way of communicating. Because – correct me if that is not at all the way you are thinking – but, you know, I'm thinking that we are very used to being entertained from the outside in, this stage. You know?

**Willi:** Yes.

**Marianne:** You know, and we are not sharing entertainment that much anymore. It's like a one-way street, you know? It's television, or it's the stars, or it's the theaters entertaining us. And we're not participating. And storytelling just feels a way where there is participation, participating of, there is a storyteller. And there is a listener, and a listener who asks questions.

**Willi:** Yes.

**Marianne:** So I find that really fascinating, and I think it's a great teaching tool where it's not hitting you over the head with something. Does it make sense?

**Willi:** (Chuckle)

**Marianne:** You know? Because we have so much like; oh, this is wrong, and this is what you have to do to make it better, you know, bang, bang, bang.

**Willi:** (Laugh)

**Marianne:** So I read quite a few of them and you sent me a few titles, and one of them is the Signal Tree. Would you like to tell that story?

**Willi:** Oh, man. I've written so many stories, I couldn't just sit here and tell them to you.

**Marianne:** Oh, okay. So I just recently read it, so the gist of the story said a tree is growing and little saplings are coming up around that tree. And that a child is seeing them and through a dream is kind of taught to take those saplings and plant them all over the neighborhood. And so she goes back and it has become more of them and she plants them everywhere. And they grow into big trees with beautiful fruit very fast. And then the process continues. And pretty soon we have a fruit forest, you know, all over for people to eat from and so forth. So I would think that came out of a permaculture gathering, possibly? Because permaculture is big on food forests. Yeah, so that's one of the things where I find that by storytelling it becomes a symbol and it becomes kind of a guideline; this is what you can do, without saying go and (laugh) you know, plant ten trees today or else.

**Willi:** (Chuckle) Well, I would hope that folks see nature in a multitude of ways, one of which would be sacred. That's one of my charges, to say to folks that nature just isn't a commodity, that it has a soul, and its soul is connected to us. So we need to take care of nature, elevate that for our survival, you know? Nature can help us with our survival, or we can kill it and we can die.

**Marianne:** Wow.

**Willi:** So that's the message.

**Marianne:** Yeah, and that's a pretty profound message. And I think you kind of really cut to the chase here, it's like we can honor and preserve, or we can kill it, and that's how it is too.

**Willi:** I know. I know.

**Marianne:** Yeah.

**Willi:** That's sustainability for me. But it's a spiritual thing. So much of sustainability is green building, or saving energy, or cutting the water down. But to me, in my work in general, if it's not a sacred thing, then it's not really going to stick. I need to get a spiritual connection for people in a hurry.

**Marianne:** Yeah. I think you are touching on something which is super important, and which is probably missing in a lot of applications where we get so focused on this one technique to forget everything else. Expand a little bit more on how you see this happen, or how we can support each other to develop that sacred and the connection to the sacred.

**Willi:** Hmm. Wow, that's interesting. Well, I think one route would be to examine our current rituals and holidays and try to see if they really mean anything to us now. I would wager that they don't really mean much. They're just routine. Routine, routine isn't a spiritual idea. Routine is just routine. So I've often tried to write new rituals and traditions, especially with the transition movement as a backdrop, because they're ripe to do this work. They're ripe to write the new rituals, and they are really based in sustainability. So that's a really powerful foundation. We need to write some new ones and get past the old stuff.

**Marianne:** If I understand you right, and if I'm hearing you right, is that we need to find new ways of celebrating the connection with nature and the connection with each other, and really bring meaning to it. We talked about it in other podcasts before, not you and I, but you know, with different people. And I'm kind of assuming here that we are probably on the same wavelengths that a lot of the current holidays we're celebrating are buy something and buy more, and eat a lot of food, and (laugh) and that's pretty much it, right?

**Willi:** Yeah. That's pretty much it. Yeah, that's sad.

**Marianne:** Yeah.

**Willi:** That's why we're in the same boat here going down, so we need to turn that around.

**Marianne:** But you said you're writing new ritual. What are new ritual look like? Can you give me some kind of an example?

**Willi:** Well, that's interesting. I'm drawing a blank.

**Marianne:** That's okay. (Chuckle)

**Willi:** (Chuckle) I'm drawing a blank. But I can give you some of a recipe.

**Marianne:** Okay, that would be great.

**Willi:** To find a current ritual like Thanksgiving and apply it not to just your family, or to Safeway where you buy your food, but to apply the ritual to a community level and celebrate somewhere as a community, so that elevation, that expansion is what I'm thinking about when I try to write a ritual.

**Marianne:** Okay.

**Willi:** I need to expand it to everybody. That's key.

**Marianne:** Okay. So basically it could even be the same holiday, only people already have on their calendar and on their books and have some kind of a relationship with.

**Willi:** Right.

**Marianne:** But instead of making it about me and my small family circle, start making it about my whole community.

**Willi:** Right.

**Marianne:** Okay.

**Willi:** Yeah. In permaculture you might develop a ritual around the harvest of a food forest. So the community would participate in grabbing the fruit, and maybe even cooking and making jars of jam, and then giving it back to the community so that the idea of reuse and sustainability is part of that ritual. I don't think that's complicated at all, but I don't know that people want to go there. Permaculturalists often are weary of things that are spiritual. We talked about that.

**Marianne:** Well, some are.

**Willi:** Yeah. (Laugh)

**Marianne:** I mean I was thinking, when I was preparing for this, you know, a lot of permaculturalists are very much into the land and the garden, and somebody like Paul Wheaton would call you a Purple Person, you know? They are there.

**Willi:** (Laugh)

**Marianne:** They have this like definition that the Brown permaculturalists, the other ones, which are into soil, and there's the Purple People which are more about the spirit and the sacredness and so forth. And I really feel that we all need to have a little bit of all of that in us. It doesn't mean that we all need to do the same thing, right?

**Willi:** Right.

**Marianne:** But kind of have the awareness of everything, because in your work, you're still, I don't know if you're a hands on out in the land garden kind of a person, but in your writing nature plays a big part. And I feel when you're going out and you're working the land the spirit needs to play a big part too.

Because if you're aware of everything going on, in my opinion, you wouldn't wound up on our, you know ...

**Willi:** (Laugh)

**Marianne:**... on a land you don't want because you would just know that you're creating an act of extreme violence, in my opinion. It sounds to me like you're very much focused on working with people in creating people connections. Is that correct?

**Willi:** Oh, yes. I always want to seek out new people to interview and to have conversations with. I published a lot of those. If I am the only one doing this work then it will get old and stale, but these people that I reach out to are incredibly bright and interested in pursuing this work and then adding their ideas. So that's really one of my keys to my innovation, is to have help, have help doing it.

**Marianne:** When you say your work, are you referring to the Planet Shifter right now? The magazine? Or to your online presence? Would you like to talk about where you all can be found?

**Willi:** Sure, I'd love to. I have three Twitter accounts. And so I'm blasting my announcements through Twitter constantly. I've got a lot of folks interested in Twitter, which is gratifying. The LinkedIn is, I have two groups in LinkedIn, mythology, permaculture related, and I post my work there. I also have a mythology group in depth psychology alliance, which is an interesting connection. These are the folks who think of your being as a soul, not as a mental, or a brain. So they're looking at the psychology of the soul there. So that's been a nice synergy. I also post on G+. I have developed these over time. They're all sort of mechanical as I release the information. It's not complicated once you get a routine.

**Marianne:** Right.

**Willi:** But it takes me probably an hour to actually broadcast through all these channels each time I put something out.

**Marianne:** So when you say something that could be, I watched one of your videos where you were capturing the sound of the bark of a tree, right?

**Willi:** Yes. (Laugh)

**Marianne:** And so you're really tying the two grades, that we're using all of our senses to experience nature? That's kind of my feeling from what I think you are doing.

**Willi:** (Laugh) Yes.

**Marianne:** Is that what you're doing? (Laugh)

**Willi:** (Laugh) Yes, of course. Yes. Embrace everything. Something will come back. You know? Just give it your all and you'll get something back.



**Marianne:** Right. So when you say you're broadcasting, so that's the kind of stuff, you would do an experiment or an art piece, or you'll write, or you'll have a discussion or an interview, and then you'll share that with the world, right?

**Willi:** Yeah, that's what I mean by broadcasting. Those are the pieces of information I put out, that I let them go, like a broadcast.

**Marianne:** Okay.

**Willi:** Like seeds, of course. Like seeds.

**Marianne:** Right. You're throwing it out there and then see what people will do with it. In your magazine, it's online.

**Willi:** Oh, totally online. Yes.

**Marianne:** You founded it on Earth Day. You want to talk about how all of that came about?

**Willi:** Sure. That's about six years ago. We launched it from a café in Oakland. It was originally an artists and musicians website that people could come in and share their work and then discuss it. That's how it was actually founded. But later on I decided to go solo and to just do the content myself, make it a little bit easier to manage. Planetshifter.com is a Drupal site, kind of old school code, but I just haven't replaced it. So it continues, the original back-end technology. Well, alchemy, archetypes, mythology, these things came in as I grew, as I became more aware of the situation. And so now I'm juggling all these different ideas each time I want to write or produce a video. So I have lots of tools, I just have to decide which ones are going to work for this particular idea.

**Marianne:** We didn't talk about archetypes at all. How do you bring that into your work?

**Willi:** Well, Jung talks about archetypes, at least he did, and I'm fascinated with the deeper themes, or fears, of people. And those are things that I would like to change to make archetypes more positive. I think that's controversial. I think some people want to say the archetypes are the archetypes and you can't screw with them.

**Marianne:** Yes?

**Willi:** But my point of view is we can change anything we want, and even if it's a psychological situation. So I'm hoping to develop, continue to develop archetypes. I have like five sets of them now that are associated with symbols and movements. Like I have permaculture archetypes and symbols that go with, and then a description of that. So it helps me, as a template, guide my themeation and storytelling. So they're very powerful things to me. I take them literally.

**Marianne:** I heard some really, what resonates with me deeply is you were saying that a lot of archetypes were based in fear. And that you want to change that. And I feel a lot of our behavior is based in fear. And when we can make off that fear we actually can come to a different kind of a change.

**Willi:** Right.

**Marianne:** So do you want to talk a little bit about that, how you feel that, you know, changing it, I think I understood, you're right, the archetypes you are developing are based in a more positive solution based outlook maybe? So how would we apply that? How can we use that to direct our life to a more sustainable, to our planet type living?

**Willi:** I think, in my case, I look for symbols. Symbols are very important as they support and transform us and connect us to the archetypes. So if we can adopt a positive symbol, or a symbol set, or a symbol language, as I've done, then we are re-gearing those archetypes. I would also mention that I'm interested in sound archetypes as a way back in or a way forward for civilization. I'm interested in what the sounds symbolize and how they relate to these archetypes that I'm looking at. I'm trying to find all the ways I can to generate something better than what we have. And that starts with the archetypes, I believe.

**Marianne:** Okay. Can you give me something practical, like a person who is kind of new to this and is now really getting interested hearing us talk about it? And so you are talking about symbols and you're creating new symbols. Can you maybe describe one? And then how we would use that to change something we would want to change?

**Willi:** Okay. Here's a permaculture and nature archetype, although it's controversial. The symbol is an AK47, or a US flag, or a scene from mass shootings on TV. These are all powerful symbols, largely negative, right?

**Marianne:** Right.

**Willi:** So what we need to do is change this deep love for firearms into a deeper love for our fellow man and our communities. Change the fear around gun ownership into an embracement of our countrymen and women. So those are the symbols, the archetype is this crazy freedom, freedom loving firearms ethic, which is paradoxical, it's killing us and keeping us safe at the same time. Then to transform that into trust and into some sort of community togetherness, that would be the hope, that would be my job, to take that gun ownership and have something else instead.

**Marianne:** You would be using a negative symbol and finding a way to turn it into a positive symbol.

**Willi:** Right. And then changing the archetype as well.

**Marianne:** And so how would we change the archetype in that example?

**Willi:** Well, you could actually write a story and then start talking about that story, or having people repeat it, or adding to it. So that story, the story comes back here in a powerful way, if there is one.

**Marianne:** Okay. So it could be a story about somebody being so – you mentioned like the mass shooting. So to me that's somebody in immense pain going to lash out in such a violent way, right?

**Willi:** Yes, ma'am.

**Marianne:** So that could be, then when we see somebody, I mean at that point its kind of late in the game, right?

**Willi:** Yeah.

**Marianne:** Our story would be not to allow somebody to go that far, right? To see pain as it happens and see how they can relate as people lift each other up type of a thing?

**Willi:** Yes.

**Marianne:** Okay.

**Willi:** That's possible. You know, it might be a child who is trying to convince her dad to turn in his guns.

**Marianne:** Mm-hmm?

**Willi:** And that's a powerful place to start. Children often have a powerful directive on our lives, and can open our eyes quickly.

**Marianne:** Mm-hmm.

**Willi:** So that's maybe where I would start with a story, for instance.

**Marianne:** Wow, that's pretty heavy.

**Willi:** Yah.

**Marianne:** I mean it's very heavy, and it's definitely, you know, so much reality right now, people are in so much distress that they need to lash out that way and just kill a whole bunch of other people. Yeah, so now I can understand better too how your stories are coming about. Because some of them, I read one of them is about a remembering chair.

**Willi:** Yes.

**Marianne:** Where a tri parched landscape and a chair is placed in it, and there's a remembrance of water, and then that water appears after a while. So basically you are creating myth by having a problem and tracing the problem, and then searching for solutions and telling them in a story way. Fascinating.

**Willi:** Yeah, I would hope that through my own pain and my own release that I will be healed too, first, perhaps. And then I realize them to others. And then we can share that solution, or that magic, well, you know, inner-realization, whatever it is. But it does come from a lot of pain, that's true. It's a very painful place to live on the planet right now, to me.

**Marianne:** Yeah. You know, I think that's one of the things which I listen to recorded books a lot, audiobooks in the public domain, and so they are over a hundred years old most of the time. And there is that same pain. And the same, you know, sometimes if you take the outer circumstances away the human condition still seems to be sustained. You know, that people are experiencing fear and despair in thinking the world is not working right, but I feel that also has always been the incentive for somebody

to say we need to change and come to a more positive solution. Basically we're trying to be on the side of the solution finders, right?

**Willi:** (Chuckle) Exactly, yeah. We're kind of running out of time too, which is another aspect of this world, so we'll see. I don't know that we have that much time to fix some of these things.

**Marianne:** Well, yes and no. I mean we can only do what we can do, right?

**Willi:** Sure.

**Marianne:** And, you know, we can turn it into a positive. Let's write a new myth here. We are running out of time. How can we turn that into a new myth if there's endless time available? The time is relative. You know?

**Willi:** Got that right!

**Marianne:** I mean time is something which is, it's not a defined thing, really, because when you think about it, if you really enjoy yourself, an hour seems like nothing, right? So there is no time. And then if you are in excruciating pain or discomfort a minute seems like a whole day. So, you know, let's just assume that we have endless time to fix everything.

**Willi:** Okay.

**Marianne:** We need to – that's a new myth.

**Willi:** I like that. I'll try it.

**Marianne:** Good. Sounds good. What do you want for people to do with your work? Do you want – tell me what your ambition is. You're bringing stuff out. You're bringing information to people. And what is your heart's desire what people will do with that work?

**Willi:** Well, that's a good question, I mean, I would love to find a publisher out there to help me put out a workbook for most people, for people who aren't necessarily online as much as others, because there's an opportunity there. I would hope that people would show their children some of my work, talk to them about it, and then finally I would think there's lots of opportunity to work with me so people can get ahold of me and suggest ideas about collaboration. I would like that.

**Marianne:** Okay, sounds good. Is there anything else you would like to tell me, Willi?

**Willi:** Not really, I enjoyed myself and I really like what you're doing over there.

**Marianne:** Thank you.

**Willi:** So keep it up.

**Marianne:** Thank you, you too. I want to – it's very fascinating to me, so yeah, let's write some new myths together. I'd like that. Thank you so much.

**Willi:** Let's do that! Thank you.



**“Casting ReWilding, Permaculture and Mythology” - [Willi Paul Interview](#) on [Talk Story Radio](#) (12/10/15) +PDF by Julia Widdop, Host**

## **Introduction**

‘I see the need to find a way for people to get in touch with their abilities to actualize their visions and not be stopped by their fear, routine or whatever we fill our time with.’

“Visions are a nebulous thing to me  
Once you have one  
Another one comes calling

In my work, I try to build tools and share ideas that may help folks get clear on a purpose and a long-term vision.

Is fear a tool? Yup.

As an outlander in this trans-perm path, I enjoy pushing the edge and challenging the prevailing norms: [WILDpermaculture](#)” - Mixing ReWilding and Permaculture with Symbols. Lesson Plan is a good example.

As for the big picture- I do not give humans much chance to survive the calamities now under way.

Yes, I live with many paradoxes!”

-- Willi Paul comment from an email with Charlotte Anthony, Eugene, 12/11/15

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### Interview with Willi by Julia

**Julia:** Hello, this is Julia Widdop with Talk Story Radio, and we have with us this morning Willi Paul, who is a very interesting man. He is the creator of Planet Shifter magazine if you want to go to take a look at it while you listen to this interview, but Willi, tell us about, you were telling me earlier about rewilding and permaculture. Shall we explore that a little further?

**Willi:** Sure, that would be excellent. That's the [recent piece](#) that's illustrated in the center illustration on the webpage. You'll see eight symbols, five of which I attached to rewilding, and three which are attached to permaculture. And in this piece I'm interested in the intersection, or the mixing, of those two. Let's call it movements, to make it easier to understand; these are movements that challenge man's dominance over nature, and man's use of nature.

So I'm using symbols as a catalyst, a nonverbal cue, to get at that intersection. And you can see the symbols on the homepage. They include trekking, and instinct, and the core of the native people, these are all things that I ascribe to rewilding. And, of course, permaculture is more prominent in the circles that I run in. But you would have to look at permaculture and how it feels with the land; it's still carving it up and manipulating the rainfall. So I wanted to challenge people in the permaculture world to take a look at what they're doing and perhaps be softer and more spiritual in their practice. Perma-culturalists are scientists, and, you know, civil engineers, and I've always had trouble trying to get them out of their box. But that's partially what WILDpermaculture is about ...

**Julia:** They like to take charge.

**Julia:** This little lean-to you have here, I'm really drawn to that image. Would you say that's rewilding or permaculture?

**Willi:** Oh, well, that's under the rewilding symbols section. So that should be clear.

**Julia:** Okay.

**Willi:** That's going back to nature and living with it versus carving it out and getting a yield.

**Julia:** So even though there's a manmade structure there it's still living with the culture, or with the nature.

**Willi:** Yeah, because it will decompose and go back to the planet in a couple of years, so I would argue that it's part of nature.

**Julia:** Okay, okay. I guess I agree. It wouldn't take it long to go back because it would fall down.

**Willi:** Right.

**Julia:** And then Nature would grow right back.

**Willi:** Yes.

**Julia:** Mm-hmm. What do you consider, how would you define rewilding?

**Willi:** Well, I published a [very long interview](#) with Dan De Lion. He's a rewildist and a teacher of children. I would suggest that rewilding, first of all, is about nature lore, a spiritual connection to nature and to animals and to protect, and to live with them; live lightly on the planet, go lightly, I guess, is the cliché. So it's learning how to survive in an appropriate way. Rewilding is a survivor event, although I think there's an element of survivorship, or survivalism in permaculture, too. So in sum, ReWilding is basically living with nature, instead of on top of it.

**Julia:** ... where would you make the divide if we build a structure that's ... not living with nature? Because even beavers build homes.

**Willi:** That's true. I do I make the distinction between the two movements. Is that what you're asking?

**Julia:** Yes.

**Willi:** Well, permaculture is interested primarily in building permanent agricultural facilities and homes. You could argue that a cobb house is a lot more permanent than a lean-to. But we're probably, you know, shaving a fine hair here. Permaculture is a groovy, new hippie way to engineer the land. And ReWilding is a chance to go back and create harmony, not carve up nature.

**Julia:** Okay. And then you also have here a myth lab. Talk to me about the myth lab. What's in there?

**Willi:** Well, the myth lab is a structured process to write new myths. And I'm going to tell you straight up that it's a controversial thing to do. But I have done it over 74 times, so I know the benefits.

**Willi:** It's probably a little scientific and a little heartfelt. My process is driven by an artifact that you use to write the story. You could use that lean-to image, for instance, to write the new myth. There's are New Myth elements that go with that process and certainly people could look that up on Planetshifter.com. But I'm trying to recharge a dead myth planet, a classic myth planet, that doesn't scant relevance anymore. So other than play with the old ones that don't work I'm trying to create new ones. That's the bottom line.

**Julia:** That will resonate with archetypal structures within?

**Willi:** Yes, ma'am, that's right.

**Julia:** What are they?

**Willi:** The apocalypse could be spiritual, it could be physical. It could be a charged process and I think it's included. And I think there's an element of science fiction in what I'm trying to do with new myths. So I am using Campbell for the journey and the initiation, but I am in trouble with the Joseph Campbell



crowd because I'm promoting the community hero over the individual hero. Clearly the community hero is very important to me when I write new myths.

**Julia:** Okay, I see your point. So the community hero would be more, instead of going out on an individual journey, the community hero would be trying to be a, save the community, or what? Tell me a little bit more about that.

**Willi:** I think you got it. The community well-being over the individual's well-being, the individual's ego. I'm looking for a holistic approach to solving the community's problems. And that comes back to the transition movement, which I'm involved with, and something called localization. Localization is bringing the energy and resources back to the source and surviving the eminent demise of the Safeway's and the inter-state delivery trucks - and the oil industry over-all- and building real sustainability at the local level. So that's also what I mean by creating a community hero. Everybody's equal, everybody gains, everybody shares in the work.

**Julia:** Okay, so the community as a hero?

**Willi:** Yes, ma'am. That's a big one for me.

**Julia:** Okay.

**Willi:** And that's a part of what I'm talking about with the new myths, making new myths, you'll find that localization theme in there over and over again.

**Julia:** So you write stories that explore archetypes?

**Willi:** Well, actually, to be more specific, the archetypes are based on Jung's work on that subconscious/conscious interface that has been explored over and over again. I'm also challenging that. I'm hoping that I can share some new archetypes that might be more beneficial. I think some of the older archetype, like old myths are dead or just ineffective. You'll find a list of new archetypes that I propose in [this piece](#). So those are the ones that I've come up with recently, and they all relate to a movement and to a symbol. I'm developing, new archetypes and, again, it's controversial.

**Willi:** It's the end of the world.

**Julia:** Yes, exactly.

**Willi:** Who cares?

**Julia:** But well, and that's how transformation occurs, you can't just stand on one side or the other. You have to transform in the middle.

**Willi:** Very well said. That's where I am.

**Julia:** You're doing it. And you're trying to show other people how to do it.

**Willi:** Yes.

**Julia:** It's kind of nebulous. Well.

**Willi:** Well, you got to be here.

**Julia:** Okay, and alchemy. Okay, alchemy is how you do it, right?

**Willi:** Yeah, alchemy is the, you know, the spiritual and physical power duo that I'm talking about a lot. And, yes, that's true. Alchemy and symbols, especially, are generating these new archetypes. That would be the quick and dirty of it.

**Julia:** And tell me something about your workshops that you have. How often do you have those?

**Willi:** Well, I did a series of [roundtables](#) recently, in various cities in Northern California, including Santa Barbara, and Davis, and the Bay Area. So I took some of these base ideas that we are discussing today and presented those, and then we had some discussion, and then archived everything at the PlanetShifter.com. So if you search on roundtable you'll find that material. I made meticulous notes and saved files so people can get ahead of the curve.

**Julia:** And is there any way for people to be informed when you're having a new workshop? Or do you have a mailing list at all?

