

Practical Animism Online Course: Live Call #3, June 6, 2019

Please excuse any typos and inaccuracies in this transcript.

Daniel: Why don't we go ahead and ... Yep. Welcome everybody. We're recording now. It's early June, 2019, for the third live call for Practical Animism Course. And thanks to each of you here and each of you who are not able to be present for the live call.

Daniel: We're going to make good use of the 45 minutes to chat through questions that are arising for folks in your learning. I want to say a few things succinctly about the most recent lesson this week on the ancestors.

Daniel: As folks probably know, a big body of my work and focus is with working with human ancestors, and especially ancestors of blood, so because that has its own space and is its own thing, it's not the focus here per se. So this is the one lesson that really goes into that more explicitly.

Daniel: And it is important to know that humans aren't separate from the rest of life, and that the category ... This highlights how the category of nature, when we think of it, often suggests other-than-humans, and that split is really problematic. So the human ancestors are our extended body, and they are the matrix or the roots, the bigger body that we're a part of, and so we can't exclude them in our considerations of a relationship with the rest of life.

Daniel: Also, all of our ancestors, even if it's been a minute, have lived in these relational ways that together we're practicing reclaiming. And so it's good, even if work with your blood ancestors is not a ritual focus for you and it never ends up being a focus, it's good to at least recognize that there is wisdom that can be accessed from your own people, and that can help to temper or reduce a need to go outside your own cultures and family and situation of origin, your own social position, in order to find a sense of rootedness.

Daniel: So those are a few reasons it's important to work with them. Also, our ancestors of blood can help us to show up in a more trustworthy way with the other-than-humans. Because when we believe that we're isolated, that shows up as a ... we look more dangerous in a sense to others.

Daniel: Like, if you have someone who comes into your life and there's 20 people that say that they're an amazing person, you're probably going to have some conferred trust, because they're a known, networked-in person rather than someone you don't know at all.

Daniel: And so if we're connected with our people and we move with them and we know them, then the trees, the mountains, the creatures are more likely to respond to us in a trustworthy way, because we're networked in. And if we're going to relate with the ancestors, the human ancestors who are potentially connected to us by virtue of place, where we're living or where we're at at the moment, but we don't have a connection through blood, for one, those are those ones, those ancestral spirits and even living descendants at times, who are part of the landscape and the ecology of the place. If we want to approach them respectfully, it's good to also know who our people are so that we can say, "Hey, me and my people say hello to you and your people, and we want to be in a conscious and caring way with you."

Daniel: So those are a few bits that I want to say up front. But mostly, I want to lead ... follow your questions. So go ahead if you have questions and raise your hand in the chat or type in the chat or raise your hand through the call. I'm going to go to some that others have sent in.

Daniel: One, is from Carol in South Africa. "Is it necessary to connect with ancestors of blood," or even ancestors of the land, I know you may not have asked that, "in order to relate directly with the other-than-human powers who are the land; with the stones, the plants, the animals?"

Daniel: No, not usually, would be my sense. If I want to greet ... there's bears in our back yard. If the bear's walking by and I'm like, "Whoa bear, how are you?" I don't need to be like, "Hey ancestors, help me to mediate my interaction with this bear." So we can approach directly the other-than-humans, or they can approach us. It's not that everything's mediated through the ancestors at all.

Daniel: Having said that, it has been my experience that ancestors of place, who we may not be related to oftentimes, depending on your history, also on a blood level, those ancestors of place can kind of block or interfere if they choose to with the attempt to connect with the land more deeply, if not given proper respect. They can function as kind of gatekeepers or protector spirits in the ecology of a place. And so it is good to seek to honor them.

Daniel: If we know we're going to be in a place for a minute and we want to go deeper with the relationships there, there's an etiquette piece around respecting human communities that have been in a place longer than we have and whose bodies and souls and spirits have become really interwoven with the story of that place; so to not overlook them. So in that way it's good form, and in certain ways necessary. But also, they don't have to come between a direct relationship with the others. Right?

Daniel: I kind of spoke to the importance of bringing in ancestors of blood and how that increases our perceived trustworthiness with the others. If you look at ... it's a generalization, but at least some indigenous cultures and systems will favor a kind of introduction style, where you situate yourself by virtue of your ancestors, like, "This is me, this is the people I'm connected to, this is how my people might have known your people," and so there's ... being situated in the larger web of relationships is important. So in that way it can be good even when relating with the land to know how to introduce yourself well.

