

Dream Journey to Poland

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Moon and Dreams as Mythic Metaphor
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When I began the Indigenous Mind Master's program in September of 2001, one of our first assignments from Dr. Apela Colorado was to keep a dream journal. Since then I have been faithfully recording my dreams for the past 15 months. During this time, as a student in the Indigenous Mind program, I also began research on my own ancestors, the Polish and Hungarian people of Eastern Europe, and the Dine and Mexican people of Turtle Island. My ancestral research culminated in a journey to Poland, the homeland of my father's people, in October of 2002. My dreams have been an integral part of my ancestral journey. They helped prepare me for my trip to Poland, even before I consciously knew I would be going. While I was in Poland, my dreams illuminated the history of Poland, and guided me through the painful history of the Polish land and people.

As a woman of mixed racial and cultural descent, when I arrived in the Indigenous Mind program, I didn't know which group of my ancestors to work with first. In the fall of 2000, I had made a pilgrimage to Mexico, in which I explored my cultural roots, and also reconnected with my maternal grandfather's family. In my heart I had a deep, warm love for Mexico and its people. On the other hand, the Polish side of my family was more of an enigma. Since I lived in California, far from the thriving Polish-American communities in the East Coast and Midwest, I knew little about Polish culture. My relationship with my Polish side of the family was distant. I perceived my father's family to be veiled in secrets, betrayals, and unspoken resentments. I felt unwilling to open up the Pandora's Box of my Polish family.

Different events occurred in my life which were signals that my Polish ancestors were asking me for their attention. These ancestors were not only asking for help, but they were also supporting me with financial assistance. The first day of school at the University of Naropa, I was handed a \$2000 travel scholarship from an anonymous Polish-American donor, and her Our Lady of Czestochowa Foundation. Our Lady of Czestochowa is the patron saint and “King of Poland.” I was surprised and grateful, but still reluctant to embrace my Polish ancestral path.

In November of 2001, I attended my first Indigenous Mind residency in Maui. The evening after our first class, I had this dream:

“Crying for the Ancestors”

... I am crouched near a small tree with two other people... I am placing a ring of sweet grass around the tree, from the top of its branches, down to the trunk (as if putting on a sweater). I am very sad, crying internally, or perhaps externally as well... crying for the ancestors, for the loss of my Polish culture. (November 7, 2002, Sun in Scorpio, Cancer Moon)

Poland walks into my dreams with grief and tears. My remembrance process began with a heartbreaking recognition of what had been lost. The tree in my dream is the tree of my own genealogy, the tree of life. My connection to my ancestors, my culture, my language, and my traditional ways has been broken. This break cries out, literally, for a ceremony of healing. The sweet grass braid that I place around the tree is a medicine that comes from my Native American ancestors. Sweet grass is used as smudge (to be burned like incense), to cleanse and purify. Sweet grass, as I have been taught, calls forth the energy of sweetness, and warms the heart and spirit. In this way, my Native American ancestors were helping to facilitate a healing ceremony for my Polish ancestors.

Cleaning up

Yet even after this dream, I did not enthusiastically embrace the study of my Polish ancestors. Whenever I imagined these ancestors, I felt a shadow, a heaviness and a pain. The pain felt too big for me alone to hold. Fortunately, I did not have to face this shadow alone. In my program I met another woman of Polish descent, Barbara Dean. We are both one-half Polish; Barbara on her mother's side of the family, myself on my father's. From the first day of our Master's program, Barbara and I began discussing our feelings and impressions about our Polish heritage. We shared the feelings of shame and sadness that we felt in our Polish families.

The very same night that I dreamed of the Polish tree, I had another dream about Barbara and myself:

“Cleaning up the Kitchen with Barbara Dean”

*I am in a home with Barbara. We are preparing to leave.... We have awakened earlier than we anticipated (around 2 AM), but it is good because **there is so much to do**. The fridge is filled with food, some spoiled and rotten, the kitchen is messy, my stuff is everywhere. The heap of stuff we need to finish before we leave is overwhelming.” (November 7, 2002, Sun in Scorpio, Cancer Moon)*

One year later, Barbara and I have returned from our shared ancestral journey to Poland. When I had this dream, a year earlier, I had no idea I would be going to Poland, with or without Barbara. Yet the dream world seemed to be preparing me for the journey. I knew this path would take a lot of work, but I also knew that I wasn't alone. While we were in Poland, the “mess” left behind of our culture became starkly real; a mess of

invasions, wars, colonization, Pogroms, the Holocaust, addiction, alcoholism, abuse, and more recently, Westernization and globalization.

