

Excerpted from: *The Call to Power: The Grandmothers Speak* by Sharon McErlane.
For more about the Grandmothers, see: <http://www.grandmothersspeak.com>

A Call to Change

The Grandmothers appeared in my life uninvited, although they and the message they brought became most welcome. They came literally from out of the blue, and placing me in situations that were foreign to me, they changed my life. They have come to correct the imbalance of yin and yang on our planet and awaken women to the energy of what they call “the deep feminine.”

Their purpose is to bring women and men, yin and yang into balance with one another. I am more grateful than I can say to be part of their work and have this opportunity to pass on their wisdom.

The Grandmothers convey their message, demonstrate the changes taking place on earth, explain why our world is in a dangerous state, and tell us what we can do to help ourselves and our planet regain balance. Their meditations and visualizations enable everyone, but especially women to connect with one another. At this time a powerful connection between women provides a web or net of yin support for the planet, holding the earth steady while the necessary changes in its energy field take place.

The Grandmothers explain this imbalance and demonstrate the difference between masculine and feminine energy. They teach us how to move into a closer, more personal relationship with the Divine and encourage us to imbue our lives with the presence of the Sacred. You may choose to return several times to the meditations at the end of the book in order to implement them more powerfully in your life.

Some will read this book for information and some will read for self-transformation. Some will be comfortable hearing about the Grandmothers while others will want to experience them. The exercises or meditations at the end of the book are for those who seek self-transformation and/or a personal relationship with these wise women.

Because the energy imbalance on earth has existed for so long, the Grandmothers say that today we are in desperate straits. Yet because the process of correcting this imbalance has already begun, the earth will not be destroyed. You will find the Grandmothers’ message profound and uplifting, and although this is a serious book it is not a gloomy one.

A Call to Power: the Grandmothers Speak to Women can be read on many levels. It can be, for you, a true-life story, an explanation of a new way of living, an invitation to enter into that life, a personal journey, or a myth. At different times in your life

it can be all of these. I know that everything I relate within its pages took place, yet I invite you to read it from whatever viewpoint is best for you. There is value in each view.

This is particularly a book for women. It calls a woman to power, gives her an understanding of the nature of yin, and gives her tools to apply its power. Since yin energy exists in all beings, *A Call to Power: the Grandmothers Speak to Women* is at the same time a book for men. It gives men an appreciation of the feminine principal and awakens them to this nurturing and supportive quality within themselves. The Grandmothers' book provides a framework for understanding the changes taking place on earth and teaches us how to take part in the sacred evolution of our planet.

The Grandmothers invite us to participate in restoring harmony to earth; however, they assure us that our participation in this work is optional, not essential. Righting the balance on earth will take place whether or not we participate. **“We give you this opportunity for your own sake,”** they say, **“because participating in this work will bring you joy.”** (The bold print throughout the book denotes the Grandmother's words, and even when they are speaking to me, their messages are meant for all.)

The Grandmothers speak and live TRUTH. Right from the first they thrilled and shocked me with their unexpected lessons. Master teachers, they surprised me from the moment I met them—that innocent September morning when I walked the dog along the cliff above the beach.

Chapter 1

A Visit From the Grandmothers

“In order to confirm woman from within herself the Great Council of the Grandmothers has come.”

It was a seemingly normal fall day. I was just going for a walk. Another clear September morning, it was early, about seven o'clock, and I had taken the dog with me. With the summer tourists gone, the town was quiet again, peaceful.

The stillness that lay over the town was as reflective as I. For days I had been thinking about the direction of my life's work, and as I mulled this over once again the dog pulled on the leash, hurrying me across Pacific Coast Highway toward the beach. We were approaching the walkway along the cliff when a group of older women suddenly appeared in front of us. It was the oddest thing. They were simply there.

The women gathered around us, speaking and gesturing with great animation, and as they smiled and laughed with one another, they beckoned me to join them. Their voices rang round me as they called to each other and for a moment I caught a bit of a song they were singing. With gleeful, girlish laughter they bunched themselves in close to me.

They were lovely, welcoming and so happy; I immediately noticed their sweet, open faces. But when they stood close I saw that they wore costumes from distant times and places. I stared, open mouthed, while I tried to make sense of this, but one with long gray hair fixed me with such a welcoming smile that for a moment I forgot about their strangeness.

Then I noticed that I was looking *through* them. I could see trees, the walkway to the beach and the waves of the ocean right through their bodies. I shook my head, trying to clear my vision but they were still transparent. Could this be a dream?

