

## **Two Shamanism Healing Stories at the Edge**

### ***A Healing Story: My experience with Shamanism***

by: Erin Cunningham-Carroll

Throughout my life I have struggled with disconnection and a feeling of separateness. I experienced connection through nature and only a handful of people. My work with Shamanism and Martha has allowed me to experience a connection with all things. This connectedness has evolved from acknowledging the beauty of Mother Earth that exists around me, to experiencing a cellular and transcendental awareness of the rhythms and cycles that surround me. I have gained an understanding of my own place within these rhythms and a level of intimacy that I am continuing to nurture. The Shaman practices and journeying have shown me that I am never alone, as I have access to unlimited resources of wisdom, guidance, protection, and healing. On a daily basis I experience the benefits of working with Martha and utilizing Shamanism.

Specifically, Soul retrieval for me was a beautiful gift. Prior to my first Soul retrieval I often reflected on times in my life when I felt free-spirited. I struggled to reclaim this piece through numerous external changes, but I remained stuck and unable to connect with this part of myself. When I experienced my first Soul retrieval, I could feel a warmth/heat expanding until it filled me, as Martha blew in my returned Soul part through my heart center. My emotions were raw, including the joy and excitement for my newly returned Soul part. Over the next 3-4 days I noticed emotions and behaviours that had previously been faded memories were now a part of me again, a part of my living. I was silly and carefree without reservation, hesitation, or falsities. I was spiritually and emotionally full, without any holes or vacancies.

When I am less fragmented I can see clearly all that I am meant to see; I can see the beauty that cocoons me and the gifts that I have been given that will help me do my life's work. When I am less fragmented I can be myself fully in what ever I am without fear or shame. Meaning and purpose of events and experiences do not seem so cryptic and everything flows instead of being stuck and a struggle.

My work with Martha and my experiences with Shamanism have been life altering in a positive way. I feel safe to explore the worlds around me while deepening my connection with all of creation. I am eternally grateful.

~ Erin

### ***My experience of Soul Retrieval***

#### Harold's Story

I want to describe my experience over a weekend in early November 2005 at the Northern Edge, when Martha Lucier performed a soul retrieval with me.

Having a soul retrieval is becoming more common these days, so I'll emphasize a few things that I think were different about mine. Foremost, I was able to work with Martha, a gifted shamanic practitioner closely attuned to spirit. Also, because the retrieval took place in the natural setting of the Edge and unfolded over a two-day period, as opposed to a briefer time, I feel that the healing changes that flowed to me were enhanced and deepened.

I first knew that I wanted/needed a soul retrieval session last summer, near the end of the five-day vision quest canoe led by Martha and Chris. Sitting alone in a wetland meadow in Algonquin Park through 30 hours, I arrived pretty much at square one on a personal level. There I discovered a yearning to feel whole inside, to finally come home to myself. Something was missing for me, and it seemed that I had felt that way forever. I spoke about it later with Martha, and she said that I could consider a soul retrieval to work specifically on this issue.

When I got around to booking a time with Martha in the fall, I envisioned it as a one-time afternoon session on a Saturday with a departure that evening, sort of on the model of a visit with a doctor in Toronto, where I live. However, Martha advised a less hurried process, and I arranged accommodation and meals at the Edge from lunch Saturday through lunch Sunday. Ahead of that weekend, I worked as much as I could to prepare for the retrieval—reading Sandra Ingerman's book about the process, reflecting, meditating and journeying. I really wanted the experience to count.

Upon my arrival at the Edge on that Saturday I was struck by how well the facilities were arranged to support my personal work. I stayed alone in the Osprey, a small separate lodging with a wood stove. The meals prepared by Vicki were regular and delicious. There were no demands on me save the ones from inside myself. A sacred container was being provided, and I was deeply grateful to be able to make use of it.

The first of three sessions with Martha was in the Gazebo, where we journeyed to prepare for the retrieval that evening. Our initial work together was personally moving, touching on core issues. With Martha's help, I entered a special space, one of deep personal exploration and frequent synchronicities, which I would inhabit for the next 24 hours.

At the conclusion of this initial session, Martha gave me tasks to complete that took me outside on the property of the Edge for a few hours to ask the guidance and support of the four elemental spirits: water, earth, air and fire. In my first encounter, as I stood sheltered from the drizzle in an alder bush looking out at the lake, I was shown a way to be with the powerful and sometimes conflicting emotions I was feeling. Out on the water, bursts of energy were freely manifesting, ordering themselves as successive waves moving in a common direction, finally dissipating at the shore. In the same way, allowing the emotional energies in me to fully manifest, I was more able to accept their flow without resistance.

Over the next two hours I contacted the four elements in turn and found an ally in each one of them. Again and again where I had an urgent issue or question, and was as open as possible to encountering the elemental spirits and energies, I received personally meaningful information and guidance. Martha sent me to these allies for assistance several more times over the course of my hours at the Edge.

The work of the afternoon had readied us for the evening retrieval session. I was apprehensive, but in a 'good' way, that is, positively expectant with a tinge of fear of the unknown. The soul retrieval was a formal and impressive ritual in Points North. First, the healing spirit powers were invited and made welcome. Then Martha journeyed to find my missing soul part. I chose to journey at the

same time. When she had located and brought it back, she blew it into my chest and head. I felt thrust into a place that was turbulent and surprising.

At the conclusion, Martha and I did not recount our experiences, leaving that for the morning. I walked back alone to the Osprey in the dark. Along the path, I consulted my elemental allies for support as Martha had recommended. Then alone in the cabin, I processed the information and impressions I had received, far into the night. One issue in particular dominated my thoughts and emotions. In the warm, safe setting of the Osprey I drummed as loudly as I needed to, and journeyed as deeply as I needed to, in order to meet the issue head on.

The next morning Martha and I met again, and shared what we had each experienced the night before. Martha's account of her soul retrieval journey included a series of revelations for me. Then she gently and patiently helped me to integrate the new soul part, to come home to myself for the first time. Finally, to bring closure, we thanked the many spirits who had helped us over the past hours. After lunch with Martha, I left for home.

As I look back over the 24-hour period, I see that the process of soul retrieval, like any inner unfolding, happens gradually, according to its own rhythm or pattern. Fortunately, I had the time to fully experience its initial phases with Martha's wise and experienced help, in the supportive natural setting of the Edge. I continue to marvel at the quality and depth of the experience, and am thankful that it was available for me at an important time in my life.

~ Harold