**Willi:** I'll let you know and you can broadcast it to your community, how's that?

**Julia:** Okay, that'd be great.

**Julia:** And I notice you have some [e-Books](#) here.

**Willi:** Yeah, the e-Book is a chance to package and repackage my work into logical topics. But they certainly don't cost anything, these are free.

**Julia:** Okay.

**Willi:** But I'm trying to make my work even more accessible than perhaps it is.

**Julia:** Well, it's wonderful that you don't have to try to make money on any of this. So you're free to ... you're free to explore any direction you'd like, it sounds like.

**Willi:** Yeah, that's right. It's taken over six plus years to get to this point. So it's just really starting. That's the exciting part. I do make money as a consultant in Silicon Valley so I don't have to worry about selling my soul.

**Julia:** Oh, good. That was something that was really noticeable about your website, there was like nothing on here where you're asking anybody to buy something.

**Willi:** Right. That's power. I don't have to deal with that paradox.

**Julia:** I thought, wow, this is interesting. This is very different.

**Willi:** Yeah, I don't have any of those baggage points, so I'm really pleased I've done it that way.

**Julia:** Yeah, that is good. Okay. Well, is there anything you'd like to tell the listeners? Our time is almost up.

**Willi:** Well, hmm ... just ask them to explore the homepage, because that's where all the entry points are.

**Julia:** Okay.

**Willi:** And to use the search engine, the search box, to look for topics. I'm hopeful that they'll find something that might resonate with them. And thirdly I really would welcome anybody's comments or ideas to partner with me. I conduct lots of conversations and interviews, so there's lots of opportunities to get involved here. I'm willing to invite people in.

**Julia:** Okay, fabulous. Well, and I assume I can put any of your [videos](#). Are these all on YouTube too?

**Willi:** Yeah, all the videos are on YouTube, so you can watch.

**Julia:** Okay. And I've been embedding them on my front page, so I did the bee myth one, and right now I've got the water one up on our front page.

**Willi:** Nice. Thank you.

**Julia:** But it's so fascinating.

**Willi:** Thanks so much Julie. I really appreciate your time.

**Julia:** Thank you. Bye.

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**Contact -**

[Julia Widdop](#) offers private Skype coaching sessions using dreams, art & journal work. Supporter of book marketing support and networking group on Talk Story Radio.

**Julia at [talkstory.media](http://talkstory.media)**



**[The Myth Lab: Myth and Permaculture](http://mythandmore.com)** - Interview with Willi Paul by Mythologist Margo Meck, [mythandmore.com](http://mythandmore.com)

Activist, Permaculture promoter, and myth maker, Willi Paul, presented his Myth Lab, “Mythic Roundtable: Tools and Inspiration for Creating New Myths” on January 22, 2015 at the Granada Book Store, 1224 State St., Santa Barbara. Please see the results from this event at [Planetshifter.com](http://Planetshifter.com) in early February.

I was curious about his method of combining myth with his passion for permaculture. I sent him a couple of questions and he was kind enough to respond. Here is our correspondence:

**Question** – I hear the word “myth” used more and more frequently. As a term is popularized, it becomes a victim of its own success. Even in Classical Greece, the term had multiple meanings. When you use the term “myth” please clarify what you mean by it and if that meaning is consistent throughout your work?

**Willi Paul** - Myth is a new, universal story that is generated by issues / crisis of our times like climate change, species extinction and drought. Classic myths support with general structures and motifs like hero, journey and initiation. My myths deal with new community types like the permaculture and Transition movements. But my myth also includes bliss, an alchemic power to see past the hype and empower solutions. I believe that creative mythology, as described by Joe Campbell, is the right overall framework for individuals in these times.

**Question** – The mythic motif of death and resurrection or rebirth is founded in agricultural/vegetative mythologies (e.g. Aphrodite/Adonis, Jesus the Christ, Ishtar/Tammuz, Inanna/Damuzi, etc). What mythic motifs, if any, are you seeing emerging from the permaculture phenomenon?

**Willi Paul** – I prefer to use symbols rather than motifs as these are more powerful connections:

**Shovel** – turning, renewal

**Cob bench** – community

**Pond** – water birth, diversity

**Sun flower** – Nature Steward

**Moon** – magic, Nature wisdom

**Bees** – togetherness, eco-business

**Lightning** – ecoAlchemy – transmutation

**Cob feet** – dance, new Nature rituals

**Broken concrete** – reuse – recycling

**Butterflies** – metamorphosis, freedom

(for more on Willi Paul's perspective click here: [Permaculture Symbols](#))

**Secondly, new archetypes work with new symbols now:**

**A. Permaculture & Nature Archetype:** A love to preserve unique landscapes for future generations. Mistrust of greedy, short-term land and energy developers

**Symbols:** Tree of Life, Permaculture logo, Yosemite, Seeds, Amazon Rain Forest, US Gulf Coast

**B. Permaculture & Nature Archetype:** Our hope is to build sustainable systems in our local neighborhoods and towns. Fear of food and fuel shortages; fights for resources between neighbors and governments

**Symbols:** Crude oil on rails, GMO; Convergence and sharing expo events; neighborhood plans and new rituals

**C. Permaculture & Nature Archetype:** A deep love for freedom to own fire arms; fear of guns and killing.

**Symbols:** AK-47, US Flag, Scenes from mass shootings, vigils, pawn shops

**D. Permaculture & Nature Archetype:** Fear that global warming will destroy all life on Earth. Mistrust of business and goal of short-term profits

**Symbols:** Rising coastal tides, melting polar ice, coal fired power plants.

**E. Permaculture & Nature Archetype:** Mistrust of energy privatization and corrupt safety practices. Love of the system and blind faith in corporate responsibility

**Symbols:** BP, PG&E, Duke Energy

(for more on Willi Paul's comments on this click here: [Permaculture, Carl Jung and the New Archetypes](#))

**Question** – I believe humans are hard-wired for story. There is much distress in some groups that Hollywood is dying. It is possible that form of storytelling is in decline, but I doubt if humans will ever be storyless. Please detail your experience in using story to explain, enlist, and engage in expanding permaculture awareness.

**Willi Paul** – The best place to start in your journey to new stories is [Texting Joseph Campbell – Five Methods to Design New Stories & Myths eBook #18](#):

**The Five methods that I have invented to date are:**

1. Building a Mythology Generator for the Sustainability Age
2. Mapping Future Myths for the Transition –  
Workshop & Video, First Study of Myth Symposium, Pacifica Graduate Institute
3. Myth Lab
4. SCORE: sounds symbols myths
5. Mythic Engine

Thank you Willi Paul for you input on this important issue. Your creative integration of myth making and permaculture promotion are truly inspiring.

\* \* \* \* \*

[Margo Meck](#) is a mythologist, writer, story consultant, and speaker. She received her Ph.D. in Mythological Studies from Pacifica Graduate Institute, Santa Barbara, CA. in 2007. She has lectured on various myth related subjects such as Personal Mythology, Proof of Identity in Myth and Fairy Tale, and the Hero's Journey.



willi paul

planetshifter.com

**[“Exercising the Artifacts” – Interview with Mythologist Willi Paul by Arthur George](#)** to Support the **[Mythic Roundtable at Granada Books](#)**, Santa Barbara on 1/22/15.

**Willi:** Thank you to my fellow mythologist Arthur George for this interview, author of the excellent [The Mythology of Eden](#).

**Arthur:** In July and again in September, I posted here 2 conversations I had with my friend and fellow mythologist Willi Paul about the “new myths” and [creative mythology](#). Willi will be leading a [roundtable](#) on creating new myths at the Granada Book Store in Santa Barbara, California, on January 22, so we thought it would be timely to discuss here on my blog – [Mythology Matters](#) - the ideas he will be presenting there. Our conversation is below.

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**Interview with Willi by Arthur**

**1. How do the “new myths” differ (if at all) in content and/or purpose compared with traditional myths?**



Lately I am seeing this “old vs. new” myth debate forming a hybrid set in that many plots and heroes from classic mythology can support the messages in the new myths of the **Climate Change Age**. We see that new myths reflect the universal issues of 2015: species extinction, terrorism, GMO and drought to name a few. Let’s take the journey, initiation and hero triad from Joseph Campbell’s work and support [new community survival songs, poems and tales](#). While technology enables both new and old mythologies to be experienced on a tablet or a home browser, new myths require a new vision and design – and intervention. See [Myth Lab](#).

Also, there are many types of mythologies to drive a new planet consciousness including *creative, creation, classic, apocalyptic, sound, and mythopoeic*. I am working on a **Unified Model of Mythology** to better understand this synergy moving forward.

## 2. What is the creative source for the new myths? How is human psychology involved?

Sources include boredom with the classic myths and our destruction of Nature and each other. I believe that we all artists with the capacity to reach inwards and outwards to experience bliss. Meditation is a key source for the creative.

In a recent exploration into depth psychology, I proposed the following [Permaculture & Nature Archetypes and their Symbols](#):

+ **Permaculture & Nature Archetype**: A love to preserve unique landscapes for future generations. Mistrust of greedy, short-term land and energy developers

**Symbols**: Tree of Life, Permaculture logo, Yosemite, Seeds, Amazon Rain Forest, US Gulf Coast

+ **Permaculture & Nature Archetype**: Our hope is to build sustainable systems in our local neighborhoods and towns. Fear of food and fuel shortages; fights for resources between neighbors and governments

**Symbols**: Crude oil on rails, GMO; Convergence and sharing expo events; neighborhood plans and new rituals

+ **Permaculture & Nature Archetype**: A deep love for freedom to own fire arms; fear of guns and killing.

**Symbols**:: AK-47, US Flag, Scenes from mass shootings, vigils, pawn shops

+ **Permaculture & Nature Archetype**: Fear that global warming will destroy all life on Earth. Mistrust of business and goal of short-term profits

**Symbols**: Rising coastal tides, melting polar ice, coal fired power plants.

+ **Permaculture & Nature Archetype**: Mistrust of energy privatization and corrupt safety practices. Love of the system and blind faith in corporate responsibility

**Symbols**: BP, PG&E, Duke Energy

Archetypes can be seen as conscious and unconscious “code” to build and advance human evolution. The Internet is our primary broadcaster for new archetypes, symbols and new myths. Like software code – it is compiled, tested and re-written over and over throughout history. Heroes update the data and write the new code.



### **3. Can you summarize the process for constructing a “new myth” for the present age? How does this differ from how the traditional myths were composed (to the extent we understand this)?**

New Myth makers need initiation and tools to guide them. Reading Campbell and other leading authors, including Mircea Eliade and JRR Tolkien. Many see a new mythology channels in Star Wars. Ultimately new myths will rise from our personal interaction with community, Nature and Sci-fi and less from formal western religions.

**I often engineer new myths by using the Five Stages of the [Myth Lab Process Model](#):**

#### **Step 1: Discover the Artifact**

The Artifact is a Nature-Human combination. Some examples include graffiti, a bill board message, an historic sculpture, and a permaculture garden, all with hidden special powers and messages to the neighborhood.

#### **Step 2: Analyze the Artifact**

The Artifact can evoke a magical journey or a mythic struggle and is the foundation focus or primer for new symbols and the imprinting and creation that follows.

#### **Step 3: Mythic Imprintation**

Imprinting is defined as a two-way interaction with a selected Artifact that generates synergistic meaning for both participants and the Artifact. Called “mythic imprinting” in the Myth Lab, this iterative and transmutative stage is grounded in the initiation, journey and hero work from Joseph Campbell and is one way that neighborhood artifacts can help neighbors generate new songs, poems and myths.

#### **Step 4: Create New Myth #42**

1. What did you like about the Artifact? Describe the visual and sonic messages in the forest journey.
2. Did the Artifact remind you of any story or song from your childhood? How?
3. Did the piece heighten your senses or support a new vision for you? Please describe.

#### **Step 5: Share the Journey and New Myth with the Community**

This is the Hero’s duty.

**Here some of my favorite New Myths from the Lab:**

[Forest Vibrations \\* Sacred Lights, Children’s Video – New Myth #42, Myth Lab #3](#)

[Land Sky River Stars](#) – New Myth #46, Myth Lab #5

[“The LightDNA Boys from the Blue-Green Galaxy” – New Myth #49, Myth Lab #8](#)

### **4. What, if any, role does one’s community play in developing new myths, or as serving as content in these myths? How large or small in scope is the community?**

The community is our extended family. Through [localization](#), our neighbors can become our news sharers, vegetable farmers and spirit guides. Here is a wise and caring future template for new myths.

Now Mount Olympus becomes East Oakland and a Myers lemon tree is a powerful symbol of community zest and sustainability.

**5. In light of the role of ritual in many traditional myths, what kinds of rituals do you envisage as taking place in connection with new myths? Perhaps you have some examples?**

I am generating mostly new community sharing rituals that by-pass the “Wal-Mart price point,” throw-away scene that drains our spirits.

**Please consider these examples of new rituals:**

[Rituals of the Return \(via Transition Movement\)](#)

[“Nature is not a Ritual” – Online Roundtable Topic](#)  
[5 New Nature-based Rituals for the Permaculture Transition](#)

[Our road share prayer ritual for](#)  
[Cascadia’s Light Network. New Myth 33](#)

[“Spring Holidays & Transition Tales 3.” Transition Palo Alto’s Spring Sharing Expo, March 16, 1 – 3 pm at Common Ground, Palo Alto. Video Interviews Hosted by Willi](#)

**6. How can music (or other sounds) constitute a myth in whole or in part (supporting it)?**

While I understand that few are trained to hear sounds as symbols (or myths), this is where I started my work in sonic mythology. If you create a [lattice of interacting elements](#) that includes words, graphic symbols, soundbytes and a unifying score, the artifact(s) can emerge and a story can unfold.

**See this synergy at work in:**

[DUSK – Sound – Symbol – SCORE Design for Children’s Permaculture Stories. Video. New Myth #61. Willi Paul](#)

I do envision a day in the near future where humans will close their eyes and experience new myths and rituals.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Tools & Inspiration for Creating New Myths**

[A Mythic Roundtable](#)

Presenter: Willi Paul, Planetshifter.com Magazine  
Granada Book Store 1224 State Street  
Santa Barbara, CA January 22, 2015 7 – 8:30 PM



**"The Quarry Men:" A Conversation on New Mythology with Carridine Poran and Willi Paul**

Carridine invited Willi to talk after reading tens of Willi's interviews with people involved with permaculture and mythology. Willi's compelling applications of mythology to social and environmental crises turn the familiar conversation surrounding myth on its head. Carridine also found his commitment to online archiving admirable. He invited Willi to have a conversation he believed would be productive of a greater synthesis between depth experience and social organizing for sustainable change.

You can find Carridine and Willi at the [New Mythology Permaculture and Transition Group](#) and the [Depth Psychology Alliance - New Mythology Group](#).

**Here is the first round of that conversation.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**ONE**

**CP:** I notice again and again people asking you, "Yes, but why do you call your stories myths?"

**WP:** This is a great question. I am advocating a new "brand" of mythology that fits our struggles and transitions. The foundation in this shift are my [8 Key Elements in the New Mythology](#):

1. Localization – back to sustainability and community; self-sufficiency
2. Nature- Centric
3. Spiritual
4. Future-based
5. Universal themes(s) and message
6. Para-Normal in conflict or characters
7. Initiation, Journey and Hero
8. Permaculture & Transition: values and principles

My tales have transformed the hero, initiation and journey from Joseph Campbell's vision with modern fears about climate change, mass destruction of Nature and a dash of Hollywood. It matters not how long the pieces are, just the alchemitized struggles and lessons.

Archetypes for my new myths are modernized as well. Archetypes are very powerful images or dreams in our creative tool kit that can offer insights and guidance on our journey:

- Growing Season / Cycle
- Spiritual Healing
- Visioning
- Giving Thanks

[Joseph Campbell](#) was often asked how a new mythology was going to develop. His answer was that it would have to come from poets, artists, and filmmakers. In this talk, Campbell explores what he called creative mythology—the way in which artists can and do give a sense of the transcendent in a universe apparently empty of meaning.

So, in my [50 New Myths](#), it's not about "story vs. new myths," it's much more about the revitalized power of myth!

//

**CP:** But is there a difference between myth and other kinds of stories? People ask why you call your myths because they are expecting something else when they hear the word myth. I'd like to explore your notion of myth as well as my own. Not only that, I'd like to somehow consider all you are doing and all the themes you are wrestling with in relation to what I know of myth as certain kinds of stories. You say your interest is in "the **revitalized power of myth**" and I'd like to consider that revitalization as a process in relation to Campbell's idea of **creative mythology**.

I think that first demands that we ask what mythology is. What is its power? That is what I see as the relevance of older mythologies, Greek and Roman or otherwise. We can investigate them and their uses in their own societies. They were connected to religious cults and rituals, to initiation rites as well as to popular entertainment. Part of the question is where these stories originate. They have been studied for more than two thousand years and a wide variety of meaning has been derived from them. Still there is no consensus on what a myth is. Part of the power of myth seems to be this **mutability**.

I think it would be very interesting to compare your 8 Key Elements in the New Mythology to concerns in these old mythologies. I think there are many parallels. And I think the main differences to be found are based on the **different crises** being addressed.

Where both could be said to be concerned with nature and spirituality and human truths (universal themes) and values, yours are distinguished by the call to return: to return to sustainable (future-based) ways of living, to the retrieval of meaning out of meaninglessness. Another way they are distinguished is by the gigantic problems your myths must address. These concerns however can still be likened to old concerns: in many of the old Greek Myths you see a concern for staying within bounds and the consequences of boundless desire. I think a core value in all sustainability work and all **planning for**

**seven generations** type thinking is the notion of conservation, of respecting limits. Myths in both eras hammer home the dangers of greed and over-consumption.

## TWO

**WP:** You write: "Part of the question is: where do these stories come from?" It is beyond my scope to tell you where the classic myths come from; it is empowering to know where mine come from. This gut-level awareness for new rituals, the new symbols, sacredness and alchemy make new myths way more powerful than the old ones, yes? To be slightly critical: the old myths are like "TV re-runs" while the new myths are bursting out of our current predicaments. A huge matter of degree of importance; of nostalgia vs. a fire in the backyard!

I just discovered the notion and underpinnings of Campbell's creative mythology. This is exciting because I now have a higher relationship with his vision and the world. I honestly did not know that this was the next stage of the journey until I read this:

"In the context of traditional mythology, the symbols are presented in socially maintained rites, through which the individual is required to experience, or will pretend to have experienced, certain insights, sentiments and commitments. **In what I'm calling creative mythology, on the other hand, this order is reversed: the individual has had an experience of his own - of order, horror, beauty, or even mere exhilaration-which he seeks to communicate through signs; and if his realization has been of a certain depth and import, his communication will have the force and value of living myth-for those, that is to say, who receive and respond to it of themselves, with recognition, un-coerced."**

So, indeed, creative mythology is my current example of **the revitalized power of myth**.

As to your reflection on the crisis of the day (or yester year), I agree in principle but technology to destroy the planet with one button or protracted regional conflict seems to separate the old from the new mythologies.

Can you explain what you mean by **seven generations type thinking**?

## THREE

**CP:** First: by seven generations type thinking I mean the attitude that one must take in making decisions: one must consider the world not just in terms of the effects and rewards for oneself but in terms of seven generations of people that come after. (See Oren Lyons.)

Yes, our gut-level awareness of new myths makes them way more powerful than the old ones for us. In the Joseph Campbell lecture on creative mythology you linked to, I liked that he pointed out that the environment of the old myths had passed away and so they really couldn't be relevant to us. Their guts and our guts react to different things. If I live in a modern city, a Bible written for shepherds who lived 2000 years ago is probably not going to reach me at a gut level. We have to explore our own images arising from our own "current predicaments" and "fires in the backyard" as you say. The old myths are indeed "TV re-runs", and re-runs from the very beginning of TV: Dobie Gillis and Beaver Cleaver. It is hard for us even to imagine what might have been enjoyable or useful about those stories.

I agree with you when you say "but technology to destroy the planet with one button or protracted regional conflict seems to separate the old from the new mythologies." This is what I meant when I said, "your [new myths] are distinguished [from the old myths] ... by the gigantic size of the problems your myths must address."

I appreciate Campbell's notion of creative mythology and I'm glad you got a lot out of it. The quote you posted includes a description of a process of how myths come about:

"In what I'm calling creative mythology, on the other hand, this order is reversed: **the individual has had an experience of his own - of order, horror, beauty, or even mere exhilaration-which he seeks to communicate through signs; and if his realization has been of a certain depth and import, his communication will have the force and value of living myth-for those, that is to say, who receive and respond to it of themselves, with recognition, un-coerced.**"

This is one answer to my question "where do myths come from?" And I think the process you have been using is like this, for instance with Myth Number 1 about the Gulf Oil spill. There's the horrific event. And then you add to it the story of the leatherback turtles. That is your way of communicating your realization concerning the experience.

When I ask this question of process, I mean how do we arrive at the new myths? The process Campbell describes is one of many. For example, there is the process described by Robert Bosnak in his recent free lecture, Introduction to the course on [Alchemical Psychology](#).

Bosnak describes an alchemical process parallel to Campbell's Creative Mythology. It involves the same elements as Campbell's does: a person's experience, a sign or image (in alchemical terms, a tincture/corpus) used to communicate the inspiration, and the inspiration itself -- "the force and value of living myth." Bosnak is applying his alchemy to psychology and individual healing whereas Campbell is talking about stories for the individual as a socially responsible self. A more significant difference I think is the **source of the creative inspiration** .

Bosnak talks about the **lyrical organization** of our perceptions in relation to these elements: (1) experience, (2) image and (3) inspiration (approx. 10 minutes into his lecture.) And what is this lyrical organization of our perceptions? As I understand it, as it resonates with my interests, lyrical organization would be reality apprehended or judged as that which makes sense or has meaning rather than the more familiar material organization of our perceptions which apprehends Reality as anything which has an existence independent of us – in spite of us, regardless of us. For me, this may be the whole of the question regarding new mythology and our attempts to tackle the huge problems of our time. What is our relation to reality, to truth, to nature?

Following this introduction about lyrical organization, Bosnak starts talking about the acquisition of an image from a dream encounter and **an interpretive processing of the image through alchemical stages of "heat."** There are two chief differences between Campbell's process and the process Bosnak is describing. First rather than a person having an experience and then "seeking to communicate it through signs" Bosnak describes the person being given an image from "deep deep down." It's not that the person has an experience which they understand and then chooses a way of narrating it to others. In Bosnak's process, the person doesn't understand the image. The second difference then is the discovery of the meaning of the image through these stages of interpretation.

I think it is this difference in process that allows for a truly powerful, healing realization in Bosnak's alchemy: the dream image is created by a much deeper source than our conscious inventiveness. Coming as an influx from a more earth-connected or natural, more ecological mind, the image speaks the language of Nature. Because of this deep source, free from our alienated ways of thinking, it is capable of offering great insight with which the soul can be tied to the contemporary disaster in a much more intimate and holistic way. This does not exclude conscious inventiveness: it only adds the requirement that that inventiveness be interpreted by this more ecological mind.

Bosnak gives an in depth example of this process of working with images starting around 37 minutes into the lecture. I suggest starting to listen earlier for the procedural context. Bosnak describes his process in the terms that his teacher James Hillman used.

Tell me what you think.

#### FOUR

**WP:** To start, I would gently remind us that [Myth Number 1](#) also includes my first recipe for new myth making, a process that is later refined in [Myth Lab](#).

Is not Nature more powerful, direct and free source of inspiration and guidance than the "intellectual corps." of psychology?

