



From *Kindred Spirit*, Winter 2003, Issue 65

Shaman, Healer, Sage

Alberto Villoldo, Ph.D.

A professor of psychology researching the effects of the mind on the brain discovered Western philosophy and medicine doesn't know it all when he encountered Inka shamans who could 'see' genetic imprints of health and disease taking shape around people. Carolyn Burdet meets a doctor who walks in both worlds.

Inka shamans maintain that the luminous energy field holds a template of how we heal, how we become ill, the jobs we do, our relationships, how we live and how we may die. These imprints predispose us to keep creating the same conditions.

By erasing the imprints of disorder and disease left on the luminous energy field by genes, past illnesses and traumatic events in our life, the Inka were able to restore the mind, spirit and body to health.

Dr. Villoldo, who in his position as a clinical professor at San Francisco State University was studying the effects of the mind on brain chemistry, was so impressed by the success of the Inka methods that he decided to learn them.

Villoldo was apprenticed to Don Antonio, a high shaman of the Q'ero nation, the last surviving Inka peoples, who believe that their sacred teachings are vital to bring ecological philosophy to the West.

The most direct and deadly way a shaman is called to his or her path is



During an expedition to the Andes 25 years ago, a Californian medical anthropologist, Dr. Alberto Villoldo, encountered a group of shamanic healers who could cure illness before any symptoms appeared in the body. They did not treat the physical body itself, but focused on the 'luminous energy field' enveloping the body.

by lightning. Don Antonio was struck by lightning when he was 12 – and it seems the lightning bolt rewired his brain. 'Don Antonio, the shaman with whom I studied, believed he could track his luminous nature – what we call the soul – through time, like tracking a deer.'

Alberto Villoldo, who walks in both worlds, explains the techniques in psychological terms as: 'We lay extra cerebral pathways in the brain.'

Imprints are recorded in the luminous energy field in code, just as information is stored encoded on a computer disc – if you look at a hard disc you can't see sentences etched on it.

'When I see a client with a physical or emotional condition, there is always an imprint associated with it. This looks to an individual who can see the luminous energy field like a cloud or nebula over the affected organ, or over the affected chakra if it's a psychological condition. This does not mean a causal relationship between the two. I have worked with individuals who have an

inherited predisposition to breast cancer or heart disease, who have an imprint over the affected part of the body, and have not manifested the condition yet. They have a higher probability of manifesting it than you or I and it doesn't have to express itself if they practise prevention through diet, exercise, positive thinking. The question is, what constitutes an accepted level of risk before you stop smoking, exercise, or seek treatment by energy medicine?

Alberto Villoldo teaches shamanic healing – lecturing to Western doctors, working with corporate clients, training nurses, social workers, carpenters.

'The Ph.D. is a passport. The fact that I'm a doctor opens doors so I can teach spirit,' says Dr. Villoldo. 'The medicine of the future is energy medicine. There are 50 or 60 medical doctors training with us who are practising energy medicine. We've come to the end of medicine. The third highest cause of death is the illnesses you pick up in hospitals.'

'Our Western language of health care is the language of warfare – if we cut ourselves, we believe microscopic organisms will feed off us, creating infection, so we have antibiotics to kill the microscopic organisms.'

'The shaman sees a collaborative universe that will go out of its way to support you if you are in proper relationship to your universe – but

it's not a system of intervention. The profound spiritual experience of a healing will bring you into right relationship with the universe.'

His organisation, The Four Winds Society, holds courses in New York and Utah in the US, in Australia, and there are training courses in Europe in Dublin and at a castle in Holland.

'We don't teach it within the village context. We're not training people to become villagers, we're training the medicine knowledge of the shaman.'



'Shamanism is an evolving body of knowledge that honours the tradition of medicine that has gone before. We differentiate between cures and healing – you can be given [treatment] and not be healed. You can have a tumour removed but the illness may not be healed. Seldom does removing tissue produce a healing. Equally, you may have a healing but not be cured. When deep healing takes place a person may die in peace.'

There is always a ceremonial aspect to healing, but only to enter into a meditative or sacred space. No ceremoniousness. We do not stand

on ceremony. It's very contemporary. We've stripped it down to essential core processes. Corporate shamans and doctors undertake this training.'

Do you have to be in a 'shamanic trance' to see someone's luminous energy body? 'No, but there's a state of consciousness similar to meditation or the yoga practice of shivasana.'

Four Winds does not use mind-altering herbs to induce trance in students. 'Psychotropic herbs can be terribly destructive,' he says.

Ironically, one group his beliefs will undoubtedly challenge is healers.

'The techniques for healing or harming someone are identical. We teach our students to practise "may Thy will be done", so it is the will of Spirit and not mine that is operating. Psychic healers are often very gifted but poorly trained in energy medicine.'

'Intuition is not enough, psychic abilities need to be developed and it is important to learn the techniques of healing. This is what the ancient mystery schools taught – from the Celtic to the shamanic,' he maintains. 'There is an assumption that energy healing cannot harm someone. But I see dozens of clients for healing who come for help after receiving healing from a poorly trained healer.'