As I continued to stare, I realized that I could smell the air from the sea and feel the wet grass and the cracks of the sidewalk underneath my sandals. Just then a neighbor who walks at the same time I do each morning waved and spoke to me and automatically I responded. “Oh, my God,” I thought. I was caught in a double reality. This was a *spiritual* experience, a vision. I was having a vision!

My mouth got dry, I broke into a sweat and quickly I tried to dismiss these old women. This must be my imagination—right? What else could it be? I must be

making the whole thing up and they would go away in a minute. I had never seriously thought I might be crazy before but this...

As the vision or whatever it was continued my mouth got drier and I noticed I was holding my breath. What was happening to me was far beyond my understanding and though I wanted to flee from the strangeness of it, I was too fascinated. I couldn't take my eyes off these women. And their soft smiles let me know that they understood my dilemma. Those smiles and the air of patience they wore helped me maintain some equilibrium. As they watched me deal with my fear they nodded, smiled all the more and simply waited, and because they behaved the way they did I was able to stop my fear from escalating.

Then the thought came that what I was seeing was real. Visions aren't something the mind manufactures. Visions are just another form of reality--emanations of energy, like everything else. These thoughts moved through my mind in an instant, surprising me. But the emanations of energy standing in front of me weren't ones I was used to and I was frightened.

I tried to flee from these women but they were persistent and stayed with me as I continued my walk. A group of grandmotherly looking women who, in spite of my best efforts to ignore them, continued to embrace and talk to me. I had to pay attention to them because although their presence wasn't physical, it was undeniable. And they wouldn't go away.

Finally I stopped fighting the experience and gave them my full attention. That's when I noticed that two of them were dressed in beaded deerskin dresses and leggings. Native Americans in full regalia!

Another woman especially stood out from the group. She was quite a bit taller than the others; her Negroid features and elegant head rose high above theirs and her long neck was stacked with bronze necklaces. She looked like a picture from an old National Geographic I had seen as a child. Her sculpted face and regal bearing marked her for a queen from an ancient African civilization.

Several women were less than five feet tall and almost square in shape. Brown skin and long, gray-brown hair worn loose over their shoulders, they were clothed in primitive looking dresses like gunnysacks. Made of fibrous material these hung on them just as a sack or bag would. Because their skin and dresses were the same color the only thing that enlivened their appearance were strands of brightly colored beads and shells hanging around their necks. They looked like tribal women from southern Mexico or Guatemala. I stared at them, wondering what they were doing in this resort town but they smiled back at me, smiles of such sweetness and confidence that before I knew it I smiled back. My fear was melting.

Three or four were draped in robes of muted grays, blues and mauves that had a Biblical look. Their hair was covered by a hood or cape but I could see by their fair skin that they were of European origin. There were others too.

As they smiled, called to me, and opened their arms, welcoming me into their midst, I felt they were delighted to see me. Stroking my face and patting me on the shoulders and back they put their arms around me and gathering me in, formed a circle with me inside.

I counted around a dozen grouped around me and knew somehow that together they represented all the races of humankind. They were queenly and as this thought came to me one of them spoke. **“Each woman is in her own way, beautiful and wise,”** she said. **“And although each of us is unique in her power and being, all of us are as one in our purpose.”** Together they announced, **“We are the Great Council of the Grandmothers.”** I was awed, impressed not only by the grandeur of their presence, but by their name too. “The Council of the Grandmothers” fit them perfectly. As imposing and dignified as they.

They would sometimes appear to me like this. But over the following years I would meet with them hundreds of times in different guises.

Now they invited me into their midst and with soft touches and penetrating looks into my eyes, held and embraced me. As this drama played on, I still walked the dog and greeted my neighbors. Somehow my consciousness was overlapping in a seamless way. It had placed me in two realities at the same time. I walked along and the Grandmothers talked to me, my neighbors greeted me the way they did every morning, while the dog tugged on the leash. I responded to them all.

Being involved in two seemingly separate realities gave me an odd, disoriented feeling, but surprisingly, it was not difficult to navigate like this. At one point I almost laughed out loud at the absurdity of my situation. But strangely enough, I also felt peaceful and somehow lifted by the energy of these Grandmothers.

Holding me close, they said, **“Plant your feet firmly in the soft dusty soil of Mother earth.”** Their choice of words and their distinctive tone got my attention. I stopped walking and thought of my feet, not on the pavement, but on the earth and immediately from above my head a cocoon of glowing silk folded down over me. Many yards long, at least six feet wide, it vibrated with the color of a glorious sunset, a dusty rose that seemed to glow with a life of its own.

I drew in a long breath as the cascade enveloped me. It felt so comforting. As the Grandmothers wrapped and covered me with it they announced, **“This is a caul. The caul is formed of a substance like light but more than light.”** Its

silkeness against my skin gave me the understanding that yes, it was light, light with heft or body.

