

Dreaming

instructions in
the
Mystery Life

American Indian Computer Art Project

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Digital Tribal Arts Quarterly

*Journal of a dream
ceremony which
took place on
August 11 and 12,
2003 in Northern
New Mexico.*

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Cover Photo
Dream ceremony
fire and full moon
.....

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Dreaming?

What is Dreaming?

The church, the government, industry, educational facilities of all types....not one of them have much to say about dreaming. It is a forgotten, ignored subject by society at large.

Tribal cultures in many places still maintains some very powerful and effective dream teachings and exercises.

In August I conducted another in a series of ceremonial dreaming exercises. This event involved a group of Italians visiting this area.

Dreaming, in my view, is something that evolved in human beings who spent generation after generation of living closely together. Dreaming is like it's own "organ system", a neglected and unused part of the human physical construction.

Dreaming can break through the loneliness and isolation of modern society. This document is an ongoing series of articles sharing and exploring how all of us can gain more effective and productive insight into our dreaming.



Elements of the Otter Pack

These items (above) are little “houses” which carry the many objects of the otter pack as they travel.

Most people see things like this in museum and history collections. At a good ceremony all the sacred objects are set out together, so they can be seen and felt. Here we have the spirit houses set out on the fence where the dream ceremony unfolded. Some of them belong to my otter pack, and some belong to visitors who are attending the ceremonies.

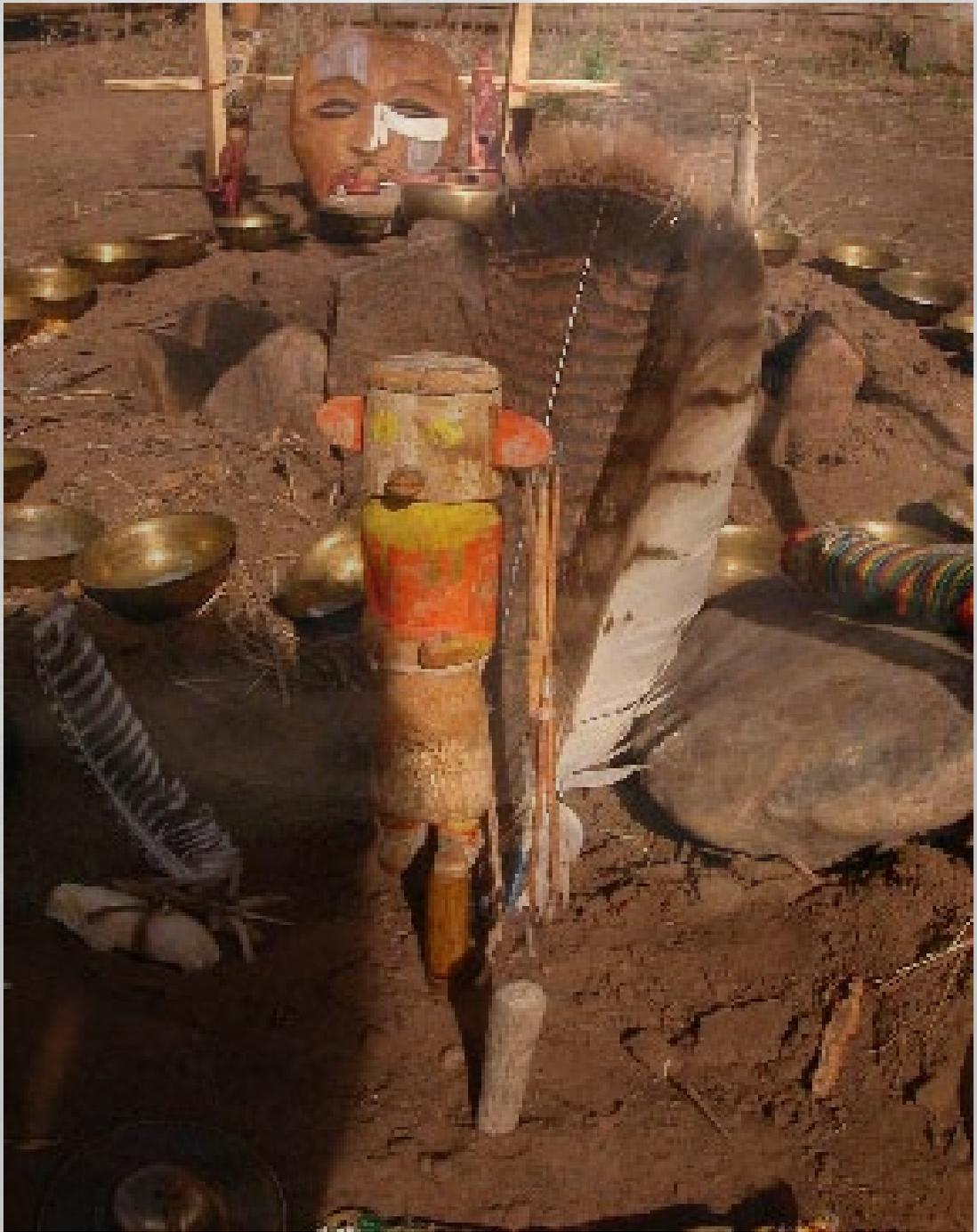
All throughout the sacred space this rule will apply. There are areas where the sacred objects that live in these spirit houses are also gathered together, the central space called the altar.