"Deep deep down" is not easily identified or felt these days with the disruptive power of television, Internet and "wide-max" theatres. We must be leery of "experts or writers or psychologists, etc." who interchange the terms mythology and alchemy. [My alchemy types support symbol making and new myths](#). Alchemy is the spiritual driver for the new world. Here are some types of alchemy to consider when building new myths and rituals:

- Imaginative Alchemy: This alchemy excites and creates our ideas, conflicts and even prayers in our brains.
- Eco Alchemy: Seeds, soil, plants and animals living, birthing and dying in an inter-related system pulsed by eco alchemy.
- Shamanic Alchemy: This is alchemy transmutes healing through ceremonies and rituals lead by a trained spiritual leader.
- Sound or Sonic Alchemy: The ancient alchemic power of song from cave rants to classical music and rock'n'roll.
- Digital Alchemy: Electronic learning and feeling working with computers including chat text, email and documents.
- Community Alchemy: People working with people: transforming attitudes, sharing ideas and making plans.
- Earth Alchemy: Planetary consciousness building and human evolution on a universal scale.

Furthermore, archetypes in my quiver are defined as very powerful images or dreams in our creative tool kit that can offer insights and guidance on our journey:

- Growing Season / Cycle
- Spiritual Healing
- Visioning
- Giving Thanks

Out of Nature evolves permaculture – a blend of science in spirit is so needed to get to the Post-Chaos Era. It's time to integrate permaculture and transition principles with the tools of the new world:

- Appreciation for land preservation and environmental sensitive crops (non-GMO)
- Saving and sharing seeds
- Knowledge Sharing
- Inclusivity (Youth to Seniors)
- Resilience (back-up systems)
- Localization (local food and alt economic systems)
- Re-use & Re-cycle
- Alternative energy sources & practices
- Social justice
- Obtaining and using the Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC)

Here are [six new symbols](#) in my work in sacred permaculture [tool kit](#):

- Diversity (Soil)
- Growth (Seeds)
- Harvest (Basket)
- Transformation (Fire + Smoke)
- Stewardship (Compost Pile)
- Localization (Community Well)



## FIVE

CP: I can say that I have read through your process as it is stated on the page where Myth Number 1 appears and as it is refined in Myth Lab. That's why I think I was able to map it onto both Campbell's creative mythology and Bosnak's alchemical psychology.

**The lists you sent in this e-mail are, I think, the reason why people ask you, "What has this to do with myth?"** People ask you that question because these lists don't communicate the grand scale of your work. I hope through this correspondence to get to the place where people recognize in your work all of these listed elements in their mythic identity.

If there was any writer in this mix who interchanged the terms mythology and alchemy, I was that writer. I did so only to talk of similarities of process.

**Nature is indeed a more powerful, direct and free source of inspiration and guidance than the intellect or any human being's attempt to produce wisdom by juggling generalized intellectual ideas.** I shared Bosnak's words to talk about symbols given by nature -- through dream and vision. I wasn't selling Bosnak or his approach to things. I looked at Bosnak's video myself to confirm that at the core of what he is offering (a course, a book, accreditation) is a simple process which I am (and you are) already practicing. The only question is at what level Nature is being engaged.

I think the greatest contribution to community to be made by what used to be called social ecology is the recognition that Nature is the first symbol user. Dreams come from Nature, they come through our bodies which are part of nature, and they come to us, to our minds, which we have somehow concluded are not part of nature.

What we now call psychology and complicate with so many layers of jargons and credentials is first and foremost given to us by Nature. Through dreams, Nature instructs us in the nature of truth and balance. We ourselves have grown so far from such truths that we require alchemies and other arts to transform our self-talk back into something that can understand our own Nature.

I agree that the deep deep down is not easily felt or accessed. But that is one of our crucial problems. I do believe we can turn off the distraction boxes that have been built for us -- not for all time maybe, but for time enough to allow for meditation, reflection and contact with real things. **Distraction is the problem of the consumer and the tool of the capitalist.** More and more I think we must reject the identity of consumer and rebuild the identities of citizen, community member, mentor, sage, shaman...

## SIX

WP: In terms of sources, [my interviews](#) continue to offer insight and directions; PR for the interviewees and education / connections for readers. Out of all of the titles that folks have given me since 2009, teacher (shaman) is the role that works best. And there is no "grand scale of work" here! Please do not think of it as such. I am just seeing the pieces and laying them down, like a railroad engineer for others to follow.

**As a species, humans are in a juvenile stage in terms of symbols and alchemy.** Is my secret wish that Nature-borne symbols and alchemy will one day help to replace the mindless tyranny in organized religion.

If we can get back to Nature by destroying it, then we might live through the great paradox of climate change or the Chaos Age. This is one theme in my 50 New Myths.

Question 1: "Nature is the first symbol user," do you mean "symbol generator"? I recommend [this piece for symbol transmutations](#):

Question 2: "Through dreams, Nature's instructs us in the nature of truth and balance." I would appreciate more detail here.

Question 3: Is yoga alchemy? Meditation? Exercise?

Question 4: What are some New Myths about the consumer?

## SEVEN

**CP:** We will have to agree to disagree on the subject of the "grand scale of your work." Just considering the interviews alone reveals a grand scale. And I would think you are the only person who has seen all the pieces because you are the one who has laid them all down. You have mental access to the contents of all of it. I don't mean to suggest that you remember everything everybody has said, but I bet as you talk to people little bells ring and get you thinking, "oh this reminds me of something so and so said when I interviewed them."

In terms of the mindless tyranny of organized religion, I'd say that is one of the big bad guys to be included in a new mythology. Not organized religion as such but an embodiment of the various states of mind which make it up. I think when we look at the original inspirations for religions, the burning bush, the dying god, or you look at the large forms that arise in the history of any given religion, Saints and Archangels as dragon slayers, Madonna and Child, we can see that Nature-borne symbols and alchemy (or something akin to it) have always been present.

Organized religion, or the bad in it people often emphasize, is an embodiment of negative states of mind. These states can be characterized. That is, they can be cast as the characters of myths. The interactions between these characters can be dramatized. It is the Interactions between these states of mind which mummify the vital nature-borne symbols Bosnak describes in his alchemical process. Organizing religion has meant adding intercessors and harum-scarum until the symbols become permanent Mysteries. These are not the mysteries of alchemy which open to investigation as discovery and transformation. Instead they are- permanent Mysteries there to solidify the power of a priestly class; that class claims sole right to these mysteries of them and so too to an authority than demands obedient ignorance.

The relation between these two states of mind, Caste Priest and Caste Suppliant, as a permanent conflict becomes a recurrent narrative in a new mythology. Identified as states of mind in relationship rather than solely as "organized religion," the priest and suppliant my theme can be seen to play out in other institutions, from City Hall to the Psalters.

Of the remaining four questions, I will save three for tomorrow and answer one in a brief introductory way. Question number 4: New myths about the consumer: I think in composing myths we first build a pantheon and a setting, like you do here. One God or Power is Priest/suppliant, One God or Power is Producer/Consumer or encouraged appetite. The setting, too, you've already got going, for instance the Chaos era, which is a situation as much as it is a place or period of time. Once you have these, and they are True Representations, the myths tell themselves. So arriving at True Representations is most important: What is an example of the consumer god? What is its power? My immediate answer to that is, did you see *Spirited Away*? The character of No Face in that movie is the character of the consumer. It helps if you understand the director's point of view, [I've quoted it on my blog](#):

## EIGHT

**Hi C:** Note that the film maker references "survival" twice in the first paragraph

"I would say that this film is an adventure story even though there is no brandishing of weapons or battles involving supernatural powers. However, this story is not a showdown between right and wrong. It is a story in which the heroine will be thrown into a place where the good and bad dwell together, and there, she will experience the world. She will learn about friendship and devotion, and will survive by making full use of her brain. She sees herself through the crisis, avoids danger and gets herself back to the ordinary world somehow. She manages not because she has destroyed the 'evil,' but because she has acquired the ability to survive.

Are there modern day survival myths? Do they involve individuals or groups? Of course, it's back to the Chaos Age v. the Post-Chaos Age....

## NINE

**CP:** I'm working on the questions you asked me about nature and dreams. In the meantime, if you want to get a sense of me you can read my blog entries on [my Grove project](#): here's what I've written there grouped by theme. You can scroll all the way to the bottom or you can read them backwards, I'm not sure what difference it will make.

I'll do my best to answer all the left-over questions in one e-mail.

I'm going to combine the third question and the fourth question in one answer:

Question 4: How is this vision (of the Grove) instructing us today? Or has it morphed digital?

(Not sure what morphed digital means: perhaps you mean that the place where the mentor appears in now the internet?)

Question 3: Is yoga alchemy? Meditation? Exercise?

I think I've already said that I don't really have much of a relationship to alchemy. I have a way of doing my work that I am pleased with, that I think is authentic and that is based in personal experience. That is not to say that it is unique. In so far as it deals with real things and alchemy or active/embodied

imagination or creative mythology deal with real things, there are parallels between all these ways of doing the work, including my own.

The little I understand about alchemy I described in one of my previous answers: in short, it is a process of interaction with an object capable of yielding transformative insight. The alchemist brings the whole force of inquiry to bear on a super-dense image: the image "heats up" until it explodes releasing "scintilla." My process of working on the Grove very closely parallels that. I was given a dream image in response to the death of my mentor. In an effort to honor him and to heal my grief, I concentrated on this image in order to evolve it into the perfect tribute. Having to materialize this thing in physical space and to design its aspects to ensure that there were appropriate to his memory, I brought to bear previous decades of study and work. The result was countless insights and a greater wholeness within me than I had ever possessed before.

I take your question regarding yoga et al, in terms of this understanding of transformative work; is yoga, exercise, meditation alchemy? I would say yes. The continual practice of exercise generally speaking can promote health and regulate mood and bring clarity of purpose. That can certainly be a transformation to a person who previously lacked those things. Meditation generally speaking also seems like alchemy insofar as it transforms consciousness and can bring about progressive improvement. Yoga, I think, is clearly a parallel to alchemy and that parallel can be made clear by seeing it in terms of prayer: Yoga is often seen as the step beyond prayer, that is, beyond the faith that directs wishes toward a deity. Yoga is a practice which intends to bring about direct experience of deity. I read somewhere, "It is not enough to believe in God, one must endeavor to touch God." Through intense bodily regulation yoga achieves higher and higher states of consciousness.

Your fourth question can be answered on several levels: How is this vision (of the Grove) instructing us today?

On an archetypal level the vision of the grove instructs us as it has since its first appearance in consciousness. And how has this archetype instructed us? As I just read in the brief essay available online by Craig Cholquist, WHAT GOOD IS AN ARCHETYPE: "As Jung pointed out, an archetypal image left unresearched is no more comprehensible than an ancient baptismal font whose history remains unknown." A vision, above all, must be explored and as it is explored many insights come and the explorer grows, and as the explorer grows, the instruction can deepen and branch off in new unexpected directions.

On a historical level, how is this ancient Greek vision of a grove in the underworld instructing us today? First and foremost, it instructs by its continued reappearance. It instructs us in the ways that we are connected to the rest of humanity past and present.

On a contemporary level, the grove can raise up our own structures to the level of the mythologized shapes from the past: what more is the mentor in the grove than the teacher in the classroom? Why do we sense the teacher in the classroom as such a lessening of the mentor in the grove? To me, the ability to see this likeness calls us to act in front of a class out of a holistic and heightened sense of education, making the act of teaching today not just a mechanical communication of skills but rather a passing on of the wisdom necessary to live a good and satisfying life. These days the vision of the grove instructs me to encourage mentoring relationships.

## TEN

CP: Okay, now I'll answer question one and two together. Question 1: "Nature is the first symbol user," do you mean "symbol generator"? I mean Nature is the first symbol user not the first symbol generator. Although I have to say reading your and [Metcalf's Primer](#), I was most excited by the idea of the myth generator: To find some way of harvesting dreams from the internet to create a world wide web of dreams! In that net, we could catch, like schools of fish, commonalities constellating tens of thousands of dreams into myth formations, monsters, adventures, pantheons, a new global mythology! The gods are human fantasies in swarm. They are our murmuration. Myths are our stories about these larger human patterns. This idea is very, very exciting and inspiring! I would like to help in any way I can to bring such a thing into existence!

But yes, I mean Nature is the first symbol user in the same sense that I mean what I say in what you quote for question 2: "Through dreams, Nature instructs us in the nature of truth and balance." The easiest way to proceed to elaborate on this is to again quote Craig Chalkquist, this time from his essay on Jung's Red Book, from page eight, about dead center in that writing:

"This tree would show up in a dream at the end of Jung's life, the roots glowing with alchemical gold. Nature imagery never strayed far from Jung's deepest thoughts about the psyche. His observation that at bottom psyche merges with world marks him out as a grandfather of Ecopsychology. [my emphasis]" Here's the [whole essay](#):

"At bottom psyche merges with world" is what I mean when I say Nature is the first symbol user and that through dreams Nature instructs us in the nature of truth and balance. An example of that balance is Jung's idea (approximately) that all conscious thoughts are half thoughts. Thinking only half a thought impels psyche to present in a dream the other half, the flipside of that thought. If you are too holy, you will dream of finding pleasure in something that defiles you. That's a balancing act. But what necessitates this balance of the "sacred and the profane"?

Consider this other quote from Chalkquist's essay on the Red Book: "In later work Jung writes that when the ego has exhausted its efforts, the unconscious should be left to itself to do further work. The Cabiri now appear: gnomes who labor like dwarves under the earth. "You want to pull up with your own force what can only rise slowly....Spare yourself the trouble, or you will disturb our work." Jung takes the hint and takes a break from inner journeying for a while. (Hillman would criticize psychoanalysis one day for trying to dig every stone out of the quarry: "But what about the quarry?"")"

The important thing for me in that quote is that last question "What about the Quarry?" To me, this is a question that strikes the same target I was aiming at when I asked, "what necessitates this balance?" How do we account for the quarry? We have these qualities sacred & profane -- separated out of an original unity: maybe that original unity is the quarry. The quarry is an original abundance as well as a geometrization of that abundance.

All the stuff within consciousness pre-exists consciousness. It is something there to be conscious of. People have this ability to imbibe or embody a quality like "holy" and if they're feeling too holy, they're out of whack and something deep within them will send a message that says, "get real" or "act NATURAL." Or as Osho says it, "Live the way Nature intended you to live."

Who sends these messages? Who makes them up? I don't. You don't. We are subjected to them and dependent on them just as we are subjected to and dependent upon sleep. These meanings are made in the place deep within you (and without you) where psyche and world meet.

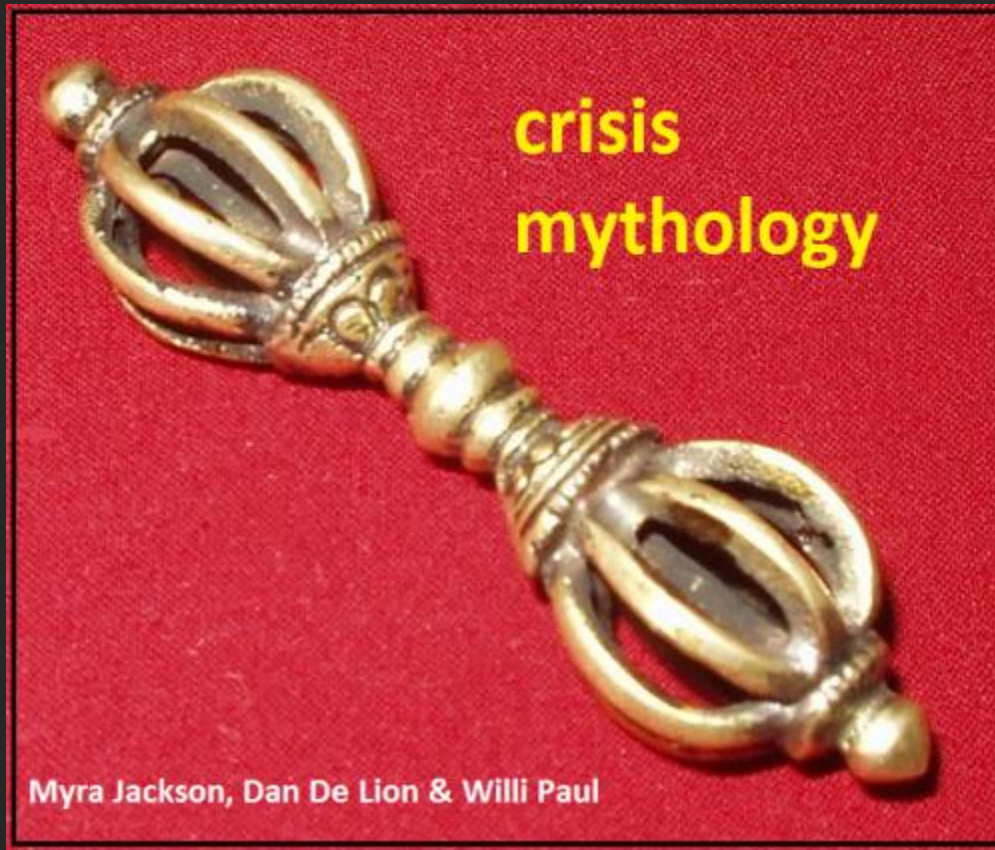
## **ELEVEN**

### **Carridine Poran's Bio**

**Carridine Poran** is an artist and art instructor. Besides offering art instruction in traditional areas, "Kerry" founded Carridine Poran Creative Services, a program of art instruction in which artists assist communities in the production of group art such as murals, picture stories and oral history forums. These projects visualize community narratives and encourage mentoring relationships.

In his career as an artist, Kerry has been a galleried fine arts painter and sculptor and an illustrator of literary fiction. As an amateur he has been a playwright, actor, novelist and essayist. His work first and foremost concerns the link between the visionary landscape of the imagination and the life well lived.

Currently he is getting to know his newborn daughter, Frida, while at the same time revamping his website.



**"Crisis Mythology" - Essays and Conversation with Myra Jackson, Dan De Lion & Willi Paul**

## **I N D E X**

Introduction

3 Essays on Crisis Mythology

The Conversation (via 14 questions)

3 Summary Statements

Connections

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## **Introduction -**

**Vajra** (See illustration. In Sanskrit it means thunderbolt and diamond) refers to an important sacred tool and ritual implement in Vajrayana Buddhism, Hinduism and Tantra where it symbolizes the male principle of creation ... in religious practice. When made to be worn as a pendant, it reminds the wearer, and the viewer, of the supreme indestructibility of knowledge. In the tantric traditions of Buddhism, the Vajra also symbolizes the nature of reality, or Sunyata."

"Our life on this earth is a true gift and great opportunity to experience our co-creative abilities and the manifestation of our dreams right in front of our eyes. I see us evolving towards an existence where we start remembering our 'ancient future' and the highly developed cultures that existed before us. May we be able to use their powerful knowledge again and learn from their mistakes in order to take our



existence towards one of a global peaceful coexistence with the highest values of ethics, dignity, and wellbeing in place for ALL. More and more discoveries of these Ancients are being made and publicly shared, and it appears that there is a definitive and perceivable link between these various cultures, which might have existed at different moments in time, yet have shared a very specific basic common knowledge. This seems to be pointing towards the possibility of a once existing global society. I like to think that we are about to rediscover its secrets and that humanity will be returning to that.” - [Martina Hoffman](#), Painter

### 3 Essays on Crisis Mythology -

#### [Essay by Willi Paul](#)

‘Many in my circle view the current smoldering meanderings from the old myths as in dire need of a refreshed power center - free from the burden of the withering storylines in old plots, online game slaughters, and our twittering kindergardens. But myth needs a new spiritual search engine to go with the Internet. This new story base and vision map is permaculture, new alchemy and the sense of the sacred that comes with it.’ - [Mother, Sun, and the Compost Pile](#) (W. Paul, 2011)

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Crisis mythology is embedded with the corrupt business values and religionist hypocrisy in our Chaos Era. New myths are bouncing and deflecting like a pinball. Celebrities give us manufactured quips as product slogans; corporate symbols are depthless logos on tee shirts. Crisis or activist mythology is rooted in survivalism and citizen protest movements.

I am a **Chaos-Era Mythologist** crawling in Jung’s unconscious - conscious caverns, bending light to speak to what is coming next. My journey tackles present day issues like GMO’s, climate change and extinction, but is also a living barometer of times to come. My task is to build a new set of symbols, stories and re-engineer the archetypes in play.

This [conscious – unconscious realm](#) includes the power of music and the collective community concert experience that must awakened to ignite new crisis mythology initiations. Furthermore, new crisis myths must include social media, as myth is most powerful as a real-time, collaborative experience and much less powerful on a static page. Active dreaming is active new myth making.

Activists in the [Permaculture](#) and [Transition](#) Movements are localizing our communities, changing our consumption patterns and partnering with Nature to debunk the corporate sell. [New symbols](#) and [traditions](#) are emerging.

Apocalyptic myths are a vision or bridge between old myths and new myths – what’s coming next? Myths of the end time are 120 minute movies. Technology and science will not save us. Community is now the hero, not the individual.

Crisis myths are often driven by our demands to defend Nature and to build a just and toxic free global community. Activists can develop new crisis mythologies using the [12 Elements of Modern Mythology](#) (W. Paul, 2015):



1. Para-normal
2. Universal struggle
3. Journey, Initiation, Community as Hero
4. Symbols
5. Alchemy
6. Nature is Sacred
7. Threat of apocalypse
8. Digital - Non-Digital Collision
9. Future/ Sci-Fi-based
10. Permaculture and Transition
11. New ritual and tradition
12. Rewilding

‘ **The Permaculture King** loves his solar-topped cob hut, the seasons and the compost stains on his feet and legs. His challenge isn’t in the constant weeding and planting and harvesting, but the struggle to get the word out, to get out of the garden and tell the planet’s peeps how to do the permaculture! Alas, we are all like the King – shining; running round and round in our local days with our Atlas-like dreams.’ - [The Permaculture King](#) (W. Paul, New Myth #4, 2010)

### [Essay by Myra Jackson](#)

I am a **Mystic** who bears the title of Diplomat of the Biosphere and Planetary Steward awarded by Stockholm Resilience Centre. Both titles suggest agency and relationship in the form of care and respect for the planetary being - Gaia. As one who is devoted to linking the wellness of people and planet as an entry point to the great restoration of humanity’s broken bonds with nature ~ I feel these titles are a stellar fit for me.

These days while hanging out in the Biosphere, with great regularity I think of Einstein’s displacement theory. I am in an incessant search for evidence that a fundamental change in our collective way of thinking and perceiving will bring about much needed creative changes within the fabric of life. In my view, there is a major displacement in the collective world view underway that is elevating the human condition. It is a form of Metanoia and it is sponsored by Gaia - the Great Mother herself. This movement in the way we see our world is changing our relationship with the Earth and with each other. In its most visible form the change is happening at the center of all human activity - food, water and environment.

For all life on this jewel of a planet, Earth is the primary metric and the vehicle for our collective transformation. We are evidence of her Grace and the common heritage of Earth’s ecosystem are gifts to us all.

Our crisis is spewing forth the **Prima Materia** needed to bring us into a new epoch and mature us as a species. Such times call for the Entrepreneur (translated as undertaker) as an agent who recognizes what seeks to die and knows how to clear and open space to allow for that spent life force to reverently consign itself to its final rest. And then, give cover into that fecund space for the subtleties of seeds encoded with the new to take form. These are creative acts on the edge of the in breath and out breath of embodiment on the Earth.

I see evidence that we have birthed an Age of Creativity where power-over structures benefiting a few have been outed and through disclosure can no longer hide their true ambitions to serve self alone. What is supported is power that cooperates and collaborates with others and harmonizes in council with the Earth.

It is a worthy undertaking to answer the call to create the community spaces where nature and nurture join to reclaim our wild hearts and blow open the doors to our senses that delights in life.

We can be sure that this call to return to our original inheritance will attract scores of subtle activists, alchemists, sirens and sacred synthesizers who move and dance in the quantum field where change occurs in an instant. All are called to create from the Aether from which fire, air, water and earth elementals emerge in the midst of the wailing death throes from an unyielding, unsustainable world and its spoils.