It covered me from head to toe, cocooned me. **“This caul will begin to heal and nourish you from the skin side in, soaking through the cells and organs of your body and aligning and harmonizing all of your parts together. A healing and awakening is now beginning which will take place within you on all levels, simultaneously. Your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects will receive what they need; they will heal, and harmonize together.”** As they spoke I felt more deeply nourished and cared for than I could remember.

Still covering me with this envelope of silk, they gently rocked, then danced me. Holding me out in front of them, raising my hands, they lifted me up, whirled me around, and laughing all the while, made me feel like a small child who is greatly loved. Next they taught me how to step with them, step back and forth and side to side. In this way we danced together. As they embraced me again, I thought, “This is all so wonderful, but what can I give back to them?” Though I didn’t speak the thought, they replied, **“Do not to do anything now. Do not to try to help us. But instead, let us do all the giving and all the work.”** I took them at their word and let myself relax into their care.

I came home from that walk full of wonder at what had happened to me and although I didn’t understand it, I knew I wasn’t crazy. I was too peaceful and happy for that. Dazed, I sat down on the couch and wrote what came to me; I wanted to keep the magic of the morning alive. Then I put away my writing. I didn’t even read it. I didn’t want to.

I had heard about experiences like this, been told about their preciousness and fragility. I also understood that it is the nature of the mind to attempt to explain and reduce every experience into something it can categorize. But what had happened to me could not be categorized and I decided not to try. Instead I would stay present in the moment, not look back to what had happened on that walk and not speculate on what it might mean. What had taken place was sacred, that I knew, and for now that would be enough.

I hummed with a special kind of happiness a long time after that morning and wanting to keep it that way I told no one about what had happened to me. I felt about my experience the way I might about a bottle of expensive perfume. I wanted to keep the stopper closed, not dilute what was in the bottle. Besides, explaining what had happened would require more energy and clarity than I had.

I knew I had been given a gift, and this gift needed to be honored and hidden away in silence. The Grandmothers had said that the healing and nourishing work of the caul would soak into me, and that's exactly what I wanted it to do.

Before meeting the Grandmothers the only time I had heard the word "caul" used was to describe the amniotic sack that covers some babies at birth. I didn't know what the Grandmothers meant by the word but whatever had covered and wrapped me had made me feel cherished. I wanted it to soak into me so deeply that I would feel wrapped in love like that forever.

Some time later, I don't remember when, I happened across "caul," and the meaning given for it was "initiation." I was surprised and yet not as I read "initiation," because at some level I knew this was what I had received. The caul had transmitted a particular energy to my body and mind, and I had felt it strongly—a peaceful strength, a sense of inner wealth I had never known before. This feeling stayed with me for several weeks. Strangely, however, when I later searched for the word, caul, I never found this meaning again. Perhaps the definition of the caul as initiation came to me in a dream.

Another startling visitation occurred around this time. I was walking up the hall stairs while I waited for a client, when I glanced out the back window and saw an enormous bird of prey sitting on our garden stepladder. Bigger than any hawk I had ever seen, he perched on that four-foot ladder, his size and bearing so out of place that he dwarfed not only the ladder, but the entire quarter acre of garden. Dark gray-brown feathers, he had piercing eyes, and just perched there, not hunting, not roosting, and turning his head in a full circle he fiercely guarded the garden.

My husband and I couldn't take our eyes off him and when my client arrived, I showed her the bird too. I was so grateful that others were there to see this with me. I still hadn't told anyone about the Grandmothers. We watched the great bird in fascination, but we finally looked away, and when we turned back, he was gone. None of us had seen him land or fly off.

A few days later Roger and I mentioned our garden visitor to a birder. Excited by our description, especially by the bird's size, she brought out a copy of Floyd Scholtz's *Birds of Prey*. We found it. He had been a golden eagle--a raptor extremely rare in the densely populated part of southern California where we live.

After we identified our garden visitor I took out the Medicine Cards, a system of instruction and divination from Native American teaching, and looked up the eagle totem. Eagle is the first card of the deck, which told me something. Gazing at the card I felt again the thrill of the great bird's presence. I read, "Eagle medicine is the

power of the Great Spirit, the connection to the Divine. It is the ability to live in the realm of spirit, and yet remain connected and balanced within the realm of Earth.”*

A familiar chill, the recognition of truth, shot downward, then climbed back up my spine. “Eagle is reminding you to take heart and gather your courage, for the universe is presenting you with an opportunity to soar above the mundane levels of your life. The power of recognizing this opportunity may come in the form of a spiritual test. In learning to fiercely attack your personal fear of the unknown, the wings of your soul will be supported by the ever present breezes which are the breath of the Great Spirit.”