Daniel: There was a conference I organized some years ago, and a friend and Ohlone person, that's one of the tribal nations in the San Francisco Bay Area, her name's Catherine Herrera, but she was giving a talk and she was asked, "Is there anything we can do as settler colonialist people to give respect to the Ohlone people and spirits here when we're out on the land doing stuff? And she said something very simple but impactful: "Introduce your people to the ancestors here. Introduce your people to the land."

Daniel: And so, introduce yourself by way of your people. Say hello. So that is good etiquette. And if you don't know your people, then it begs the ... there's an invitation to get to know them better, so your introduction can be more impactful. Good.

Daniel: There's a question ... I don't see folks with hands raised yet. That's totally fine. There's a question from Ana, who listened to an interview with Alex Stark, who's great, and there was something, I'm not sure what he said, that came across as, "The physical world is not real, the material world is not real." And there's an important, legit concern of, "Is he saying or am I saying that animism as a sort of approach to life is transcendental or is, like, denying of the physicality of the world?" because a lot of harm can come from being kind of checked out with the physical, or not accountable with the physical form.

Daniel: And I don't see it that way. I actually have an aversion to an imbalanced, transcendental kind of view. I look, for example, to at least my own understanding, limited as it might be, of dharma teachings and Buddhist teachings, because it's one tradition that both recognizes, that there's a kind of impermanence or emptiness, or sometimes Tibetans may talk about it in terms of "rainbow body" or, like, the things that we believe are solid are actually still quite mutable and changeable and sort of empty in a sense, and physics would say much the same thing.

Daniel: And does that mean that you get to bypass relational accountability just because things are changing or just because they're dependently arising? It doesn't mean that at all. And people who have embodied, like, the Bodhisattva ethics, which is

just a Buddhist jargony way of saying a commitment to others, like a profound, multi-lifetime commitment to others' wellbeing, human and other-than-human. When we have that ethic and we turn toward the world and not away from it, we walk toward the trouble, we can at the same time recognize that the beings that we're caring for, like ourselves, you could say don't exactly have a center; that we're more of a rhizome or an interconnected mycelium or tangled net of consciousness; that nothing's totally separate from others.

Daniel: I'm not entirely sure I exist apart from others. And you could psychologically take that in a certain direction, but I'm saying that we're part of a network of consciousness. And that's different than saying the physical world isn't real. I don't see it that way, because I think that can lead to a kind of view that, like, somehow the subtle energy is real and the physical isn't. I think a bit more in terms of levels of density maybe. Yeah, let me say just that. And acknowledgement to the way that a distorted, transcendental-only view can play into a narrative that is not always, but at times, present in certain interpretations of Christianity that sort of says, "This world is ... you know, like Heaven is real and the next life is real, and this world is not so real." Buddhists sometimes will speak in that way as well, or other traditions. And the devaluing of incarnate life when that imbalance is happening ... I'm not saying that's inherent to the teachings of Christianity or others ... when that imbalance is happening, yeah, sure, it can enable a lot of horrific behavior. So, yeah, don't do that.

Daniel: Good. Okay. Anybody have a live question? Sorry, I don't see them here.

Daniel: There's a question about ... Oh. Do I make an assumption that ancestors are real, so to speak ... and that I had said that the class is welcome to people who are very new and may not have any background in ritual, am I making a belief kind of assumption about that?

Daniel: Maybe. That's been my experience: that I get better results with life when I act as if something continues after the death of the body and that we're not only the body. It's a subtle and important question about the ... There's a habit of talking, even in so-called shamanic circles or around a lot of ritual where it's like, "Oh, there's the bear, and then there's the bear spirit, or the spirit of the mountain," or whatever it might be; that there's a physical and a spirit. And indigenous folks I've been around will talk about it this way, too. On a practical level, it makes a lot of sense, because sometimes things have a reality to them as I experience the ancestors. But they're not incarnate in the same way that we are.

