

# Eldership

## Practice Exercise

This exercise in eldership practice is drawn from a combination of teachings that view life in terms of a mythic journey, for people and communities.

We ask you to read through these brief highlights of an emerging curriculum for the initiation of eldership, and to be in the conversation as a witness for the youngers during the first part.

In the second part of active conversation, please participate as yourself, with your position as a needed presence concerned with eldership in the community at heart and in mind.

Acknowledgements and gratitude go to these specific sources, and to all Ancestors and old rooted cultural teachings in general.

*Angeles Arrien's book, The Four Fold Way*

*Eldership from the Dagara people of Burkina Faso in West Africa*

*Randy Thomas Jones' work as grief ritual choreographer and author of Medicine Without An Expiry Date: Indigenous Remedy for Modern Trouble.*

*Alberto Villoldo's book, Illumination - The Shaman's Way of Healing*

## **Four Fold Way by Angeles Arrien:**

In Arrien's *Four Fold Way*, which is a distillation of archetypes based on the four directions all shamanic cultures have used to help orient themselves within the context of spirit, life and ecology, the elder, or teacher, moves in a way of being open to outcome, not attached to outcome.

The elder's quest is a practice in developing one's human resource of wisdom and our responsibility to life, community and ecology.

The eldership phase is the third stage of life, culminating the experience of life before the final initiation – the Great Crossing in Alberto Villoldo's terms.

The other archetypes in the medicine wheel of *The Four Fold Way* are:

The warrior (leader), whose lessons are in power - about showing up to be present, honour and respect, limits and boundaries, personal responsibility.

The visionary, whose lessons are in ways of seeing – perception, intuition, insight, and images; life purpose, and mastery in the living of one's own gifts.

The healer, whose lessons are in the human resource of love, learning about opening to receive and to give, to care for self and others, to be grateful, even when the challenges are about the fiercest matters in love.

The eldership journey gets us in touch with Ancestral wisdom, our roots, and the legacy of our lines and our place within.

As we move from one life stage to the next we are pressed by life itself to go through an initiatory period that takes us forward and backward, moves us through healing by understanding and forgiving, which we accomplish with a presence of attention to grief over what we are losing so that we can open to become that which comes next.

## **Village Intelligence – wild natured or shamanic ways of community, a living system**

In village ways, matters of grief, potential, initiation, resources, needs, responsibilities and cooperation are matters for everyone. Elders and the children hold the weight of the village while the partners, parents, and coming of agers conduct the power. Nature and Ancestors are always involved, and a kind of Sacred balance and magic results for the basis of healthy community.

### ***Illumination, The Shaman’s Way of Healing by Alberto Villoldo***

In Villoldo’s work, *Illumination ~ the Shaman’s Way of Healing*, he teaches about seven primary initiations in our lives. He refers to them as demons and angels that are built into the mythic journey of every life.

The first three are the experiences undertaken through the day to day life in family and community, that come in childhood and coming of age; the next two are those of partners and parents, and the last two, those of elders.

The are, in order of their appearance around the wheel of life:

|                      |                                  | Connection to Arrien’s <i>Four Fold Way</i> |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Birth                | Wrath, healed by peace.          | Lessons in use of power.                    |
| Manhood or Womanhood | Greed, healed by generosity      | Lessons in vision.                          |
| First Love           | Lust, healed by purity of intent |   |
| Marriage             | Sloth, healed by courage.        | Lessons in use of power.                    |
| Parenthood           | Envy, healed by compassion.      | Lessons in love.                            |
| Sagehood             | Gluttony, healed by temperance.  | Lessons in wisdom.                          |
| The Great Crossing   | Pride, healed by humility.       | Lessons in wisdom, power, love, and vision. |

The teachings that Villoldo shares come from the traditions of the original cultures of people known as the Laika. In these traditions, there is a path of human consciousness evolution with four stages,

Serpent (existence),

Jaguar (family and creativity),

Hummingbird, (heart and connection),

Eagle, a level still to come in the future, beyond our present evolution into Hummingbird.

The conclusion of the Laika cultural view, and echoed by many other old cultures in their own words, is that this time in humanity's evolution is the time when we collectively evolve into the Hummingbird stage, living from the heart, re-cognizing our connection to all that is, healing polarities, dissolving illusion, living with gratitude, balancing meaning with reason.

## **Conclusion**

When you come to play this position in our commons conversation, we ask that you arrive 45 minutes ahead of the rest to say hello to your fellow elders, to run through the tasks, to ask any questions you have, and to join hands with all of us in a prayer for the cultivation of our circle of care toward the culturing of community that nourishes all life.

Thank you.