With these words ringing true, I recognized that the universe *was* presenting me with an unimagined opportunity. If I were to accept it I would be operating outside the bounds of my “mundane life.”

Around the first of October I was rummaging in my desk and remembered to look at what I had written the day the Grandmothers appeared to me. I was stunned by what was on the page.

“With culture so long dominated by yang, the principle of masculine energy, yin, the principle of feminine energy, has become deficient and weak. Woman is cut off from her own sense of power and purpose, which comprise her beauty, and feeling this lack, she seeks outer confirmation of her identity and worth. Women spend inordinate amounts of time and money in order to be confirmed from without.

“No matter how many ‘confirmations’ of her beauty, her power and purpose, she receives, yet she feels the lack. This is because feminine energy cannot be conferred from the outside. Yin is. It exists for its own sake. Seeking it will only confuse the seeker.

“In order to confirm woman from within herself, the Great Council of the Grandmothers has come. Each Grandmother is unique in her power and being and yet all are as One in this purpose—to restore yin, the feminine energy, to full beauty/power so that the world may once again come into balance.”

It was in my handwriting, yet I had no memory of writing it. I realized that the message had been written through me, not by me. I also understood that what I was reading was not for me alone. The truth reverberating in their words was for all women, for all people.

Their words confirmed what I had already known. The world *was* dangerously out of balance. The level of human pain seemed to be rising. I was seeing more

suffering from violence and despair in my psychotherapy practice. What the Grandmothers were calling, **“Too much yang and not enough yin,”** was also pushing the nations of the world closer to war. Later on in my work with them, the Grandmothers told me, **“Yin and yang are out of balance. Yang has grown excessive. Increasingly wild and violent, yang energy cannot come back into balance without the intervention of yin.”**

In mid-October Roger and I had an appointment with an astrologer. I had finally told him about my experience with the Grandmothers and we were both curious as to whether the astrologer would pick up on this strange happening.

Reading my chart first, Dorothy announced that I was about to begin the work I was born to do--something different from anything I had ever done, intensely spiritual work that would be important to me and to others. She said I must trust in what would be given to me and move forward into this work in full faith. What was being presented was the opportunity of my lifetime.

With a lump in my throat I listened and when I told her about the Grandmothers and the eagle she laughed delightedly and said *this was it!* I would pass the Grandmothers' work on to many women; I would travel and write a book! My chart showed me spending long hours at the computer.

Although Dorothy had been right about many things, she wasn't always right. I was no writer; I had never touched a computer and didn't want to. Roger laughed aloud when she said I would spend long hours at the computer. He knew my phobia of machines

But she wasn't budging. I would teach the Grandmothers' work, I would travel and I would write. Chuckling, she told me to call her and let her know how things were going.

Later, as I began my work with the Grandmothers, her words sustained me. I kept reminding myself that I was to trust what I was being given, knowing I would never forgive myself if I surrendered to my fear of venturing into the unknown. I had to trust the process and go where I was being led. I made a vow then not to give in to my fears but to instead keep focusing within, listening to my heart—no matter what.

The first week in November I attended a painting workshop with Meinrad Craighead, a former Benedictine nun, artist and scholar who teaches the art of the Sacred. Here I was introduced to concepts new to me--the feminine aspect of God, the sacred art of the Goddess culture, and shamanism. Confiding in Meinrad what had happened to me in September, I asked her, were the Grandmothers and the eagle connected? She thought so. The visit of the Grandmothers and the eagle

followed a classic pattern found in many myths, she said. She encouraged me to find out why they had come.

When I returned home I searched my day planner, looking for the date the eagle had landed in the garden. It was September 12, 1996. Then I pulled out what I had written when the Grandmothers appeared. It was dated September 10. After a lifetime of nothing even remotely like this happening to me, *two visitations had come two days apart.*

Now I really questioned why the Grandmothers and the eagle had appeared. What did they want? But I had no idea how to find out. To ask them I needed a way to contact them and although I waited expectantly for them to return, they didn't. If I wanted to talk to the Grandmothers—I didn't dream of talking to the eagle--I would have to find a way.

I didn't know where to turn for help so I did the only thing I knew—prayed for someone who could help me. I had only done this a few days when, walking through town one morning, I ran into a friend I hadn't seen in a long time. Susan had been in chronic pain for as long as I had known her but today, smiling and confident as she approached me, she radiated health and wellbeing! When I asked what had happened to her, she told me that for the past few months she had been working with a shaman. This work had made a tremendous difference in her health and attitude.