The dream takes place in the kitchen to signify how this “mess” affects the heart of the home and family. The kitchen is a traditional place for gathering in Poland. Poles gather around the kitchen table to feast, to sing, to plan, to argue and debate. My most cherished memories in Poland took place around the kitchen table. Every meal was shared by family. Yet this dream illustrates that I have much cleaning up to do to restore my traditional Polish kitchen/culture.

Untangling the Silver Cross

A few months later, the tree of life returned to my dreams:

“Untangling Silver Cross from Tree”

I am climbing a tree outside of a house. I am trying to untangle and remove a long silver necklace, with a cross, from the branches.” (March 3, 2002, Sun in Pisces, Scorpio Moon)

During my journey to Poland, one of my biggest and unforeseen struggles was with the Catholic Church. Poland is a very Catholic country (over 80% of the Poles are practicing Catholics)¹. Remember, Pope John Paul II is Polish (the first non-Italian Pope in 456 years, and the first Polish Pope ever)² and in Poland he is a beloved national hero and spiritual leader. I left the Church 15 years ago, and would have laughed if someone had told me how much Pope paraphernalia I would ingest in Poland. I watched the Pope on television (the Poles celebrated his 24th year as Pope on the day of his ordination,

¹ Krzysztof Dydyński, *Poland*, (Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2002), 46.

² James Barnes and Helen Whitney, “John Paul II: His Life and Papacy,” *Frontline, The Millennium Pope*, 12/12/02. www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pope/etc/bio.html.

October the 16th); I patiently sat through family videos of the Pope during his trips to Poland; I was brought as a special guest after-hours to the Pope museum in his hometown of Wadowice (which displays all the gifts given to the Pope from people of the world); I gratefully received a Pope calendar and a *Music for the Pope* CD as gifts.

My heart was very conflicted. On one hand, I longed to have the same reverence for the Pope as the Polish people. I wished desperately to connect with the faith and spiritual tradition of my ancestors. To do so, I was willing to let go of my 15 year old boycott of the Catholic Church. On the other hand, the Pope represents an institution that is sexist, homophobic, and responsible for the colonization and slaughter of indigenous people worldwide.

Within the many churches and cathedrals I visited in Poland, I experienced this history viscerally. I felt dissociated and disconnected from my body. I felt shame about my sexuality that hadn't surfaced for years. And I felt anger that boiled into rage. Paradoxically, at the same time I was touched by the beautiful devotion the Poles have for their Church, and their Pope. I felt the faith ("So strong you can cut it with a knife"³), which at times moved me to tears. And I felt the undeniable presence of Spirit in churches, especially surrounding the image of Matka Boze (Mother of God).

In Poland I began to untangle the silver cross of Catholicism from my ancestral tree. I began to carefully investigate the presence of Catholicism in Poland. I asked myself questions like: What was the native faith of the Polish people? What was their society like before the advent of Christianity? How are the old ways still practiced within the context of the Catholic Church? How is the Catholic Church an integral part of my Polish heritage? As I read more about the life of John Paul II, it is clear that his papacy

³ Joanna Rossi, Jungian Psychotherapist and traditional Polish healer. Phone interview 9/15/2002.

has been a great gift to the Polish people. I can no longer dismiss the church as all bad, as I would have 15 years ago.

In the Spring of 2002, the message became undeniably clear that I was to travel to Poland. Through a client of mine, I heard about the work of Polish woman Jadwiga Lopata, and her organization, *The International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside*⁴. A beautiful journey was unfolding for me; I would travel through Poland and live in the countryside on small organic farms with traditional Polish families. A week before I left to Poland, I had a beautiful dream about wearing an outfit of red and white (the Polish colors), and dancing with water and long scarves. In my waking life, inspired by the advice of my elders, I journeyed to Lake Chabot to make an offering and to do a simple cleansing in preparation for my journey.

New Perspective

On October 4, 2002, Barbara Dean and I leave SFO headed towards Chicago, and then on LOT Polish airlines to Krakow, Poland. In my very first dream on Polish soil, I was back in Maui in a dream I named “New Perspective”: *“I am in Hawaii near the ocean with three big windows and an amazing view.”* (October 5, 2002, Sun in Virgo, Virgo Moon) Nothing could offer me such a radically new perspective on my Polish heritage than making this journey to ancestral land. In the next 4 weeks, so many new windows were opened for me and inside of me that I will be digesting the experience for many, many moons.

The Shadow

⁴ Jadwiga Lopata and Julian Rose, *The International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside*, <http://www.icppc.sfo.pl>

Dr. Kimmy Johnson asked me an important question in relation to my dream work, and my journey to Poland: “When did you arrive in Poland in your dreams?”⁵ For the first 10 days of my trip, I walked on Polish soil, ate Polish food, and stammered out basic Polish phrases; but I did not dream of Poland. My first Poland dream was short, only one line, entitled “Scenes from World War II Poland”: “*A pilot smashes the head off a statue.*” (October 14, 2002, Sun in Virgo, Moon in Aquarius).