Daniel: So I do have the view that there are less physically dense layers or realms of existence which overlap with this realm, which have real consequence and trigger

relational accountability. So not all people, human or otherwise, are visible to us. Some of those people are, you could say "spirit people", but there's a risk that that creates this sort of metaphysical split where it's like somehow a spirit is more real or less real than this physicality, and I don't see it in either of those ways. It's just maybe a different level of density or something like that that ... Like, we perceive on a kind of narrow bandwidth. And some humans are particularly psychic, or there's a moment where things are really open, when you're having a near-death experience or something, and then your perceptual bandwidth gets wider and you can see the spirits in the room, or something happens. It's like that.

Daniel: In the part two of the course, we're going to have ... there's a lesson on deities. Like, this one on the ancestors and the one on trying to introduce the framework of deities, gods, goddesses; bigger, collective kind of forces that include plants, animals, mountains; physical, perceivable things; those two lessons out of the 14 do move into the terrain of things of the kinds of people that are not always physically perceivable to living humans. And so I am suggesting that not all people are perceivable to us all the time. So the ancestors are kind of in that camp.

Daniel: In another sense, the ancestors is a way of just signifying or pointing to our extended body or our root structure, or the lineages and the collective energy we're a part of. And so they speak through us. And in so far as this is also the voice of Daniel's ancestors, then they're physically perceivable, too.

Daniel: So when we wear ... The ancestors wear our very own face. So that's weird and interesting and complicated and good and means they're also hear. So both things are true, yeah. But it's a great question.

Daniel: So I'm not saying to the individual who asked that you should believe in it, but I'm saying consider that it might be worth acting as if the ancestors have a kind of reality, and then staying really true to your own experience of what happens when you try on that possibility. So it's always a kind of experiment. "Believing" in a thing or trying to a belief can be useful, because it allows for certain kinds of interactions to play out that couldn't play out if they're blocked, because you don't believe it's possible. So be pragmatic about it. That's a great question. Good.

Daniel: I see a hand up, so let me go to, I think Jenelle and Lindsey maybe. You're off mute, yeah?

Jenelle: Hey Daniel and everyone.

Daniel: Hi there.

Jenelle: I experience, not just bloodline networking, but also soul-line networking. I'm curious if you have any suggestive protocol or guideline when it comes to introducing ourselves to the ancestors of place or the other-than-human, if any sort of acknowledgement of soul-line networking is valuable.

Daniel: I think you're saying your sense of spiritual place and rootedness and kind of where you are in the bigger network includes not just blood ancestors, but ancestors who you're connected to through spiritual lineage or soul affiliation, or not necessarily blood. Is that what you're saying?

Jenelle: Yep, soul affiliation, also with conscious awareness of past lives and the kind of soul story of [crosstalk 00:17:00] and-

Daniel: Sure, yeah. Yeah, look, I'm super ... I don't have a dogmatic feeling about any of that. So I think it's my experience, and I think it's what happens for a lot of people over time, if you allow your relational field to expand, to include not just other living humans, but to include the human ancestors, the other-than-humans, the deities, the archangels, whoever you hang out with, then you end up having kind of a team or like a crew of other beings, other people that you're connected to, a relational network. Just like you have all the contacts in your phone, someone is, like, Oshun, and then the Archangel Gabriel, and then the spirit of the moose or whatever. So they're part of your contacts. And the power dynamics with those ones might differ from relationship to relationship.

Daniel: So if you're going to do an introduction of yourself to a being you're wanting to establish trust with and just meet, is it potentially good form to be like, "Hi, it's me Jenelle and Lindsey, and these are the folks we're connected to, so on behalf of me and those I'm connected to, greetings, respect to you"? Yeah, sure. That seems great in general. Yeah.

Daniel: The question in so far as you're giving attention to etiquette is a great type of question, because that's part of the learning I'm hoping to encourage with the course, is how really slowing down and trying to understand relational etiquette with the spirits, with the land, with the ancestors, hopefully increases our sensitivity to those things with other living humans, both, that's a both/and. So thank you, Jenelle.

Jenelle: I agree. Because that is the ... I can't speak on behalf of others, but I've heard some other people speak about kind of, like, the overwhelm of not having this sort of knowledge, and then this world opens up anyways. I'm just really wanting to learn etiquette to make sure we're being safe, respectful.

Daniel: Yeah. And also, don't be perfectionistic about it. If you have an openness to learn and you stay humble ... We're all going to make mistakes, and it's good to just bring your vulnerability and your openness when you approach others.

