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THE FOUNDING INSPIRATION FOR SACRED HOOP MAGAZINE IN 1993
"Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and around and about me was the whole hoop of the world... I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit and the shapes of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the Sacred Hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight and in the centre grew one almighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father, and I saw that it was holy."
 (From the vision of Nicholas Black Elk Lakota Holy Man: 1863 - 1950)

From the Editor



Summer is here (or the deepest of winter depending on where you live of course). I've been enjoying being outside and connecting to the sky and the earth, and all the spirits of the little Welsh valley in which I live.

In America there will be lots of outdoor Native American ceremonies going on, and we have a story about one of these in our first article; a Cherokee Corn Dance, in which Ken Evans had his first taste of Native American spirituality.

I remember my first taste too, almost 30 years ago now, I came home and said "I think my life has just changed." I remember being taught how to make stone 'medicine wheels' on the land, but nothing as elaborate as the Bighorn Medicine Wheel we feature in the next article.

But not all ceremonies are elaborate or involve lots of people taking part. Huw Wyn tells us about Tibetan chöd, an ancient ceremony combining shamanism and Buddhism, often performed by yourself in the most frightening, haunted place you can find.

It's pretty remote on the steppes of Mongolia, especially back 100 years ago, with no GPS and no iPhones, or even an electric torch. It was there in the 1920s that Henning Haslund had the chance to observe a shaman working to heal a man, and we publish his account of the experience.

In the C21st technology means that I can now chat to Mongolian shamans online and GERAL T. BLANCHARD was able to fly into the deepest Amazon in a little Cessna plane, to spend time with the Achuar people there. But the spirits are still the same, and so is the role of the shaman. But it can be a bit shocking when the tribal shaman asks you to run the healing, as GERAL discovers.

I've worked with feathers for 30 years, I learned how to do Native American style beadwork and used lots of bird of prey feathers in my work. But I also enjoyed the brilliant feathers of tropical birds, and still have a collection of big scarlet macaw tail feathers. But the real experts in working with tropical feathers are the native people of the Amazon, and we share some of their splendid craft.

I've been taking part in a lot of discussions on Facebook lately about the use of the word 'shaman;' should we use it, should we call ourselves it and who is one and who is not one. I have one shaman friend, from a Siberian tradition, who says "of course you should call yourself a shaman, it's only like saying you do first-aid," whereas 'good' British reserve says only an egotist would call themselves one. Well, in our next article, David Kowaleski shares with us some of the ways people get to be shamans in traditional cultures.

In the West, the shamanic revival has mostly been workshop led, and the next two articles, by Jim Price and S.Kelly Harrell, look at some aspects of this. Jim writes about holding your silence and not giving away your power, and Kelly reflects on how to move forward when you have come back from the workshop and are working on your own.

And we finish with two articles about ancient sacred rocks from two different animistic traditions and locations: Europe's oldest pagan tradition, in a glen in Scotland, and beautifully decorated reindeer stones on the steppes in Mongolia.

I like rocks, they never need watering and they look even more beautiful when weeds like moss and lichen start growing on them. And remember, wherever you do your ceremonies, in your flat, in your mansion, in your yurt, in your garden, on the steppes or prairie, or in your local park, you are never very far away from a rock!

Blessings to all Beings
 Nicholas Breeze Wood