I was thrilled to see her looking so well but didn't think much about what she had said until the next afternoon when I talked to another friend who mentioned that she too was working with a shaman. Both women were seeing the same one! In my prayers I had asked to be guided to someone who could help me. Maybe this shaman was the person.

**Medicine Cards, the Discovery of Power through the Ways of Animals, Jamie Sams & David Carson, Bear & Co., Santa Fe, New Mexico*

Chapter 2

We are bringing to earth something of the sky

The shaman turned out to be a former Catholic nun who had come to California from Mexico only a few years ago. She didn't seem at all exotic the way I had imagined a shaman would, only kind and perceptive. With her friendly face and ready laugh, she reminded me of someone I might run into at the local supermarket.

After listening to my request, she offered to teach me how to journey to levels of what she called "non-ordinary reality" where I might find what I was looking for. I could journey to this world of spirit by listening to the monotonous beat of a drum. This would put me into a light trance.

I was a little bit thrilled and a lot scared by her offer but if I wanted to find these Grandmothers I had to do something. She had a sweet expression, and a lively sense of humor. I decided I would trust her.

This work, she cautioned, was not for everyone, but if I was successful and the Grandmothers met with me, I would have a chance to learn the answers to my questions. I must word my questions clearly so I would know exactly what they were responding to. She would tape record my journey so I could give this adventure my full attention and not worry about remembering it. "You can only try, the rest is up to them," she said, and motioning me to lie down, she turned on the tape.

Trembling with excitement and fear, I lay on her floor. I was to find a place from which to enter what she called the "upper world" where beings like the Grandmothers reside. Here I must "journey," seeking them for as long as the steady beat of the drum continued. When it stopped and changed to a fast beat, I was to begin my return. "Take note," she said, "of the route you travel, and return the same way. Under no circumstance are you to deviate from this procedure." I saw the look she gave me and understood. If I got lost, I might not be able to find my way back.

Now I was really scared. Quickly she covered my eyes with a scarf and as soon as I heard the drum, I prayed hard, straining to remember her directions. First I must find a place from which to enter the upper world. As soon as this thought came a tree I love came to mind. It would be my entry point.

I focused on the tree and suddenly I stood beside it. Turning toward the trunk, then scrambling up its branches, I perched with my head sticking out of the topmost twigs and peered into the expanse above me. I asked for help, bounced on the branch and willed it to spring me into the endless blue above. Amazingly it did and I found myself rising effortlessly into the sky. As soon as the thought came to rise, my body was catapulted skyward. This was already a different sort of reality.

I flew straight into the firmament, enjoying myself immensely until I became aware of a heavy blanket of clouds above me, thick and ominous. How would I get through them? But no sooner did I ask for help than a passageway appeared in the clouds and, with only a little effort on my part, pushing hard with my feet to thrust myself upward while my hands grasped at the formless edges of clouds, I passed through.

I had entered the realm of non-ordinary reality. Here was what the shaman called the first level of the upper world and here I would begin my search for the Grandmothers. Now I was to ask everyone I met, no matter how strange they might appear, if they were my spirit helpers. If they were in fact there to help, I could ask where I might find the Grandmothers.

When I passed through the opening in the clouds I found myself in empty space, blank and devoid of life. No form, no movement, no color, only white space stretched before me. In my mind I called it “the white land.”

Because there was no life, no form of any kind here, I would have to go higher to find the Grandmothers. “Please,” I pleaded with the universe, “take me to a helping spirit so I can find them.”

As soon as the request formed I was lifted from this lifeless space into an arena of blues and whites where clouds, winds and shifting movements were all about. Quickly the colors grew dim, making it dark, then darker still until all I could see was a pair of white eyes staring out of the blackness at me.

“Are you my helping spirit?” I asked the eyes. “Can you take me to the Grandmothers?”

Silence. There was no response, but something behind those eyes beckoned and I followed onward, upward and out of the dark.

“We’re rising high into what looks like the Himalayas,” I said to myself as I looked around. Then together with whatever was behind those eyes, I climbed higher.

“There is a cave here,” I said and began to laugh at how formulaic it seemed to be taken to a cave in the Himalayas. But whatever was behind those eyes wasn’t laughing. It motioned me to follow it into the mouth of the cave and in I went.

Shadowy, musty, dank. When my eyes adjusted to the dimness I made out a figure of a sage at the back of the cave. With long white hair and a drooping mustache, he wore white robes and sat in the lotus position. As I walked toward him I heard myself say, "He is a great being," and wondered how I knew this.

But the shaman had told me to ask and so I stood before him and asked, "Are you my helping spirit?" He nodded "Yes," and I was so moved to be in this cave with him that tears came to my eyes. Quickly he took my hand in both of his while I sat before him and although I stared, I couldn't see him clearly enough to make out his features.

