

Press Kit - Gwilda Wiyaka, founder of Path Home

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She Found Her Path Home

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The stern front of Path Home's building in Boulder, Colorado belies its welcoming nature inside. Upon entering the office of this shamanic school, there is an immediate sense of quiet calm. A fountain trickles in the background, and there is a faint scent of incense in the air. This peaceful setting is characteristic of the education offered here at the Path Home Shamanic Arts School. Gwilda Wiyaka, a certified shamanic practitioner and the school's founder and owner, is equally hospitable. With a warm nature and quick wit, she can quickly put one at ease as she explains the basics of shamanism, how Path Home started, and her own journey through the practice of shamanism.

Shamanism is a form of healing that repairs the soul, "mending where the laws of nature have been broken," Wiyaka says. In the practice of shamanism, there are four different levels of being: the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. In our modern world, it is easy to tend to the first three elements and neglect the fourth. Essentially, Shamanism is a way of caring for one's spiritual well-being. The roots of shamanism are ancient.

"If you follow anybody's ancestry back far enough, they end up in a shamanic, earth-based society," says Wiyaka. Deeply intertwined in many cultures, shamanism is also related to many religions, although the two are quite different.

"Shamanism is not a religion," says Wiyaka, "but rather a healing modality that works in the spiritual realm." Instead, it offers a way to evolve and heal spiritually, and also an opportunity to learn more about one's spiritual self.

This opportunity for spiritual healing is what drew Wiyaka to shamanism nearly thirty years ago.

"I came into this world wired differently than most," she says, "I'm very empathic and feel what others feel. It was hard because I couldn't tell what was mine and what wasn't ... it was very difficult growing up." It is because of this that she plans on starting a children's program for those who are shamanically gifted. Her early experiences were also what motivated her to found Path Home.

By the time she was in her twenties, Wiyaka's incapacity to understand what she was feeling and experiencing had taken a toll on her life. Fortunately, during this time she met her first shamanic

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teacher, a Lakota elder, who introduced her to the ancient art of spiritual healing. She went on to study many forms of Native American shamanism, including Navajo and Arapaho. She is also well-versed in Celtic, Tibetan, and core shamanism, a modern form that incorporates common elements of many of the world's shamanic practices. Now, through Path Home, she has made a way for others to find the path she did.

Wiyaka has spent thirty years studying shamanism, and twenty years as a shamanic practitioner. Path Home, almost ten years old, grew from the workshops that Wiyaka offered through her own private practice. It is now a certified occupational school.

Within Path Home, there are two tracks that can be pursued. The first is an "a la carte" of sorts; the school offers a variety of workshops that focus on different areas of shamanic study.

"There are workshops to learn about retrieving power animals, working with power animals, creating sacred spaces, and journey work," says Wiyaka. These workshops primarily provide students with the necessary shamanic tools to develop their spiritual lives.

The other track within Path Home concentrates on ways to enhance and build upon an existing shamanic profession. Students can also train to become certified shamanic practitioners, or become involved in drum circles.

"A drum circle is someplace between a church and a bar!" Wiyaka says with a laugh. Drum circles serve different purposes; they can be bonding experiences, places for spiritual development, or just for fun. Wiyaka's drum circles are based on shamanic principles, and sometimes to do journey work, which is an altered state of consciousness in which someone can gather information. Wiyaka also organizes corporate drum circles for companies. Sometimes, when a company or business first opens, they begin with a drum circle.

Regardless of what students of Path Home come to study, whether to grow spiritually, enhance their own practice, or become certified, there is a constant philosophy behind the school.

"It's bringing wholeness and balance back," says Wiyaka. "Fragmentation in the world creates our pain and suffering; we are living half the life we could." Through Path Home, Wiyaka hopes that her students can find that other half and live more happily.

"What I love the most about shamanism is that it has used every experience I've ever had," she says. Without a doubt it has added to her creative experiences; in addition to Path Home, Wiyaka has done graphic design and is also a writer and a singer-songwriter, with several CDs already out. It is in her teaching others, however, that she feels she has made the biggest change: "I'm just exceedingly grateful to be put into a situation to make a difference," she says.