'Energy medicine practices set the immune system free to function

The Inka shamans maintain that the luminous energy field holds a template of how we heal, how we become ill, the sort of jobs we will do, how we choose our relationships, how we live and how we might die. These imprints predispose us to keep creating the same kinds of conditions.

optimally and bring about healing. When you treat a disease you can create multiple complications in the client if you are not careful. When you unblock the immune system, physical healing happens naturally. When you unblock the chakra system, emotional healing is accelerated.'

Dr. Villoldo claims healing can exacerbate illness by feeding it. He says cancer, for instance, feeds off the increased energy and blood flow which healing can provide.

He says a healer can also be potentially dangerous if they are still on their own journey of personal transformation.

It's important that a healer knows their stories, so they don't have to heal through their clients. Otherwise, as a healer, you will be attracting people who act out your story. In that case, the healer is unconscious and keeps recreating their own need for healing through the client.'

The medicine of shamanism operates in another universe from the medicine of pharmacology. The fundamental difference is the contrasting perspective of knowledge.

'Information can provide a diagnosis. Knowledge is about being able to heal.

'This knowledge is universal, and I believe it contains a message of hope for Westerners.' says Villoldo, 'especially once we have exhausted the limits of Western medicine, of ecology, and of sustainability in the planet.

'This is the same knowledge of the Celts, and the Aborigines, that has been persecuted in the West. It is not Inka, although it comes through the Inka, just as mathematics is not Greek even though it came through the Greeks.

'The shaman differentiates between information and knowledge. Information equates the formula H₂O with water. But knowledge



can make it rain – the shaman “prays rain”, and the rain comes when he or she becomes rain.’

Mythology lends clues to the varying views of these sciences. ‘The mythology of the West is patriarchal. The shaman healer is the feminine, of the earth. On no other mythology on earth is the feminine born of the masculine. This is the only culture to have a mythology where we are thrown out of the Garden of Eden. The Native people are given the earth as custodians.’

He tells a story that bears this out. ‘I was in the amazon with a medicine woman and her husband. She told me to walk across a clearing and walk into the rain forest. All I could hear was the chatter of insects and birds. I took a couple of steps into the rain forest and the singing stopped. Silence. The medicine woman said, “They know you’ve been kicked out of the Garden of Eden.” I was convinced they could smell my toothpaste or deodorant, not that they were sensing my inner condition. I smeared my body with boa fat – which, believe me, is not pleasant – and thought, “they’ll smell another snake slithering into the rain forest”. Again, the singing stopped as soon as I stepped into the rain forest. It was not until ten years later that I could walk into the rain forest as someone who has walked with beauty on the earth.

‘Everything is alive. The river and canyons never lie to you. In the West we live in a world that’s inanimate. The shaman speaks to gravity and defies the laws of physics. We are asked to make it rain or call in lightning. In fact, you don’t call in the lightning, the lightning comes.

‘One time I was with my mentor. The high mountain lagoons were drying out. The villagers asked him to call in the rain. He said: “I’m going to pray rain.” I

Soul Retrieval

Trauma can cause our luminous energy field to fragment and aspects of ourself can become lost or stuck. Part of our soul can be lost at the scene of a shocking accident, for instance, causing a gap in our psyche that cannot develop until we remove and repair our fragmented self.



contradicted him: “you’re going to pray for rain.” “No,” he said. “I’m going to pray rain.” He meditated for three days, then the clouds gathered and it started to rain. I said: “you made it rain!” “No,” he said, “it rained.” That’s the task– there is no “I” making it rain. In the same way, if you are calling for peace you have to pray peace, you become peace. There is no “I healed”. Healing simple happens: spirit heals, so a person heals themselves. The person has to want to heal. If you don’t want to heal, there’s no healing that can help you.’

More Information

- *Shaman, Healer, Sage*, – How to Heal Yourself and Others with the Energy Medicine of the Americas, by Alberto Villoldo is published by Bantam.
- Alberto Villoldo has a Ph.D. in psychology from Saybrook Institute, California. While on the San Francisco State University faculty Dr. Villoldo founded and directed the Bio-Self Regulation Laboratory to investigate the effects of energy healing on blood and brain chemistry.

- Alberto Villoldo founded The Four Winds Society to link ancient shamanic tradition with modern medicine and psychology, and set up the Healing The Light Body School to teach the healing wisdom of Inka medicine people, www.thefourwinds.com.
- Courses by the Healing The Light Body School are being held in UK, e-mail: fourwinds@thefourwinds.com, www.thefourwinds.com

Thanks to *Kindred Spirit* magazine for permission to use this interview. *Kindred Spirit* is a bi-monthly publication and the leading guide to Mind, Body and Spirit in the UK. Phone: 44 1803 866686 e-mail: www.kindredspirit.co.uk