The Old Man In Charge of Dreams is sharing the silence of the dreaming fire. With him are several of the sacred pipes which are sharing in this dream ceremony.

The bowls each contain a moon, the 28 circles of the moon from dark to full and back to dark again.





A very old Katsina (Hopi) participating in the Dreaming. Here are more details of the sacred space which was set up to assist the Dreaming Ceremony.

Asleep or Awake?

Many of our elders have noted that people seem to be going through their lives in a sleeping state...but a sleeping state without dreaming. William Butler Yeats called this process “automationism”. Sleeping in this exhausted way comes into our daily lives when we are unhappy, living a life that does not really open our human hearts (is how I put it).

Sometimes it seems as if others, or powerful external forces exert an influence over us that keeps us from waking up. At other times the sorrows and fears of life may cause a person to choose being asleep inside their lives.

Dreaming is such a powerful force. It is an energy that brings healing, emotional and spiritual growth, mental clarity. It releases its many healing powers when we approach dreaming consciously, aware of its value to us. Like learning the alphabet, or learning how to ride a bicycle, Dreaming can be approached in an unfolding way through practice and belief and consistency.

Sharing dreaming with others is a key element in the tribal understanding of this force. Dreaming flourishes in people who are close, passionate, emotionally open to each other: people who talk to each other. People in continual contact with each other also dream about and with each other. This “dreaming together” which came to our human experience through our shared ancient tribal experience, is the aspect that seems to have been nearly lost. It is this aspect of dream training or dream practice that my ceremonies, songs and objects address.

Notes from my notebook

I have started carrying a pocket notebook. I keep my thoughts and ideas about upcoming ceremonies in this notebook. Some of these items are points I hope to remember to stress in my discussion with the ceremonial participants. Some entries are insights I get as I hold the emotional context of being prepared to open my heart and do my best in these ceremonies.

In a good ceremony I hope to be of service. It is my hope that our working together in this way will bring us healing and clarity, that it will open a beautiful window into our unique self, and how our unique self can work with the rhythm of dreaming.

The day and moon exactly six months opposite to the day of the dream ceremony (August 11th 2003 in this case) in the winter season, is the “harvesting”. Tribal dream teachings and stories usually are winter events. We believe the mind in winter is attuned to dreaming in a way it is not in the other three seasons.

Working with nature is a subtle and powerful element of the techniques of this school of dream teachings. Use every part of nature. Use the phase of the moon, the season, home grown foods, the solstice and equinox.....doing ceremonies at these important natural moments adds powerful but very quiet energies to your efforts. This is also a key element of tribal consciousness regarding dreaming.