Daniel: And remember, I'm not saying you would do this, but this is a thing for others, too, if you feel shaky about your own sense of confidence, now, that can be a really sweet kind of vulnerability, but also make sure you're balancing it with discernment and protection, because if there is another kind of being, human or otherwise, who would have, for whatever reason, kind of ill intent towards you, they could take that low self-esteem and then use ... it could create trouble, put it that way. So it's important to kind of feel your center, know your center, move slow, and bring that into your connections with the others. Thanks Jenelle. Yeah.

Jenelle: Thank you.

Daniel: Let me ... I'll go in just a moment to Izabella and then Kai. There's a great question from Sara that came in ... I assume it's okay to name you, sorry ... just about the feeling of doing enough. Like, I'm not sure if I'm doing enough or I'm engaging enough, not necessarily in the course, but just in light of the ecological meltdown we're in and in light of the ... you know, there's a lot of trouble happening, and it's easy to feel like we should be doing all the things and getting it right all the time and doing a lot of those things.

Daniel: I struggle with that, too: "Am I doing enough?" My sense of that is, no, we're never going to do enough. It's never going to be enough. So that's one ... it's not the complete truth, but that's one, for me at least, that's one part of the truth: it's not ever going to be enough.

Daniel: Then, simultaneously true ... And to feel that, to be able to enter into that experience of so much loss, and that also there's a completeness and things are already enough, and we're already just really super made out of love, and lovable, and worthy right how we are in the moment, and to see that if we can stay connected to self-love and to that kind of self-worth, self-esteem, then the things that we are doing with our brief and precious life, we can bring our full presence to those things.

Daniel: One of the gifts that I think the world and the spirits and the others want from us is our full attention and presence. One could even say we have a moral accountability or responsibility to do our destiny and to try to show up all the way and to work from that assumption that, "It's not going to be enough, but I'm going to bring my full presence to whatever it is I'm doing."

Daniel: So, yeah, I mean, maybe that's a general answer, but it's something that a lot of people sit with, and we're going to be deepening into that in the coming lessons, especially in two lessons, I think, around ... or three, around grief and just how much loss we're living through, and how to not get flooded by that, but still stay openhearted and engaged. So thanks.

Daniel: There's a question then, one other I wanted to speak to from Nikki in the Facebook group, about, "What's going to help to actually get more information about what rituals and ways of honoring food, plants animals that your ancestors practiced?" A lot of that knowledge has been lost. Some of it can be retrieved.

Daniel: So let's say, for example, someone has Italian ancestry, you might understand, "What was the dyad at the time," for one, "of those cultures?" And you learn that, "Okay, so tomatoes are actually domesticated by Aztec people, not Italians, but the brassica family: broccoli, kale, cauliflower, are domesticated in the Mediterranean. So understand what were your ancestors eating, and then understand the rhythm of the growth of those plants, because a lot of the rituals of honoring them would happen around the times of planting and growing and harvest. So look to the cycles of harvesting. And if there are rituals of kind of harvesting animals as well, to look to what can be known still about those rituals and how they were practiced if they've been lost.

Daniel: Then, beyond that, you ask the ancestors of ... you ask your ancestors what they did, and they'll be able to share things with you. And you ask the food and the plants and animal relatives that we're eating for food what their experience was. Because it's really great to be curious about their side of that experience.

Daniel: So those are some ways, in general, when you're like, "How do I access this or that information?" Part of relational, or you could say animist way of moving is to make sure to include the voices of the others and to listen to their perspective on it. Good.

Daniel: Let me go to Izabella, her question. You're off mute, Izabella. Yeah.

Izabella: Yeah. Hello. My question would be about is there good ways to talk about this topic to other people who might think that this is crazy, so that ... I don't necessarily want everybody to understand me, but I would like to give them a chance, if it's possible, to at least get a glimpse. Because if I just speak about my experiences, it ... sometimes I get this feedback from people that, "That's too much. That's crazy. That's dumb."

Daniel: Yeah, sure. It's a common and important question. For one, the desire for mirroring and to be seen and understood and all of that I think is super healthy and normal. I have that, and I happen to be blessed that I have a lot of folks around me who

have a similar framework. But for one, is to know that it's a really sacred impulse to want to have people who get you and understand you and have community in that way.