I regretfully admit, that before traveling to Poland, I had no idea how much of an impact World War II had on Poland. Like many other Americans, I was ignorant of world history. Even as a Polish American, I had not studied any of the history of Poland. My journey to Poland was a crash course (pun intended) in Polish history. I devoured whatever books I could find on Polish history and culture. I discovered that World War II had left an ugly scar on Poland and its people. Poland was hit harder by the war than any other country. Over seven million Poles were killed, including over 3 million Polish Jews, literally obliterating their presence in Poland. The Polish cities suffered devastating damage. Polish historian M.B. Biskupski writes,

The damage done to Poland was almost incalculable. Any monetary amount becomes a meaningless figure alongside the reality of the destruction of Poland's cities: Warsaw, the national capital, 84 percent destroyed; Gdansk, 55 percent devastated; Wroclaw, Szczecin (then Stettin), Poznan, and other cities seriously damaged.⁶

The image I had in my dream could have been a historical snapshot of any of these major Polish cities.

⁵ As I reviewed my dream journal from last year, I discovered that I had visited Polish soil in my dreams. Yet because my physical body had yet to be in Poland, I did not recognize these dreams as such.

⁶ M.B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, (Westport, Ct, London: The Greenwood Press, 2000), 97.

Dr. Apela Colorado has taught us, "Pay attention to what shows up." Following this advice, I must pay careful attention to this first dream image of Poland. The first time Poland speaks to me in my dreams, she tells the story of the destruction of World War II.

In waking reality, I walked through the streets that had been destroyed or occupied during the war. What struck me profoundly was how I could feel the non-presence of the Jews. I could feel their ghosts as I walked through the looted and deserted former Jewish district of Kasimera. Broken windows, charred buildings, deserted synagogues. I wondered how this slaughter of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and Poles and Polish soil had affected the spirit of the Polish people.

A week later, I wake up shaking from a nightmare:

"Bloody Hands"

I am with my mother and sister on a street tour. We encounter 2 or 3 women playing violent games. Guns, knives, bandits. Bloody hands are reaching towards me. I run to escape. (October 14, 2002, Sun in Virgo, Aquarius Moon)

At the bottom of this page of my dream journal are two words, somehow woven into my dream landscape that night: "*Concentration Camp.*"

To whom do these bloody hands belong? To have blood on one's hands is an admission of guilt, of being caught red-handed. Rivers of blood have been shed on Polish land. Long before World War II, Poland had endured brutal invasions from the Tatars, the Teutonic Knights, the Swedes, the Germans, and the Russians.⁷ What role did my own relatives play in the atrocious history of Poland? Were they bloodthirsty invaders, or young women raped and taken hostage by their attackers? Were my ancestors the zealous Polish patriots who pillaged Polish villages in the Pogroms? Were

⁷ Dydynski, 13-29.

any of my ancestors Jewish who secretly converted to Christianity to protect themselves and their families? During WW II, did my ancestors harbor and help the Jews? Or did they turn them into the Nazis, and if so, was it in fear for their own lives?

In my dream, the bloody hands were chasing me. Master dream worker, Jeremy Taylor told his students in a dream class that often the worse thing that happens in the dream is the element of healing and power. When I reflect upon the bloody hands dream, I wonder what would happen if instead of running from the hands, I turned to welcome and embrace them. How is there blood on my own hands? How am I repeating the cycle of invasion and violence in my own life? Could I welcome and listen to the stories of ALL my ancestors? The brutal invaders as well as the simple peasants? Could I forgive them?

As I write this, I pray about what I can do to bring healing to my ancestors, to the Polish people, my family, and myself. I suspect that some of the dark cloud of shame and silence on the Polish side of my family relates back to these unresolved invasions, brutalities, rapes, and betrayals.

No Shoes

In the middle of our second week in Poland, Barbara and I were planning a trip to the former concentration camp, Auschwitz. Auschwitz, a place where millions of Jews, Poles and others were “exterminated”, is now a popular tourist spot. As we made our plans to go, I had a feeling in my belly that something wasn’t right. I knew I couldn’t go to Auschwitz on a tour, as if I were visiting the Grand Canyon or Wawel Castle. No, Auschwitz is a big place with a big, terrible history. I recalled the teachings of my IM

sister, Audri Scott Williams, as she told us about her journey to the slave dungeons of West Africa. She and her companions had done extensive preparation and ceremony to be able to visit the dungeons in a safe and honorable way. I knew that Barbara and I must be similarly prepared to visit Auschwitz. I talked with her about making prayers and offerings during our visit, and making plans to go to the river afterwards for cleansing.