To view the Earth from its biosphere, the solutions to our most deeply entrenched challenges and the thinking that perpetuates our sense of separation, suddenly, seems clear as we are flooded with a sense of biophilia that washes over us, in the way, Oxytocin bonds us to our birth mothers.

And with that feeling of connection that her luminous raiment supports, we see, Permaculture visible as a great activity of hands and hearts in which our collective wound of disassociation from nature is nurtured and restored whole. In the many luminous threads, we see the idea of dirt and bugs salvaged from the shadows and embraced as fertile and rich with microbial life rather than denied as untouchable. We see a growing realization that diversity harmonizes and a great turning inward to make peace with the microbes within the gut and the outer ecology of the Earth. We see the [hashtag], #BlackLivesMatter becomes the canary-like tweet heard across the globe as the moniker that uplifts ALL lives, in a way that enlivens the latent treasury of evolutionary information from mitochondrial Eve herself.

If Earth is a primary metric of Human Wellness, what do we need to measure?

\* \* \* \* \*

### Essay by Dan De Lion

What is Activist / Crisis Mythology to you?

To me it seems that the old myth of humans getting banished from Eden has become a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy of a fundamental and perhaps suicidal disconnection from nature, source, which ends up instilling the belief that human behaviors and actions are of a corrupt nature, and that human is somehow less than divine.

Within this realization, it is very possible and necessary to develop a new mythology which recasts us out of the original sin idea, and gives some credit to the goodness of the human species. One way I see this banishment being historically enacted is in the way that our ancient ancestors were perhaps seeking resolution to a problem that they felt; which at the time, was waking up to having fallen from a hunter gatherer lifestyle into sedentary agrarian and therefore stationary and rote people, they felt that something was lost, that literally they had fallen.

A recasting came in the 19th century in the form of “natural philosophers” where science tried to rebel its way out of this disconnection from human-as-nature, and fought for the freedom to recast the perennial question; what is nature? And what is man’s relation to nature?

The likes of Copernicus, Darwin and other explorers sought to see a new human arise by studying nature, and indeed it did. Yet, what we have concluded once again is a flawed perception that we get from this age of scientism. When the smoke was all clear, we have been given the paradigm of a dead and meaningless universe that does not breathe or live, and surely does not speak. Neo-Darwinists developed a system of thinking which Darwin apparently was said to never agree with and the “survival of the fittest” projection was fully claimed to be indeed the behavior of nature and therefore of man.

Out of this, another human projection upon nature which gives rise to social justification for an oppressive class structure, the birth of social Darwinism, hierarchical structure, Tyranny, and the exploitation of far off resources based on capitalistic economy of the same principle. We now see a culture which believes it's only inherent nature to be bad and flawed, or at the very least not to be trusted and therefore watched over by a law enforcement. Yet, above law is the sense of ethic; cause and effect, the careful study of consequence, the law of karma. The misperception that humans have created, is thought to be a reality, but is actually a projection of a confused and greedy type of human.

#### New Potentials of Ecological Myths

One of the long forgotten, yet most potent ideas now on the table is that of symbiosis. This is the interrelation of individual organisms to work together to provide a benefit greater than each organism could ever do on their own. The willingness to compromise, to work together, to share resources, and this is also just as fundamental to our nature as human beings. In Nature, symbiotic relationships are just as persistent of the theme as ideas like survival of the fittest.

To look to the relationship between bacteria, mushrooms, plants, and the soil building process is to see that without an organized working and structuring together none of the survival of any individual species is possible. In fact, we are learning here from our ancestors; the oldest living organisms on earth. Surely, they have the long term vision, and it is one of a shareware economy.

We as humans, at this very time on earth, must be careful to wake up and realize that the glasses we hold over nature is a projection, and it is called culture. We do indeed create our culture, and we create our culture through language and ideas; myth. For our survival as a species, and for many of the organisms to survive the human being phenomenon, we must discern between projecting our belief systems onto the way nature "behaves."

Through mass advertisement, the illusion of convenience, humans largely have fell into the inability to recognize the crisis we are in, as well as a great forgetting of the power humans have in the situation to change it. And yet, there are tremendous forces working towards this remembering.

A deeply touching example of the power that we do have is with animals which were labeled as extinct, with the help of humans, were brought back to wild populations. This serves as one of many powerful reminders of human capacity to bring change and make tremendous effects on the ecosystem.

One such story is of the [California condor](#) which was an endangered species for over 25 years before it now again has numbers released into the wild. That is a huge effort for something that only takes a few gallons of gas and an afternoon of habitat destruction with modern machines.

"Los Angeles (CNN) -- Almost 25 years after the California condor went extinct in the wild and dwindled to just 27 birds in captivity, North America's largest flying bird is on the verge of a watershed moment: Its total population is projected to hit 400 this spring, including 200 birds thriving in the wild. Apr 26, 2011."

Out of this crisis the human species is entering, there is yet a blessing in disguise. The blessing that we have is that with each day, as the devastation and destruction shown to us by our own media becomes more prominent in the lives of humans, the more we will all desire for a new way to arise. It literally is and will be the resistance softener.

Developing new memes for the culture

"A meme is to an idea as a gene is to DNA" - Terence McKenna

A meme is an idea which is the most packeted element of that idea. Thing that once you see, you not only understand, you vision. You see literally what someone means. This is like a genetic upgrade of ideas, essentially this technological application is like a neo-biological function.

We are currently in a process of self-hypnosis with digital media, unconsciously programming culture through the meme. What I propose is to actually spread the meme you wish to see; that this can be done consciously. Cultural programming through potentials of mass dispersion of the packet of data in one glance.

If we simply had the awareness power to collectively overpower the image hypnosis that our current culture is currently working under, eventually it would generate the collectivity, to overpower the old ways; a kind of aikido of symbology.

New rituals

One Option for all of us is that we can bring any kind of request for a sentence and an image that expresses the new potential of being, to the best that you can envision it, into our meditation and time in nature. To literally turn the spiritual and ecological vision inside out and into the culture we live in. And the stage is so ripe that if it's a good idea and people like it, millions will spread it. This is perhaps a dawning practical and potent way of activism; a way of exfoliating the culture with new ideas, images and words that excite people, and get them motivated for change and transformation. Good ideas always overtake ones that are less functional once they are spread.

We now have the fastest information spreading technology that our culture has ever had a hold of. This is an odd but unique potential to bring magic through the technology that we have received. And yes, like all tools it has the potential for both negativity and benefit. Yet entirely, it is Gaia's gift to us. Somehow we built her in silicone, and the new temple is awakening.

One choice changes the whole world.

\* \* \* \* \*

## The Conversation-

### How do we unfold the idea that Gaia is indeed sentient and alive?

**Dan:** I foresee that it will take new mapping strategies by the natural sciences. In the last 10 years there is more and more realization toward the hermetic revelation, “as above so below”. In this understanding of the Interrelation between all organisms, there is no evolution, there is only co-evolution. Within the diversity on this planet, the way that each individual species pushes each other genetically to continue to evolve, expand, and grow is a more relevant message to humans than what species are individually.

In order to see the threads between, we need this needed stretching of a new map of biology to understand the ways of expressing this interrelation.

**Myra:** A bit of awe that invites curiosity and opens the senses is a great entry point for a direct encounter with the sentience and aliveness of Gaia. And yet, where Abrahamic religious traditions have shaped the prevailing narrative, I see this idea of being tossed out of the garden as disruptive to our relationship with Gaia. There has been a collective dulling of human senses as we disassociated from her. The doorways to the senses that aid us in growing into an appreciative relationship with Gaia are systematically shunted and ultimately shut down from the moment of birth and acculturation into the modern world.

Our bodies and its inner ecology directly correspond to that of Gaia. There are many examples: The same pattern in a leaf is repeated in the vessels of the human heart and the array of rivers in the Amazon. And quantum motion observed in the subatomic life within our bodies echoes that of the galaxy.

When we peer into an electron microscope the holographic nature of reality is evident everywhere. The microbes within our gut are alive. They feed on us and excrete nutrients we utilize. They have bodies with sensory organs that grow and die depending upon the environment within our guts. Embedded within our bodies are colonies of microbial life that exist out of view. Do they know we are alive as individuated two-legged humans? Can the tick who is born on the hip of an elephant grasp the sentience of the beast it feeds, excretes, mates upon and calls home?

We fail to recognize the profound interdependent and interrelated relationships we have with Gaia, let alone, all the beings who call our bodies their home. Perhaps, it is a case of not being able to see the **forest for the trees syndrome**. What we inherit by being born unto Gaia is given freely and is common. We tend not to be conscious of things that demand nothing of us, and give no value to what we feel we have power over or we that which we can take on demand. Rather we appreciate what is rare and limited in access.

In my view, we are in the midst of awakening to the sentient nature of our planetary home as a living being. We have yet to fully process those early pictures from space where we could see the stunning elliptical being suspended in space and embedded within the Orion arm of a spiral galactic being we call the Milky Way - a being known to many indigenous as Grandmother Eridawni. The Indigenous hold an

important part of humanity's relationship with Gaia in wait of our discovery and keys to unfolding the idea of her sentience.

What does it mean to be a sentient being embedded within a larger sentient being? What are our responsibilities in that relationship? How does being in good relationship harmonize the environment? It is important that we discover how to be in good relationship. Our presence, now threatens our ability for human life and the life of many other beings to continue. Like any being in the role of the Mother, providing material sustenance to its lifeforms, she will show us the boundaries and the consequences of crossing those boundaries.

In my view, the changing climate is a form of planetary feedback system inviting humanity into a more mature relationship with the Being from whom we share a common inheritance, Gaia. This resounding clarity is a true Clarion call to humanity to enter the big story. The scale of the narrative is shifting and it is a story that is Galactic in scale. NASAs instruments are blowing the doors open to our senses. We are seeing new planets, galaxies and universes. We can hear the music of the spheres and we are being awakened into our ancient inheritance. Recognition of Gaia's sentience and our ability to receive and transmit information regardless of time and space, will return us to the Garden of life and poise us for greeting the ways in which life expresses in its Galactic forms.

**Willi:** To me, GAIA is both a mythic and an everyday force that can unfold in many ways and in many places. Permaculture's community ethics support a global view and change here. Fighting toxic corporate profiteers in the courts and the streets are channels.

### **What is Capitalism's role in activist mythology?**

**Dan:** I see that there needs to be a way to correlate cash and calories; meaning that the big economic disconnect in capitalism is the ability to tie in calories spent to dollars earned. If there was a way to convert the understanding of effort back into labor, then true cost would be reflected.

We definitely need strong solutions to the falsified ideas of endless resources that global capitalism promises. Another very practical way this can be integrated is in understanding how to build cottage industry. Within the ability to localize resources as much as possible, main street gets to keep money local instead of it being globally recycled into stock and into the WTO. Another revolution in the making is the ability to ween away such stringent FDA laws for certified kitchens so that again the bakers, jam makers, and wild foragers can provide the local community with foods that are local and much more safe than most that passes through the FDA regulations.

**Myra:** This is not a direct answer to the question. However, I see Capitalism as a false narrative closely identified and skillfully couched within democratic values. It is important to question the idea of property ownership. The rule of law set aside, we humans come up against a wall of terror when we bear up laws that allow ownership of people and the rape and acquisition of the planetary body to the highest bidder. The biosphere and ecosystem of Gaia provides life sustenance and must be stewarded for all.

The curtain is being lifted through disclosure at various levels and across many sectors of societal life to expose the actors behind the scene in the world economy. It will bring about a systemic change of Mythic proportions.

Like Rome, I see, **too big to fail** structures on the verge of collapse and total transformation. CEOs of major corporations are well aware what people want from corporations has shifted. I read a confidential report that presents us with enormous opportunities.

**Willi:** Capitalism is a primary archetype and pusher in a greedy, top-down system that destroys land and cultures wherever it rears its ugly head. There is no greater mythic-alchemic force than Capitalism.

### **How do humans find responsibility instead of blame?**

**Dan:** The number one thing that seems to block progress and change is the sense that understanding the consequences of our purchases, lifestyle, and comfort, this process gets translated often into blame, guilt, and shame.

We are in such a time where trying to remind someone on a shopping line of bringing cloth bags instead of plastic can bring a charged argument. The fabric of our society is desperate and ripe for change, yet so emotional about its decision making processes.

The way we discuss options, changes, and progress are going to need a very soft and inspired tone, with lots of solutions, and very little harping on the problem. People seem to know what's wrong, but need some guidance towards what CAN happen.

An easy thing is inspiring the use of ball jars instead of paper and Styrofoam cups. Even something little such as this, when globally applied, would be a huge hit even to the petroleum industry, all of which are made out of oil.

**Myra:** Compassion turns us courageously inward. This turning inward finds no gain in placing blame, shaming or feeling guilt. Instead, it opens a space to draw upon which is more vast and unleashes the WILL to respond to one's own life with compassion, while extending that opportunity for others to do the same.

**Willi:** Building responsibility mandates a turn away from materialism; blame is a symptom of greed.

### **What are the dominant symbols in crisis mythology?**

**Myra:** The Spiral is one of many symbols in crisis mythology.

In the 70's, I began receiving dreams with spirals. There was one spiral in particular that came steadily over the course of a year. This was before spirals became dominant as a motif in the cultural. One morning, I woke up hearing the words, DRAW IT. I knew instantly that loud directive meant, draw the SPIRAL image appearing in my dream. I did so and took it to a graphic designer some years later to have it rendered into a graphic file and placed on a business card. During those years, spiral designs slowly made it onto the scene. People close to me would buy totes, plates, bookmarks, etc., as gifts for me with spirals. Now they are everywhere and no one remembers a time when it was rare to see a spiral. I feel that the spiral connotes upward and downward movement and in nature this funneling of toroidal energy is a potent force of collapse and acceleration; assimilation and elimination; upending forces.

In an Age of Creativity, conflict, crisis and chaos are our messengers. Those who can ride into conflict, crisis and chaos and see the hidden pattern waiting to be liberated are ones who feel comfortable exploring their own subconscious material for the treasure it holds.

What I find so compelling about the spin and velocity inherent in the spiral is that recent discoveries that have defied scientist and engineers have been solved by artists who saw the hidden shape of objects while in motion. One example is that of Frank Chester who discovered the 7 sided geometry of the heart, now called the Chest gram. The geometry of the human heart was an unknown, until he saw its geometry by spinning a model of the heart. He used the same method to discover the geometrics of the bell.

**Willi:** The US Highway System, empty reservoirs, the Pope; the US Capital Building; Donald Trump.

### **Can the old myths foster a “collective transformation?” Is this alchemy?**

**Dan:** The revival of older and more ancient myths are a huge way to reconsider world potentials and ways of seeing our role in it. There have been many ways of seeing, and it is important that we as a “modern culture” learn this. We have been given a false idea that we are right simply because we are here now. That all else that was incorrect in being and has gone extinct to our current way which is a perfected version. This could not be further from the truth, The Greeks and Romans also had this similar thought, and their whole civilization was plowed under in spite of their hubris.

The alchemy of collective transformation gains its highest power in the art of storytelling. And this truly was, and is, a key foundation for all indigenous culture. This has always been a way of instilling ethics and value of the natural world into children at a young age, before they could think otherwise. The realization that even the scientific understanding of reality, although having factual basis in matter, is still another mythology, and is therefore imperative for our culture in the ability to revive the sense of mystery that we are so longing for; the realization that reality is bigger than any of us can see. In the philosophy of understanding the entire universe, the bottom will always drop out... be it atoms, quarks, strings, superstrings, M, or OM.

Within the relativity of the mythmaking process we get to observe the effects of choosing belief paradigms that are sustainable. Globally, within indigenous cultural myths, the one thing that is obvious is that they have succeeded in not developing a culture with the sense of alienation, separation, and disconnection from earth as home that we have. All hugely important factors which our modern way of being has not been lucky enough to deliver.

The myth that we live in a world which is un-alive, is no different than saying a dog is less alive than a human. These are just belief systems, and as Robert Anton Wilson once said, belief systems are BS.

**Myra:** Yes, they can. In our current age, the meaning of old myths take on new meaning as we gain experience of other in a connected world. We are discovering how connected we have been all along through the similarity of myths across the globe. It allows us to connect dots and step into a bigger frame and ask new questions about the arc of human being and doing.



**Willi:** I am on record that the old myths are tired and not in-tune to current global dangers. If can morph the old myths with new ones, then we may be able to ignite the “video game, screen culture” in today’s youth and tech industry.

### **How can we organize in local communities? Is disaster eminent?**

**Dan:** It does seem that disaster may be eminent, but perhaps, only for some of us who choose to ignore the signs. Among the sensitivities of our time, it seems to me to be imperative to develop resource and skill-sharing among those who want to. It seems that many of us have been preaching to those who really don’t want to listen, and have gotten tired of doing so. It seems that a next level of society rising is now needed by us, one that perhaps can be summed up by, “Find the others, become the we.” To thread together those who see the immanent changes, want to do something about it, and have skills and trades, resources, desire for bulk buying, and land. It may be like a kind of aikido; a stepping out of the way so that the trajectory and motivation of those who don’t care is not restricted by those who do.

**Myra:** The Power of One and the Commons - look for that one person in your community who is already engaged as a turned on steward of the commons (food, water, forests, air, libraries, etc.) in your community and support them. In an Age of Creativity, we need to return the artist, herbalist, beekeepers, composters, farmers, water mavens, tree loving arborists, shamans, alchemists back to the center of the community.

For example, let us transform our farmers markets into places where we stop and listen to news from Beekeepers on the health of the bees in our community, celebrate the seasonal nectars and learn how to live in our region in way that the bees live well alongside us. We can do the same with other aspects of community life.

The priorities differ from community- to- community, however establishing direct connections to your food and water supply as a community is an important place to begin.

**Willi:** In many ways, we are “in disaster now.” The Transition Movement is a great value base for change. While resilience is now a clique, Transition’s localization of people and resources is a great start.

### **Where is your watershed? What is its condition?**

**Dan:** As a traveler, I have been blessed to witness many watersheds and currently, I am in California studying the drought here. It is such a catastrophe in the making with little promise of progress other than de-salinization plants. From the perspective of the east coast, it is amazing to watch most of the food, even if it is organic, get shipped from California. Without water in California there are 2 options... One is to admit that there is an ecological issue to face, to truly begin the process of intervention where we realize we have a hand in this matrix, or the other is for corporations to continue to pull the wool over our eyes, start de-salinating water from the ocean, and/or ship in foods from farther away such as Mexico or even Africa. It seems that those choices, of course, are in our hands as local caring community.

**Myra:** I have not found one Intact Indigenous culture of the several that I have encountered who does not know where the water source is for their community and track the flows of that water back to its

Mountain source. You will find them offering libations back to earth before eating and a reverence for that water as an honored presence. Its condition and status is known and comes with a feeling of care.

We will know a systemic change is underway, when in the west this basic Human 101 question can be answered by young children in our communities.

We abdicate our human responsibility for this vital relationship with Gaia and all that we inherit from her by walking unaware of this basic earth system. We are 70% water as is the planet and our wellness is linked to that of the planet.

This is an Earth Metric important to each person in a community. It is a part of the commons and apart of community life to be in relationship with the earth through stewardship and celebration.

**Willi:** My heart is my first watershed. It pumps fluid to my body and allows interaction with other souls and secondary watersheds in the community.

### **How healthy is the soil in your community?**

**Dan:** In the North East, where I grew up, it literally is some of the best soil in the country. The Black dirt region of New York is famous, as well Manhattan (mannahatta) meant “the land of the rolling hills”, Oddly enough we have built concrete slabs miles high over the best farmland we have.

Comparatively, in southern California, there is less organic matter. It is composed mostly of clay and sand, and I’m sure that as a result, it requires much more watering.

**Myra:** This is where Permaculture and biodynamic farming prevails and why we are learning so much about the direct links to the human immune system of which 85% lies within the gut.

Healthy soil is the precursor to a nutritious food profile. Our attention here goes beyond food alone. Soil is another key earth metric of healthy community life.

**Willi:** Soil is a powerful symbol of soul. Enrich the soil, enrich your soul. Unfortunately, there is too much toxicity in both.

### **What does planetary stewardship look like in your community? In your life?**

**Dan:** Within several communities I work with I have made efforts to ally with other local organizations who have the same common goals; Permaculture, Farming, organizing workshops, movie nights, discussion forums, as well as local cottage marketplaces.

I also have been offering a continual list of classes on foraging, herbalism, fermentation, and nature meditations since 2010, which always seek to always be a conduit for bringing the awareness of humans role in ecology, developing change, and building a community that will overcome the lethargy of modern cultures current ability to change fast enough. I have also seen many people connect and develop lasting connections and friendships by meeting at my classes and other events. It truly does make a difference; I have seen it first hand in New Jersey, of all places.

**Myra:** Self-care becomes equanimous with Earth-care. Planetary Stewardship becomes real as each individual takes responsibility for cultivating inner peace and linking the inner ecology of being with the outer ecology of one's community or bio-region. Self-care consist of many things. In my life, I am more available to my community when I harmonize to the rhythms of the rising and setting sun, as they shift seasonally. I extend my sleep during winter and adjust it a bit during the peaks of summer. I wake up before sunrise and greet it when I can and eat my last meal before sunset. My day is guided by this movement over the clock and the Gregorian calendar.

I recognize I am stronger with Nature. Identifying and protecting fresh water sources and drinking living, fresh waters is the ideal, choosing local food, supporting local farmers through CSAs, utilizing local currencies, cooperating with my body's power to heal and rejuvenate in nature, considering the circle of life and impact when making decisions, living with a bias toward harmlessness with recognition that I do cause Harm at times, opening in ways that I cultivate my gifts and offer them, care for the esteem of the other, and communicate and receive wise council from the intelligence of nature. Willing to go where others will not go to bear witness to my own shadow and that of the collective to discover the way through.

Enjoy and celebrate life and allow others who choose differently to enrich my life. Bring big doses of lovingkindness, friendship and compassion into my life. Live as a Beacon. Live true. Magnify the keepers of bees, trees, soil, water and seeds, and support them. Stand up for the children of all species.

**Willi:** I think little things make me a planetary steward (i.e. – crisis mythologist). Recycle, re-use, and re-sell for starters. New myths can emerge from this practice.

### **How is technology like mythology?**

**Dan:** Essentially, technology is a mythology come to life. The ability to dream, then make it so. Within it are many notions, such as the idea that there will be a "green" technology that enables us to live as 6 billion people without compromising any comforts, or that a medical breakthrough will fix disease and death once and for all. These are all kinds of mythologies which project hopeful beliefs onto a scenario which may not come to pass in the way we hope.

Out of this must rise a sane mythology. One that finds humans careful balance within the ecosystem. Not as the dominators, and also not as the observers of a phenomenon with no connection to our own efforts. Both of these perspectives must be resolved. I think Gandhi said it best, "it may seem that what you do is insignificant, but it is significant that you do it."

**Myra:** I do see Mythology as a form of inner technology. Story is a human device that informs how a person sees themselves and others relative to their culture and to the world. Within story are memes and archetypal characters that are encoded with meaning. Using computer technology as a metaphor, one could say that when we are conscious of the myths informing our view, they are like software programs we run; however when unconscious they operate more like hardware or operating systems that are hardwired.

**Willi:** By most definitions at online sources, mythology is a technology. I call this hybrid phenomenon **MythoTechnics** as there are several important implications in tools and access now. Mythology as a technology? Where are the gadgets? The calibrations? The downloads?! Mythology has always placed a

critical role in the evolution of human beings. Through MythoTechnics, the wisdom of the stories, symbols and lessons of both ancient and modern myths can now must refreshed, accelerated, and permeated globally as a shifting and sacred force, a key global alchemic unifier or motherboard for the Transition of man with Nature now underway. Please read my complete vision” [Mythology is Technology: The MythoTechnics](#).