Daniel: Then, my habit or my suggestion in general would be to start slow. We think of ... we could almost have, like, an animism inventory or a scale: "1 to 10, how animist are you? Do you talk to the furniture in your house and the metals? Or do you just talk to the pets? Or do you not even really talk to the pets, and then you only really like certain kinds of humans?" So some people, a lot of people wouldn't think you're that strange for having a real, emotional bond with your dog or cat, for example. So that can be a way to start to bridge into having a relationship with a not-domesticated animal.

Daniel: Some people have a really intimate relationship with the food that they grow, or their trees near their home. So a lot of people enjoy certain kinds of relationships with the other-than-humans. It could be with a Catholic saint, it could be with a certain place. And they maybe don't even ... they've never said it out loud to somebody. So there are a lot of other people like what you're describing, Izabella, who enjoy some of these relationships. And when you make a space for that by sharing about your own experience, they would actually feel excited to share themselves.

Daniel: So I would say take calculated risks to share things and notice how that goes, because a lot of people, they will understand, at least parts of it. A lot of people have experience of their ancestors who have passed, for example, even though they don't have a framework for it. So I would ... And to know that there are so many people around the world from all different cultures who really wouldn't think ... they think it's strange to not enjoy these relationships; so to know that it's actually quite normal what we're doing here. It's just, we're re-enlivening those things in a time when it's been diminished a bit.

Daniel: Yeah, so be hopeful about that. Thank you, Izabella for asking. Yeah.

Izabella: Thank you.

Daniel: Let me go to Kai. Can you take it off mute from your side? Oh, sorry. Yeah, you're good, Kai.

Kai: Okay. Hi Daniel. Hi everyone.

Daniel: Hey.

Kai: I apologize if a similar question has been asked. I'm just joining the course, so I've missed the first two calls.

Daniel: You're good. Come on in. Yeah.

Kai: I'm just noticing that as I move more into this work and other work that looks to open more and receive more, my level of sensitivity is quite high, so very, very raw. I just recently did the three-day intensive in Toronto, and the line that I worked with that was the wound, was that the loss of these practices, the grief was so huge that it was just complete shutdown of sensitivity and being open.

Kai: So, yeah, I guess I'm just looking for or interested in your thoughts around ways to approach that. It just, it feels like it's like a waterfall of ... Yeah, I'm realizing how much I shut myself down because I feel so much.

Daniel: Yeah, welcome back to the messy, grieving heart of humanity and beyond. It's a good question. Let me see if I can say anything about it.

Daniel: I don't know. I mean, I'm still working it out myself. I think it's good to have a tender heart. It's important to both have a tender heart, and to realize there are legitimate dangers in the world, and the world includes the seen and the unseen aspects of the world.

Daniel: So it's easy if we start opening up to be like, "Oh my God, I'm so open. I'm ready for all these relationships." And then, there's like, "Oh no. Realization two: some of these others are unsafe." It's like, "Well, I kind of abstractly knew that, but how do you balance that with this really tender and excellent opening?"

Daniel: So then we get into, "How do you balance openheartedness with boundaries and protection?" We're actually going to talk about boundaries in the next lesson. But one thing that may not be obvious is we can assume, based on cultural conditioning, that whatever needs done, we need to always be the one to do it personally. And when it comes to boundaries, it's also possible to call into your relational field others who have a protective kind of function, whether it's deities or ancestors or other kinds of spirits, stuff like that.

Daniel: So imagine if you had five or six really trained, sort of martial arts experts who had ... their sole mission was to protect you, Kai, as you move in the world, you'd probably be a little more relaxed in your nervous system.

Daniel: So on a spirit level, it's possible to cultivate ... It doesn't mean we are protected from all things, it doesn't mean we don't have consequence. But it can increase the actual level of safety. So if the question is, "How can I be open and feel safe?" The most effective way to feel safer is to be safer and to actually address the legitimate threats in a pragmatic way. And staying on our path of ... like, staying in our lane, sort of

on our path of destiny, and moving slowly, and staying open. It's a lifetime of practice to know how to navigate the different kinds of things that could arise. But keep holding intent, stay on track, and call in protection around you while staying open. I mean, that's a general strategy.

Daniel: But, yeah, if you're cracked open, like, generally, just go with that, and tend to safety both. Yeah. Thanks Kai. That's great. Glad you're with us.