I spoke to him anyway, telling him about the coming of the Grandmothers, and that I sought them. "I want to find out why they came to me, I want to know if I can be of service to them." Again he nodded. He knew it all, patted my hand and said, "**It's all right.**"

Although his words and tone comforted me I wasn't sure what "**It's all right**" meant, so I asked if it was all right for me to continue on to the Grandmothers. He looked hard at me and then motioned, pointing upward with his index finger.

To reach the Grandmothers I must go further. Bowing, I offered my thanks and as I rose to my feet I glimpsed an opening in the cave wall just behind his seat. It appeared to lead upward through the cave roof. A passageway. I entered a narrow tunnel and felt my way upward in total darkness.

When at last I reached the mouth of the tunnel and stepped out of the dark into fresh air I was on top of the mountain. But again there was no one present so I must go further still. "Higher," I called out, "I want to find the Grandmothers."

With determination that surprised me over and over again I reached upward, pulling myself higher into a now featureless expanse. In the midst of this upward pull it dawned on me how far the Grandmothers had come to find me. "Did they make this same trip?" I wondered, deeply touched by their effort.

Immediately I began to laugh at myself for thinking in such literal terms. "The Grandmothers," I murmured, "are not ordinary beings." Transparent, wise and all knowing, this journey was no struggle for them.

At last I broke through a membrane-like barrier into an arena where small clouds bounced in the air around me. The light was bright, and it was strangely quiet here. I could tell I had pulled myself to a high place because of the quality of the air. The atmosphere held good feeling; this was a happy land--sunny, misty, soft.

Again I asked for a helping spirit and, if possible, the Grandmothers, and as I waited in the bright mist I heard the laughter of what sounded like young women. I glimpsed vague shapes moving about while with every moment that passed I became aware of the palpable happiness that was this place. The air was thick and sweet, making me feel expectant—as if I had been brought to the foot of the Big Rock Candy Mountain.

Suddenly the place was charged with holiness and although I couldn't see anyone, I knew that a great being was present. "Are you my helping spirit?" I asked, "Are you one of the Grandmothers?" The being roared with mirth, peals of laughter cascading from its self, one after another. "This," I thought, "is the true sound of good humor and joy."

The mist began to thin while the laughter welcomed me, wrapped and drew me to itself. Now I could see enough to notice a circle of beings surrounding me. I felt them brush against my body and thought, "It's the Council of the Grandmothers, it must be," but I still couldn't see enough to be sure. My heart beat fast in my throat as I waited expectantly, but that bright mist hung over everything, making it impossible to see clearly.

"Whoever these beings are, they are happy together," I said and then noticed one of them sitting off to the side, alone. It was a woman. "Are you my helping spirit?" I asked.

She beckoned me forward and as I approached I saw that she was sitting on a throne. Before I could think about it I bowed before her and blurted out, "I'm so honored that the Grandmothers came to me. It's hard for me to believe, but I am believing it more. I want to know why they came and what it is they want." Finally I became aware of my words stumbling over themselves, and simply asked, "Why did they come?"

A presence wrapped me in love. This was exactly how I had felt when the Grandmothers embraced me on my walk--nurtured, warm and full. "It is the Grandmothers!" I cried. "They are with me again." Patting me, full of smiles, these same Grandmothers began to take care of me. This time they covered me, not with a caul, but a robe.

"Grandmothers, thank you for everything you're doing for me," I began, tears choking my throat. I tried to go on but was overcome. "Your message is so beautiful," I struggled to speak, "about women I mean, and the need is so desperate!" Here I broke down completely. "Please," I said as soon as I could speak again, "if I can help you with this work, show me how. How can I be of service? How can I help?"

Quietly and with great dignity they said, **“Let us help. Let us help you.”** They took me in their arms, rocked me like a child, and as I gazed at their kind faces I said, “Yes, yes Grandmothers, any work that is done, it will be you. But is there anything you want *me* to do? How can I implement this message you’ve given? *Can I?*” I blurted out, suddenly wondering at my own audacity. But, unable to stop talking, I said, “I know you gave me this message for some reason. Do you want me to pass it on?” I was so thrilled to be in their presence again, so overcome with emotion that everything rushed out of my mouth at once.

They stepped to the side to confer privately, glancing over their shoulders to let me know they were thinking over my request. As they carefully surveyed me I became caught in their gaze and locked there, I received the message that they were going to make me one of them. I didn’t understand how this was to take place, but I *knew* it.

And before I could consider what this meant, it was good-bye to any lingering attachment to youth and hello to becoming one with the Council of the Grandmothers. There was a bustle of movement; hands touched my hair, arms and back while glowing warmth filled my chest and stomach. I had become larger, warmer, more expanded.