### **Are we now pitting symbiosis vs. survival of the fittest in the mythic realm?**

**Dan:** Yes, in a big way, it seems that these are 2 myths to resolve into a new holistic map.

How can we acknowledge that alchemically we are following the spagyric method. Spagyric means the process of first separation, then purification, and finally, recombination. This philosophy, put forth by Paracelsus, seems within our culture, to be an unfinished process within our earth system as a kind of alchemical vessel.

We have categorized everything within the “survival of the fittest” paradigm, and “purified” it by analyzing, individuating, and dissecting all of its bits. And now the great unfinished work is the act of recombination. This is what makes the formula strongest.

**Myra:** We have memories of unity and non-dual reality in the subtle realm of formlessness that takes on a sense of separation in the material realm of form. It is a paradox of mutually exclusive realities that are naturally resolved through liberation.

In the garden of paradise, out of the garden. In the symbiotic environment of the womb or out of the womb trying to get back in. Claimed/abandoned, One and the many; my god, your god, and it goes on. With every word we speak, we reinforce the view of dualism. We have come to this point of initiation and folded in prior epochs.

This time we have an image of Earth - we see that the Earth is not flat after all. And that the grandeur of what is before us is not fully explained by our ideologies alone. Will we collectively open up to beginner’s mind to receive a glimpse of our bigger story and offer up our small stories of separation?

**Willi:** This is a complex question for me. Where is this so-called mythic realm? Are we are beginning to understand symbiosis through biomimicry? I get “survival of the fittest!” We are competing with each other through our companies and climate change to a fast grave.

### **What is the significance of being a mystic or reviving mysticism in this age?**

**Dan:** It seems to me that the simple truths that we have begun to take for granted, such as, the heart beats, the body and all of the entire earth are mostly water, and even further, every cell is empty space. And yet, the phenomenon we call consciousness is the same great mystery that it ever was. None but the mystics of old have made traction on not “how does consciousness manifest”, but instead, “where does consciousness arise”, or what is its point in the ecosystem?  
Where does it end?

These questions are just as pertinent to modern human, and still the great unanswered quests. You only need one miracle, well each of our hearts beating are just that. I don't see a real need to downplay being mystified by that. What we are is enough!

So it takes a true awakening into realizing WHAT IS, in order to know what we have before us, and this has always been the work of the mystics.

**Myra:** My mystical way of being is one of positioning. As a mystic, I walk with an awareness that there is a great mystery in which I am apart that appears to be non-dual and transcendent to time and space. I wish to be in relationship with the creative origins of that great mystery and keep a gate open to that unfolding mystery to make it known to me. I have found over time that Belief structures are provisional and useful in the way that scaffolding is — for a limited time. I am open to the Great Mystery and find myself utterly astounded by its transformative power to move me upward on the spiral where I can see life from what seems to be an elevated view or an overlook of sorts.

The significance is not lost on me during times in which we live today. We face the degradation of systems, ecocide, human slavery, mind control on steroids, power over structures robbing whole communities of their future, rampant systemic greed, toxicity, violence and terror in the name of ideology and dogma, etc. This mystical view provides a pathway through the collective discord into the place where diversity in harmony reign in a beautiful balance. It is there, that I am reminded that in this place of chaos, I can choose to take action upward on the spiral of consciousness and in doing so I see that it is a collective undertaking. I am not alone. We are moving upward together ...

**Willi:** Not sure what a mystic does but it might be close to paganism and magic.

**Do you see the potential of new conscious festivals or gatherings?**

**Dan:** I am excited to see the levels of “conscious” festival evolve into rituals that fill a needed void in our culture. I have been to my fair share of festivals, both “conscious”, and quite “unconscious”, and yet there is still an underlying desire for the archaic, being close with and returning to nature, fire spinning, dance and drumming, magic, theatrics and poetics. All of these are aspects of a needed connection with the earth that we once had, and yet need help establishing. I see that festivals and fairs, gatherings, and gypsy markets will grow and spread in time as a way to take back the culture and bring forth a roving cottage industry that shares in higher values, earth spirit, and the sacred of all things.

**Myra:** Yes, I do. Beyond the useful merriment and delight of gathering together, we are being called to open ourselves to the protection and nourishment of Gaia. To restore the broken bonds with Nature, we are called to dance upon the earth, in community, once again. It will be a sign of our meta-change. We must raise the arc of energy within our individual and collective bodies to elevate our condition and to enter the spaces where we entangle with the particles that will carry us into the New Era.

**Willi:** Yes. Especially events that originate in Nature. The power of community rock music festivals has a long way to evolve! Please see my piece entitled: [The Reservoir: Rock Music and Mythology](#).

**What is to come of the well-built ego of the 21st century?**

**Dan:** To truly trust in earth consciousness means that even this ego was built by Gaia for an ecological function. It has a place, the superego perhaps is the future where the consciousness is embodied within actors on the stage of life. All great art, invention, must be channeled through the individual's ability to birth these things into the world. I think it's actually been something to really control us, the idea that we must remain as ego beating, homogenous servants is an incredibly disempowering myth. The huge challenge of this time indeed is to discover, yes, my ego is worthy, and yes, my ego means well. There is so much doubt in the ego to be a sly dark creature who wants to be aggrandized at the expense of others. And again, that kind of assumption puts us right back into feeling banished from Eden.

**Myra:** It will be humbled to discover that it is a radiant facet of consciousness along with many, many other distinct facets whose combined brilliance plays a role in the full luminosity they share as a whole, verisimilar, to that of a diamond.

**Willi:** Perhaps a super-ego based in the family and/or community will arise?

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### 3 Summary Statements

**Dan:** Throughout all the transformation, dedication, destruction, upheavals, and ecological processes we have witnessed and studied, it still seems imperative that we as human beings have a crucial role in the NOW. The way we, as an economy and culture, choose to develop the next 10-30 years may truly be a truly sink-or-swim time for the human species, and I see that discussions like this to birth and develop out of a mythology of "impending doom" and into solution based thinking will truly set the foundations for further discussion and greater shift of mythos. And remember as Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." May this be another piece to the mystery of awakening. Thank you Willi and Myra for your thoughtful and heartfelt conversation.

**Willi:** Crisis Mythology (also called "Activist Mythology" early in this process) is both a present-tense and future-driven agora. Gaia is key: as a metaphor and the land and communities on Earth. Gaia will likely remain in the songs of poets and balladeers until we place our ethics into the seeds and harvests. Permaculture is "active Gaia"; so are Transition values. Nature is heart; a spiritual chrysalis. While climate change, extinction and many other problems choke our psyches, Crisis Mythology ultimately mandates that the future of Nation State and all human beings as One.

**Myra:** Collectively, we are experiencing the lifting of the veils on all that structures and informs our beliefs about the source of life, who we are in relationship to self, other; and our responsibilities to self and other. Nothing is immune from being thoroughly re-examined for its authenticity and resilience to endure and sustain life into the next iteration of planetary life. The Mythic realm points us toward the grand narrative spiraling upward from our very DNA. This planetary moment is radically poised to signal the dormant codon pairs within humanity to awaken. We are designed to feel, do, imagine and share creatively together. And in the becoming, dance in the quantum field we share in common with the living universe as subtle artisans, healed healers and stewards in council with all life.

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## Connections -

**Myra Jackson** is a Mystic and Evocateur of the sacred well-rooted in various ancient spiritual and tantric lineages, Myra devotes her time in service to communities and organizations with a focus on the wellness of people and planet. In February 2015, Myra was given the title of Diplomat of the Biosphere and Planetary Steward by Stockholm Resilience Centre and is actively exploring the way of fulfilling such roles. Educated as an engineer, Myra found that her early training in electrical theory informed her spiritual life. Today, that training provides useful metaphorical language in discussing the subtle realm and alchemy. Myra feels that The Great Mother (with her masculine fully ensconced) is an archetype emerging with fierce clarity and resplendent force, evoking our re-membering during these transitional times. After 35 years, she unveils this whispered wisdom in the public domain.

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**Dan De Lion** is an earth herbalist, forager, musician, and teacher. He teaches through Return to Nature, providing classes, lectures, and seminars on wild food foraging, mushroom identification, herbal medicine making, as well as primitive and survival skills with a focus on wild foods and forest medicines. He also incorporates the philosophies of yoga, alchemy, meditation, and mysticism into his classes, lectures, and seminars and brings a deep rooted indigenous medicine perspective of practicing intuition with plants, in a systematic and earth-based way.

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“Kids, Rewilding and the New Mythology” - A conversation with Dan De Lion, [ReturntoNature.us](https://ReturntoNature.us) and Willi Paul, [Planetshifter.com](https://Planetshifter.com) Media (+PDF)

**Rewilding** means to return to a more wild or natural state; it is the process of un-doing domestication. The term emerged from the green anarchism and anarcho-primitivism political theories, in which humans are believed to be "civilized" or "domesticated" by industrial and agricultural progress. Supporters of rewilding argue that through the process of domestication, human wildness has been altered by force.

Rewilding is considered a holistic approach to living, as opposed to skills, practices or a specific set of knowledge.

## Prelude

“The function of the dream is as the Gaian teaching voice. The Logos is returning.” – Dan

**Willi** - Please elaborate on this passage for me...

**Dan** - It feels that at this time, the actual “felt state” of the earth itself is coming to conscious awareness of the human endeavor. That nature is actually expressing itself to those who are becoming more receptive, and the ideas are always similar. That through tools such as the internet, psychedelic medicines, and collective education, our dreaming and imaginal internal state is coming to the physical world. It’s that the Gaian consciousness is demanding that dreaming will no longer be suppressed by rational control.

And in this way, the western model of mind is being squashed by a force beyond its limited conceptions. Is there more to reality than mind? Yep, but now the question is how do we work with the unseen. The collective dreaming space is a way in.

In this time of great work of awakening coupled by planetary devastation, perhaps human mass extinction, it is very likely that the voice of Gaia itself will rip through our minds and lead us toward solutions. That in the back corner of consciousness, there is a voice... this voice is the logos. It is a practice to access the power to dream-The inner realm, the imaginal space, which is where all solutions and inventions have truly come from, and will continue to come from. This inner guiding voice, seen as



the logos by the Greek mystics, has been discussed openly many greats from Einstein, to Newton, to George Washington Carver, to Masanobu Fukuoka, tell of altered states in which visions came to them.

The odd blessing is that no matter what our culture has done synthetically and culturally, we still dream, we still see visions full of archetypes with deep meaning. Some of them speaking messages of apocalypse, the need for change, the floodwaters rising, and peoples place in the need for an awakening.

We must all do our best to keep dreaming and paying attention to the symbols and significance of repeated patterns within our dreams, for it is there that the wisdom of nature comes to access us. If we, in community, practice conscious dreaming, it will begin to develop and unfold more of this vision. That we can see an inner landscape of “the way out” through this cultural “stuck point” we find ourselves in. The more we all pay attention and share our dreams with others, and discuss the symbols and try to find the meaning in them, the more we will see a map arise emanating from a source that is actually speaking a message to the collectivity of humans.

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**Willi** - Are you saying that we live in an altered state?

**Dan** - I would not suggest that the state is altered, but perhaps that the state of mind we are in is like an altar in which to view the world. A perceptual lens that is always evolving and changing. And within that, a largely ignored aspect of perception is that the lens by which we view through our belief systems do determine the possibility of what we see and experience. Under this awareness, then we must philosophically and culturally resolve the fact that, as Salvador Dali exclaimed “I am drugs” – meaning, that if truly consciousness is “biological” as science says, than everything we do, say, think, and eat or consume is indeed consciousness altering. That there is no stable state in essence.

And from this perspective, then, what we perceive of the “modern world” is actually a result of a drug stupor of tobacco, coffee, alcohol, and synthetic pharmaceuticals. And yet, you can see what’s going on in a place like Peru, where Ayahuasca is making itself known. Slowly the realization between plants and drugs is being more self-evident.

**Willi** - Can we be the voice of Gaia?

**Dan** - The earth, the Gaian system, is definitely seeking conscious conduits. The Dr. Seuss story of the Lorax expresses this sentiment perfectly. Through attuning with the Gaian system, our intent, will, message, and perception aligns with the intent of the Gaian system. Which, when we look beyond the childish misinterpretation of “survival of the fittest” and see the actual message being broadcast; symbiosis, then we can resolve the apparent disconnection between the voices within us, the head, heart, gut, and genital region. This takes a tremendous amount of self-work, self-reflection, and softening our awareness to see, and not defend our minds.

Darwin apparently had a sign over his office door that said “there is no higher or lower”, and within that wrote extensively on other “less popular” ideals of capitalism, such as symbiosis, and also wrote extensively on the plant brain and the intelligence of nature. Within the path of biology there are 2 paths, simplified as “telling the plants what they are good for based on prior research vs. asking the

plant what it wants to teach us, based on its signature, habitat, taste (carefully done) and other characteristics of its “voice”. Within that practice is attuning to a waking dream state.

**Willi** - Can you give us an example of how you activate conscious dreaming?

**Dan** - A few ways of activating this conscious dreaming state and learning directly from the ecosystem are forest wandering, meditation, dreaming, consumption of plants, and trance work; as well as combining these practices in very careful and self-reflective ways. One of my most practiced ways to sync the dream and physical world is by taking time to meditate in the forest, to set an intention of opening and wandering to the mysteries of nature within that meditation and open up a mindful state of active dream bridging.

Within this practice, I invoke that all of the messages of nature will also be a metaphor for self, circumstance, prophecy of what is to come, similar to a dream. That by interpreting animals, plants, insects, etc., as a totem to the story of my life, I can extract relevant messages from the ecosystem. The totem messages that are given take time and contemplation to decipher, just like the messages and story of dream.

**Willi** - What are the values of Rewilding? Are they different for children vs. adults?

**Dan** - I find that the most valuable aspect of rewilding, for both children and adults, is an innate sense of curiosity that continues to push the boundaries of our own personal awareness and attention. The open way of wandering, when applied to practice, enables the universe to lead us through means that are not rational and go beyond every day rational comprehension. This is something that children innately have, when they declare that a specific tree or rock has a name, or they become friends with energies of the earth, which requires preserving the capacity as they grow, not telling them it's all unreal as we do in our rationalist culture. As if our modern culture really has a stronghold on reality =) For adults, the access of this waking dream, imaginative and agenda-less state is more of a challenge, where they need to practice returning to that, and getting their control issues out of the way. Then mysteries unfold daily.

**Willi** - What are some key symbols of Rewilding?

**Dan** - Key symbols of rewilding, shelters, Neanderthal, [Otzi](#), a Paleolithic diet.

**Willi** - How do we evolve past the agenda-less state? What does this feel like?

**Dan** - We want to set time to explore agenda-less wandering, to open up to coincidence, magic, and non-rational perception. Wandering in the forest leads us to many animal sightings, plants, mushrooms. In the practice of hunting/gathering, it's not a rational only experience that leads us to food and medicine. This is why indigenous people did so much ceremony around the hunt. As most of us have heard, the tribe would pray for the right deer to reveal itself in sweat lodge, asking the “deva” or spirit of that animal to bring the right one, that will do least harm, the injured or weekend deer. Very different than sitting in a tree stand.

When we enter the wandering state, we are led by our intuition, vs our intellect which analyzes the situation constantly.

Perception is a more holistic potential incorporating rational thinking, but not allowing that to be the dominating factor. With intuition, instinct, openness, observation, meditation, and rational thinking combined, we can truly perceive with all that we are equipped with.

**Willi** - What are common rituals of Rewilding?

**Dan** - Within the rituals of rewilding encompass everything from learning where our food comes from, to thanksgiving rituals, to celebrating the solstice and equinox, to sweat lodges, and magic, alchemy, medicine making, and even the ritual of reclaiming our money out of large scale capitalist models into local community, trade, and barter – redirecting energy in its many forms toward a less captive mentality.

**Willi** - Is Rewilding about survivalism?

**Dan** - I find that it may be today, because we are very disconnected from traditional living skills. So, as all of the popular TV shows show that you can “survive” for a weekend, and get back to a modern living civilization to get the calories needed to restore yourself from the ordeal which you would have died from. But this is only due to a lack of traditional skillset that would have been second nature by the age of 3 in traditional and indigenous culture.

In my practice and life path to thrive is the goal, and perhaps this is what indigenous people were naturally born into. A child was born into a surplus of food that their ancestors worked for to provide them the caloric necessity needed to grow their bodies and train to provide for their own, and for others.

Now a days we are often taught that “survival skills” are to get us back to civilization. Yet, as we in the rewilding community birth out of the “solo survival in the forest” mentality in to “tribe” mentality we will naturally develop a deeper sense of community. Within my practice, the goal in nature is to thrive, not to run back to the city. To find that we are home in the forest, not that we are in a temporary battle with nature to return back to some other place.

**Willi** - Tell us more about your Nature-based magic? Is this timeless?

**Dan** - Often we hear of the “pagans” or “Hindus” or “pre-Christian” traditions; most of which have been suppressed out of our culture. Yet, I find that the plants teach us these traditions directly. That the alchemy of mysticism and magic is broadcast directly from plants, minerals, animals, etc.

A great example of this: In rationalist thinking there is often a great confusing realization of how did indigenous/pre-modern people all discover the same technology at the same time all across the globe without being in “communication” (which is an assumptive idea). We see signs of this interconnection in the practices from flint knapping, to alchemy, to medicine and building methodologies. Within this complete void of realization, it shows, at least to me, that the Gaian system, the plants, the animals, are all broadcasting a certain set of timeless teaching skills that can always be reclaimed because indeed, they are the way.

That things are progressively unfolded through the alchemy of asking the right questions and taking introspective time to contemplate the answers given. This gives a great hope in realizing that, for

example, the plant traditions will return because indeed the plants broadcast their knowing into the biological organism which is our bodies. And deciphering those messages is a great alchemy.

It seems quite clear to me that this is how all people discovered their medicinal and edible aspects in the first place, instead of the hubris of projecting a “trial and error” rationalist mentality upon them, which has so many obvious flaws to it. A great example of these flaws is to just watch a monkey around poison ivy, do they smell and sense it first? Or just eat it and die, and then all the monkeys avoid it? Apparently our ancestors didn’t know how to smell, touch, and nibble test a plant before sitting down to a meal of it?

A really great example of the collective receiving of Gaian wisdom is to observe the ingenuity of flint knapping techniques all over the world. It is a delicate art of prediction which as anthropologists and paleontologists discovered, each quantum leap in technique is suddenly found all over the world. It’s just one of many threads of the mysticism of the collective conscious that many mystics have expounded upon. The same can be found with fire making techniques. Primitive people were far more advanced, and in a very real way made much larger leap in technological revolutions than our own culture.

**Willi** - The Boy Scouts have been working in and valuing Nature since they began. Your thoughts?

**Dan** - In a way, the boy scouts organizations were an attempt to preserve Native American practices, perhaps even unconsciously. And yet, the problem with these and other organizations seems to have arisen after the “leave no trace” philosophy was adopted in the 70s. In the attempt at “conservation” we adapted a very “hands-off” approach to nature where the only way to interact with it was to “save it” and that touching it automatically means damaging something; and with it the concept of caretaker was lost. Of course, we don’t need to save the earth, we need to save ourselves to be able to reside on the earth, which is allowing us to stay, for the time being.

Through these leave no trace teachings, suddenly it became about staying on a trail, and not touching any plants which automatically concludes harming; and the parks systems reinforce this with stringent rules about removing vegetation. As a result of this mentality, great dualities have arisen and become strengthened; people go in nature to go somewhere or to get a certain amount of mileage/exercise, and then go to the grocery store, instead of hunt/gather and understand the balance needed within an ecosystem to thrive and survive.

The concept of wasting would never exist under such real life experience. This disconnect has led to a wall up when most people never go to the wild places; there becomes no translating medium. The interaction is like a mime with a glass wall up. This is why I teach through Return to Nature, for me it is a missing piece of “nature translation” in a way, seeing the patterns and helping others unfold them.

That said, it is very important that these organizations keep engaging children in the options to play in the mud, drink wild water, eat plants, and understand deeply that “packaged meats” come from actual animals.

**Willi** - Tell me about your experience with Joseph Campbell’s initiation, journey and hero process?

**Dan** - Throughout my own awakening, while seeking to understand the subtleties of yoga, alchemy, and western mystical, as well as shamanic traditions, I discovered Joseph Campbell's work initially on yoga and the chakras and found audio lectures of the "perennial philosophy teachings" online, which opened up many doors of perception.

As I dove deeper into his work I found that there was indeed a huge continuation of Carl Jung's archetype work into a deeper level of mythos and mysticism, which indeed related and correlated that to the shamanic understanding that "spirits" or "energies" also have an archetypal representation. Of course, this was something that Jung wrote extensively on, but had not become popular due to the obvious boundary pushing that it would entail for his time.

As I searched and worked through his wisdom teachings, audio lectures, online materials, I eventually found a circular diagram of the hero's journey around the same time I was working with a shaman of the Peruvian Quechua tradition. I found the deep significance that the medicine wheel of the Quechua, north American shamanic, and Joseph Campbell's conception all showing the growth of life through the 4 directions of the circle, and that indeed we never return. And, because it is a spiral, not a circle, we keep moving forward never to "return" to the same exact place of the past, but indeed there are similar themes of season, time, age, and location.

**Willi** - Can the community be the Hero? If so, how?

**Dan** - The community is DEFINITELY the hero. One of the things I consider is that the age of the "enlightened ego" was very much defined by the astrological sign Pisces. This symbology is embodied in the Jesus archetype: Sacrifice, be the hero, and die for the sins of the world. This is the old hero, and perhaps also Martin Luther King, Ghandi, John Lennon, and many others were sacrificed in this way. What may be needed is the true Aquarian rebirth, which is that the community is the hero. And the Aquarian age being not necessarily something that will "happen to us" but something that we make manifest through our practice; something that the global culture is birthing. The Aquarian symbology is about saying there is no individual to "take down" that the cup is overflowing, that everyone knows, that all are becoming wise, enlightened, aware. That the issues and solutions we face are becoming global, blatant, and cannot be suppressed.

**Willi** - Why is Nature supposed to help humans survive? Isn't this the other way around?

**Dan** - The Nature and human dichotomy is an interesting one. Are we, as humans, nature? Or are we separate. Fundamentally, I feel that indeed humans are nature, and our intentionality is made to mimic the care of the ecosystem. Yet, we, through cultural and mythological ideologies have skewed that original intent. Simply stated, the belief that we are not nature stops us from intuiting the "human purpose" within nature. That said, we of course know that humans are meant to be caretakers of the ecosystem.

If we look at much of the plants in biology they have enlisted Homo sapiens help to diversify and spread their seeds, to cultivate the wild, and to really do things that no other plants, and maybe no other mammalian organism can do. Yet, where is the empowered and realized method? It seems obviously that we, as a species need to first admit to the rest of the ecosystem that we have no idea how to care take, and that this will be a learning curve in the biological evolution of the planet, or we will just simply

make such a mess of exploiting the ecosystem that we will hit the self-eject button, and bring a lot along with us.

It seems more and more relevant that the Gaian system does want us to be part of the biological thrust of diversifying, protecting, and preserving the biosphere that took billions of years to get to this point. And Gaia is pushing us toward that realization, but maybe we have removed (or at least severely reduced) the catalyst for the awakening of the human ecological purpose; psychedelics =)

**Willi** - How do you use alchemy in your practice?

**Dan** - Alchemy is truly the basis of transmutation of energy, so in that way alchemy is occurring all the time. And, on the grandest level this means a spiritual quest to transmute our inner darkness/lead into gold/light – With this philosophical understanding as our basis, therefore to alchemize with plants can mean to transmute a leaf into a proper potion, nourishing substance, or medicine, of which can include a topical salve, liniment, or internal tincture, tea, or ferment. Within these practices of “the great work” of alchemy, there is a parallel and practically same basis of understanding also be seen in the tantric yoga path, Taoist alchemical works, and of course the western alchemy so named during the renaissance.

