

Vision Comes in Multiple Forms

My heart is pounding so hard it might explode out of me chest. I can feel the beats thumping inside my head and ears. There are a thousand thoughts running through my head: "I'm not sure I can do this. It's the way I saw it. What if I miss? The buck is limping, he's injured. What if I just injure the deer more? Is he suffering? What if...? Pull the trigger. No, squeeze the trigger. Focus. Breath...I'm moving too much. There is not a clear shot. The branches are in the way. It's now or never. The deer is looking right at me. What if...? BOOM...

10 years ago I had a recurring dream. Each time the dream changed a little bit but the ideas were the same.

A friend and I were walking in the woods and we were talking about all the animals. There was a lot we didn't know and we wanted to know more about certain animals. Then all of a sudden I lay down and didn't move. I stayed in this spot overnight. In the morning my friend brought breakfast but I didn't eat and we didn't talk. It was like I was dead. I lay there another day and night and in the morning my friend brought more food. I didn't eat again. On the third morning I "woke up" and I knew all the information about the animals we were seeking.

Several years later I was taking a nature class and I overheard some other participants talking about a Vision Quest, "So you go into nature, stay in a small area with no food for 4 days and 4 nights and you get all your QUESTions answered. It's like you die there. Some people call it the little death." WOW, I don't know about this. It seems a bit strange. But okay, it's close enough to my dream so I'm going to do it. I never heard of a Vision Quest before but I'll give it a try.

The following year I was sitting, standing, laying, laughing and crying in a small circle in the forest with no food and no one in sight for 4 days and 4 nights. I'm not sure exactly what occurred during that time, but it was the most powerful experience that I've ever had.

The next year I received a grant to learn more about the Vision Quest and how to offer the experience in my area. During one of the courses, we did something that I'll call a Spirit Walk, where we moved on the land guided by intuition. Many things happened on this particular walk. The things I want to point out in this story are: My chest heated up 3 times to the point where I was

sweating heavily, I went under water 3 times, I took 3 deep breaths and I ran around a sacred space 3 times. I didn't know what this meant at the time and didn't really give it much attention. Over several weeks, I came to understand that I was being shown the 4 elements: Fire, Water, Air and Earth, to which I didn't care a whole lot about. That's not for me, I thought.

At the very end of the courses the instructor looked straight at me and told me that I would be pouring sweat lodges for people...Ha, I thought, zero chance of that happening. If he could have only heard how loud I was laughing inside my head...impossible, I said to myself. No way I'm doing that.

The following year, I signed up for a bird language course in California with a friend. When I was on the website looking for more information about the class, I ended up looking at other classes that were offered. Well, there was 4 Elements class offered online, so guess what I did? That's right, I took the class.

The instructor is an interesting individual and spoke in a way that I never heard anyone talk before. He was down to earth and he had organized words for jumbled thoughts that I had. I looked into what else he offered and found the Leadership Initiation Project. Do you want to be a self-leader? Do you want to live your Vision and take responsibility for your actions? Yes, yes and yes. So I was in. I'm not sure what I didn't read and what I missed in the description but the 9-month course was centered around indigenous wisdom and ceremony, including the sweat lodge or Inipi as I've come to understand the process. How I even signed-up for the course is beyond me. But I did and in a few months a friend and I were sweating inside a small dome built of sticks covered with blankets and heated by glowing red hot stones.

The weeks went by and one evening during the Inipi, water from the roof was dripping on my shoulder like someone tapping me on the shoulder. I felt the roof and there was not that much water to cause dripping like that. It's steamy in there but it's not dripping. I didn't think much of it but the same thing happened the next week. After we were out of the lodge and sitting around talking, I mentioned the dripping water on my shoulder and my friend said, "Yeah, that happened to me, too. This week and last week." Wow! As we discussed it further the "tapping" was on the same shoulder in the exact same spot 2 week in a row on two different people. Coincidence? I think not. Synchronicity? Yes.