I looked down at myself and saw that the robe with which they had covered me was black and white. These were the colors in their robes too. The mist had gone, and I could now see these wise old women, smiling and waiting for me. A wave of contentment flooded my body as I registered my happiness and theirs.

“You are to come here, sit with us, and be a part of this council,” they said. **“This is your rightful place. You are accruing power and stability, and *this*,”** they said, **“is another initiation.”**

“The eagle is part of this work,” they said, and the memory of the eagle in our garden flashed in my mind. As I glanced at them, understanding dawned. **“The eagle was our messenger,”** they said, confirming my thought, **“he set the action in motion.”** Suddenly *they* began to look like bald eagles. Tall and imposing in their black and white robes, these Grandmothers were fierce, almost frightening.

“Grandmothers!” my voice cracked as I stared at them, but forcing myself to go on, I said, “I’m here on earth where I can do some good if you will do it through me. How can I anchor this message for women?” As soon as the words were out of my mouth I felt my eagerness to begin their work building.

Folding arms or wings against their chests they smiled. **“First you need to trust that this is your work.”** Pausing to let their words sink in, they said, **“This will**

happen by coming here to be with the council.” Nodding mutely, I watched them, fascinated.

The next thing I knew we were sitting together. High on a formal platform, a dais, we formed a semi-circle and as I sat in silence I became aware of the powerful presence of the eagle. He was with me; he was within me. I felt him, especially in my hands and feet, and as I gripped the edge of the dais, I watched my hands and feet become talons.

With my upper body upright, I took on the towering carriage of an eagle. “Are you my power spirit?” I asked this overwhelming presence inside me. **“Yes!”** I heard the fierce cry.

“This is why I feel such oneness with the great bird,” I said, and when I looked at the Grandmothers, they had become eagles too. The council of great eagles sat with fierce expressions and powerful wings. As I watched these Grandmother eagles the phrase, **“Sky mother,”** came to me.

Now my body truly transformed. Fierceness grew; I was taut with muscle, single pointed in focus. I *was* Eagle. I was surprised to note that I was more thrilled than frightened by this power.

“We are bringing to earth something of the sky now,” the Grandmothers said, **“doing this in a new way. It is actually an old way, but one absent from earth for a long time.”** As they spoke such power built inside and around me that I vibrated with it. **“The earth is going to be infused with this power,”** they said. **“It is being infused with it now.”** “I am embodying this power,” I said to myself.

The drumbeat changed, stopped a moment and then sped up. This was my signal to return to ordinary reality. “Grandmothers, help me to sustain this power on earth, to sustain it in this body. Thank you,” I murmured, hurrying my goodbyes so as not to fall behind the drumbeat. “I’m coming down now.”

Turning away from their fierce, black and white forms, I made my way through the layers of the upper world as quickly as possible, arriving in ordinary reality just before the drumbeat stopped. When at last my body stopped quivering I opened my eyes to see the shaman standing over me with tears in her eyes.

My experience left me shaken but filled full. I had been deepened by whatever the Grandmothers did to me on this, my first journey to the upper world. As I thought back over it I mused that though initially their presence wasn’t as clear as it had been on my walk along the cliffs, their words and the transmission of feeling were even more powerful than before.

Over time I learned that the Grandmothers appear in different ways at different times. To this day they either show themselves to me as women or as eagles, but sometimes they don't "appear" at all but make their presence felt just the same. I have had many adventures with them, but others have seen, heard or sensed them in still different ways. Since the Grandmothers are aspects of the Divine, they are not limited in form or in method of communicating.

Several years have passed since I first met them and my work with them continues. Simply put, I am their student and they are my teachers. In my heart I am in union with them and I believe this sense of union is what they refer to when they say that I am one *of* them. Yet my place, my role in the cosmic scheme of things is different from theirs.

Whenever it is time for me to learn more from them, I feel them calling to me, almost pulling on me. They pop unexpectedly into my awareness; I may become aware of them as I go about my day. Whenever this happens, I journey to them as quickly as possible.

Often I journey because I have a question about their work. The shaman taught me to state my questions in the clearest language I can muster and this I try to do, speaking my journeys into a tape recorder. When I play back these tapes, I hear the Grandmothers' messages, stated in their words, though since I am I am the one speaking, spoken in my voice. This book is comprised of these encounters.

The Grandmothers appeared in September of 1996 and by late November of that year the shaman taught me how to reach them. This process enabled me to work with them whenever I needed to. The journeying method was new to me and because it was unlike anything I had ever experienced, it by-passed the judgments and limits my mind usually places on my experiences. Since I had no idea how to formulate, criticize or evaluate a journey I was forced to let the Grandmothers teach me directly. My mind didn't know how to pigeon hole this one.