Daniel: Let me speak to some questions that came in from Corran and Jess both about how to acknowledge ancestors of place who either, one, might not be in a condition of a lot of peace, or, also, different variables, who arrived through conditions of hardship or persecution or nonconsensual movement, like enslaved people of African ancestries in the Americas, for example, or ...

Daniel: Basically, ritually, your question is, "Where you're at, if you hold intent to honor the ancestors of a place, what if they're not at peace and what if the legacies by which they came to be there are difficult?"

Daniel: For one, don't assume one way or another what their condition and spirit is, because they may have come there through a very peaceful route and not be at peace. They may have come through a difficult circumstance and be quite at peace. So don't make too many assumptions about their condition just based on how they arrived at the moment where you're at.

Daniel: It is true that some ancestors of place may be unsettle or unwell in spirit for all kinds of different reasons. It's a big topic, really. In general, it's good to connect with your own people and your own resources, and from that place of connecting with your own, ideally, ancestors, because it's an ancestor-to-ancestor kind of moment, but at least your own guidance, your own connection to the sacred, whoever your team is, with them communicate goodwill to the ancestors of place and just say, "Hey, is there anything I can do to acknowledge you? I want to be here in a respectful way."

Daniel: And they might ask for certain offerings, for example, or actions, like, "Clean up this area. Do this. Do that." And if you can do those things and they seem reasonable to you, those are great trust-building actions to take.

Daniel: And if you are invited and you hear a message from the ancestors of the land that relates to a kind of reparations or making amends in whatever way for past histories of harm, whether or not you personally or your ancestors personally committed them, if you're willing to do that and it kind of checks out in a common sense way, those are great actions to take. If we listen to the land, because the voice, if you will, of the Earth in any given place, and the voice of the ancestors of that place are not very

separable a lot of times. If we listen in to them and we are guided to participate in cultural repairs that need to be made, that's fantastic. That's good. However gets us to participating in those repairs, that's good.

Daniel: Yeah, let me say just that for now. Let your own team of trusted powers function as a kind of chaperone or interpreter or support team whenever you're interfacing with an energy or other people that may have a troubled energy or they may have complicated intentions or motivations, allow your support team to assist you with that moment when it gets complicated.

Daniel: Good. Let's go to some live questions here. I think I saw Kira next. We'll have time for just a few, then we'll do breakout groups, then I'll come back for a little bit for folks who want to hang out. So, yeah, go ahead, Kira, if you would.

Kira: Hi. Hi Daniel.

Daniel: Hi there.

Kira: I was struck by something you said, I think on the last call, about beliefs; that many indigenous cultures, they don't really have the concept of belief. I'm wondering if what you mean to say is they look at more of what we do, not ... Like, someone's spiritual, religious belief is really more demonstrated in what they do, like belief is not as real as action.

Kira: And I guess the second part of that question is, I'm so struck by ... I have the belief that everything is sacred, but my behavior, like, it's so hard to bring that full presence to the fact that almost everything is sacred and every act I could do is a ritual, and how to integrate the gap between belief and action. And is it really mostly presence and intentionality that makes that difference? I hope that's not too much in there.

Daniel: No, that's good. It's true, as I understand it at least, that most cultures, indigenous and otherwise, around the world care more about what you do than about what you profess to believe. I think that's just ... Look at people's actions more than their words, that kind of thing.

Daniel: Then, it takes decades at least to cultivate wisdom. So what you're talking about is, "How do we embody love and kindness in a way that's not just a good idea, but is actually effective in the world and to extend that to this whole other relational field, the other-than-humans as well as all the complexities with living humans?" And, yeah, it takes a lot of tenacity and self-esteem, frankly, to know how ... We have to feel really ... really love ourselves really well to be able to effectively take in the feedback that the world, human and otherwise, brings to us in a way that allows us to learn.

Daniel: Like, being skillful at relationship is a learned thing, and the teachers are not always elder humans. They can be humans of all ages, and other-than-humans. So the thing is, is that we're on a path of learning and staying humble with that. But it's not something that you mentally figure out.

Kira: No. No, I mean, I'm even struck, like, my home is a spirit. Like, there's relationship everywhere, and to bring that kind of whole presence to everything ... I don't know. When there's someone who moves through the world, they may not have the belief that everything is sacred, but there's something about how they move that you can feel quality. And I guess, I don't know if just even meditation helps cultivate that quality.

