

CREATING Conscious Crossroads

Evelyn Rysdyk

The of turning of a season provides a natural time to reevaluate our life and its overall direction. We review what has occurred over the past season and these reflections can also involve prayers for the unfolding future. We desire that the season will hold blessings for us, but what is the most effective way for us to make these prayers?

frequencies actually contribute to manifesting the life we want to live. Being grateful therefore holds tremendous power. Perhaps that is why traditional shamanic cultures maintain ritual offerings of gratitude to the spirits as the primary method for assuring a 'good life.'

One of my teachers, Grandfather Misha of the Ulchi people of southeastern Siberia, taught me to make regular offerings to the protector spirits to ensure that I would have happiness; that is good luck, health, prosperity and joy.

These offerings would be made to animal protectors, natural features such as rivers, lakes and mountains, the ancestors, as well as to the most powerful spirits of place that were honored as 'masters of the *taiga*' or forest. These were beings such as the very tallest of the sacred larch trees, the tiger and the bear.

Ceremonies of this kind are done as part of the responsibility each individual has for being in right relationship with the spirit world. Among the Ulchi, these offerings are seen as a part of keeping the delicate balance between the unseen realms and the human realm.

In the shamanic world view, humans don't expect to receive what they are unwilling to give. When the balance is attended to, when we remain in harmony, the spirits that love and care for us are strong and therefore more able to nurture us. It is a simple equation, give and you will receive.

This attitude about making offerings is much the same in the Peruvian Andes. Ritualised offerings called *despachos* are part of what a shaman in that part of the world uses to produce and maintain *ayni*, or the sacred reciprocity with the spirits.

Despachos may be done for many different reasons such as starting projects, embarking upon new relationships, rewriting contracts, transitions and such. In fact in the Andes, there are over 200 different varieties of despachos.

In a despacho the shaman is offering his or her thanks to the spirits *before* any action occurs not afterwards.

A shaman says 'thank you' first! - quite different from the way we Westerners were



A Peruvian shaman performs a despacho.



Science is now confirming what shamans have always known - that gratitude has the capacity to shape the nature of our reality.

When we experience deep feelings of gratitude, love, compassion or appreciation, we align ourselves with Divine Creation.

These divinely aligned feelings radiate coherent frequencies throughout the body which promote health and vitality. In addition, these



trained by our parents ("Now, don't forget to say 'thank you' to your Aunt for the lovely hat, dear").

A despacho is a ceremony for times of transition, to give thanks for what has yet to manifest. The offerings are gathered from the best 'ingredients' that are available, because that's what the person performing the ritual wishes to have returned to them in the ever-turning wheel of reciprocity. For this reason, the finest foods and sweets available are always offered to the spirits.

These despacho offerings, which are either burned or buried, may comprise a huge variety of objects which are assembled on a sheet of white paper. They may include flowers, candy, cookies, beans, rice, corn, tobacco, chocolate, rum, perfume, and other objects that are meant to represent that for which a person is grateful. Other objects can be figures of a couple to attract new love, a tiny figure of a house to ask spirit to support the building of a home, an image of an airplane to ask for blessings on a long trip, or even toy trucks and shovels which may be used in a despacho to support the creation of a construction business! The possibilities are endless.

Whatever the case, the actual action of making an offering reminds the person performing the ritual that they are part of a great and powerful Whole. This deliberate and beautiful reminder of one's connection to All That Is can be remarkably life transforming.

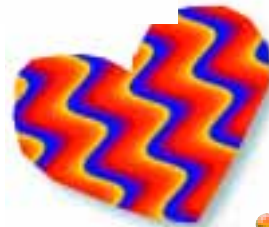
KIND TO THE ENVIRONMENT

What follows is a ritual you may wish to use to make prayers for a new season, to celebrate a new endeavor, to offer good wishes on a birthday, or for any time you wish to offer gratitude to Spirit

Rituals that entail making a fire are especially cheering during the dark time of the year. The completed offering bundle may be made small enough to carefully burn in an indoor wood-burning