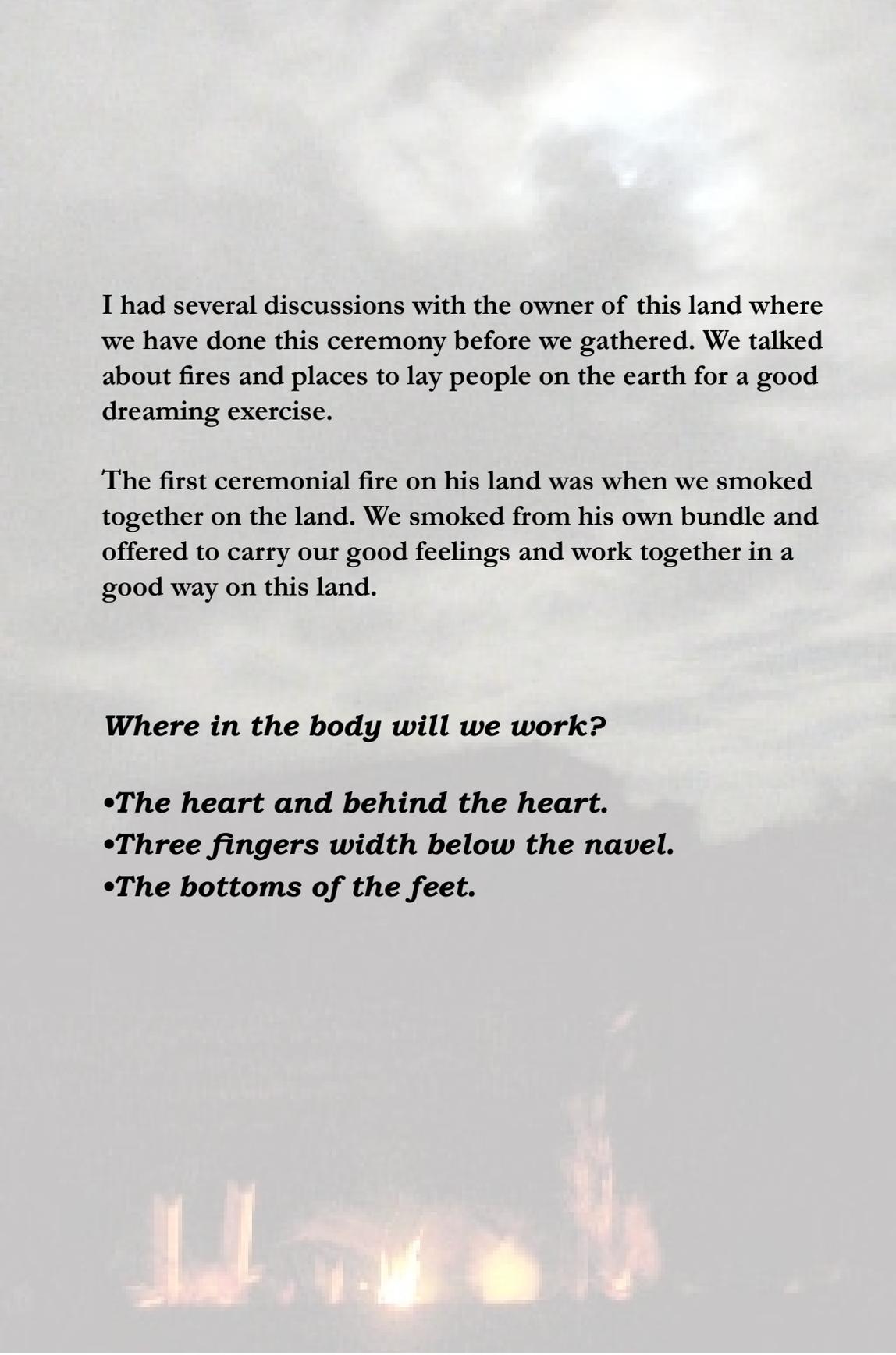
In preparation of a ceremony of this type there is a lot of thought that goes into the place where the dreamers will meet. A good ceremony has an infrastructure. The more thoughtful and coordinated is this infrastructure, the better are the chances for success.

It has been said that for a truly sacred and powerful ceremony, no amount of work is too much. The more all the people, the place and the seasons can agree, the better are the chances of better and better results. Chaco canyon in New Mexico is a good example of how ancient tribal peoples created exceptionally aligned ceremonial space.

In this ceremony we are on the land, sleeping in blankets around a ceremonial fire, out in the open.

We say the ceremonial fire is “opening a prayer into the belly of the earth”....we do not think of this dreaming fire as a regular fire.

We do not burn things or cook things in this fire. In my ceremonies I use tobacco. I have the participants place pinches of tobacco into this fire during their ceremonial time with me. There are many things that can be and will be said about these ceremonial fires as we go on in this series.



I had several discussions with the owner of this land where we have done this ceremony before we gathered. We talked about fires and places to lay people on the earth for a good dreaming exercise.

