Three Qualities of the Authentic Shamanic Teacher

In the previous article, *The Role of an Authentic Teacher* [1], we introduced some thoughts about the nature of the authentic shamanic teacher, allowing us to share a few insights for those who are looking for a shamanic teacher, as well as those who feel drawn to become shamanic teachers themselves.

In doing so, we are speaking from over 27 years of apprenticeship in this timeless tradition, a period during which we have studied with many teachers in the outer world, both Western and Indigenous, as well as with our own inner teachers in spirit.

Under their wise tutelage, we practiced the shaman's craft for more than 12 years before we became shamanic teachers ourselves. At that point in our lives, we did not simply create workshops based on what we had been taught and then start marketing them to our community, proclaiming ourselves as shamanic practitioners and teachers. Rather, members of our community, hearing or knowing of our interests by word of mouth, began to ask us to speak at gatherings.

Often these events took the form of one to two-hour talks accompanied by experiential journeywork or a healing ritual, usually in someone's living room on a Sunday afternoon, sometimes followed by a potluck meal. These informal events continued for several years until Hank published *Spiritwalker - Messages From The Future*. Then the invitations to speak and teach began to come from conferences and institutes. Yet even here, we never sent in our resumes, approaching this well-known institute or conference committee with a proposal for a talk or a workshop. We waited to be invited, and this remains our protocol to this day.

However, the big question still lurks in the shadows for our consideration: how do you know when a shamanic teacher is authentic? How do you know whether this famous author or that well-known person or that unknown (yet fervent) individual has been authentically initiated? This is most important for if there is one thing that spiritual seekers in the transformational community are looking for, it's authenticity, and here, from our experience, are some pointers you might consider.

**The first thing that we look for in a spiritual teacher is humility.**

If someone stands up in front of a group and announces that they are a shaman, that's your first red flag. No authentic shaman ever claims the title. It just isn't done—ever. All authentic shamans know that the Powers to which they have access to are on loan from the spirits. They also know that when a practitioner becomes a little too full of themselves, proclaiming themselves to be this or that, this is the quickest way to lose
connection with that Power. Accordingly, all authentic shamans tend to be very humble people. Sometimes people will use the term shamanic practitioner which is aligned with humility.

**The second quality we watch for is reverence.**

In this case, reverence refers to an active respect that is extended to everyone and everything, regardless of who and what they are. If you find yourself in a group with a teacher who is autocratic, demanding, condemning or rigid, you might reconsider your commitment to that teacher. If you find yourself in a travel group where the leader treats the locals unkindly or with disrespect, this is not a favorable sign.

**The third quality we watch for is self-discipline.**

If you have found yourself with a spiritual teacher who is arrogant, who expresses themselves through proclamation and pontification, or if you have found yourself in the presence of someone who seduces you with wonderful stories and accounts that may or may not be true, you're probably in the wrong place. If you hear through the grapevine that a well-published, well-traveled, and well-known teacher violates the boundaries of the students, specifically sexually, you would be better served to find a more trust-worthy individual to help facilitate your spiritual growth.

That said, allow us to add that we do encourage our workshop participants to work with as many accomplished and authentically-initiated teachers as possible. In addition to their teachings, these individuals bring us into enhanced connection with each other, creating community. Through interconnection and cooperation with others of similar orientation and training, our experience is broadened, our abilities sharpen to become more refined, and our knowledge deepens to become wisdom.

When we walk on the shamanic path of direct revelation, we engage in a spiritual practice that was revealed to us by the Hawaiian kahuna, Hale Makua--a practice within which we are to love all that we see with humility, live all that we feel with reverence, and know all that we possess with discipline ... a path that reflects our honor.

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