Daniel: The important-

Kira: Like, it feels like it's a felt sense.

Daniel: I understand, yeah. Some cultures will ... in my modest contact with Buryat Mongolian culture through a friend and former teacher, Sarangerel, who's passed, they would speak about quality of "windhorse", or Buyanhishig, and it's a quality of almost, like, building usable energy through acting in integrity or doing acts of service or something like that. Then, when you act out of integrity, you deplete that reserve of energy.

Kira: Wow.

Daniel: So learning how to actually be useful and assist others is an important way that we build confidence and self-esteem, and that in turn allows us to participate in even more rigorous and humbling and challenging types of learning. So, good. That's good.

Kira: Thanks Daniel.

Daniel: Yeah. There's some great questions coming in. And if your questions don't get spoken to now, I'm committed to responding to them in writing after, so we are gathering them from the chat.

Daniel: I'm going to turn it over momentarily here to Lindsey for the small groups. Those will be half an hour in duration, as usual. Then, I'll stick around for just a little bit after and see if I can respond to some of the other questions I didn't get a chance to yet for folks who are still on the call.

Daniel: I appreciate each of you and your resonance with the course. I am happy to stay for maybe another 10 minutes or whatever it ends up being for folks who want to hang out, to respond to a few other questions. Otherwise, this will be in the recording as well, so if you want to catch it later, that's good, too.

Daniel: Oh, I did mean to share, I'm sorry I didn't at the start, that there's a great directory now within the course page of the supporters. So folks have been curious, "Who are they? Do they have a website?" and all of that. So most folks who have a website have their information up in the course ... the inside of the course. So if you want to check out more about the supporters, that's a great way to learn about that.

Daniel: Yeah, I'm just glancing if there are other questions. Did anybody have a question that has ... Oh Dana. Go ahead Dana. I saw your hand up before.

Dana: Yeah, hi. Thank you so much for your offerings and your guidance. It's real medicine. So I just wanted to say thanks first.

Daniel: You're welcome.

Dana: My question, my journey has been I'm really passionate about birth work. I've been a doula, I'm kind of on this journey to become a midwife. And in the journey to do that, I'm a CNA, so I'm a nursing assistant. I'm trying to become a nurse. I'm working a lot, and now I'm doing death work. I'm working a lot with death and holding space for that.

Dana: I think you answered some of my question a lot with some of the other questions around presence and boundaries and protection, and I'm finding a lot of parallels between birth work and death work.

Daniel: Absolutely.

Dana: As far as, like, holding space, and it's a very vulnerable time, but also a very potent time where people can step into their power. So I just wanted to ask you for advice and guidance within that role, I suppose. I know it's not a super clear question, but-

Daniel: Yeah, I can speak to it just a little. Transitions between this reality and the other reality, whether it's arriving or departing, are vulnerable, for one; a lot of things can happen. In a sense, the ancestor work that I guide, I kind of see myself as a postmortem doula, something. So there is a lot of folks who work with conscious dying and death and I'm like, "That's great. That's generally one stage before where I specialize."

Daniel: Many cultures actually have a very explicitly mapping of ... I mean, look, the death of a body here is the birth, hopefully, of an ancestor. And a birth here is the departure of someone from the ancestral realm to here. So there's a very explicit, as we say in Native American church, doorway in to doorway out kind of symmetry or mirroring that happens between birth and death.

Daniel: To the point of ... people will speak sometimes of the fourth trimester, or even just the nine months to a year after birth of being a time of getting stabilized. We saw that with our daughter, that it's taken her to endure ... you know, after more than three months to get fully, fully landed. And after the death of a body, many culture recognize about a year, maybe 49 days, or there's a period post-death, pre-being seated as an ancestor. So there's a transitional period in that way as well. So that also mirrors the arrival to this world.

Daniel: I think one of the ways that people who look out for deaths and births both ritually can bring awareness of things is the need for protection; that there's a need for ritual safety and a need to protect that vulnerable and sacred liminal, in between kind of space from outside interference, and to make sure that the powers that need to be there to resource those vulnerable transitions are present.

Daniel: Without getting so far into a big topic in this moment, some folks giving birth will speak about needing to go in spirit to retrieve the soul of the child, or there is a kind of going into the realm of the ancestors, to the realm of the dead, if you will, in order to bring the arriving one all the way here and through. So I haven't lived that experience, but I've listened to folks who have spoke of it in that way.