The first ceremonial fire on his land was when we smoked together on the land. We smoked from his own bundle and offered to carry our good feelings and work together in a good way on this land.

Where in the body will we work?

- The heart and behind the heart.***
- Three fingers width below the navel.***
- The bottoms of the feet.***

Why do you go to sleep?

Because you are tired or because you are seeking dreams?

In the modern world with electric lights and days scheduled to meet the business transactions, most of us do not sleep a natural dreaming sleep. The natural smiling sleep helps dreaming. The dive into bed after a long day under electric lights and the other trappings of modern society are rest from long day sleep: not the same type of sleep at all.

In many tribal societies certain days and periods of days were set aside for dreaming with the old ones and the young ones. These ceremonial memories are common to tribal experience. The modern world will most likely not give you any time off for dreaming days.

If there were a huge world wide study of dreaming content I wonder what would be revealed? Science does not yet know how to think of (remember) dreaming in quite this way.

Do we ever sleep to discover, to find, to journey? Most people I know do not think this way about dreaming and going to sleep....but Dreaming can happen in this way.

Alignment:

We have set everyone in the circle of dreaming according to the light of the Moon on their day of birth.

We “start” the circle with the dark (new) moon, 180 degrees away (opposite) from the dark moon is the full (brightest) moon. We allow 28 phases or faces of the moon for the complete circle.

Any type of alignment helps achieve balance. These details are subtle, but I know really well how powerful and beautiful they are.

Ceremonial life looks for and takes advantage of alignments with the powerful forces of nature. Every ancient culture in the history of the world went to great lengths to mark and define the precise moment of the Winter and Summer Solstice, Morning Star, Equinoxes and other shifting events which affect spiritual life on earth.

Alignment with the Moon is also alignment with the order of the light of those Grandmothers who went before us in this life. Those beings who helped hold details that we can use to ensure that we can educate and empower ourselves by working together with the people around us.

These alignments also break through the bias and social impositions that say who sits where and why. A good ceremony takes us outside the boundaries of the normal muddy life and uses sacred formalities to ensure the safety of the opening heart and the soul on its great journey of discovery. Every little detail harmonized helps in powerful ways.

What Ceremonial Teachings are in the Otter Pack?

The Dreaming Ceremony

The Morning Fire

The Three Fires

The Seven Fires

The Blue Corn Ceremony

The Inner Guide Ritual Alignment

The Moon Lodge Group

The Sacred Pipe Practices

The Water Drum Teaching

The Ancestor Bundle

The Shaking Stone Practice

Ceremonial Breathing Style

The Sound Ceremony

The Naming Ceremony

The Sweat Lodge

The Wrapped Up ceremony

The Song of the Shrinking Path

apparently.....more or less.

Bundles:

To help understand what a tribal bundle is, each person in the ceremony was given a small bundle to take care. Their journey here lasting some three weeks, they were told to find a place at the end and put a hole in the earth. Into this hole in the earth they were to place the bundles and the water they have been carrying, as a way of touching the earth before they return home.

These little bundles contain some beautiful and powerful objects.



Feeling (My work)

I have this idea that if I do my work well, that if I am a diligent and focused worker, my ceremonies become a feeling point on the body of the earth.

My interface with American life does not work very well. When I am working in a traditional and ceremonial space on the earth, I feel safe and in my best feeling of balance.

There are generations of details and the connections I feel to the intentions of people who lived long ago; being put to work for each person who attends a ceremony like this one.

You will see many things in the photographs. Each of these things has a teaching and a ceremony. Each object has a relationship with the other objects. The oldest object in the otter pack is about 3000 BC. The newest, a little bundle of the ashes and feathers of my little sacred bird who travelled this mystery life with me for some years before he passed away (May 27th 2003).

I cannot know where to stand on this earth where I do not feel the bleeding of tribal peoples. I always hope that what I share with this world is from the best, the brightest and the most loving part of tribal culture.....without blame or sorrow.

Blue corn and tiwa clay pottery.

This pottery was made from the earth where we are dreaming this exercise, the blue corn grown upon the same earth.



Slowing Down (Talking)

What I like about doing some ceremonial experiences with Italians, in this case, is the language difference.

The translations slow down the conversations. The translations require more even breathing and thoughtfulness in what is said.

