

A WORKBOOK AND ONLINE COMMUNITY for Co-CREATING OUR SUSTAINABILITY ETHIC

Section VII – Living the Ecozoic Era Chapter 2 - Dream

The discovery and connection to a universe of infinite capacity of positive change may be the single most important thing human beings can do to participate in our current societal transition and global awakening.

Appreciative Inquiry Commons

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/research/progTheories.cfm>

How do we alter the ‘Dream of the North’?

When I offered to design the ‘Caring for Creation’ track of the United Religions Initiative North American Conference, I asked the person who was coordinating the conference for co-designers, and specifically people deeply rooted in indigenous culture. I had two primary concerns: the need for the shamanic wisdom that was grounded in reciprocity with the Earth, and an understanding of the indigenous ‘dream time.’ I was given the names of two women, one Native American, the other from South America. They blended the ‘Dream’ phase of Appreciative Inquiry with their own understanding of indigenous dreaming. They designed a process for our group that they then facilitated. For me there was a mysterious, magical quality to their facilitation that I cannot describe adequately, and certainly can’t facilitate myself. I remember looking around the room as the session was drawing to a close and thinking, as has happened so often in this work, that the shaman in each of us had been awakened. I was sitting in a room full of mystics.

In my studies of mysticism and indigenous peoples, I’ve been particularly taken with the Aborigine people of Australia. They believe that conception takes place when the mother first feels the baby kick, and the mother

then meets with the elders of the tribe to share as much as they intuit about the child and the surroundings when the kick was felt. The elders then deliberate and name the new person’s ‘Dream Time.’ The Dream Time is shared with Aborigines from other tribes all over the country. There is a Dream Time walk that is shared by all those of the same Dream Time. Thus, everyone has two distinct affiliations – to their tribe and to their Dream Time. Fighting among Aborigines is very rare because it is taboo to hurt or kill someone of your tribe or Dream Time. Also, there is a song that is shared among all those of the same Dream Time, and its words convey all that is necessary to both feel a sense of abundance along the seemingly barren walk, and to be a contributive member of the community. Because the Aborigines believe in reincarnation and that they return every fourth generation, there is an embedded responsibility to act in ways that insure sustainability.

David Abrams in his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, relates the following story of an Aborigine and his Dream Time walk. While traveling in a van with an Aborigine, his Dream Time song came blurring out with such speed and intensity that he was frothing at the mouth. They were traveling along

Could it be that if we wish to change the ‘Dream of the North’ that we will have to change our relationships with the Earth and all life, and the internal conversations they generate?

his Dream Time at around 30 mph. When they went back and walked the same route, the song was sung at the proper tempo. It is as if there was energy emanating from the Earth, flowing through the person, and manifested in sacred song. I've never experienced such a thing personally, but I've no doubt that it is real. I believe this is a form of physical and spiritual intelligence that creates a sense of sacred place that I honor, although it is beyond anything I can feel in myself. Aborigines often have a favorite place on their Dream Time where they go when it is time to die, and they give themselves back to the Earth – they are an integral part of the life-death-life continuum.

The Native Americans speak of making decisions with seven generations in mind. When I first heard this, I couldn't fathom how to think this way. Someone recently told me to think about the old folks that I knew as a child, and now that I'm in my 60's, think about the lives I'd like to see for my grand children. When I do this, I'm essentially spanning seven intimately familiar generations. Also, when I look back seven generations into the late 1800's, it is reasonable to

construct what was happening then, the cultural shifts that were occurring, and how these changes affect our lives today. And it's not all that hard to project back another seven generations and think about the Founding Fathers – who they were, what they created, and the importance of their creation throughout the subsequent generations.

I suspect that indigenous cultures have a different ongoing internal conversation, and this conversation is largely governed by their abiding relationship with the Earth, all of life, and life's source. Could it be that if we wish to change the 'Dream of the North' that we will have to change our relationships with the Earth and all life, and the internal conversations they generate?

I wonder how we might incorporate some of these ways into our visioning of our 'Dream of the North,' and I think that Otto Scharmer's '[Theory U](#)' gives some great insights. As I read his work and reflect on my own experiences, I feel as if both the dream (oriented around possibilities) and the process (ongoing learning through prototyping) are alive, with emergence being a fundamental characteristic.

Reflection

The 'Appreciative Inquiry Dream' is grounded in virtues based on the best that we have been, both in our lives and in our history, and it is full of aspirations built on those virtues and the transformations necessary to avoid a linear path from the past to the future.

Please take the lists of virtues that have emerged as most important in your life, and blend them with the transformative changes you wish to make. Share them with others, particularly those virtues and transformations that are communal.

What transformational changes are ahead for you, particularly your relationship with the Earth and all of life?

How does this help create the infinite container that puts into play the virtues and principles you most cherish?

What insight does this give you for the finite games in which you wish to engage, and the way they will be played?