

MY JOURNEY: DISCOVERING THE QUETICO

The summer of my freshman year in high school, I had a life changing experience after witnessing the passion of wilderness preservationist, Charlie Ericksen. Charlie was a gifted photographer who brought awareness about ecological inter-connectedness and sustainability into public schools. He lived a life of magic on an island on Nym Lake in the Canadian wilderness. I received a scholarship to canoe the pristine waters of [Quetico Provincial Park](#) in Atikokan, Ontario for two weeks, and Charlie was my canoe mate. One day, paddling on my own around camp, I heard an inner voice, clear as a bell say, *Everything is in Relationship!* The understanding of these words has continued to resonate as a deep truth my entire life.

Charlie dedicated his life to ecological education through wilderness experiences from his island home with his wolf-dog, sidekick Lobo. The curriculum continues today as [The Voyageur Wilderness Programme](#). My maiden experience there was so profound that I later attended Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin, which was a short distance from the Minnesota border. This allowed me to visit yearly and become friends to the man who changed my life and reflected the essential value of Mother Earth. I spent many unforgettable summers portaging those waters with kindred spirits who followed the call to reconnect to that sacred land.

ON THE SHINING BIG-SEA-WATER

As I became a part of an extended family of artists and environmental activists, my dream to build a log cabin and become self sufficient manifested. I lived off grid and worked co-creatively to construct homes, co-produce historical multi-media projects and sustainable businesses in Bayfield, Wisconsin. I will forever cherish the memories of living on the shores of Gitche Gumee, so aptly named by the Ojibwe people meaning *great sea*. The Ojibwe name for the lake is actually *gichi-gami*, and *kitchi-gami* in other dialects, and named by Longfellow, *Gitche Gumee* in *The Song of Hiawatha*.

OUR SUPERNATURAL SENSES

I returned to Chicago and was taking a hypnotherapy training with a medical hypnoanalyst and was staying with my family in a nearby suburb. On the last day of the training, upon returning to their home, I pulled into the driveway with a sudden, deep sinking feeling in my heart. I stopped the car immediately and ran in to make sure everything was all right and my mother let me know that my grandmother has passed.

I was torn about going to the funeral but was so close to her that I felt I needed to attend for a reason beyond obligation. As I stood by the casket I suddenly sensed her body hovering over us and I asked, *“What are you doing here?”*. I will never forget her reply. She said she was waiting for me to arrive so that she could say goodbye. I never told anyone about my experience until years later, for at that time, people thought you were a little ‘crazy’ if you shared those kind of experiences! I now understand I had a gift of clairaudience, and that those who wish to connect with us can do so if we are open to receiving their communications.

SACRED PLANT SPIRIT MEDICINE

Fast forward, my life evolved and I moved to the canyons of Malibu, California working as an event producer and designer. My home was at the top of a canyon with a view spanning the ocean and a state park for my back yard. One day as I was hiking the land, I experienced what I now know, to be a spontaneous *shamanic journey and direct revelation* through my energetic communication with an

ancient cactus. I received a transmission, a full recall, that I had been a Medicine Woman on that land in a lifetime before. My perception of reality had powerfully shifted and I was deeply moved by this *soul remembering*. Within a few days, I was gifted a book about shamanism by Jose Stevens, [The Power Path School of Shamanism](#), that opened a door to another dimension of my spiritual path.

This awareness led me to the the meeting of my first shamanic teacher, [Sandra Ingerman](#) and her teacher, anthropologist Michael Harner, the founder of [The Foundation for Shamanic Studies](#). I continued training with many shamen; Hank Wesselman, Alberto Villoldo, Theo Peredes, Dr. Hu Len, Malidoma Some and Aama Bombo, along with other native shaman in Peru, Ecuador, Hawaii, Costa Rica, Mexico, Nepal, Bali, and Thailand. While living in the San Francisco bay area, I was also a founding member of *The Center for Shamanic Healing* and had a private practice.

SACRED PLACES ARE EVERYWHERE

I loved having a private practice in Chicago for over 20 years, while regularly traveling, exploring and training with amazing shamen and healers around the world. One of my shamanic blessings there was that two of my yoga and massage clients were *babalawos*, oone an Obatala priest and the other, an Ogun priest of Ifa. The word *Ifa* refers to the mystical figure *Ifa* or Orunmila, regarded by the Yoruba as the deity of wisdom and intellectual development.

Philip Niemark and his wife Vassa are the founders of the [IFA Foundation International](#), now located in Crescent City, Florida. Through my relationship with them I was exposed to initiations, ceremonies and the Nigerian/West African divination *system of signs* of the Yoruba people. This system does not use a collection of curios, but interprets 256 *odu*, that are specific *divination signatures*, that are interpreted by the *babalawo* using either sacred palm-nuts or a divination chain.

DIVINATION WITH SACRED SYMBOLS

The foundation of my shamanic work is a divination practice known as *Reading the Bones*. It is a spiritual reading that provides you with a deep insight into your life, spiritually, mentally, and physically. My initiation into this system was through my colleague and mentor, Gogo Gretchen Krilly McKay of [Ancestral Wisdom](#).

Gretchen imparted the wisdom of these ancestral readings to me throughout a one year mentorship. This wisdom reflected her many years of travel and training in Swaziland with her mentor, Zulu *sangoma*, Traditional Doctor PH Mtshali. The reading is a living transference of energy that can induce positive shifts in the body for the release of emotional and spiritual blockages. For this gift of knowledge, I am forever grateful.

TODAY I LIVE IN THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS of Asheville, North Carolina. My symbols readings are a part of the shamanic and ancestral healing sessions. My [Sacred Art](#) is for personal healing and ceremony and I also offer Creativity Sessions. I am a certified BQH Hypnotist and Life/Soul Coach, providing amazing tools that can support you with re-wiring the brain's unconscious resistance and trauma, so that you can create the life you love!

Desiree DeMars 2000