

Birthing my Medicine Drum

Making my medicine drum was a powerful initiation into my birth story. Through this process I saw how the threads of this story were woven through my life. In November 2012 I made a deer drum, a beautiful amazing drum that I deeply honour and connect to. The creator of the deer drum is said to be imbued with its gentle loving medicine. And this has certainly been my experience. Deer is said to teach us about love, about compassion and healing. It teaches us that we are OK- just the way we are (deermedicinesound.com) and for me making, playing and journeying with my drum has been a profound journey of acceptance and healing, of myself, and others. The magic of my drum has continued to flow and weave in all manner of ways, gifting both myself and for all those I now play to.

The process of creating the drum was part of my initiation into my own soul's journey. Creating the drum was a difficult but very healing process as I reflected on my birth story, on my creative blocks and long held beliefs about myself. But I was supported through this process by Jane Hardwicke Collings and Talulah Gough. And now I see the synchronicity of the process so clearly it is staggering.

It started with the selection of the hide. It was said that the hides were all from does (female deer) but the one in front of me, had buck (male) written on it. We were asked to choose a hide, or let the hide choose us, and I definitely did not want a buck! This was a strong feeling in me, and so I was gazing around at the many other hides in the room. But at the same time, I didn't want to move too far from the one in front of me. A niggling thought was forming in my head, what if this buck was meant to be mine? I was perplexed. So, as guided by Jane, I asked the hide, are you mine? And a loud and clear "Yes" came back. Oh Ok...that was sorted then. My hide had chosen me. And this proved central to my story of self.

The process of cutting, wetting and creating began. And fear arose in me, because the words, "I can't cut straight, and I am not crafty or creative"...were asserting themselves in my head. Creativity is at the heart of our lives. We are all creative, always creating, manifesting, harvesting and letting go, but the ideas around creativity are often warped in our consumer driven culture and we are taught to consume rather than to create. We are called consumers not creators.....and so this story of not being creative is shared by many. The way we are born also shapes the way we create, after all it is the most fundamental creative act. (*Being Born*) It is an imprint for creative acts in our lives and in the process of drum making we get to look at our own imprint, on the way we create.

So, during the making of the drum, I had much opportunity to pause and reflect on the truth of these things. I was guided by Talulah who supported me in remembering to breathe and to be gentle with myself, and soon I had a kind of rhythm going, interrupted with various feelings of overwhelm and determination to keep going! And by the time the full moon shone on our rounded cut out hides draped in the river, I was feeling a deep sense of achievement and exhaustion.

The next day the manual was pulled out, The Drum Making Process, showing us how to weave the skin to the frame....and with it those old stories reappeared, "Oh my goddess not a effin manual, I hate them, I never follow them, I can't"...Big sigh, more breathing, more allowing and some affirmations, I can do this, I can read, and I can follow instructions...And so with a big breath I started, and stopped, and started again....and after more gentle coaxing I was underway threading and weaving the deer skin thread into my hide....

During a break I went to have a look at the book, *Being Born*...which details the imprint from each type of birth. I was wondering what it would say about normal births as I was the fourth of five children born vaginally from my mother. But was I simply a normal birth? I opened the book at a random (sic) page – and the headline startled me, "The Wrong Sex Child"....The words jumped out of the page, and I knew then I was "the wrong child." My mind was flooded with the words of my birth story from my mother, "and you were born, so I rang your father and he was disappointed because he wanted a boy"....At the same time I remembered vividly all the teasing by one of my older sisters...."they didn't want a girl, you were supposed to be a boy." These thoughts and feelings filled my heart and I wept and wept.

I was the wrong child...I had known that but hadn't allowed myself to feel into it, and now I was. And it all made sense- how I liked to make others wrong and how at the same time I felt I couldn't ever do things right. (I could see my husband kindly nodding at that one!) because deep down I felt I was wrong and insisting on my rightness was a way to mask this.

And then I saw how magical it was that I had chosen a buck- the wrong sex -and in claiming him (or him claiming me) I had made him the right sex, and me the right child....And the journey of healing really began! After many tears, and then some laughter I allowed myself to return to weaving my drum. And in the afternoon, it was completed. The cross on the back was a bit crooked, and he certainly didn't look as soft and pretty as some of the other drums, but he was my drum. I had made him, and already had a sense of the profound journey we would continue to travel together.

From this simple beginning my drum and I have journeyed far and wide. My drum journeys have brought me both deep and powerful lessons, and others too as I now host drum journeys for other women. Drum journeying is a shamanic process of travelling to other realms, the lower realm, the middle realm and the upper realm by following the beat of a rapidly struck drum. In the shamanic world view, we are all part of the universal flow of energy, part of the all that is....and by drum journeying we can move out of ordinary consciousness into a meditative or "even hypnotic state" where we can encounter both metaphorically and actually the energy and beings within the shamanic realms, who come to us for healing and wholeness. (see Four Shamanic Drum Journeys, brochure SSW)

So, the day after making our drums we were called to journey. I was quite shocked at the thought of doing this but there really wasn't much time to resist so I lay down on the

sweet earth and travelled with the beat of the drum, meeting my power animal (elephant), my inner shaman (spider-woman) and my spirit teacher (grandmother medicine woman). Again, lots of doubts surfaced through this process, but through it all I begun to feel into my deepening connection to these other realms, to the possibilities of the interconnection of all life, to the web of life. Something I have been yearning for my whole life.

The process of building a relationship with my drum has been a beautiful initiation into trust. Trusting what we cannot see but that which we can feel so deeply in our core. I found the writings of Gail Wood, and her book *The Shamanic Witch*, to be a powerful recipe for relating to my drum. She acknowledges that it takes time to build a relationship with a drum, just like it does with anyone...and so the more time I spent with my drum, the deeper the relationship. At first I was just feeling him, smelling him, touching and relating to him and then after a few weeks I allowed myself to truly drum him.

My first drum session was so powerful. I created sacred space, calling in the directions and elements and giving thanks for the opportunity to drum, and then began to follow my drum where he lead....Part of the learning for me has been to follow- to listen with my whole being and allow the drum to speak to me, rather than me to him, and this helps me follow others too (as someone who asserts her rightness- because she acutely felt her wrongness, this has been a great gift!).....

I drummed and drummed and felt the energy surging through me, I felt our deep connection, not only to each other but to the universal flow of energy, to Shakti. It was a real opening, a gateway to ecstasy which was quite unexpected and profound. I didn't stop as he led me into a beautiful ecstatic dance! By the end I was exhausted but thrilled. I was in awe of my drum and proud of my-self for travelling with him through my wounding's into the place of healing, of Shakti- the universal feminine consciousness.

After a tragic event I decided that I would drum each day, and I have been doing that now for many moons, just listening, trusting and playing with my drum, feeling into the evolution of our relationship. I know the power of the drum, and trust that I can send healing to those who need it. More recently I began drumming for others and found that the magic I encountered is there for them too. That the Shamanic practise of drum journeying is open to all- and I have been gifted the experience of drumming for others, feeling into their encounters with their own wisdom, guides and teachings. And so the journey, both gentle and wild continues.

Written in 2014

References

Deer Medicine Sound -deermedicinesound.com

School of Shamanic Womancraft

Robyn Fernance, *Being Born*, Little Acorn Books

Four Shamanic Drum Journeys, School of Shamanic Womancraft

Daniel Saurine, The Drum Making Process, School of Shamanic Womancraft

Gail Wood, The Shamanic Witch, Weiser Books