Modern people talk to fast and listen not very well.

A good ceremony takes time. A good ceremony does not interface well with modern schedules. I always try to surrender to my breathing, to the feeling I am getting from those people who are listening to me.

Gifts

The gifts you receive from these ceremonies is very different than any other sort of gift you have ever received. Accepting the gift is an important part....understanding comes more slowly, in layers, but only after you have actually consciously accepted the gift of that ceremony.

These are not tools of western science or religion.

Half-Way

I can do my work, try to do my best. At best I can only put you half the way there, just that far. I can take you half-way there, the rest is up to you.

Smoke Fire Smoke

A good ceremonial fire will begin to send spiraling smoke as the energy of the assembled group becomes more and more in balance with the medicine.

Most of the people in this dream ceremony said they had never slept outside under the stars and moon upon the earth in their lives. I cannot remember a time when I was not doing this, even as a small boy. These revelations and layers of life and how we see and feel life are a beautiful and powerful part of the sharing that goes on during the ceremonial days.

A good ceremony builds from a trust....layer by layer and moment by moment building a feeling of safety that allows you to open up in new ways. (A safe and productive context in which to work with other human beings.)

If these conditions are really present, you will see the smoke of the fire move in a beautiful spiral almost constantly. It takes some time to generate this energy once everyone has gathered. This is just one reason why a ceremonial fire, and having a place to have a ceremonial fire, can be of great help to any group ceremonial alignment.

Do not believe the smoke of a good ceremonial fire is like the smoke from a camp fire or a burning building. Not all smoke is the same. Some smoke is healing, purifying, sacred in a very ancient way.



the dream fire, 2003



Seeing how modern people often react to the smoke of a ceremonial fire, I am reminded that it is the most obvious facts which are most often overlooked.

I notice how some people embrace and welcome the smoke of the ceremonial fire, while others cough and complain, never giving even a heartbeat to their role in the energy of the fire. Like dreaming, the use of fire has become a cloudy memory in the subconscious, forgotten by the personality and emotions of modern life.

I have watched the smoke of a ceremonial fire reach out to touch people, like a mysterious finger. I have seen this smoke bend the ego and pride and create leaks where anger and self-distraction destroy any hope of learning, at least at that moment.

When a small fire is made on the earth, and there a group of people choose to observe, feel and keep such a fire going for some days, many beautiful feelings and observations will appear. It is an experience best felt rather than explained. I am just hoping to encourage some patience and calm focus when considering fires and the smoke that comes from them.

A good medicine fire spirals in a clock-wise direction and goes straight up. When you see and feel such a fire you will understand the way in which you have helped create that energy at that time.



Healing Therapy Counselling Self Improvement

Explanations? There are not so many, at least not in the way you would expect. These ceremonies are not therapy, or an extension of some counselling or healing path you may be experienced in. You arrive in the middle and leave in the middle.

In this work you are given an experience with objects on the earth, sounds, smells, feathers and parts of a world I call the mystery life.

It is the feast of the human soul and its place in harmony upon the sacred earth. It is an opportunity to sit with and be inside of how far you have come in your life at that moment. A ceremonial leader sees and understands many things about the people who are present during these ceremonies. He knows where you have been and where you are going.

The best work in these ceremonies comes not from learning, or healing, or sharing. It apparently comes most clearly as a “feeling” and as a “dream”....mysterious and powerful sensations that are not easily defined by medicine, science or society.

I believe that all the learning, healing, abundance and peace we all seek comes all in a moment, a beating of the heart inside a perfect feeling with the sacred earth.

Sound

Much of what I share in the dream learning ceremonies comes from the sounds. I do several very long songs while the dreamers sleep through the night. I can go 4 to 8 hours singing through the night. How long depends upon the energy I received from the group I am working with.

These songs are a fusion of all that I have learned about dreaming. I contain these teachings inside a very old song so that they will be heard by a very old part of the mind. Much of the ceremonial work is to get messages through the resistance of the subconscious, the brainwashing we have received from our churches, schools and governments. The old song goes back to a different time, an important time in the formation of the human animal.

The animals of this world communicate by what science is pleased to call “sounds”, which is not really like “language”.