The Things You Will Need

- A large sheet of heavy, white paper (a large sheet of drawing paper works well)
- A few red and white carnations
- Floral water or cologne
- Granulated sugar
- A few white, yellow, black, red and brown beans
- A scallop shell
- Three or four cotton wool balls
- A foot each of embroidery cotton in the colours of the rainbow
- Some of dry alphabet noodles
- An intact egg shell or a paper maché egg
- Paper confetti
- Small paper hearts
- Small paper stars
- A paper cross
- A few animal crackers
- A small feather
- A small dried starfish
- A small spiral shell
- Small squares of gold and silver foils (sweet wrappers are a good source for these!)
- A loadstone or small magnet
- A little birthday cake candle
- Some of your favorite candy or sweets
- A stick of your favorite incense
- A tiny crystal
- A tiny sliver of mica
- A few pieces of unpopped popcorn
- A few squash or pumpkin seeds
- Three or four extra dried beans (any color)
- One or two pats of butter
- Some paper play money
- A three-foot length of thick red thread or wool
- Small models of things you are grateful for, to give to the fire!
- Food and drinks to share after the bundle is burned





fireplace or wood stove, instead of an outdoor fire pit.

Don't forget, you'll need to plan ahead if your community requires you to get a special burning permit, and with any fire, please be mindful and take care to keep the burning under control and only use objects in your offering that will not harm the environment when they are burned.

If you are planning to burn the despacho, build the structure of your fire before you start the ceremony, but don't light it. You may wish to prepare by sprinkling a bit of cornmeal or tobacco to bless the place where the fire will actually be built.

Depending on where you live, you may also bury the offering in the soil. If the offering is buried, the prayers are released in a slower manner as the Earth claims the contents of the despacho. Making the offering in this way is especially good as preparations for building a structure on the land such as a house or barn. A hole that the despacho will be placed in for burial may also be prepared with either cornmeal or tobacco as well.

In a situation when the offering is buried, also be mindful of only using biodegradable elements in the despacho. While based on a

traditional Andean despacho, this ceremony has been altered to more closely reflect the spirits and resources available in the Northern Hemisphere. This variation is a good ceremony for times of transition, to give thanks for what is to come even more than for what has already passed.

All of the offerings listed here (see previous page) are suggestions - use your imagination. Just pray from your heart and remember that whatever you include will get either burned or buried at the end of the ceremony.

Some of the items will be harder to get than others, use your discretion if you are unable to get them, or make them out of paper with an intent that they are the actual items. Your offerings are of what is considered to be the best because that's what you want to get back in the wheel of reciprocity. For this reason, the very best foods and treats are offered to Mother Earth!

PERFORMING THE RITUAL

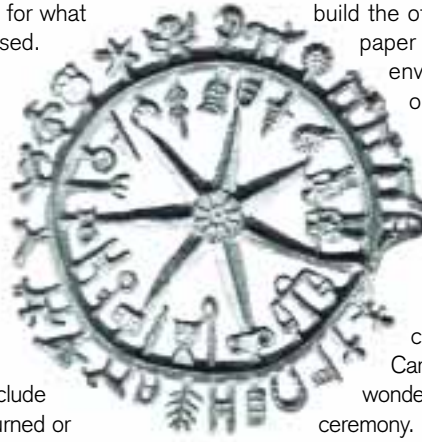
Always place the ingredients for the offering bundle in a clockwise fashion with your right hand. This is the direction and hand used for ceremonies of creation.

1: Everyone gathered for the ritual gets a few drops of perfumed water poured into his or her hands. In Peru they use a perfumed water called 'Florida water' but any floral water will work nicely. Participants then clap their hands together three times and inhale the scent to wake up the spirit.

Pass your scented hands over your body head first and down to the floor. This combs any heavy energy (*hucha*) down and into Mother Earth intentionally releasing it to Her for transmutation.

2: Prepare the place you are going to build the offering by sprinkling perfumed water and cornmeal in a circle and also in a cross for the four directions.

3: Lay down your base. This is a large, heavy sheet of white paper that has been folded three times vertically and three times horizontally then unfolded. The resulting nine squares create a central square in which you would build the offering. This paper functions as the envelope to hold our prayers and dreams.



