

Using Shamanic Methods in Conjunction with Other Nature Connection Techniques to Learn About Ecosystems and Develop Relationships with Nature

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January 17, 2019

The Earth and its Ecosystems are diverse, dynamic, and complex. Within these systems, many entities, energies, processes, and forces interact with each other. Changes are always occurring. Rock type, soil character, water movements, water chemistry, climate, weather, and the composition of living communities all vary from place to place and from one ecosystem to another. Desert, mountain, ocean, boreal forest, tundra, temperate forest, urban savannah, prairie, and other types of ecosystems each have their own character. Humans are an influential part of ecosystems as well as being strongly influenced by how ecosystems function. Our food, water, medicine, shelter, clothing, vehicles, energy, and other parts of our lives come from ecosystems. Our land uses, resource extraction and use, and our waste products all heavily alter the natural world. We change ecosystems and the changes affect nature's gifts to us.

Because nature affects us in many ways, and because we can customize the effects through the ways that we engage, we may find it beneficial to cultivate understandings of the complexity and dynamicism of ecosystems as well as learn techniques for interacting with many aspects of these systems. If we have the awareness and skills, then we can better work with diverse kinds of nature entities and energies. We can avoid negative consequences of our behavior and optimize the health and wellness benefits that come from nature interactions. With better understanding and open lines of communication, our decisions about relating to nature can improve.

Some of the many nature connection techniques that we can use include observations (scientific and otherwise), scholarship, meditation, prayers, artistic expression, food and medicine gathering, song, dance, folk traditions, and energy work (e.g., Qi gong, Reiki, and Yoga). Observations are a key part of nature awareness, as are multiple pathways and levels of engagement. If we observe from many perspectives and engage with a variety of methods, we can cultivate a better understanding than if we work with only a few modalities. See Davis (2018) for information about diverse nature connection techniques.

Shamanic methods, used in conjunction with other techniques or by themselves, can provide many extra layers of depth and dimensions to our understanding of nature and generate more lines of communication with the natural world.

Shamanic journeys and communications conducted while in a shamanic state of consciousness can help us improve awareness and have more responsible interactions with the entities and energies that dwell within particular natural landscapes. These kinds of shamanic methods can provide key information for appropriate environmental stewardship of a particular place. Shamanic exploration has provided missing pieces of past landuse and improved the identification of causes of environmental issues. For example, during shamanic engagement, a landowner and shamanic practitioner saw potential reasons for new hydrologic pathways through an eastern New England landscape. The hypotheses about changes to the

hydrology that were generated during shamanic conversation with the energies of the landscape could then be verified through scientific inquiry.

Conversing with the energies, and/or the spirits, can be very helpful for establishing the right relationship with the land, with a place, or with an ecosystem. In many places, shamanically enhanced communication with nature entities and energies can provide important information for making wise decisions. Who better to consult than the parts of the ecosystem? Shamanic states of consciousness can facilitate another dimension (or multiple other dimensions) of communications.

Talking with ancestral spirits of the land can be helpful for broadening our perspectives. Sometimes these entities can shine light on mysteries about the land use history of a place, and knowledge of landuse history can support successful dealings with the land.

Shamanic journeying ahead in time. or along trajectories to and through natural areas, can help us see what is required to solve a problem or be a good steward. The local spirits (especially water bodies) can be supportive of these kinds of journeys.

Hand in hand with better understanding and stewardship, our personal alchemy and healing can be facilitated through these methods. Roberts and Amidon (1991) make the point that healing the self and healing the Earth is the same work.

May we cultivate high levels of awareness and wisdom about how the Earth and its ecosystems function and then live with greater respect and reverence for Earth's sacred landscapes.

References

Davis, A.M., 2018, Nature Connection Techniques. Web page. URL = http://www.landsolution.com/cwtl/nature_connection_techniques.html.

Roberts, E., and Amidon, E., 1991, Earth Prayers: 365 Prayers, Poems, and Invocations From Around the World. Harper Collins.