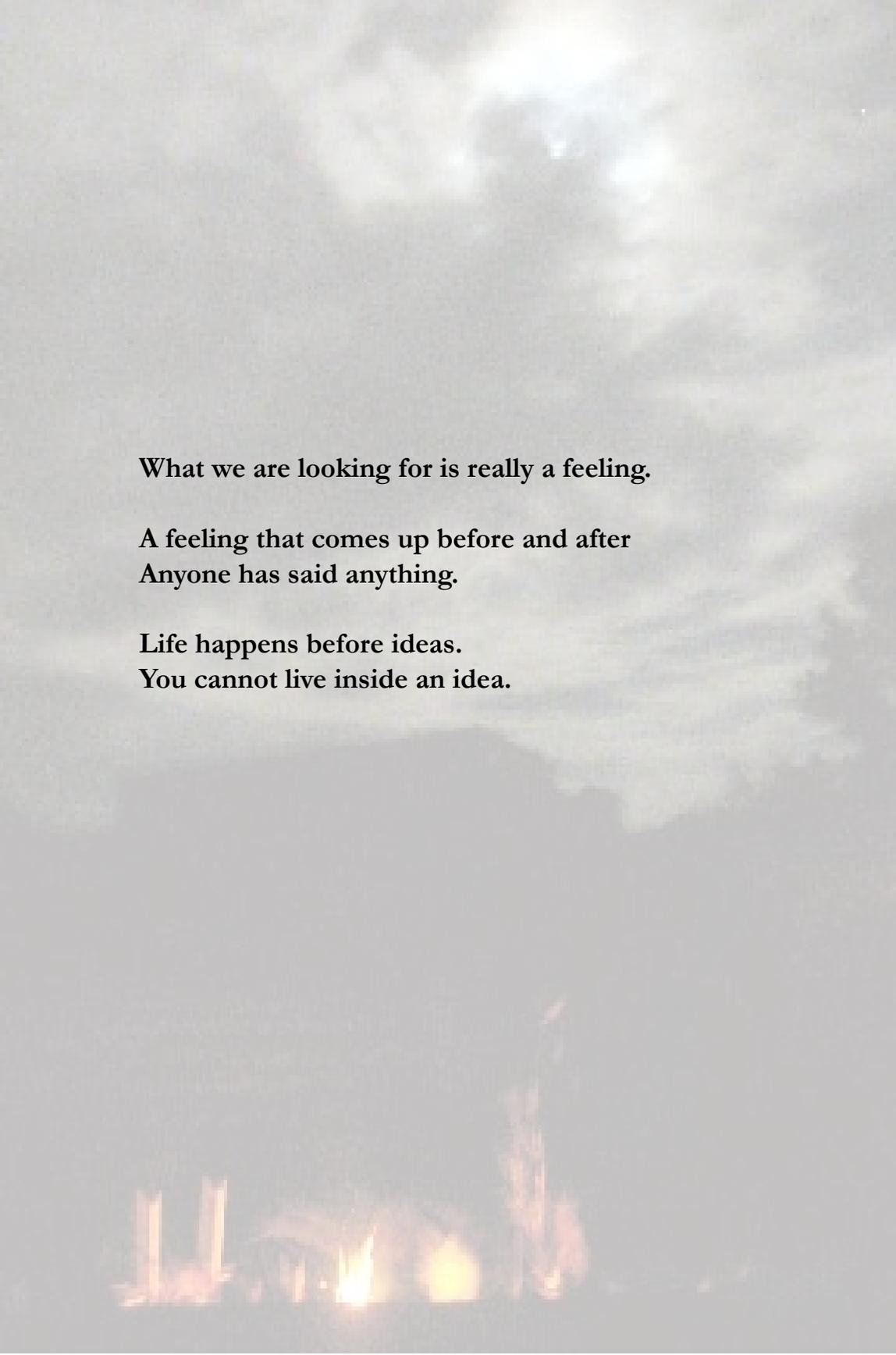
Other sounds come from the moment tobacco is put into the fire, or the moment you see the first light of day...a sound I sometimes call the “morning sound”. This sound is the answer to this question:

“What is the shortest sound you might make that would tell god, or the belly of the earth, who and what you are and why you are here? This is what I have to say about the sounds of this ceremony.



the dreaming group
the next morning,
after the ceremony....





What we are looking for is really a feeling.

**A feeling that comes up before and after
Anyone has said anything.**

**Life happens before ideas.
You cannot live inside an idea.**

These thoughts and expressions have come from the dream ceremony which was performed in Northern New Mexico between myself and 12 Italian people visiting this country and culture.