4: Begin by placing red flowers around the edge of the center square, creating a border. Carnations work wonderfully well for this ceremony. Red flowers represent Pachamama, She who provides our physical existence; our food, air, water and our actual bodies.

Dismember the red flowers by twisting the calyx off the petals. Lay the blossoms so that they fall open around the edge of the central square on the paper with deep thanks to Mother Earth for all her gifts.

Once this is complete, fill the center of this red border with white flowers. White flowers represent the *apus*, or spirits of place, the dominant spirits in the area of your home.

Fill in the inside with the white flowers, with thanks for places from which you source your power. This base of flowers creates the foundation to cradle our offerings in the same manner as Pachamama and the *apus* cradle us. Sprinkle sugar and paper confetti over this base to sweeten the offering. Continue to add more sugar and confetti over the offering as it is being built.

5: In the center of the foundation of flowers is placed a scallop shell which represents the womb of Pachamama, the source of all life. It is interesting to think that the people of the high Andes understood that all life arose in the sea!

Place inside the shell a black, red, yellow, white and brown bean. This replaces the lead figures of people that the Andean people use. We use different color beans to represent the different colors of humanity - male/female, young/old.

Speak your honoring prayers out loud, as you go along. We also use

This page.

Above: playing a flute, a Peruvian shaman performs a despacho.

Bottom: the despacho bundle before it is closed up and given to the fire.

Inset: a starfish despacho offering made of lead.

Opposite page. The completed bundle wrapped up and ready to offer to the flames.



heart-shaped confetti over the entire offering to remind us of all the many hearts that beat throughout Creation.

6: Above this center create a sky. Make clouds of cotton-wool balls and use the coloured threads to make a rainbow. To represent the Sun and Moon, use silver and gold foil or paper cut outs. The Moon (silver) is placed on the left the Sun (gold) is placed on the right side. This also reminds us of both the wisdom and our connections to Pachamama (gold) and the apus (silver.)

Remember to place things in a clockwise fashion and don't separate earth and sky. Let the rainbow tie earth and sky together. Sprinkle stars over the entire offering to represent our star brothers and sisters.

7: Continue to build the offering. Place a starfish to represent the angelic or enlightened ones, spiritual beings that come to us in our journeys. Add a cross to represent and honour the four directions.

8: Add more sugar so that life will be sweet!

9: Now add things that represent what you are thankful for in our world. The bounty of animals (the crackers), birds (the feather) food, clothes, incense for perfume in life, sage, spiral shells - which remind us that life is a spiral path. Beans, squash seeds and corn (The Three Sisters of the North American First People) represent the power of community and that we function best when we work together. Rice is added for wealth. Alphabet noodles stand in for the power of words, the sacred words of prayer, of love and of storytelling.

Candy and confetti are sprinkled throughout to offer thanks and ask for beauty in life. We add crystals for clarity, a sliver of mica to remind us that all of creation is a mirror for us and a lodestone which is a natural magnet which is used to draw abundance and make our prayers 'attractive'.

Use something to represent the ancestors (small photocopied family photos are great for this). Instead of the traditional llama fat, we add the butter for richness and instead of a llama foetus, we add the egg (with contents blown out) for any unborn dreams such as beginning relationships and projects that have not yet hatched. If you'd like you can also add alcohol for celebration.

A candle, which you light, celebrates both the light and fire. Play money as well as bits of gold and silver are used to represent the abundance that we require to live well. If there is something personally special that you wish to give thanks for, make a paper cutout to represent it and add it to the offering.



10: Now fold up the offering bundle, bottom up, top down, right in, left over. Tie it up securely with red string and don't turn the offering bundle upside down when you tie it! Tuck a flower into the tie.

11: Now is the time to light the fire and burn the bundle. As the despacho is burning, everyone but the fire tender has their back turned and is rattling and/or singing until it is entirely consumed. This is so that you aren't watching the spirits do their work.

12: Continue the ceremony by sharing food and drinks with each other! Make this a time of real celebration, our lives may be made richer through these moments!

13: On the next day, check the scallop shell. If it is all white there will be extra luck! Celebrate and remember this is only meant as a guideline.

The important thing is encourage a joyful attitude and perform the ceremony with a sense of deep gratitude for a glorious opportunity for a new beginning!

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