Yet something still didn't feel right. Audri had prepared for months to face the horrors of the slave dungeon, whereas we were throwing together a last minute ritual. But my western mind was attached to "sticking to the plan."

The night before we were scheduled to go, I had another dream:

"Auschwitz with No Shoes"

Missy (a Polish Jewish friend) and I go to Auschwitz. We are standing outside the entrance. She doesn't want to go in. Inside the gates, the ground is covered with filth and broken glass. I realize that I am barefoot, and I don't want to walk around this way." (November 14, 2002, Sun in Virgo, Aquarius Moon)

I awoke with a big "Aha!" In my dream, the soles/souls of my feet are exposed and vulnerable. My soles (my soul) lack the proper protection to traverse in such a dangerous space. I knew that my dream was telling me that I was not prepared to go to Auschwitz, and warning me that I could be hurt if I did go. Still, I was reluctant to bring this up to Barbara, not wanting to disappoint her. Strangely, only a few minutes later, I received a phone call from the house where Barbara was staying, saying that she was very ill, and couldn't make it out of bed. I felt sympathy for Barbara, but was relieved that we weren't going to Auschwitz. Barbara's sudden illness confirmed my dream's warning that we should not go. I felt thankful that my ancestors and spirit guides had

intervened and warned me of the danger I could be in if I went to Auschwitz without the proper spiritual protection. I was grateful that I had been well trained by my elders and teachers to take such a dream warning seriously.

My dreams have played an essential part of my path in the Indigenous Mind Program and my ancestral work. The healing of my Polish ancestral wounds commenced with a dreamtime ceremony, “Crying for the Ancestors”, in which I grieved for the loss of my ancestral tree and my Polish traditional ways. Even before I was consciously aware of my impending journey to Poland, my dreams helped prepare me for this journey. In “Cleaning Up the Kitchen with Barbara Dean,” my dreams helped me to understand the enormity and urgency of my work. This dream also reminded me that I was not alone in cleaning up the mess of my Polish ancestors. While I was in Poland, my dreams guided me into the shadow of WW II, and its terrible impact on the Polish people and land. As I approach the beginning of my Master’s thesis, my dreams continue to be a powerful source of spiritual and ancestral information. I am thankful to my dreams and all my ancestors who walk with me in dreamtime.

Annotated Bibliography

Barasch, Marc Ian. *Healing Dreams: Exploring the Dreams that Can Transform Your Life*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2000.

After his dreams guide him discover a cancerous tumor in his thyroid, the author pursues in depth research of the realm of dreams and healing. He explores many facets of dreams, including “The Otherworld,” “Healing the Shadow,” and “The Invisible Community.” He includes many interesting case studies of healing dreams, which take the reader beyond a purely psychological interpretation of dreams. He also provides examples of dream work from a cross-cultural and indigenous perspective.

Barnes, James and Whitney, Helen. “John Paul II: His Life and Papacy.” *Frontline, The Millennium Pope*. 12/12/02. .

This is a very informative article on Pope John Paul II by the co-writer and producer of a PBS Frontline documentary about the Pope. It provides a concise summary of the Pope’s life, all within the backdrop of major historical events in Poland.

Biskupski, M.B., *The History of Poland*. Westport, Ct, London: The Greenwood Press, 2000. 97.

Biskupski provides a good overview of Polish history. Most of the book focused on Polish history beginning in 1795, and continues to 1990. She divides the chapters based on major Polish historical eras. I found this book on Questia, the online library.

Dydynski, Krystof. *Poland*. Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2002.

Dydynski’s book is not only an excellent guidebook to traveling in Poland, but is also a great resource on Polish history and culture.

Jaenke, Karen Ann. “Personal Dreamscape as Ancestral Landscape.” Unpublished doctoral dissertation, the California Institute of Integral Studies: 2000.

This is an excellent account of how the author’s dreams guided her to the forgotten stories of her own ancestors. She also tells the story about certain ancestors who have visited her in her dreams, and how she works to integrate their teachings into her waking life.

Johnson, Kimmy Karen. "On The Path of the Ancestors: Kinship with Place as a Path of Recovery." Ph.D. Dissertation, The California Institute for Integral Studies. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 2002.

In Chapter 2, "Medicine Wheels and Original Instruction," Johnson discusses the loss of original medicine from her own ancestors of the white hoop. She documents her own personal search for her ancestors who lived in balance with the earth.

In Chapter 4, "Personal Introduction," Johnson talks about how the land is a teacher, and guides the reader to explore her/his relationship to the earth. She explores the levels of healing and recovery, and introduces the remembrance process.

Lopata, Jadwida and Rose, Julian. *The International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside*. <http://www.icppc.sfo.pl>

This is a great website that includes political and historical information about traditional farming in Poland. This site also has an extensive directory of ecotourist farms in Poland.