The great 2, the duality between male female, are united to create a 3rd element. In yoga, this is seen as Shiva (masculine) and Shakti (feminine) and their union as a result of resolving the dualities into union. Of course the “male female” principle is an archetypal metaphor for all levels of dualities, and indeed aspects within. On the esoteric, alchemy is the way the mind splits things into categories (alchemical separation), and the recombination or ability to see the threads (tanu-trayate iti tantra) between things, is the recombination; 2 very integral and important aspects of alchemy.

On the basic exoteric (material) level, this work can be done even with taking a leaf from a garden, in ritual and prayerfulness, and creating a healing ceremony for tea to heal us, or another. I try my best to apply this practice in all herbal preparations that I make.

**Willi** - I use color, sounds and code to create new myths and ignite alchemies here. Are you using music to teach rewilding? Are you creating songs or stories with your students? What are the main themes?

**Dan** - I do write music and love to improvise song and music circles within my community. I write and sing of the mysticism of nature, the medicinal aspects of plants, as well as the passion and magic of the realizations that come along with self-discovery within nature. It seems crucially important to gather friends together and make musical prayers and intentions in the form of improvisation to the sacred lands and spirits that were once revered and worked with by indigenous people all across the globe. In reclaiming the ability to raise our voices together, to bring fourth meaning, to explore intimate connection, and to break through all of the fears and limits that tell us we cannot sing, or our voice is not worthy, we do find a tremendous alchemy, the alchemy of transmutating the throat chakra into a power center... and indeed, the voice of Gaia is within that space.

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**Dan De Lion's Bio –**

Dan is an Earth Herbalist, Forager, Musician, and Teacher dedicated to working with Nature to further the healing of the planet and the soul. He teaches through Return to Nature, providing classes, lectures, and seminars on wild food foraging, mushroom identification, herbal medicine making, as well as primitive and survival skills with a focus on wild foods and forest medicines.

He also incorporates the philosophies of yoga, alchemy, meditation, and mysticism into his classes, lectures, and seminars and brings a deep rooted indigenous medicine perspective of practicing intuition with plants, in a systematic and grounded way.

Dan grew up in a life full of exposure to plants in the herb and vegetable garden which his mother grew, with continuous herb books as part of his upbringing as well as roaming access to the back yard which led to a farm. As he grew with this passion, he began mushroom hunting at 20 years old, and soon realized that wild plants could also be foraged, and received his formal herbalist training in 2010 from Heart Stone herbal school in Van Etten, NY. That same year, he started his business Return to Nature as a vehicle for sharing his passion for herbal medicine and his outreach to build a community with a deeper expression of Nature as a continual and abundant provider of nourishment, medicine and spiritual connection.

Dan has been teaching and leading community workshops and gatherings throughout NJ, NY, and PA and the surrounding area since 2009, and before that toured extensively throughout the country and recorded 2 albums in the musical group, Natural Breakdown. In his herbal and spiritual explorations, he has also traveled across the world, from India, to South America, to many places in the United States seeking and sitting with teachers and guides who have deeply expanded his knowledge about herbal healing, deeper perspectives on causes of illness, and working in respect with the natural world. Through teaching and facilitating now hundreds of interactive workshops, plant walks and community gatherings, along with receiving global exposure to many forms and permutations of community he has built and helped raise a strong core community based on herbal practice, nature skills, potlucks, and regenerative methods in his local home town of NJ.

Teaching from a deep passion to inspire children and adults alike to return to nature and remember that there is deep treasure around each and every corner of life, Dan teaches through hands on mentoring with focus on engaging the senses in and with nature to create and bridge a deep connection to the earth and our immediate surroundings that continue to deepen in students for the rest of their lives. Dan also offers private mentorship to students of all ages.

Dan leads several group plant walks a month and teaches workshops in symbiosis with local communities as well as classes for any groups including birthday parties, boy scout groups, homeschooling groups, and just about any other occasion. His class topics include Foraging and herbal remedies, Community building, hands on herbal medicine making, how to harvest, identify, and prepare wild food, Mushroom identification, vegetable fermentation, kombucha making, bird language, and primitive and survival skills, and nature awareness.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Connections -**

Dan De Lion

Dan at returtonature.us

[www.returtonature.us](http://www.returtonature.us)

[www.facebook.com/returtonatureskills](https://www.facebook.com/returtonatureskills)

[www.youtube.com/returtonatureskills](https://www.youtube.com/returtonatureskills)





Digging up our [Hunter and Gatherer Mythology](#). Interview with Gary R Varner, Author and Mythologist by Willi Paul

'Folklore and mythology are more than children's tales. My books attempt to show how universal these myths are, how valid folklore is from one country and people to another. They are all based on universal themes that describe how people have lived, thought, worshiped, feared, waged war with both man and demon, viewed the world and the cosmos and gone on to the Underworld. These beliefs and histories must not die but must be kept alive. They are at once common and uncommon, natural and supernatural.

You will also read about giants and fairies, sea monsters and mermaids, demons and the gods of nature. I am continuously fascinated with symbolism as well and have spent considerable time in exploring those ancient symbols that can still be found on contemporary buildings and in our cemeteries.'

– [Gary Varner](#)

**Willi:** I am interested in the pre-history world, including the symbols in the Hunters and Gatherers daily life. Could certain symbols help to propel early human evolution; to raise their awareness or consciousness?

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Interview with Gary by Willi -

**What are the pros and cons of injecting a contemporary science like biomimicry into the ecology of the Hunters and Gatherers?**

Not sure how one would do this. I don't think modern man should attempt to add any outside factor to existing ecologies that are already working for a society. The old saying "if it works don't fix it" comes to mind.

**If ReWilding is a return to the primitive, can we argue that the Hunters and Gatherers practiced ReWilding?**

I don't believe so. When modern man "ReWilds" he does so to mimic or recreate that which other earlier or indigenous societies already have. I seriously doubt that "primitive" hunter-gatherers decided to become more "primitive". ReWilding seems to have been the product of the Victorian age which sought to recreate the "golden age." Modern man attempts to do this on an ongoing basis with little result to show for it on a mass scale.

**What evidence exists relative to whether the Hunters and Gatherers were a matriarchal or a patriarchal society? Does this have implications on their mythology?**

There have been many of both societies. Most early societies were a combination of matriarchal and patriarchal systems with multiple gods and deities of both sexes it wasn't until monotheism reared its head that patriarchal societies really took hold. Native American societies are predominately (but not exclusively) matriarchal with family lineage and organization based on the female aspect.

Both systems most likely based their mythology on their socio-religio viewpoint. Obviously Judeo-Christian-Islamic societies are patriarchal to the extreme, many times viewing women and children as property and passing down family hierarchy along the male line. The Judeo-Christian-Islamic deity is male as are the "heavenly hosts" so Judeo-Christian mythology is based on this social structure.

**Campbell champions the ideas in initiation and journey. If the Hunters and Gatherers followed the seeds and prey, with the changing seasons, what were their initiations and journeys?**

One would have to look at the individual society. Hunters especially have had an animal component that is important to their beliefs. Fertility rituals are mostly in tune with animal (cattle) possession which also gave rise to such mythic creatures as Pan. Societies that are mostly gatherers are more in tune with the seasons and will have created means to astronomically observe them and predict the changes to know when certain plants are available. This is true as well for hunters who need to know the seasons when certain important animals migrate etc. Initiation is important to place each member of society within the society and belief system. At times young men will dress in animal hides to mimic becoming one of them. Initiation for young women is mostly tied to marriage, fertility and child birth.

**Campbell also championed the individual Hero while I promote Community Heroes. How do you see this in the modern world?**

I see little evidence for "community" heroes. Individual heroes yes and our society recognizes those individuals who exhibit courage and selflessness as heroes. This is probably more true today than in the

past due to the changing dynamics of the world. Of course these individual heroes may become community heroes if the society remembers them over time. We may be talking about the same thing.

**Do you believe that we have both old and new mythology now? Can you give us examples of both?**

Yes. I think old mythology changes over time and thus becomes a new mythology. Technology seems to generate its own form of mythology such as UFOs. Old mythology was one way to explain certain phenomenon and most likely was a major factor in the creation of deity. As religion plays a lesser role in today's society new mythology fills the void.

**What do you understand about the archetypes of the Hunters and Gatherers?**

Pan, Cernunnos and horned animals are all archetypes of hunters. They watch over and rule the wildwood and are important in the continued fertility of the world. Likewise the Green Man is important for the continuation of vegetable life, trees and the fertility of the earth.

**If we can say that the Hunters and Gatherers were in a pre-myth period, what forces sparked myth to arise on Earth?**

I believe myth is tied to the wonder of the natural and supernatural world. Humans have always wondered why things are, what is behind the natural forces of the environment such as fire, the winds, birth and death. I don't think I would agree that Hunters and Gatherers existed in a "pre-myth" period as I believe that myth has always existed.

Please see my proposed [Hunters and Gatherers symbols illustration and definitions](#). What are your reactions?

**Symbols of Hunter Gatherers (partial list) -**

**Feather** – Ornamentation; Value Exchange; Story Prop; Signaling  
Gary: Medicine, symbol of power, enabled shaman to take flight

**Lightning Fire** – Evidence or Fear of Higher Power; Fire Source  
Gary: Symbolizes both creation and destruction

**Mud** – Body Painting; Sun Burn Help  
Gary: Source of fertility

**Sun** – Round; Heat; Cycle of Day and Night  
Gary: Supreme power/deity, all seeing

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**Gary's Background –**

I have been trained as an archaeologist and it was this background with its focus on ethnographies that got me interested in folklore and myth. Over the years both of these subjects appear to have waned in the public's interest. I attempt, through my writing, to keep these topics alive.

Over the years I have explored many areas of the world, including England, Ireland, Wales, the Yucatan, Canada as well as points of interest across the United States from California to South Carolina. I have visited amazing sacred locations and I have seen mysterious holy wells, Native American rock art and ceremonial sites, megalithic monuments found in such locations as Avebury, Stonehenge, North Salem, New Hampshire and Chichen Itza, Yucatan. These places of power are stunning but no less stunning are the smaller in scale centers of ritual such as the rock art of the Paiute near Bishop California or the Luiseno in San Diego county, California, the Hopi and Navajo in Arizona or the Southern Paiute and Yuma people in Red Rock Canyon of Nevada.

Over time I have found that indigenous and ancient populations around the world created their own special symbols which could be used to bring fertility and wealth to a people as well as to control and manipulate weather, heal the injured and sick or cause sickness and ruination among rival groups. From Ethiopia to Nova Scotia people have responded to the unknown forces of the universe in similar ways, in some cases in identical ways. Why this is so is one of the many interests I have in the study of folklore and mythology and the many physical manifestations of beliefs.

In the last few weeks I have decided to physically move on in my pursuit of more strange tales and unusual subject matter in the United States. I have relocated from my longtime home of California to a small, culturally rich town in the Blue Grass region of Kentucky. This is a place of the Mound Builders and is dotted with battlefields of the Civil War and Revolution. Tales of serpent people, demon dogs, water monsters, little people and Bigfoot will keep me busy for years to come and hopefully will provide additional books for you to enjoy.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **Connections –**

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**“Sacred Trees and Refuges” – Interview with Rachel S. McCoppin, Author of [The Lessons of Nature in Mythology](#) by Willi Paul, [Planetshifter.com Media](#) (+ PDF)**

‘The Lessons of Nature in Mythology reveals the important role of nature in mythology: from creation myths, myths that present the necessity of the harvest for survival, myths that tie humans to wild aspects of the environment, and finally myths that reveal the human life cycle as no different from the cycles of the seasons.’ (McCoppin, p. 16)

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**Interview with Rachel by Willi**

**Who controls myth today? Can people write new ones (mine are [here](#))?**

This is a really good question – ancient mythology was often the sacred stories of a people. Mythology provided humans with answers to some of humanity’s most difficult questions, about morality or mortality for instance. Therefore, many scholars have questioned what happened to the powerful role of myth in contemporary times. I think that myths how they were intended in ancient times, especially in nature-dependent cultures, have largely been forgotten in our times, but I do believe that there are



many instances in contemporary culture that still shows remnants of mythological concepts. Your question asks “who controls the myths today” – I would say that we certainly see mythological concepts in popular culture, as well as the media.

I think this use of these concepts can be good, but I also think it is mostly detrimental; for instance, definitions of a hero in contemporary film, like the many films of superheroes, often present stunted versions of the heroic journey where the heroes of today represent unattainable versions of heroism. They are shown as stronger, braver, etc. than the average person, and so audiences admire them, but do not relate to them. I feel that ancient myths, conversely, often portrayed heroes that audiences could relate to—the heroes often failed their journeys, were overcome with doubt and confusion, etc. Again, the myths were sacred stories, so when audiences related to the heroes, they could find meaning in the stories that might help them in their own lives.

**How do you define archetypes in your book?**

I define archetypes in my book according to many themes addressed by mythological scholars as common archetypes, but I specifically focus my book on natural themes as important archetypes within myths, such as creation and destruction archetypes, divine and mystical beings as personifications of nature, etc.

**Here are my elements of modern myths. Your feedback?**

1. Para-normal
2. Universal struggle
3. Journey, Initiation, Community as Hero
4. Symbols
5. Alchemy
6. Nature is Sacred
7. Threat of apocalypse
8. Digital - Non-Digital Collision
9. Future/ Sci Fi-based
10. Permaculture and Transition

**There are many examples of man’s destruction of Nature and the seasonal cycle. Monsanto’s toxins and the world drought are examples. Are there new myths surrounding this phenomenon?**

Yes, your examples here are great, and when I look at them, I see many archetypes that exist in myriad world myths from ancient times. Many myths present mystical elements in their tales, such as the para-normal, or examples of alchemy; often these elements are presented to encourage audiences of the myths to embrace aspects of the world that are difficult to understand by only using logic. Again, in heroic myth, the hero often must enter upon a phase in the heroic quest where he or she becomes confused; sometimes this occurs in a mythical otherworld, where often there are para-normal characters or mystical elements serving to push the hero into embracing a world view that is different from the one held by the hero before his or her quest began. I think these elements in contemporary times might serve similar purposes as we see them in more ancient renditions of mythology.

The format of “universal struggle” or the archetypal hero’s journey that you mention are topics that fascinate everyone I think. Many scholars look towards these tenets that seem to appear in myriad myths, and so they wrestle with how this came about. Many, like Jung and Campbell for instance, declare that we see these tenets again and again, even in modern tales, because they are human elements. We, as humans, conceive of our lives following patterns that existed since the beginning of human history. We face struggles, and view the effort to overcome these struggles in terms of a quest; we relate to stories where a protagonist has learned something valuable because of their quest. It gives us purpose when called to venture upon our own journeys.

Your examples of the presentation of nature in modern myth is interesting. I think there is a tendency to present “nature as sacred” as you say, but in contemporary times, it seems we do this, but in a way that is profoundly removed from how this message may have been portrayed in ancient myth. Nature-dependent cultures, such as those in the Neolithic period, were of course intimately involved with nature; they depended upon the environment for their survival. The cycles of the seasons, the success of the harvest, etc. were elements that Neolithic people were highly aware of; therefore, their perceptions of divinity, and what was constituted as sacred, was firmly intertwined with nature. Many nature-dependent cultures conceived of humans as inseparable from the natural world, as equal to other living beings, and believed that time was cyclical, not linear, because death in nature, was something that appeared temporary.

Therefore, many myths from nature-dependent cultures focus on the message that death for all living beings is only one moment in an endless, natural cycle—in spring and summer botanical elements thrive, but in fall and winter they wither and die; however, in spring, these same elements appear to be reborn. When myths present humans as also adhering to this natural cycle, the message of the meaning of life and death is arguably a very different message than the ones our contemporary culture offers. By showing that nature as sacred today, I feel we do this without sincerity, without an understanding of what that really means or what it meant to many nature-dependent cultures. Nature, today, for instance, is often presented as a sacred place of respite, where we can go to escape our busy lives, but after we do this, we leave nature to enter again into our busy lives; we seldom define our lives, or ourselves for that matter, as firmly a part of nature. We certainly, in contemporary American culture, seem not to hold nature as superior to ourselves, so this changes the portrayals we offer of the natural world.

#### **What are of few critical initiations and rituals in Nature and modern day myths?**

We, in contemporary culture, have many old rituals that we continue to perform that have been in some way connected to the rituals of ancient times—the celebrations surrounding May Day, or the solstices, bringing in a tree at Christmas, dying eggs at Easter, dressing up at Halloween. All of these practices come from more traditional celebrations of the seasons of nature. I think, though, that often we might not know or recognize the important connection to nature these rituals might signify, so we perform the actions without embracing the intended meaning. For instance, solstice or May Day celebrations often have people erecting a May Pole and dancing around it, but internalizing the great need for spring to again resume in order to propel the harvest season, so that the people can prosper, is not really an aspect of the ritual today as it was in more traditional times.

**I do not live in Greece and see very little of the old myths in Silicon Valley or elsewhere. There is no Mt. Olympus. Money is King. Help?!**

I live in Minnesota, and for me, I do have to be close to abundant nature to feel fulfilled. I spent many years living near Detroit, and I struggled to find the solace that nature provides me today. I became fascinated by myths because of seeing the patterns of nature in more intimate terms in a remote environment. When I started to visit places like Greece or Ireland, I was struck by how much the landscape at these places seemed to fit the myths so well. The land seemed to be the myth in many ways; for instance, in seeing the landscape that birthed the famed Greek Herakles, rugged mountains, sparse brush, it fit the conception of this hero who wore a lion skin and carried a club. Mythology for me, when I started to reexamine the myths I had always loved, took on a different meaning.

I started to see that so many myths followed patterns evident in nature each day. Multiple myths strove to define divine beings, heroes, quests, in terms of natural elements or seasonal change. Then, for me, the myths really came alive; they helped me look out at the nature around me in Minnesota and find meaning in my own life. This isn't to say that people in more developed locations cannot also find mythic meaning in the nature that still exists around them. Near Detroit, I remember finding a single tree that for some reason moved me; I remember looking forward to the intersection where this tree stood because seeing it, I could firmly see the changes of the seasons, when I might have missed them living my busy life. I think wherever you are, once you internalize the natural mythic messages that were so sacred to people for millennia, you view mythology, but also nature, differently.

### **When you write “natural elements” are you including pagan practices and mythology?**

Yes, but I view the term “pagan” was a definition later articulated by cultures that labeled the existing belief systems of a people as “pagan” because these beliefs were different from their own. Often many cultures with very different belief systems would be labeled “pagan”. The practices and rituals of a culture undoubtedly affect the myths of the culture, and so striving to understand these cultural elements is important when studying mythology.

### **How do you interpret Nature and mythology in places like wildlife refuges and zoos?**

I think that, as I spoke above a bit, how we define nature as a culture shows how nature is depicted in our modern myths, our attempts at preserving places as refuges, etc. I think all attempts preserving nature as it is, is of course wonderful. Encouraging people to get out into nature as often as possible is an important thing. But, again, reflections of the importance of nature often seems like a passing whim. To destress, we seek nature, but only for a few moments. Also the nature we seek is often cultivated. We want parks with paved paths; nature then becomes a tool that humans have tamed for their benefit. In myths from many ancient and/or nature-dependent cultures, this view of nature is not only absurd, but it is a dangerous view. We have multiple myths that showcase mythic characters who believe they can control nature, and they end up destroyed by nature. Many myths speak towards the importance of embracing all aspects of nature, not only the pleasant elements.

### **Can you speak to the recent rise of rewilding life style? Is this movement capable of creating new myths?**

I think that all attempts at immersing oneself in nature is going to be beneficial for the individual, but from my perspective, I'm not sure if by doing this, we will create new myths that mimic what we see when a culture as a whole is fully dependent upon nature for survival. We can always invent new myths; literature and film has provided us countless examples of “new” myths, but the purpose behind the



myths I think is of vital importance if we are ever to come close to the intention of the cultures that created their respective myths. If we create a myth as a tale that captures something that is sacred to us, then it becomes a myth. If nature is viewed as vitally sacred by a people, then it too can become part of a new mythology in a way that might at least come close to the way I see it often being presented in ancient mythology.

**It seems obvious that science and technology have over-taken Nature as cultural game changers and myth limiters. Your thoughts?**

Yes, for sure, as I spoke above, I firmly think that when a culture forgets their tie to nature, it places people at an unrealistic place where they feel falsely superior to the elements of the natural world. If we forget our place within nature, as only one part of nature, then we abuse nature, and of course end up abusing ourselves.

**What the “land reveals” sounds like a [permaculture](#) process that asks the designer to study the “lay of the land” and come up with a holistic plan.**

I think ancient myths are largely created from people’s perception of the landscape and the processes of nature. Again, mythology consists of the sacred stories of a people, so portraying an understanding of nature, or at least a reverence of nature in myth, makes it understood that nature is sacred to the people creating the myth. I have traveled to a few ancient locations, in Greece, Italy, Spain, Ireland, Scotland, etc., that were held as sacred to the cultures that created some of our most beloved myths, and to me the locations chosen for the sacred temple, sanctuary, etc. seems to have been precisely chosen according to a holistic plan that in every way incorporated the landscape – seeing this also, for me, helps me understand the myths that are connected to these important places.

**Can the soil still be a catalyst for myth making today?**

This is an interesting question – I would say that the soil played a fundamental role in ancient mythology. The soil was often viewed in myriad cultures as birthing the first elements of nature, as well as the first human beings. Many cultures also envisioned the land, and especially the soil, as alive, so myths were created that explained all life emerging from the soil as well as returning to it upon death. Womb-like imagery of a Mother Earth Goddess emerges from this in many cultures, so it is interesting to think of the myths that might come from contemplating the soil today. Again, though, the soil in Neolithic communities for instance, would probably have held much more significance to people than most would attribute to it today. And myths only become sacred if they truly speak to what the audience hold as sacred.

**When are [Nature sounds](#) elements in myth?**

This is also an interesting question – I think that all elements of nature have at some point become tenets found within myth: rivers, trees, flowers, even fleas. Often single aspects of nature become personified, as nymphs in Greek mythology for instance, or even as divine beings, like the Hawaiian Pele. But, thinking about “nature sounds” makes me think about one’s perception of nature while immersed within it – the sounds one hears in nature within myriad myths identities for the audience of the myth exactly how the mythological character perceives his or her natural environment.

**Please define holy, sacred and sacrifice in modern day mythology?**

What is deemed holy or sacred today might be more connected with abstract concepts, rather than the concrete conceptions of the sacred in many ancient myths, especially in terms of reverence for the environment. I think the concept of sacrifice has profoundly changed in many contemporary renditions. Many films for instance show sacrifice in terms of something a hero does that is so profound it deserves high acclaim, but many myths from nature-dependent cultures present sacrifice in terms, again, of the patterns of nature. If many nature-dependent cultures view life as cyclical, following the seasonal patterns of the environment, sacrifice becomes something that is portrayed as less monumental than it is in contemporary versions of myth. The American Indian Penobscot myth of the Corn Mother, shows the divine Corn Mother asking her husband to kill her and drag her corpse over the land, so that her body can produce the staple crop of corn to enable the survival of her children and community. This is certainly a sacrifice, but in this myth it is presented as mundane, as the Corn Mother doesn't really die; she merely dies for a moment, but is reborn as corn. Today mythic sacrifice in films often show the character as a hero who deserves fame for his or her sacrifice because it is viewed as an ultimate end.

**What are some “end of Nature” myths – old and new? Is environmental destruction also mythic creation?**

Many ancient myths of destruction exist, in Indian, Norse, Greek, Roman, etc., mythology. Though, often myths that showcase the end of the world do so in a way that is similar to the myth of the Corn Mother. The world is viewed as adhering to the same patterns of the seasons as humans must adhere to, so death for the world is required, as it is required for all living beings who live upon the earth. But, again, like the myth of the Corn Mother shows, death in a culture that views time as cyclical, is only one momentary stage of nature's patterns; therefore, when the world is destroyed by a flood, or cataclysmic event, a new world always emerges, as everlasting life, in natural terms, is a promise of the environment.