This ceremony took place on the night of the 11th of August, 2003.

For those who attended the ceremony, it was the 3rd in a long series of ceremonies which constituted the total journey of this group.

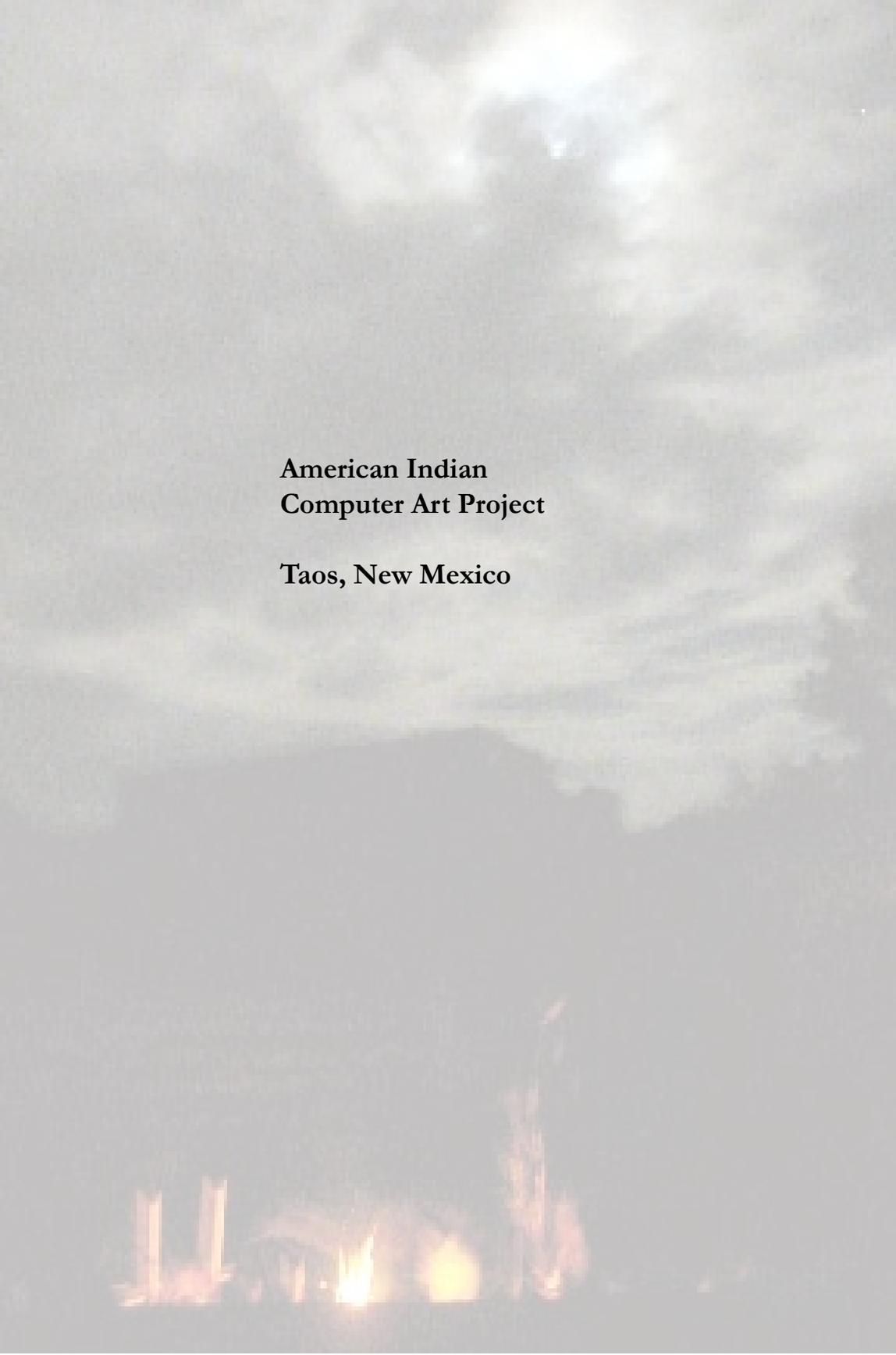
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For more information on our work, please see www.aicap.org or contact me at 505-751-0290.

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