I just recently read a book call "The Bushman Way of Tracking God" and the Bushman talk about tappings on their body and that is one of the ways they know

when and what to hunt. So, I figured it was time for me to go hunting. Although now I understand the tapping to be something different, it got me started. I am not a hunter, never hunted and didn't ever care to hunt but...here I go again.

We learned how to make long bows from Yew staves. And we thought that would be good for hunting, wild boar nonetheless, Ha. It took me a few years to even go out "hunting". I would go sit in the woods and day dream. Yes, I had the longbow with me but I wouldn't have shot at anything if it walked right up to me. A few years went by like this where I was "hunting".

Then 2 years ago I shot a rifle for the first time and took it out with me "hunting". I didn't shoot at anything but something changed and I thought I might actually shoot at a deer if it came my way. Over the summer I considered it more and purchased a crossbow before the fall deer season. I felt different and thought that I might harvest a deer next session.

I read the book "From Boys to Men at Heart, Hunting as a Rite of Passage". There are a few stories in that book that clearly stand out to me. One is of an old timer and the way he hunted. He didn't hide from the deer but was still enough that the deer didn't pay him any attention and they might even walk close to him. He said he wouldn't take those animals but waited until one looked at him and noticed him. This deer was giving his/her life to the hunter knowingly. And that is the deer he would take. Another story was of a hunting guide who knew about the sacrifices the deer are making by giving their life to the hunter. This guide had a hunter shoot at a large buck that was looking directly at them. The hunter didn't pull the trigger and never shoot at the deer. The guide was a bit upset and explained that the hunter just disrespected the deer and the deer nation and the guide would need to do ceremony to make things right. I also heard that a good harvest is when the weak or injured are culled from the herd. I wanted a good harvest and don't want to disrespect the deer people.

Well, hunting season came and I was out several times and had an understanding that I was going to kill a deer this year. But no deer seemed to say to me that I'm the one. It was the last week of archery and I saw a buck that was limping on its front left leg. Wow, could it be? A good harvest. I saw the buck again the next day on the same route but the buck was too far away to have a chance at shooting. I knew where to sit the next time I went out, or so I thought anyway. That night I had a dream:

My friend and I were planning to hunt and I had a vision about what deer he was to shoot. There were 3 large bucks that approached him and I told him he

was not to shoot them but he was to shoot the forth deer that come his way. The forth deer was a doe.

The next day, a gray and misty afternoon, I drove to the hunting location. On the way, I realized that this dream was for me, not for my friend. I was to take the forth deer that came my way. I went to sit in the spot where I might get a good shot at the injured buck or another deer that might come my way. I sat in a small patch of brush on the edge of a field. I thought I might be hidden from the deer by sitting in the brush. The afternoon was getting later and later and I thought I might not see a deer on this day. Then a doe and 2 fawns walked directly to me from the other side of the field. They were about 30 yards away and just watched me as they grazed. I raised the crossbow and had the leading doe in the crosshairs. I was not going to shoot at this deer. They moved on and then another deer came out into the clearing.

The buck was limping on his front left leg, looked right at me and walked up to about 25 yards away from me. He was standing nearly broad side but slight to the front, 8 point antlers, 4 per side with one side slightly smaller than the other side. This can't be like my dream yesterday...could it? The signs are there: The forth deer, he's limping so it would be a good harvest, he's looking directly at me. And like the old times say, if the deer looks at you it's willing to give it life to you. I'm still was not sure but I raise the crossbow slowly. My heart starts to pound a little harder and my mind started to race with doubt. "Breathe" I tell myself and calm my heart and mind. Is the buck 25 yards away? 30? maybe even 35? Where would be the best to aim? A little high maybe? What if he is 25 not 35 and I miss? What if I just injure him? He's limping already. What if? What if? As I looked through the scope of the crossbow there was a little stick in the way. Guess I can't take the shot. If he moves three feet, then I can take the shot. He leans forward and bites more grass to chew. Then he takes a few more steps forward, about 3 feet. Ah, another branch is in the way. Not a clean shot. Another 3 feet and I'll have good shot. He takes a few more steps forward and moves another 3 feet. This can't be happening, I not sure I can kill this deer. Well lucky me, another branch is in the way. The deer moves again 3 feet and looks at me. No excuses this time, a clean shot.