The Norse myth of Ragnarok shows the world, and all the beings who exist in it, including the divine Aesir, as dying, but a new world will be born from the destruction of this world, so yes, mythic destruction is viewed as always mythic creation when viewed in the terms of nature. However, what happens when we as a people have destroyed the environment, so that its promise of renewal, which is such an integral aspect of so many ancient myths becomes threatened? I think the myths change, but as with the contemporary myths of the hero who is misrepresented and therefore may not provide audiences with meaning in their own lives, I worry that our many filmic depictions of destruction might present a possibility of this ancient rebirth coming from destruction when the health of the environment depends upon its ability to assure this cycle.

**Myth arises out of Nature only? Would there be myth without humans?**

I love these questions – I label the introduction of my book, and also conclude it with a statement that is connected to your questions here. I feel, as I discussed above, that the land or nature really is the focus of the myth. Herakles is the rugged mountains of Greece, Demeter and her daughter Persephone are the harvest. You ask “would there be myth without humans”; since I view so many myths as just a human attempt to capture their understanding of nature, I think that we would just lose this attempt at conceiving what nature is, but nature would of course continue its patterns, if it has not been destroyed to a level that it cannot perpetuate these patterns.

## **Can Nature be the Hero? Can the community be the Hero?**

I do think that nature is the hero of most heroic myths; in fact, next year in fall 2016, I have another book being published by McFarland entitled *The Cycles of Nature in the Hero's Journey*, which focuses on precisely showing heroes in this light.

I also think that the community is always a part of the discussion of myth, but the way we define community is important. For me, the community of the myth is the audience, and yes, I think that the point of telling the myth, especially myths of the heroic quest, is to teach the audience how their lives are connected to the lessons of the myth, which for me are natural lessons.

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## **Bios -**

Rachel McCoppin, Ph.D. is a Professor of literature at the University of Minnesota Crookston. She has published articles in the areas of mythology and comparative literature. She has published a scholarly book by McFarland: [\*The Lessons of Nature in Mythology\*](#) (2015). Her work has appeared in journals including: *Symbiosis*, *Studies in American Humor*, *Studies in the Novel*, and *World Literary Review*. She has also published articles in many scholarly books published by Palgrave Macmillan, McFarland, Atlantic, and Greenwood Press.

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**“Mythology and Resilience” - A Conversation between Author & Painter [Stephen Linsteadt](#) and Mythologist & Transition Entrepreneur Willi Paul. + PDF. Presented by [Planetshifter.com Media](#)**

“The main difficulty in replacing the industrial order is not the physical nature of the situation, but its mythic entrancement ... the myth is primary.” This new myth “... must emerge from our new story of the universe. This... can be understood as soon as we recognize that the evolutionary process is from the beginning a spiritual as well as a physical process.” - [Thomas Berry](#)

“I would say that the Transition Movement is the 21st Century version of the New Age movement.” - Stephen Linsteadt

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A conversation between Stephen Linsteadt [SL] and Willi Paul [WP]

## **ROUND 1**

**[SL]** *Carl Jung held the opinion that civilization is influenced on a global level by certain archetypal energies arising from the Precession of the Equinoxes. The twelve stages of this cycle of astrological alignments can be found to correspond to the twelve stages of the hero's journey as outline by Joseph Campbell. Do you agree with Jung's perspective and, if so, in what hero stage do you think we are experiencing at the present time?*

**[WP]** I am not a student of Zodiac and this symbology. But there are new symbols in my work. See five archetypal energies below. Today's journey is a mediated, hybrid Journey: on foot, with internet and the transmuted archetypes. False heroes and false journeys abound. Community is the Hero. Teacher and learner moving forward together. Family is key.

I think today “our solo Hero” is threading sand in Campbell's Stage 6. [Tests, Allies, and Enemies:](#)

“Now finally out of his comfort zone the Hero is confronted with an ever more difficult series of challenges that test him in a variety of ways. Obstacles are thrown across his path; whether they be physical hurdles or people bent on thwarting his progress, the Hero must overcome each challenge he is presented with on the journey towards his ultimate goal.”

I have encountered [five archetypical energies](#) related to climate change, Permaculture & Nature and their symbols:

1. Permaculture & Nature Archetype: A love to preserve unique landscapes for future generations. Mistrust of greedy, short-term land and energy developers

Symbols: Tree of Life, Permaculture logo, Yosemite, Seeds, Amazon Rain Forest, US Gulf Coast

2. Permaculture & Nature Archetype: Our hope is to build sustainable systems in our local neighborhoods and towns. Fear of food and fuel shortages; fights for resources between neighbors and governments

Symbols: Crude oil on rails, GMO; Convergence and sharing expo events; neighborhood plans and new rituals

3. Permaculture & Nature Archetype: A deep love for freedom to own fire arms; fear of guns and killing.

Symbols: AK-47, US Flag, Scenes from mass shootings, vigils, pawn shops

4. Permaculture & Nature Archetype: Fear that global warming will destroy all life on Earth. Mistrust of business and goal of short-term profits

Symbols: Rising coastal tides, melting polar ice, coal fired power plants.

5. Permaculture & Nature Archetype: Mistrust of energy privatization and corrupt safety practices. Love of the system and blind faith in corporate responsibility

Symbols: BP, PG&E, Duke Energy

[SL] *What are the main themes in your New Mythology Landscape?*

[WP]

- + [Para-normal](#)
- + [Universal struggle / message](#)
- + [Sacrifice](#) (W. Paul)
- + [Symbols and Archetypes](#) (Jung)
- + [Sharing](#) (Transition Movement)
- + [Community as Hero](#) (Joseph Campbell)
- + [Spiritual Resilience](#) (Julia Bystrova)
- + [ReWilding](#) (Dan De Lion and Permie Pixie)
- + [Nature is Sacred](#)
- + [Future-based](#) (W. Paul)

**[SL]** *What is your concept of the 'Hero' both for the individual and for the community?*

**[WP]** My new role of the Hero is embedded in permaculture (Nature) and the Transition (sharing) movements. We need Heroes that champion a fearless heart, a deep respect for sustainable / local agriculture and a courageous value shift away Capitalism and private property and profit.

The corruptible individual is no longer desired as our Hero. The unity and resilience of the community is the new Hero, the neighborhood is the new spiritual interface.

**[SL]** *What role does sacrifice play in the New Mythology?*

**[WP]** Sacrifice is used metaphorically to describe selfless good deeds for others or a short term loss in return for a greater power gain, such as in a game of chess. Recently it has also come into use as meaning 'doing without something' or 'giving something up'.

My definition for sacrifice is: "the practice of not having the same choices as before, where we must give-up certain lifestyle benefits and comforts." But can giving up something actually be gaining something in return?

Is sacrifice always a negative? Is it the same result when we give up spiritual resources? What are these?

Here are some examples of how the new sacrifice is celebrated or practiced. [Symbols](#) are again key:

- A front lawn garden. An empty swimming pool
- Giving up the automobile
- Last year's toys
- Giving away old clothes
- Volunteering some time to a non-profit
- Reducing home or business water use
- Walking or using mass transit

**[SL]** *How does sacrifice support [resilience](#)?*

**[WP]** The two ideas are intertwined. Psychological resilience is defined as an individual's ability to properly adapt to stress and adversity. It can be learned and developed by virtually anyone. Resilience should be considered a "learned behavior." Here sacrifice can be implemented by resilience.

Sacrifice can also reduce stress and adversity with [community training and family support](#).

**[SL]** *The philosophy of Permaculture is a system of sustainability that works with nature as opposed to exploiting nature. It also pays attention to 'people care' as an ethical prerequisite. Our society tends to rely on government to take care of and be responsible for our basic needs. Consequently, we sometimes feel powerless to make the changes we believe are needed. What is the significance of 'resilience' in permaculture?*

**[WP]** Resilience is the current narrative driver, the community hub with many spokes:

- + Innovation
- + Risk taking
- + Preparation
- + Honesty and Honor
- + We are the government and the governed
- + Apply lessons from the past to fix unhealthy ecosystems (permaculture)
- + Thinking with Cycles
- + Community Self-Determination

**[SL]** *How is the New Mythology related to Transition Movement?*

**[WP]** The Transition vision is wired to the new mythology: farmer to town; rural to urban. Both are individual story and community story generators. Mythology is the dance band for the new Transition Songs.

Transition folks champion something called "[the](#)"

- + Sustainable use and reuse of regional resources
- + Vibrant economies which circulate wealth and opportunities locally
- + Social equity in meeting basic needs of all community members
- + Community control of essential resources
- + Community empowerment in public decision making

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## **ROUND 2**

**[WP]** *How is your art studio like your heart? Do you feel resilience there?*

**[SL]** I like to treat both as sacred spaces. The heart as a sacred space means it should be kept free of negative thoughts and emotions, especially those of self-doubt or self-worth. Otherwise, the connection to heart-consciousness is broken. 'Heart-connection' is a state of being in-tune with intuition, which I believe is also the source of inspiration and creativity. I treat my art studio as a cloister-like space that affords me a sanctuary from my life's demands and mostly from my thoughts and their needless agitations. I don't ever approach a canvas without first finding that centered place within. Otherwise, there is no creativity present and the results are always disastrous.

**[WP]** *What are a few recurring symbols in your paintings? Can these "wear-out?"*

**[SL]** For many years the symbol of "The Unknown Woman" has appeared in one form or another. I have come to understand her as the Archetypal Feminine. I use the term 'archetypal' as a reminder that it isn't about male or female. It is about our perspective. The Feminine asks us not to abandon the inner world of intuition and heart-consciousness. The Archetypal Feminine appears in my paintings in various disguises and poses, sometimes abstract, at other times painted realistically. There is always a sense of mystery about her. Other symbols generally appear as objects she is holding or surrounded by; objects like masks and fish. Sometimes she appears swimming or submerged in water. My latest series, Of Sky and Earth, incorporates Nature as a symbol. In this sense, Nature is "The Unknown Woman" and the

viewer is encouraged to examine their relationship with Her. The symbols of the feminine in my paintings have changed over the years. I think that happened because I changed and also because my outer world continues to change. I recently painted The Unknown Woman leaning on a stack of bee boxes. The symbol of bees had not been collectively activated ten or twenty years ago. I suppose in a sense my symbols 'wear-out' and give way to new signposts that are needed along the Journey.

**[WP]** *Tell us about the forms that wounds take? Do individuals and society at-large have the same wounds and healing actions?*

**[SL]** Wounds are physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Every aspect of being human seems to have its wound archetype. I believe it is built in to the program. I see wounds as the motivation for change, growth, and transformation. I find that I am mostly motivated to go into action when pain makes my current situation intolerable. It seems that pain is often the remedy for denial. From the perspective of the Journey of the Hero, wounds are the 'Call to Action.' Society also has its wounds and its motivations for change. This is why our current environmental crisis is so scary. I worry about how much pain and wounding the global community needs to endure before it goes into action and makes the changes we already know we must. In the meantime, we remain in denial and hope a few scientific research papers will prove we have nothing to worry about.

**[WP]** *What is informing / propelling your Journey? Is it fear in part?*

**[SL]** Yes, fear is a huge motivator. The fear of running out of water in the Southern California desert might finally cause me to move somewhere more suited to a Permaculture approach. My paintings of Nature are motivated by my fear that my grandchildren will have to contend with an unsustainable world. Fear about our future has definitely propelled me on a Journey, one that is both personal and collective. Personal, because I have to ask myself to define my purpose and explore how much I am willing to sacrifice for the sake of others who are suffering. Societal, because the solutions to our environmental, political, and economic problems can only be solved by people coming together and working together as one global community. It's the only hope we have.

**[WP]** *What musical artists bolster your resilience?*

**[SL]** My resilience is bolstered by a sense of hope and knowing that there are people in the world who are not afraid to demand change. I suppose this is why I often feel stuck in the music of the sixties and early seventies with artists like Graham Nash, the young Bob Dylan, and Joni Mitchell. I love the voice of the feminine. It feels appropriate in this age of re-connecting to the Archetypal Feminine. The song "People Help the People" by Birdy (Jasmine Lucilla Elizabeth Jennifer van den Bogaerde) is one of my current-day favorites.

**[WP]** *Go deep and tell us about the "fabric of spacetime?"*

**[SL]** Ha. Deep. I have taken on the outlook of many others that the fabric of spacetime is consciousness. I like the view that consciousness manifests in spacetime first as vibration, which creates resonance patterns or standing scalar-wave energy events that give rise to the geometry of matter. Human beings are connected to the resonance of spacetime like frequency oscillators.

**[WP]** *What is the hardest barrier to listening to one's heart?*



**[SL]** We, especially boys, are taught from an early age not to show emotions. Our emotions are what we 'feel' when we are happy or sad. That same ability to feel is what connects us to intuition, which stems from our connection to the resonance patterns of spacetime. Resonance is the language of the heart. Resonance is a vibration whose specific signature can stimulate emotional response centers in our body-mind. What prevents us from hearing those resonance signatures is the childhood and societal brain-washing that conditioned us into believing that what we perceive with our brain is the only reality we should pay any attention to. As Einstein said, our society honors our thinking mind and ignores the gift of intuition. Our society places more value on what we have materially and as a consequence we judge ourselves based on how much money we make, the size of our home, the number of cars and TVs we own.

It is difficult to hear the subtle vibrations of the heart when we are preoccupied with climbing the social ladder and the competitiveness that entails. Fortunately, the tide is turning. We have entered a new age of the awakening of the Feminine. The archetypal energies of the Feminine are creating chaos in the very fabric of our societal structures. Every aspect of our existence has come into question and we are being forced to change, to adapt, to be resilient. We are being forced to work together and to embrace cultural and religious/spiritual differences. The Feminine is about community—a community of heart-consciousness that goes into action to make the changes the world requires. This is the power of the heart (Love) in action.

**[WP]** *How does Scalar Heart Connection work for children? Adults?*

**[SL]** Scalar Heart Connection is a process that utilizes the heart's resonance connection to spacetime to 'tap into' our feelings and areas where we hold emotional imbalances. The process helps us develop intuition. It requires that we let go of our thinking and allow our heart to guide us through a matrix of statements that offer positive responses to what is troubling us as opposed to letting our mind react from acquired habit. That is the adult version. Children, on the other hand, are naturally connected to their heart's intuition. Children love using Scalar Heart Connection to ask their heart for guidance. They are much quicker than adults at getting to the meaning of the heart's positive response suggestions. Adults tend to filter everything from their mind-brain and then react competitively, whereas children process from the heart and respond compassionately.

The process relies on the source of synchronicity to inform us of what we need to know in order to fully digest and assimilate the outer event or situation that is causing us trouble or unrest. Often, the situation is only a trigger that has activated a repressed emotion from an earlier experience, usually from childhood. The process takes us on a Hero's Journey. In most cases, the Journey takes us back to where we started, but with new eyes—eyes of the heart. The heart informs us of the mind-brain reaction the early experience habituated in our sub-conscious. The heart also provides us with an appropriate and heart-centered new way of being. I find that when we cognitively understand the pattern of behavior and its original genesis we are free to adapt a new neuronal pattern, one that is life enhancing. With forgiveness and compassion we are liberated. I think this is the key to why children are so resilient—it is their nature to forgive, to love unconditionally, and move forward.

Scalar Heart Connection is a powerful modality also when used for groups, businesses, or for couples that are experiencing an area of conflict in their relationship. The process has been used successfully for pets and toddlers. I have done sessions for groups of people around the issue of world peace or our connection with Earth. The sessions with Earth have shed light on how Earth feels towards human beings. It was shocking to discover that she feels unloved.

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### ROUND 3

**[SL]** *Under archetypal energy C. you list "A deep love for freedom to own fire arms" and "fear of guns and killing." When I think of Permaculture and communities connected to Nature I envision people living peacefully, in harmony, without the need or desire to possess guns. Do you agree with this? Some people believe that the movement to live off the grid necessitates a need to protect themselves. How do we reconcile arming ourselves and living peacefully?*

**[WP]** No, I don't see the Transition as peace and love. When food, water and energy systems collapse, we will be in the Chaos Age and security for permaculturists, their friends, family and land, will require multiple layers of security. Guns included unfortunately. This is the classic "haves" vs. the have nots." Key: A post-Capitalism landscape needs a lot of love and instruction now!

See these specific visions:

+ ["Four Zone Food Security System for a Permaculture Village." Design for Resilience](#)

+ ["The Tree Pod Community" – Resilience with Nature in the Permaculture & Transition Era](#)

+ [The Resilience Center for the Transition \(RCT\) with Site Plan \(PDF\). A Permaculture & Reskilling Vision](#)

**[SL]** *Do you agree that the unity and resilience of the community as the new Hero is made up of individual Heroes? You mentioned the 'corruptible individual is no longer desired as our Hero' but isn't that an oxymoron (corruptible Hero)? Then again, in the Journey of the Hero, the Hero is never the Hero in the beginning (Lucius in "The Golden Ass"). Can we say it is an evolutionary process--we become the Hero when we successfully slay the dragon (recognizing and incorporating those shadow parts of ourselves) and that is the undertaking we are now collectively facing?*

**[WP]** We are the dragon. We are the Tribe. If I teach anything these days, it's unity. Note that I said "corruptible individual" not "corruptible Hero," so there is no paradox. We create the evil and we transform it into the good. In the evolutionary process that I and many others want, the community is the edu-agora, family and spiritual driver.

**[SL]** *You described Joseph Campbell's Stage 6 of the Hero Journey as that of Tests, Allies, and Enemies. You mention 'Sacrifice' as one of the tenants of the New Mythology and I wonder if it might be the biggest test we will face. When I think of the community as hero I immediately recall the recent images of refugees on the evening news pouring into Europe and the response of closing borders with razor wire. I suppose it comes down to a fear of scarcity, to a fear that other people's gain comes at our loss. But isn't the New Mythology also a world without borders? How do we find the courage and the heart to consider other's in the same way we care about ourselves? What needs to be incorporated into the Transition Movement to cope and deal with what could be a large scale call to sacrifice?*

**[WP]** The "courage and the heart" that you seek starts with a major shift in consciousness for humans, away from the current love affair with materialism and self-centeredness over the community good. The Transition Movement is slowly addressing the old vs. new value paradigm, fostering gratitude, sharing, and a "do it yourself" ethic.

A large scale call for sacrifice seems unwise right now as slow and sure steps (i.e. permaculture) make for deeper, sustainable changes.

strong>[SL] *Who or what are our Allies? Who or what are our Enemies?*

[WP] We are the Allies and the Enemies.

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#### **ROUND 4**

[WP] *What supporting values do you hold in regard to permaculture? What do you want to “mix in” with this Nature design movement?*

[SL] The Permaculture value that seems most important to me is the need to pay attention to the ‘People Care’ ethic. It is cited that “it is often the dynamics of people that can interfere with projects, and secondly that the principles of permaculture can be used as effectively to create vibrant, healthy and productive people and communities as they have been in landscapes.” I would mix in the need for the individual to first re-connect to the wisdom of their own heart. Re-connecting to our heart allows us to authentically connect to the hearts of others and then to the heart of Nature. When we connect to heart-consciousness we are more inclined to be of service to the needs and values of the community.

[WP] *Do you agree that there is the “old mythology” and “new mythology”?*

[SL] If we define myths as traditional stories about gods and heroes then the Journey always has the same archetypal challenges. I think what changes is the context. Dragons, for example, have been replaced by rising coastal tides. I believe this is what Joseph Campbell was referring to when he said our current society doesn’t have a modern myth. We have become so disconnected from the Journey—our purpose and life’s meaning—that we don’t consider that having a story about ourselves serves a purpose. However, our current climate crisis has caused us to re-consider our future and with that our purpose and the ultimate meaning of our lives. This is why we are starting to see “new mythologies.”

By creating a new story we give ourselves a roadmap to a successful outcome. The new story also incorporates how we got into this mess by defining the villains, who are ultimately ourselves as you pointed out. The Hero, as community, will have to undergo changes, make lifestyle sacrifices, and transform energy sources before acquiring the elixir of sustainability.

[WP] *Are archetypes unchanged since they were created in your view?*

[SL] The idea of archetypes is an old one, going back to Plato and most likely to a time before him. Plato described these messengers as “Forms” or essences that transcend the physical world, yet give the world its form and meaning. Attempts to define the concept of archetype are elusive by the very transcendent nature of these forms. We may sense the presence of an archetype through synchronistic events, dream symbols, or common cultural/religious structures and impulses. The presence of an archetype, as Plato suggested, is like a shadowy form hazily visible from the other side of a drapery. At best, we see a two-dimensional symbol that requires interpretation. Jung, who dedicated his life to the interpretation and cataloging of archetypal symbols, came to understand that we are surrounded by a

living matrix of meaning, like an ocean of super-consciousness pregnant with synchronistic potential. From this standpoint, it seems to me that the essential essence of archetypes is unchanged, but the symbols they utilize change with the times; they shape-shift in accordance with cultural perspectives and beliefs in the same way dream symbols change over time (chariots became cars, etc.)

**[WP]** *Walk with me down Main Street USA and point-out some symbols of the Heart?*

**[SL]** Children, animals, children with animals, videos on Facebook of different animal species playing lovingly together, helping the elderly, tolerance, feeding the hungry, taking in immigrants, people coming together in times of disaster, smiles, laughter, holding hands, hugs, making eye contact.

**[WP]** *Are we the 7th Generation?*

**[SL]** In effect, every generation is the 7th generation of those who came before. Seven generations is about 140 years. If we look back 140 years to 1875 we discover this is the time when the use of oil and its associated fuels began to be used as an alternative to coal. Worldwide oil production has risen sharply ever since with only a slight dip during the 80's. So, yes, we are the 7th Generation of the birth of the oil industry.

*"[Eight generation sustainability](#) is an ecological concept that urges the current generation to live sustainably and work for the benefit of the seventh generation into the future. It originated with the Great Law of the Iroquois, which holds appropriate to think seven generations ahead and decide whether the decisions they make today will benefit their children seven generations into the future."*

**[WP]** *The Scalar Heart Connection process seems very mathematical, "new agey" and complex. Who is your audience?*

**[SL]** The process is as easy as picking a number one through ten. People will always see in their mind's eye or feel one number over all the rest. This number is related to a statement that provides insight into their current situation or to something that is troubling them. The appropriateness of this chosen statement to their situation is uncanny. It has been called the "Wow effect." People immediately want to know how it works. This is because our society has been taught that nothing exists beyond what can be scientifically explained. The honest truth is that I can't explain it. I can statistically show that the numbers picked at random after a thousand sessions are skewed towards statements related to "Disconnection from Spirit" and "Low self-esteem." Therefore, I can point to distributions that are beyond normal probabilities, but that doesn't explain the 'how.'

Researchers such as Dean Radin at the [Institute of Noetic Sciences](#) has conducted experiments that demonstrate the ability of human consciousness to skew the outcomes of random number generators. So we know that consciousness is connected in some way to matter, but science hasn't really offered a widely-acceptable scientific explanation. Now comes New Age teachings, which, since the 1970's, have advocated a 'new science' and a variety of alternative spiritual and philosophical beliefs, including the idea that we are all connected as One. I believe it is our connection to that One, higher and collective consciousness (heart-consciousness) that is responsible for how we 'know' which number we need. New Agers also advocate holistic and other approaches to personal health and global ecology/sustainability. I would say that the Transition Movement is the 21st Century version of the New Age movement.

