

# Capturing Dreams... Weaving Opportunity



*By Judith  
Ewing  
M.Ed., M.A.,  
CIH*

Everybody dreams. If dreams lead to visions, and if visions can connect us to creative Opportunities, then how do we catch dreams? And, if everybody dreams both good and bad dreams, how do we sift out the good dreams? Dreamcatchers—or Dream Nets as they are called by the Ojibwe —were created to do both. Believing that dreams will never cease, the ancient Ojibwe traditionally hung a Dream Net above the bed to catch good dreams so that one can dream in peace. The Lakota also performed that tradition, holding the belief that the web is a perfect circle with a hole in the center to be used to help people reach their goals through good use of the ideas, dreams, and visions sifted out by the Dreamcatcher.

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Dreams have always had many meanings to Native Americans. They believe that dreams are messages from the spirit world. Therefore, Dreamcatchers are one of the most fascinating traditions of the Native American cultures and have

been a part of Native American peoples' spiritualism for generations. The Ojibwe are credited as the first people to create and use the Dreamcatcher. From the time of its origination other Native American Nations have continued to adopt Dreamcatchers into their culture, even into the 1960's and 1970's as a result of the Pan-Indian Movement.

The earliest Dreamcatchers, first known as Sacred Hoops symbolizing strength and unity, were crafted by parents to protect their children from nightmares. As a traditional element, these Dreamcatchers (sacred hoops) were originally made out of willow and covered with sage. Sinew creating the web was attached to the hoop at eight points, symbolic of the eight legs of the legendary

spider who weaves the web. Feathers attached to the hoop were meant to assist the flight of good dreams. Today's more modern Dreamcatchers replace the use of deer sinew, now forbidden, with artificial sinew. And the modern-day hoops usually are made from wood or metal wrapped in leather strips. However, with both traditional and modern Dreamcatchers, the decoration of the web is guided by the artisan's Imagination including the size, shape, and colors used.

Historically, American Native newborns are given charms woven in the form of spider webs with a feather placed in the center of the web to signify breath or air. These Dreamcatcher charms are hung from the hoop on their cradleboards. During waking hours, the baby is being entertained by watching the air playing with the feather. A lesson is also being given on the importance of good air. During sleep, the Dreamcatcher charms protect the dreams of the baby from the tricksters of the night so that the newborn's innocence will not be harmed. Toni (1992) addresses Dreamcatchers humming above children's beds in her poem BEYOND.

Sleep well sweet child  
Don't worry your head  
Your Dream Catcher is humming  
Above your bed

Listen so softly  
I know you can hear  
The tone of beyond  
Close to your ear

Love is alive  
And living in you  
Beyond all your troubles  
Where good dreams are true

Since Dreamcatchers are intended to protect all sleeping individuals from negative dreams,

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larger sizes are hung in teepees and lodges for all to have good dreams.

Legends state that the Dreamcatcher was a gift to man from the willow tree and the spider to catch all dreams floating in the night air. Although the legends vary somewhat from tribe to tribe, the major theme involves the spider weaving a web for the basic intention of sifting out good dreams. More specifically, the Ojibwe version states it is the positive dreams that slip through the hole in the center of the Dreamcatcher, and then glide down the sacred feathers to the sleeping person below. It is said that many times good dreams slide down so gently that the sleeper is unaware of the dreaming. However, the bad dreams which do not know the way become hopelessly tangled in the Dreamcatcher web only to melt when struck by the first rays of the sun of the new day. The Lakota Dreamcatcher legend has the opposing belief that the web will catch your good dreams while it is the bad dreams that will go away through the center hole. Even though the legends of the Dreamcatchers differ slightly, the underlying meaning and symbolism is universal across cultures and languages. The Lakota additionally share the belief that the Dreamcatcher holds the destiny of the future.

Throughout time for both the Native American and other people, Dreamcatchers remind us of the importance of metaphors and visions from the world of dreams. Kekule and Einstein represent two modern-day examples wherein the importance of symbols and metaphors within dreams led to



creative Opportunities of discovery that changed the future. While attempting to find the chemical structure of Benzene, Kekule was said to have dreamed of a snake biting its own tail. From that Image the chemist concluded that Benzene might be a “ring” molecule, instead of a long-string molecule. Einstein is also said to have been creatively influenced through his meditation upon a dream of his sliding down a steep mountain while rapidly gaining speed until approaching the

speed of light which caused the stars to change their appearance. It is thought that his reflection upon this dream later helped him work out his scientific principle of relativity.

A Native American spiritual meaning for spider is “creative pattern of life.” Thus, like the spider creating webs in the Dreamcatcher, and similar to Kekule and Einstein capturing the symbolism within dreams to guide

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their discovery, each of us have the Opportunity to weave our captured dreams and visions into creative patterns of change for our own lives.

The concept of the Dreamcatcher is gifted to us by our Native American ancestors who regard the Dreamcatcher as a serious instrument through which the true meaning of our dreams and visions can be discovered. Much respect can be offered to our Native Americans who, through the legends surrounding the origination of the Dreamcatcher and how it works, honored the importance of dreams to mankind. Now, today, just as then for our ancestors, the role of dreams is to provide a powerful force to the creative process of weaving Opportunities into our lives. Our Native American ancestors have

taught us through the tradition of the Dreamcatcher that we indeed can capture and follow our good dreams to inspire visions, which in turn can connect us to even more adventurous Opportunities that weave the destiny of the future.

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## Welcome Amrita Cottrell



We offer a great big WELCOME to Amrita Cottrell who has joined us as Office Manager. Amrita is the Founding Director of The Healing Music Organization and the Co-Director of The Crystal Sound Institute. Her work in sound and healing music came from her own amazing recovery from breast cancer in 1999, when she was able to eradicate two tumors in as little as six weeks with the sound of her own voice. Amrita has a degree in the Health Arts and Sciences and is an inspiring teacher and public speaker. Also, she is an accomplished musician and singer. Her music artfully blends her playing of crystal singing bowls with her high, clear singing. She has shared her healing story and her work with the crystal bowls at

the United Nations, as well as the NY Times and CBS News.



"I joined the staff of Imagery International because I really believe in the work. Having been through some dramatic health challenges in the past, and using visualization to assist in my healing, I wanted to support the great work of Imagery International. I've been involved in the work of healing with sound and music for the last twelve years. Imagery is just the perfect complement to the other work that I'm doing and would like to learn more."

Thanks for joining our staff Amrita. We look forward to lots of great work and times together.