My heart is racing full speed at this point. I can feel the beats pounding inside my head and ears. There are a thousand thoughts running through my head: "I'm not sure I can do this. It's the way I saw it. The deer is limping. He's injured. What if I miss? What if I just injure the buck more and he suffers? What if? What if? It's a good shot. Aim just behind the front leg. Don't disrespect the

deer nation. This is the chance...pull the trigger. No squeeze the trigger. Focus. Breath...I'm moving too much. Is it a clear shot? Are the branches in the way? How far is the deer? 25? 35 yards? Aim a little high. It's now or never. The deer is looking right at me. What if?...BOOM...the crossbow goes off. Thud I hear the arrow hit the buck.

The buck spins 180 degrees and bounds away with no limp at all. It stops about 100 yards away at the edge of the field. I raise the crossbow and look through the scope. I can see the arrow sticking out of the side of the deer. The scope is misty from the moisture in the air and I don't know where the arrow hit the deer exactly. Is it high? I set the crossbow down because of the mist on the scope and when I look up again the buck is gone. I'm a bit shaky and in a slight daze. I wait about 5 minutes and then walk to where my Dad was sitting. I'm shaking like I'm cold, but I'm not cold, adrenalin must be pumping in my veins. We wait for another 30 minutes and then start looking for the buck where I saw him last and where I thought he might have gone. It's nearly dark and we haven't found the deer. We decide to leave for the night.

I felt terrible having not found the deer. I need to find that deer in the morning and I only have a short time to look due to other commitments. I text two of my friends and ask them for some prayers and offerings to help me find the deer in the morning. I also pray. I have an understanding that if I find the deer in the morning, then I would need to share this story with others.

I search in the morning, crawling around in the thicket, looking everywhere. No deer to be found anywhere. As I come out of the wood into the field where I last saw the deer, I look across the field to a very small patch of woods near a house. I walk over there on my way home and see a dead deer. It looks much smaller than the deer I saw through the scope. But it is a buck. I walked closer, 8 points and one side is smaller than the other. It sure looks like the same deer. There is no arrow in the deer but a hole where the arrow broke the humerus. I notice an exit hole in the belly? But that wound is healing and has 3 blade marks, my arrow had four blades. So that is not from me. Another injury the deer had. The limp was caused by a deformed left front hoof. I walked a little further and find my arrow without the tip. I put it all together. After being shot, the buck didn't go into the woods but backtracked across the field. He must have died soon afterwards in the small patch of woods. I tie an offering to the land, for life, for how death supports life. I tied other offerings of gratitude for the buck to the tree near where I had taken the shot.

When we butchered the deer, we found the arrow tip on the far side of the deer. The arrow had gone through the humerus, both lungs and the heart. A good shot.

This experience and the deer are part of me now and I'm also closer to my deer relatives because of this interaction.

I was and am very thankful for this deer for offering its life to support life: my life, my story, all the connections that develop from this story, and this dance of life and death. I recognize and honor the deer people for all that they are and all they provide. I recognize their knowledge of the land and their will to live. I recognize my responsibility to the deer nation to make sure they can live fully into the future. I'm grateful that you are catching my story and I hope we can connect around it. I recognize I am my relationships, all my connections. May we connect around The Vision of Life.

Here are some organizations that have been a part of this Vision:

Oneness Quest formerly Earthheart: <https://theonenessquest.com/>

Tracker School: <https://www.trackerschool.com/>

Helper's Mentoring Society formerly the Leadership Initiation Project:
<https://helpersmentoringsociety.mykajabi.com/>

8 Shields: <http://8shields.org/>