If Scalar Heart Connection seems mathematical and complex that is my fault. In my quest to help people 'understand' how it works I have tried to appeal to their left brain by introducing the concept of number as an archetype. I share that our heart beats 72 times a minute on average and that is equal to 4,320 times per hour. Anyone who has read Joseph Campbell's work is familiar with his fascination with the mythological number 432 and its association with the 432,000 years in the present cycle of time, the so-called Kali Yuga. People are now recognizing 432 as the musical note of A in Pythagorean Tuning. The number 432 squared is equal to the speed of light (within .0018). These are a few examples of how the heart is rhythmically connected to space and time. If the heart is connected to spacetime then the heart must know what spacetime knows, hence the ancient adage that the heart is the portal between the seen world and the unseen world.

My audience is now world-wide. There is a free version online at [AskYourHeartSession.com](http://AskYourHeartSession.com). This version is shorter than the practitioner version I teach at workshops. Because it is shorter it is also quicker and people love how fast they can get answers from their heart about what is troubling them at the moment. There is also an app called Ask Your Heart, which provides the convenience of an app. Scalar Heart Connection is one of many tools that is a bridge for people to help them tap into the knowing of their own heart.

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## Bios –

### Stephen Linsteadt

[Stephen Linsteadt](#), born in Ukiah, California in 1956, studied painting with Marjorie Hyde at Grossmont College and graduated with honors with a B.F.A. in painting from Long Beach State University and did graduate studies at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston.

Stephen is an avid reader of Carl Jung and a student of quantum physics and cosmogony. He is the author of Scalar Heart Connection, and Quantum Healing Codes. Please look for his forthcoming book, "The Heart of the Hero". (2016 release).

His paintings are explorations of how the quantum world of vibrating energy comes together as the physical reality that we experience in our everyday lives. His current paintings explore the alchemical theme of "as above, so below" as found in Nature: "Of Sky and Earth". The work is an exploration of the Jungian notion that our outer world is a reflection of our inner state.

## Connections –

### Stephen Linsteadt

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**“New Traditions and Indigenous Mythology” – A Conversation with Dr. Jeff Hart and Willi Paul (+PDF).**  
Presented by [Planetshifter.com Media](https://planetshifter.com)

First, we learn to create and share customs and traditions from family and key institutions. The supportive idea is that we practice to raise the flag or pick apples with the Scout troop in the Fall. We can develop and practice new values with in the Chaos Era. **New traditions can lead to new mythology.**

**Resilience** is now LinkedIn jargon but is a critical community building glue and plays a role in each transition between the fives sequences (Values > Customs > Initiations > Traditions > New Mythology).

How does **Transition** create [new holidays and celebrations](#)?

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**Foundation Article for Conversation:** “Examining the Sharing Vision in the Transition Movement” – Values > Customs > Initiations > Traditions > New Mythology (“the Sequence”). By Willi Paul, [Planetshifter.com Media](https://planetshifter.com)

**Key Issues –**

[ 1. ] We need new symbols now, called artifacts in the Myth Lab. New symbols as catalysts of change-esp. for children. Sharing by humans is connected to a deep care for Nature. Nature shares with us and we practice with each other.

[ 2. ] The 5 levels in the Sequence are a social scaffold, supporting other integrations and empowerment.

[ 3. ] Questions: Can new traditions cross national and religious boundaries in this bloody and fractious time?

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### Defining the Sequence Terms –

A personal **value** is an individual's absolute or relative and ethical value, the assumption of which can be the basis for ethical action. A value system is a set of consistent values and measures. A principle value is a foundation upon which other values and measures of integrity are based.

A **Custom** is an action or way of behaving that is usual and traditional among the people in a particular group or place.

**Initiation** is a rite of passage marking entrance or acceptance into a group or society. It could also be a formal admission to adulthood in a community or one of its formal components. In an extended sense it can also signify a transformation in which the initiate is 'reborn' into a new role.

A **tradition** is a belief or behavior passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past. A number of factors can exacerbate the loss of tradition, including industrialization, globalization, and the assimilation or marginalization of specific cultural groups.

**New Mythology** – as proposed by Willi Paul.

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*Examining the Sharing Vision from the Tradition Movement -*

**Values > Customs > Initiations > Traditions > New Mythology + Symbols**

#### **New Personal & Family Sharing Values**

Love Nature; Build community; resilience; Permaculture: Earth Care, People Care, Share the Excess

**Symbols:** Blueberry patch; Planet Earth; Saving ground water

#### **New Local Sharing Customs (Routines)**

Reuse / recycle; community exchanges; backyard gardens; bake sales, second hand clothes

**Symbols:** Good Will Store logo; Tables of free stuff

#### **New Sharing Initiations (Passages)**

Learning Quaker ways; Boycotts and protests; Permaculture: Building a Community Food Forest; Annual garage cleaning, Community water saving campaigns; Neighborhood Resilience Courses

**Symbols:** Occupy logo; Permaculture logo; Soil

#### **New Global Traditions Sharing (Celebrations)**

Sharing Expos; Opening / closing summer cabin; Christmas Tree cutting and decorating; Earth Day; Gay Pride Parade; Transition: **Localization**; World Music Day

**Symbols:** Tumble Weeds & Soil blowing away; Empty water reservoirs

## **New Sharing Myths (Universal Stories / Lessons)**

["The Permaculture Potluck Café"](#); ["Our Revolution Starts Here"](#) – Little Free Library Network

**Symbols:** Community meal; Harvest gathering; Donation box

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### **Conversation with Jeff and Willi**

**Dr. Hart:** Willi, Thank for this nice compilation of thoughts. I have continually read and listened to passages from videos of Jung and from his writings, where he has referred to nature, myths, and symbols - related to the stages of life, consciousness and unconsciousness.

My recent research has been looking at parallels between the thoughts of Jung and the thoughts of indigenous tribal people. Much has come from my readings, and much from my 20+ years of face-to-face relationships with North American Tribal people (First Nations, Isanti Sioux, Winnebago Hochunk, Umonhon, etc.).

Particularly my Santee and Omaha Tribal friends have shared much about their traditions, their symbols, their beliefs regarding spirit world, nature and mother earth, sun & moon, and much more. One of my significant findings has been their reference to "All my relatives" (translated from Umonhon /Omaha and Isanti Sioux/Santee languages). When they pray for all people, particularly the children, they pray "seven (7) generations in advance" (into the future, but a different view of what future is), and they pray to All My Relatives - all those who have come before me, which translates very near to Jung's "collective unconscious".

My closest tribal friends often talk about finding time to "go upon the hill", to keep in touch with all living things & nature, and spirit world, which they would equate to the unconscious and collective unconscious. Considering all these thoughts you have provided in this PlanetShifter magazine regarding myths, they are similar to why indigenous tribal people "go upon the hill".

So, all these things that have been mentioned in this "Examining the Sharing Vision in the Transition Movement" - reminded me of my thoughts that I have shared above. If we are going to follow in this Transition Movement, we need to also look to and include all indigenous people. There are many "secrets of the elders" - They know. Thanks for sharing Willi!

**Willi:** Hi Jeff - Thank you for your insights. Where is this "Hill" in Silicon Valley, inside my iPhone, in my heart? I wonder what it will take to start this walk?

**Dr. Hart:** Willi, I hear what you are saying.

Traditionally, "going up on the hill" would mean an individual would find a remote hill, mountain, or other high place, out where one would be in touch with nature, without any external material world interference. They would find a place to sit, for 3 days and nights, with very little food or drink, by themselves, allowing their mind to be open to the spirits, listening and cleansing their minds, getting back in touch with who they are inside, where they come from, allowing all their relatives, All My Relatives, who have come before to speak from spirit world and remind them of life and all that is good. There you go.



**Willi:** Do you think this meditation could spawn new myths?

**Dr. Hart:** Good question. New myths to some. Rediscovery of forgotten myths to others.

Renewing the myths that have always been known to elder indigenous people, indigenous cultures and archaic man - Some of which are rapidly disappearing due to the overpowering physical, material (corporate), and scientific world. (Reference: Jung's "Modern Man In Search Of A Soul", and "The Undiscovered Self".)

**Willi:** It sounds like you are saying, in fact, that there are [no new myths on Earth?](#) Tell me what you see here:

**My 10 elements for producing new myths:**

1. Para-normal
2. Universal struggle / message
3. Journey, Initiation, Hero / Community
4. Symbols
5. Alchemy
6. Nature is Sacred
7. Threat of apocalypse
8. Digital - Non-Digital Collision
9. Future-based
10. Permaculture and Transition

Do the indigenous people have the same understanding and utility of archetypes as I do?

See: "[Permaculture, Carl Jung and the New Archetypes](#)" (+ PDF) by Willi Paul, New Global Mythology Group @ Depth Psychology Alliance

**Dr. Hart:** Briefly, regarding the myths question, I agree with what you have written and it makes sense given the current "state of the world/state of modern man."

"Time", the existence of it in the physical & collective consciousness, does not exist as we, in the physical, know it. One has to decide if they believe this, or not, or if they simply know this. Your concentric circles, with collective consciousness/unconsciousness, is very interesting. I am still thinking about this. I'll have to get back to you later.

I'm not sure I would say I found a "new" myth. I perhaps may have found an old myth with a new name and a story told in another way, sort of a theme and variations concept. Many themes are new to most individuals in the physical world - they are being discovered, or more accurately, rediscovered as a new interpretation of a myth that has always been in the unconscious (or spirit world). In the unconscious, the other side, or spirit world, past/present/future do not exist separately - it just all is.

Many indigenous Tribal people talk about animal spirits. Many individual names may have archetypal reference or attachment. I have a name that was given to me which primarily references an eagle and its characteristics - somewhat archetypal.

I think your work and research with symbols and symbolism is extremely important, just as symbols, instruments (the feather, sage, etc.) and rituals are important to indigenous tribal people.

Finally, I have more of a difficulty now, than I did in my younger years, identifying something as old or new. Just as I believe there is really no such thing as a good or bad experience - it's just an experience from which we need to learn something. Our development is a result of this learning. Symbols and rituals may appear (physically) different but have similar meaning, depending on the individual, the culture, a point in time, an environment, or whatever.

And I believe, as my tribal elder friends have told me, some of those (older) symbols and beliefs have been forgotten. A few say they are not forgotten, they are still there - they may appear to us differently, or it could be that we can't see them because our eyes have been clouded by (the white man) the other beliefs and cultures that have been forced upon us.

So, perhaps we do need to go upon the hill, just far enough above the clouds that are blocking our sight, our minds, and find that which appears to be new, which is old and was found again - that which has always been there, waiting for us as individuals to find again, when we are ready.

I think what you are doing with archetypes, myths and symbols is on the right track to helping people rediscover that which has always been there for anyone to see and know. I don't believe it really makes much difference if an individual finds a new myth or an old myth. The importance is that the myth is utilized to help the individual turn inward, to look into the myth, to discover what is there to help the individual grow and develop, to discover themselves, who they are inside. And, to go up on the hill every now and then, to keep the myth alive.

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'Rituals and taboos play an important role in human lives and help reinforce norms, behaviors, relationships and also in ... rites of passage, holidays, political rituals, and even daily actions that can be redirected from moments that stimulate consumption to those that reconnect people with the planet and remind them of their dependence on Earth for continued well-being.'

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**Dr. Jeff Hart's Bio** - 40 years of experience teaching and coaching self-awareness, personal/team development, leadership skills, and building relationships. Dr. Hart is an MBTI Master Practitioner, certified to purchase, administer and interpret MBTI Steps I-II-III. Dr. Hart's research includes indigenous tribal populations and building self-awareness using Type, MBTI, and EBW. Recent research is in process, exploring and discovering significant parallels between thoughts of Jung, Indigenous people and Tribal elders related to stages of life development, development of psychological type, learned emotions & behaviors, and awareness of consciousness & unconsciousness.

#### **Education**

Bachelors & Master's in Education, 1973/1979, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)  
Ed.D., Human Sciences with an emphasis in Leadership Studies, 2004, UNL

**Professional Work**

- University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Faculty Educator, 1999-present.
- Nebraska State and Federal Juvenile Justice Specialist and Government to Government Tribal Liaison, 1992-1999.
- Nebraska Dept. of Labor and Job Training Counselor and certified TPI (The Pacific Institute) trainer, 1988-1992.
- Public school education, as a teacher at all grade levels, 1973-1988.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Connections -****Dr. Jeff Hart**

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More -



[“The Shop-Vac Pirates”](#) - Interview with [“Fish Not Gold”](#) (WA) Director Kim McDonald, PhD

Introduction –

“Washington’s rivers are slowly being destroyed by a few hobby miners. Destruction of redds, refugia, and release of toxic metals are just a few of the problems resulting from suction dredge mining.

Suction dredge miners routinely remove or displace in-stream boulders, root wads, and logs from streams to gain access to the gravel under them. These objects provide fish with critical habitat, and when moved, put fish at risk. There are currently no provisions for requiring miners to replace habitat or to repair or remediate the damage they've caused.

In 2013, Washington State taxpayers spent over \$216 million in salmon and steelhead restoration projects. Many of those projects are jeopardized by suction dredge miners. The WDFW literally has no idea where miners are operating or when. The department does not track where miners work or when and are unable to monitor their activities or provide enforcement.

Mining laws in Washington State are appallingly behind current science. Years of longitudinal studies in California have concluded the cumulative impacts from suction dredging on salmon, steelhead, and resident trout populations, are enormous. Washington State has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in restoring salmon, steelhead, and trout streams. Countless numbers of volunteer hours are devoted to work in riparian areas. Yet a suction dredge miner, with a pry bar, a winch, and a dredge, can undo all that work in a matter of moments.

The administrators of our state's mining program, the Washington Department of Fish and Game (WDFW), have no idea who is mining, where they are mining, or when they are mining. The only permit a miner needs to suction dredge for gold in Washington is to download a copy of the state's Gold and Fish pamphlet. There are no licensing fees. And despite a requirement that miners notify the appropriate federal agencies where they are mining, most do not because they don't want to invite any scrutiny of their actions."

content from: [Fish Not Gold Web Site](#)

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**Interview with Kim by Willi -**

**Who is giving you straight answers and which parties are giving you the run-around?**

As the the volunteer director of Fish Not Gold I would say in the "activist" world, we get straight answers from our colleagues who have tackled this issue in Oregon and California. We generally get an effective run-around from government agencies that should be doing a better job enforcing their own regulations, the Endangered Species Act, and the Clean Water Act.

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**Is Fish Not Gold the "last stand" for fish and stream health in WA?**

No. There are many, many components for helping our endangered runs of salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. Our work on reducing the impacts of suction dredge mining is but one of the components. It is one that can be accomplished if policy makers had the will, but like many impediments to recovering salmon, steelhead, and bull trout, there is very little political will.

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### How are the politics between Fish Not Gold, Trout Unlimited and the Government these days?

Generally activists have found that trying to work with government agencies is sometimes effective and sometimes frustrating. But we should persist at not only trying to make our natural world better but also our democratic world better, that is, to work within the system and use all the tools available. Participating in our public sphere can be a frustrating experience, but collaboration is often far better than confrontation in the long run.

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### Are the hobbyist dredgers typically older white males, unemployed?

Don't know about their general employment status, but the white older male demographic is generally descriptive of the suction dredge miner.

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*"[Suction dredges](#) are essentially gas powered floating shop-vacs. A large nozzle (generally 4" in diameter) sucks up gravel and sediment, then the dredge runs it through a sluice. The sediment and lighter gravel are deposited in long plumes downstream while the heavier metals such as gold, rest in the sluice. Miners who work areas that have been mined, also disturb significant amounts of mercury, used years ago to amalgamate gold flecks into nuggets."*

### What are the basic remediation strategies?

Restoring streams hammered by suction dredge mining is similar to restoration techniques used for salmon, steelhead, bull trout. Providing cool, clean water with sufficient in-stream flows. Shady riparian areas, sufficient in-stream cover against predators, etc.

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### How much gold is in the WA streams, really?

The streams where suction dredge mining is occurring in Washington are streams where mining has been active for over a century. While there is no survey of quantity of gold, anecdotal evidence is showing the miners are not recovering any significant amounts.

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*"A [retired mining engineer](#) stated, "Large scale miners have to follow all sorts of regulations. These hobby miners with their suction dredges can do more damage than a large gold mine, because they are not regulated and there is no enforcement."*

### What is your plan to regulate and enforce?

A few thoughts on that. Washington State currently has no idea who is mining, when, and where. So one of the first things we are seeking is a system to monitor (and enforce if necessary) where the mining is occurring and by whom so if there are issues, we can hold the miners accountable.

Second, Washington State is the epicenter of Endangered Species listings for anadromous and residential trout and salmon. We spend hundreds of millions in taxpayer and hydroelectric rate payer dollars in restoring critical habitat for salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. Yet the miners are allowed into the streams that are listed as critical habitat and can destroy not only the remaining habitat but restoration projects. We would like to see the miners not be allowed to suction dredge on those critical streams. If they want to pan for gold, fine, but they should not be allowed to put a suction dredge in those streams. We would like to see the dredges subject to similar regulations as other floating devices in order to ensure invasive species don't get into our fragile waterways.

And last, we believe the miners should pay a licensing fee to assist the agencies in paying for regulatory costs, like anglers and hunters pay a licensing fee. Unfortunately in this day and age we have become a pay to play society and the miners should stop getting a free ride.

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#### **Background Reading -**

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#### **Connections -**

**Kim McDonald, PhD**

Fish Not Gold

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Interview with Delaney Pearson, [Community Rights Lane County \(OR\)](#) by Willi Paul, [Planetshifter.com Media](#)

*"Community Rights Lane County (CRLC) educates citizens about our rights to local community governance. We believe decisions affecting communities must be made by community residents – the people affected by these decisions and laws. We believe corporate structures should not have privileges that elevate corporate interests above community rights."*

Please see helpful articles from CRLC on the following topics -

[Basic Community Rights Education](#)

[Community Rights Around Oregon](#)

[Community Rights Around the Country](#)

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Interview with Delaney by Willi -

How are you using the system to change it?

We're in the system, and to some extent, we must use the system to change it. But we also need to step outside of the 'box of allowable activism' in order to see that the system is rigged in favor of the Corporations.



People have inherent rights established by our constitutions, amendments, initiative processes, etc. But they are buried under years of re-centralized power, where regulations, originally crafted to protect these rights, are now rewritten by the Corporations. The permit process is a good example of why people need to approach our challenges differently.

Our best approach is the initiative system – one of the last remnants of our right to local self-government in action – where we can write and pass laws that protect the people's health, safety, and welfare at the community level, instead of the corporate-written laws that advance corporate profits over people and the planet. These people's laws strengthen our right to govern ourselves free from corporate interference, and fundamentally challenge the existing structure of law that has been manufactured to advance corporate interests over the people's well-being.

### **What are the historical foundations for the emerging community rights movement?**

Well, we can go back to the U.S. Declaration of Independence, or here in Oregon, Article 1, Section 1 of our State Constitution where 'all power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority'. These documents or declarations often emerge from confrontations with oppressive powers. Look at the abolitionist and suffragette struggles; community rights movements are definitely part of our history.

When existing laws violate human and natural rights, protests, civil disobedience, and legal challenges ensue. People don't want to break laws just to have clean water or to prevent eminent domain or to stop Corporations from destabilizing their communities, but when the system of law is broken, what other choices do they have?

### **How does "self-governance" work in your vision?**

I think we already see what self-governance could look like – it just isn't sustainable. When communities initiate local food markets, when small businesses set up shop, when organizations work on behalf of homeless populations, when environmental groups organize to stop pipelines and fracking, those are all attempts at self-governance. And it 'works' when powerful interests cannot overturn the will of the people. If a community decides they want GMO labeling for their food, then any Corporation doing business in their town will need to abide by their rules. It's really just democracy in action.

However, as people in communities nationwide, we need to take the next logical step to pass local laws that protect our health, safety, and welfare because this is self-governance. We need to remind our government that it works for the benefit of the people, and not corporations. Until our government and legal system get that straight, we the people have to do it ourselves.

### **Is CRLC advocating succession from local, county and State governments?**

No. We don't want to break away and build new governments; we just want ours to function on behalf of the people, instead of the Corporations.

### **Don't we, as shareholders, own and direct the corporations?**

It's an argument currently employed by University Presidents and Foundation leaders who reject calls for fossil-fuel divestment; many of these institutions argue that they have more leverage holding shares in these companies than they would if they sold them off. The most glaring problem with this line of reasoning is the lack of evidence that they are helping drive these Big Corporations away from harm and toward better business practices. I'm not saying that it never happens, but the amount of energy and organization just to get these people to the table..., and then we're still stuck with a structure of law that rules for the corporations almost every single time.

But most people are not shareholders of the multinational corporations that are running this country right now, and we're stuck with suffering the decisions of corporate shareholders who lives hundreds and thousands of miles away from our communities. The corporations' singular duty is to make profit for its shareholders – who are not us. We can't expect corporations to put people over profit, but we can expect that our government is authorized to manage corporations so that both corporations and government work for the best interests of the people.

### **What are your favorite fiction or non-fiction stories from your work with CRLC?**

Most people remember pivotal moments from their lives where what they believed to be true, was no longer true. We hear story after story about the first time people heard **Thomas Linzey**, the environmental attorney and CELDF's Executive Director, speak about the failure of environmental laws and how they've been battered about in a system of rules created by the big polluters. Many people in Oregon first came into contact with Linzey at the PIELC, the annual Public Interest Environmental Law Conference.

And if you didn't see him at the event, someone sent you a link to the video. He relayed several stories about people trying to protect their homes, land, and water - people who were repeatedly told, often by their own government, that they did not have the right to say no to corporate harms.

It's astonishing to arrive at the realization that our structure of law works great for Corporations but no longer recognizes (real) people as having those same rights. The very framework we were brought up to believe in is now more fantasy than reality. It's a pretty powerful thing when you wake up to this fact.

### **Tell us about the Charter Amendment to Protect the Right to a Local Food System by [LocalFoodRights.com](http://LocalFoodRights.com)**

This Charter Amendment will protect our local food system – local farmers, farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture and more – by recognizing our community's right to local food and by banning GMO agriculture. We will pass this law in defiance of state law that tells us our community cannot say no to corporate agriculture. We cannot stand idly by while our local food system is exterminated by Big Ag.

This Charter Amendment is a part of a triumvirate of local initiatives that seek to protect the people's right to self-government by law, as well as the community's health, safety, and welfare, which includes economic and environmental well-being. We must proactively seize our authority as We the People to protect ourselves, families and community from corporate control. To do nothing, it too accepts that status quo in which corporations reign.

### **What other State, regional and national groups are you partnering with?**

The Oregon Community Rights Network, the National Community Rights Network, Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF), Support Local Food Rights (SLFR) and 350.org/Eugene.

### **What is your worst fear and greatest hope for the future?**

One of my worst fears is being realized. Just look at Denton, Texas. A local community passes a law to ban fracking, and now banning fracking is illegal. Through the current system of law, Texas ruled that Corporations have the power to tell communities that they must endure the externalities of a hazardous and polluting industry. This is a blatant refusal to recognize people as rights bearing citizens with the power to determine how they want to live their lives. It's no longer deal making in the back room, we're being told to our face to go away. When your government argues for ruinous corporations and tells the electorate to get lost, we're in big trouble.

My greatest hope for the future is that these very public confrontations help wake people up. The adage 'united we stand, divided we fall' is staring us down. It's in our best interest to realize the truth and work together to change the system, because the Corporations will not alter harmful behaviors on their own. We the People need to work together and change the system now.

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### **Delaney Pearson's Bio-**

Delaney is an avid cyclist from California who is learning to love the Oregon rain and mud splatter up her backside. She currently sits on the board of 350.org/ Eugene and on the steering committee for Community Rights Lane County. She works on media and messaging for both organizations and co-leads a writing group for women concerned about climate. She has a minor degree in Economics from Foothill College and a BA from Harvard University.

### **Connections –**

**Delaney Pearson, CRLC Media**

<http://communityrightslanecounty.org/>

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National Website - <http://www.celdf.org>

Facebook: Community Rights Lane County

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