Daniel: So, yeah, that's good. That's good, Dana. Thank you for your service. I'm glad you're with us.

Dana: Thank you.

Daniel: Yeah. Let me see. Sarah? Yeah.

Sarah: Hi.

Daniel: Hey.

Sarah: I also took your ancestral medicine workshop recently in Toronto.

Daniel: Oh, great.

Sarah: It was amazing. Thank you so much for that.

Daniel: Thanks.

Sarah: But I do have a question. In doing some of this coursework in relating to ancestors of a place, so far my ancestral contact has been with collectives and not ... I'm sort of attempting to be patient and work with them to tease out a name or a way to introduce them, kind of unsuccessfully so far.

Sarah: Would you recommend that until I sort of get that information maybe not ... Because I've moved somewhere new and I'd like to sort of get to know the place here. And so, yeah, I mean, I have my Parthenon of helper spirits that I could definitely start with I think in introducing myself to the place. But just wondered if you had any thoughts on working with collective ancestral energy as a starting point.

Daniel: It's good. It highlights something I want to make sure I name here, which is about the need for discernment when relating with the ancestors in general.

Daniel: I know I spoke to it in the lesson, but it's actually critically important that not all among the dead are equally well or safe or trustworthy. If I said that not all living humans are trustworthy, I imagine most of you have life experience to back that up, and it's certainly true among the ancestors.

Daniel: One of the criteria of ancestors who are relatively more well and probably worthy of trust is that they function as part of a group or a collective. So I see that not always, but often as an indicator of health. If you look at the overall feel, their network of energy that the one is embedded in, then you can ask, "Is it my intuition? Is it the sense of my guides and my trusted team that this is a safe and wholesome energy to relate with?" And if so, then you enter into a dance of establishing trust, knowing that you can have things occur later that reveal to you that the trust was misplaced. It's possible that we misread another as being more worthy of trust than we thought was the case. And that's across the board. And that happens for everybody at different times.

Daniel: So it's important to know that you have choice at all times about if you need to step back, stuff like that. But, typically, if it's wholesome, if it feels good, you're coming with respect, it's probably good. You know? Like, in general, trust your instincts. And if you get spun out because you realize you read a situation wrong, then it's okay, it happens.

Daniel: Does that speak to it, Sarah? I know it's a more general answer.

Sarah: Yeah, I guess maybe just specifically when I'm looking to make contact with the ancestors of a place, so this new place that I've moved to, and I don't have a clear sense on how to introduce this ancestral collective that I've made contact with. Should I be

including them in that? Or should I just be sort of using some of my spirit helpers around when I go to make contact with the ancestors of-

Daniel: Should you include a collective or a group of ancestors from your own lineages that you've made contact with when you-

Sarah: Yeah.

Daniel: Yeah. If they're your people, include them in how you approach the ancestors of the land.

Sarah: Okay, even though I don't know exactly ... like, I can't get a name out of them or-

Daniel: No, that's okay. I don't ... It's not very named all the time, just [crosstalk 00:51:54]-

Sarah: Okay, got it.

Daniel: It's a little bit more of a felt sense. Trust your instincts and you'll know. Look, it's a dance. If you're dancing and you step on somebody's toes, then you, hopefully, pick your foot up and relocate it and try not to do it again.

Daniel: So it's okay. I'm not saying we seek to make mistakes, but if something happens then you course correct. Yeah.

Sarah: Awesome. Thank you.

Daniel: Yeah, thanks Sarah.

Daniel: Maybe a final thing, and then other questions will be responded to directly, yeah, by email, something like that. Anybody else have a thing?

Daniel: Okay. Good. Well, thanks everybody. I believe it's on Monday, the next lesson will be on boundaries and protection and the sacredness of no and hearing no. That's good. There's a lot of human and other-than-human implications there, and it's good to balance out the warm, fuzzy aspects of the Earth connection with a real ethic of consent up front, and how tricky that can be to actually navigate when we are embedded in a culture that does things otherwise, and we do a lot of killing to eat and all those things. So we'll expand into that in a kind and connective way.

Daniel: Thank you everybody. I appreciate you and your people, and we'll continue more real soon. Thanks.

Lindsey: I'm unmuting the lines now. Goodbye everybody.

Audience: Thank you.