

## **When we Become a Dreaming Culture**

by Robert Moss

I have a dream: that we will again become a society of dreamers. In a dreaming culture, dreams are valued and celebrated. The first business of the day, for most people, is to share dreams and seek to harvest their guidance. The community joins in manifesting the energy and insight of dreams in waking life. In a dreaming culture, nobody says, "It's only a dream" or "In your dreams, mister." It is understood that dreams are both wishes ("I have a dream") and experiences of the soul.

Dreaming traditions – like those of Australian Aborigines, Native Americans and early European peoples – recognize that the dreamworld is a real world, possibly more real than much of waking life, in which we often stumble about in the condition of sleepwalkers. In big dreams, we "wake up" to a larger reality. Dreaming peoples know that one of the central functions of dreaming is to keep us connected to sources of healing, creativity and spiritual insight in an order of reality that is hidden from ordinary perception. Another of the vital functions of dreaming is to rehearse us for challenges that lie ahead in ordinary life. Dreaming peoples know that we dream the future, maybe all the time.

If dreams were honored throughout our society, our world would be different.... and magical. Let me count the ways:

### **Dream Partners**

Personal relations will be richer, more intimate and creative. There will be less room for pretense and denial. Sharing dreams, we overcome the taboos that prevent us from expressing our real needs and feelings and open ourselves to those of others.

### **Family life and home entertainment**

"What did you dream?" is the first question asked around the table in a family of dreamers. In our dreaming culture, families everywhere will share dreams and harvest their gifts of story, mutual understanding and healing. Parents will listen to their children's dreams and help them to confront and overcome nightmare terrors. Best of all, they will learn from their children, because kids are wonderful dreamers. This might be bad for TV ratings but it would bring back the precious art of storytelling, helping us learn to tell our own story (a gift with almost limitless applications) and to recognize the larger story of our lives.

### **Dream Healing**

In our dreaming culture, dream groups will be a vital part of every clinic, hospital and treatment center and doctors will begin their patient interviews by asking about dreams as well as physical symptoms. Health costs will plummet, because when we listen to our dreams, we receive keys to self-healing. Dreams often alert us to possible health problems long before physical symptoms develop; by heeding those messages, we can sometimes avoid manifesting those symptoms. Dreams give us an impeccable nightly readout on our physical, emotional and spiritual health.

### **The Care of Souls**

As a dreaming culture, we will remember that the causes of disease are spiritual as well as physical. We will use dreams to facilitate soul recovery. In dreams where we encounter a younger version of ourselves, or are drawn back to a scene from childhood, we are brought to recognize a deeper kind of energy loss, that shamans call soul loss. Through trauma or abuse, through addiction or great sadness, we can lose a part of our vital soul energy. So long as it is missing, we are not whole and the gap may be filled by sickness or addiction. Dreams show us what has become of our lost children and when it is timely to call them home.

### **Dream Incubation**

In a dreaming culture, we will remember to "sleep on it," asking dreams for creative guidance on school assignments, work projects, relationships and whatever challenges are looming in waking life. When we seek dream guidance, we must be ready for answers that go beyond our questions,

because the dream source is infinitely deeper and wiser than what Yeats called the "daily trivial mind."

#### Using Dream Radar

Dreaming, we routinely fold time and space and scout far into the future. As a dreaming culture, we will work with dream precognition on a daily basis -- and develop strategies to revise the possible futures foreseen in dreams for the benefit of ourselves and others.

#### Building Communities

When we share dreams with others, we recognize something of ourselves in their experiences. This helps us to move beyond prejudice and build heart-centered communities.

#### The Art of Dying

The path of the soul after death, say the Plains Indians, is the same as the path of the soul in dreams -- except that after physical death, we won't come back to the same body. Dreamwork is a vital tool in helping the dying to prepare for the conditions of the afterlife.

#### Walking the Path of Soul

The greatest gift of dreaming is that it facilitates an encounter between the little self and the big self. Active dreaming is a vital form of soul remembering: of reclaiming knowledge that belonged to us, on the levels of soul and spirit, before we entered this life experience. So much of the harm we do to ourselves and others stems from the fact that we have forgotten who we are and what we are meant to become. Dreaming, we remember, and encounter authentic spiritual guides who will help us on our paths.

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