

COMOX VALLEY CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 29
The World Beneath Cultures

In our last chronicle we discussed the shamanic journey. In this chronicle the Shaman is going to take us on a journey. The journey itself is imaginary. The place he is taking us to is very real— down to the cellular level, to the world beneath cultures.

The Shaman is a modern shaman so he agrees to meet us in a large downtown store in front of the elevators. He welcomes us and invites us into the “Environmental Elevator.” He pushes the down button. We descend from the ground floor, to the organizational floor, to the systems floor, to the culture floor, and finally to the cellular floor where we get out.

At first we don’t know what to make of what we see. It is unlike anything we have ever seen before—a frenzied world in motion. The Shaman says, “Don’t be alarmed. It is all quite normal. This is the place where, in the past, your scientists used to look for discreet “building blocks” as the foundation of life. . But we now know that there are no such things. Instead there are only cells, entangled cells, that are the basis of all life—plant life, animal life, human life, Earth life and even the life of the conscious universe.”

“I’m going to give you the tour in three different areas” said the Shaman. “I ask you to take careful note of what you see and, at the end of each area, I’ll ask you for your observations.” So off we go.

The tour was like wandering through a huge room filled with cells gyrating in constant flux. After we passed through it he said. “Unless you are a scientist looking through a microscope all day it must seem very confusing. But did anyone notice anything?”

A woman held up her hand and said, “Confusing is an understatement. But each cell seemed to be unique—to have its own individual identity.

“You’re right” said the Shaman. “Each cell is unique. But it is like the single human cell. As it develops it divides into arm cells, heart cells, head cells, brain cells, each one unique. And when the child is born he or she is unique, different from every other human. Any other observations?”

A teen-aged boy said, “Even though they are different they all seem to be living.” “Right again” said the Shaman. “Each one is living, whether they are insects, plants, animals, human, or even Earth itself.

An older gentleman said, “I’ve noticed something. Even though they are different and living....and I might be wrong in saying this.... they all seem related to one another. The shaman said “Yes, they are.” Very insightful. Not only are they related to one another, they are dependent upon one another. They are a community.”

“So the cellular life has three distinct elements: individuality of species, life, and relationship with one another in community. Well done. Let’s move on to the next room.”

This room was also very large but there was a difference. The cells were moving much more slowly. Some of them were hardly moving at all. After we got through the area the Shaman said to us, “I’m sure you will notice the difference. Some of these cells are sick or dying. But, though you can’t tell from a single visit, if you had been taking this tour twenty years ago or even ten years ago you would notice that there are now many more cells in this area. This is what we might think of as a hospital emergency ward. We are not sure how many will be saved.”

We moved on to the last room. It was huge but it was darker. There was nothing in it except memorial plaques on the walls: “Last Dinosaur” and a date, “Last Carrier Pigeon” and a date, and so forth. The Shaman said, “This is the Anthropocene Room. It is the place that reminds us of the species that have passed out of existence. And every day the list is rapidly increasing.

The shaman said, “Well that’s the tour. I’m sure that most of you must have mixed feelings but I’m hoping it will remind you that you have a mission.”

On the way back to the elevator he said, “Every cell that you have seen down here, if it is to survive, needs your help. It must get through the various stops up the elevator: culture, systems, organizations, and the top floor which is your present environment. That is your mission—to help them survive.

He shook hands with each person and gave him or her a card which he called, “A little souvenir of the visit.” It was a Lakota prayer. It said...

Grandfather Great Spirit

All over the world the faces of living ones are alike,
With tenderness they have come up out of the ground.
Look upon your children that they may
Face the winds and walk the good road to the
Day of Quiet.

Grandfather Great Spirit,

Fill us with the Light,
Give us the Strength to understand, and the eyes to see
Teach us to walk the soft Earth as relatives to all that live.

Mike Bell, Comox Valley Climate Change Network