

and deep personal experience. This suggests that the Planetary Dance is a performed expression of the spirituality of the persons involved, many of whom have been associated with Halprin and the Tamalpa Institute. This particularly provides an example of Anna King's description of *spirituality* as being "a term that firmly engages with the feminine, with green issues, with ideas of wholeness, creativity, and interdependence, with the interfusion of the spiritual, the aesthetic and the moral" (King 1996: 345). Halprin has traveled around the world and established Planetary Dances in many different countries, so there will be a number of dances going on simultaneously, often on the weekend closest to the spring equinox. Out of this is developing a global community of persons who share this spirituality with its particular ecological and moral vision and its performed and aesthetic expression.

Craig S. Strobel

Further Reading

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- See also: Dance; Deep Ecology; Deep Ecology – Institute for.

Plastic Medicine Men

"Plastic medicine men" is a term that refers to people who falsely claim to be indigenous spiritual leaders. Some plastic medicine (wo)men make no claims to be indigenous, but do make false claims about being mentored by a spiritual leader. One prominent example is Lynn Andrews, the author of several books, including, *Medicine Woman*, and *Jaguar Woman*. She claims to have been mentored by a Cree Medicine Woman, Agnes Whistling Elk. However, her book describes a hodgepodge of pan-Indian cultural practices, and no one by the name of Agnes Whistling Elk

lives in the community Andrews claims to have visited. Some plastic medicine (wo)men actually claim to be indigenous, such as Brooke Medicine Eagle and Dhayani Yahoo, although the tribes in which they claim membership do not recognize them. And finally, some plastic medicine (wo)men actually are recognized members of a native nation, but they do not have the authority within their tribe to act as a spiritual leader. One of the most famous such figures was Sun Bear, who became famous on the New Age lecture circuit, but whose teachings were generally denounced by native communities.

The appropriation of Native American spiritual/cultural traditions by white society has a long history in the U.S. – from colonists dressing as Indians during the Boston Tea Party, to the YMCA sponsoring "Indian Guide" programs for youth. In contemporary society, this practice of "playing Indian" is particularly notable in the New Age movement in which American Indian spirituality, with its respect for nature and the interconnectedness of all things, is often presented as the panacea for all individual and global problems. An industry has developed around the selling of sweatlodges or sacred pipe ceremonies, which promise to bring individual and global healing. Consequently, it has become economically profitable for peoples to market themselves as spiritual leaders. While there is not a monolithic opinion on this practice or on particular plastic medicine (wo)men, many native nations and organizations, such as the Traditional Circle of Elders, have publicly denounced this phenomenon. Hopi, Cheyenne, and Lakota elders have also issued statements against it. One Oakland-based group named SPIRIT exists only to oppose spiritual appropriation. Indian nations are even using the legal apparatus of intellectual property rights to file lawsuits against those who make a profit by stealing Indian culture. Unfortunately, these attempts have been largely unsuccessful to date because native traditions are considered "public" property under current U.S. intellectual property rights. Ironically, because copyrights are not granted to communities, individuals can actually appropriate native songs, traditional medicines, etc. that are considered part of the public domain, claim intellectual ownership over them, and deny native communities use of these same traditions.

On the surface, it may appear that native spiritual appropriation is based on a respect for Indian spirituality. Consequently, it often comes as a surprise to many non-Indians that native communities have become increasingly vocal in opposing this appropriation. One reason for this conflict between those who appropriate native religious traditions and native communities is that many non-Indians often hold essentially Christian assumptions about how all spiritual practices should operate. One common assumption is that indigenous religious traditions are proselytizing traditions – that is, native spiritual leaders want non-Indians to know about and to practice

native spiritual traditions. Unlike Christianity, however, native spiritualities depend upon the land base that gave rise to them; they cannot easily be transplanted to another geographical area. Many ceremonies must be performed at specific locations.

Christian colonizers in the U.S have had a very different relationship with the land than native people. Christians have often regarded the land as something to controlled and subdued. Christian understandings of land are reflected in Genesis 1:28:

God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

Because Christian traditions have often regarded land simply as something for human use, it generally does not figure prominently in religious practice. By contrast, because native peoples regard the land as their relative, it is critical that land be respected ceremonially. Just as the land provides for the people so that they can live, so must the community care for the land ceremonially so that she can live. As a result, unlike Christianity, native traditions are not proselytizing. Traditions are seen as applying specifically to the land base from which they arise; they do not apply to peoples from other lands.

Because Christianity is a proselytizing religion, its adherents generally attempt to “spread the Word” to as many potential followers as possible. The desire is to inform as many people as possible about the Christian religion so that individuals will want to convert to the faith. Also, because Christianity often emphasizes the individual believer’s relationship to God, it is important that every individual understand the doctrines and practices of the faith. Native traditions by contrast, often stress communal rather than individual practice. Consequently, it is not always necessary or even desirable for every member of a nation to engage in every ceremony or to have the same level of knowledge about the spiritual ways of a tribe. The reason is that all the members know that the spiritual leaders are praying for the well-being of the whole tribe. As Supreme Court Justice Brennan once stated in defense of Indian religion: “Although few tribal members actually made medicine at the most powerful sites, the entire tribe’s welfare hinges on the success of individual practitioners” (in Smith 1999: 13).

It is not always necessary for all members of a tribe to be equally knowledgeable about all ceremonies, and because, as mentioned previously, the ceremonies only apply to the people of a specific land base, in many cases, ceremonial knowledge must be kept secret. Consequently, many tribes prohibit non-tribal members from coming to their lands when ceremonies are performed. The New Age

image of the all-wise shaman going on the lecture circuit to teach indigenous traditions is antithetical to the manner in which native traditions are actually practiced. To make these acts of spiritual appropriation even more problematic, most plastic medicine people charge for their services. True spiritual leaders do not make a profit from their teachings, whether it is through selling books, workshops, sweatlodges, or otherwise. Spiritual leaders teach the people because it is their responsibility to pass what they have learned from their elders to the younger generations. They do not charge for their services. Indeed, they generally do not describe themselves as spiritual leaders at all. They are just simply known as such by the community. To quote one native activist, “if someone tells you they are a spiritual leader, they’re not.”

Andrea Smith

Further Reading

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See *also*: Aboriginal Spirituality and the New Age in Australia; Holy Land in Native America; Indian Guides; Indigenous Religions and Cultural Borrowing; Manifest Destiny; Mother Earth; New Age; The Sacred and the Modern World; Scouting; Snyder, Gary.

Pogačnik, Marko (1944–)

Born in Kranj (Slovenia) in 1944, Marko Pogačnik has become one of Europe’s most important spiritual teachers in landscape and Earth healing. Schooled as a sculpturist, he became known as an artist, landscape planning adviser, and geomancist. Among other things, he designed Slovenia’s coat of arms after the country’s independence in 1991. He is a teacher at the School for Geomancy “Hagia Chora,” which was founded in Germany in 1994–1995. Since the 1980s, the core of his activities has involved Earth-healing projects and applying the principles of geomancy. Pogačnik has developed his own distinctive methods based on his spiritual experiences, but has sought to make them measurable and replicable for other geomants. He believes that with the turn of the millennium the Earth began a major evolutionary transformation process and he has engaged himself in worldwide actions around this theme.

Pogačnik’s basic idea is the multidimensionality of Earth and landscape: the physical forms of Earth phenomena – from individual life forms to landscapes – are intimately connected with different levels of non-material dimensions which are essential for the maintenance and health of the web of life. He distinguishes three such dimensions: a “structural” or “emotional” dimension through which the etheric life-forces nourish all levels and