Until the Grandmothers appeared, I had lived a pretty "normal" life. Married, with two grown children, I had spent most of my adult life in the same town. For more than twenty years I had maintained a psychotherapy practice, treated individuals, couples and families, taught classes and run workshops.

When I had begun my practice the work had fascinated me and I couldn't learn all I wanted fast enough. Our children were still at home at that time, so I sandwiched my work at a mental health clinic and my private practice in with my responsibilities to my husband and children. It was a full life with a very tight schedule.

I was totally engaged in the work, and knew that the more techniques and approaches to treatment I learned; the more effective I would be as a therapist. So, whenever I could, during evenings and on weekends, I sought more training. I was especially interested in the body/mind connection and found myself drawn to therapeutic techniques that gave the body, mind and spirit ways to work together for healing.

For nearly twenty years I had been fascinated by my work, but recently I hadn't been as enthused about it. There was a nagging dissatisfaction I couldn't put my finger on. Though what I was doing was good work, helping one person at a time no longer seemed enough for me. I wanted more--to be stretched, challenged, utilized to full capacity. I wasn't sure what this "more" I was seeking would look like, but hoped that eventually something would come to me. This was before the Grandmothers appeared.

The Grandmothers turned my world on its head. Following their guidance and going wherever they led was a struggle for me. I was accustomed to having at least some control over my life and felt overwhelmed by the strangeness of these journeys. What was happening to me was simply not rational; I couldn't explain it to myself, let alone anyone else. It was a great adventure all right, but "What," I asked myself, "was I doing?"

It takes me a while to trust things that are not of this world and this stuff was pretty far out. Over the next few years I came to accept the fact that in the midst of the most astonishing experiences with the Grandmothers, I was still capable of wondering if they were real, and if all this was actually happening to me.

Often I listened to my tape-recorded journeys, especially during the first few months when I needed reassurance that I wasn't making up stories or losing touch with reality. As I listened to the tapes and heard the emotion in my voice, the hesitancy in my speech, the pauses, surprises and tears that came up, it convinced me it had all really happened. My years as a therapist had trained me to listen carefully, and now I heard the sincerity in my own voice, the shocking authenticity in my reports. I couldn't doubt their truth.

This work was calling me to a new commitment to trust--trust in the Divine in the form of the Grandmothers and trust in my connection to them. Even though I quickly believed in the Grandmothers, I still had difficulty believing in myself--believing that I, this unremarkable woman, was worthy of receiving what they were giving. As time wore on I learned two important things: to hear truth the way it came to me, not as I had imagined it would show itself, and to trust in my ability to hear it. The Grandmothers were patient with my lack of faith and slowly I learned to follow wherever they led.

Over and over I asked, “Why did they come to me?” until one day I remembered a dream I had had six weeks before they appeared. In the dream a holy man dressed in a long ochre robe who had visited my dreams many times before, came once again. This time he was direct. Walking up to me and looking into my eyes, he asked, **“What do you want?”**

Even in the dream state I was surprised that he would ask this. For years he had worked with me both in meditation and in dreams so he knew exactly what was in my heart. But when in the dream I replied, “Why I want God,” he only stared at me, then asked, **“What else do you want besides God?”**

I was dumfounded. What could he mean, “Besides God?” What else was there? I had longed for God all my life. But giving me a knowing look that said, “Think about it,” he left and I woke up in turmoil. “What do you want besides God?” became my Zen koan, teasing, frustrating, opening me to a new level of contemplation. The peaceful life I had led before the dream evaporated.

Now and then I had a sense that there *was* something else for me besides God. For a long time I’d had a vague feeling that there was work of some kind for me to do. This made me recognize that with an urge this compelling, I couldn’t want just God. I wasn’t yet ready to enter the state of bliss.

After the dream I began to ponder and realized that for several years my life had felt slightly empty. I was underutilized and knew I was. I was used to accomplishment and a fast pace. I had raised my children at the same time I taught school and completed graduate school; then I had thrown myself into my practice. Now, after more than twenty years as a psychotherapist, I was no longer finding the work as compelling. Though lately I had branched out further—learned more treatment techniques, even become a Reiki master, something was still missing.

I had been searching for work that fully challenged me. Now I understood why the holy man had asked his question. He knew I was ready for something more. After I grasped his intention I began to pray for work that stretched me to full capacity.

My mantra became “Give me something to do that uses *all* of me.” As I repeated it, the desire to be utilized to capacity grew stronger. The holy man asked what I wanted at the end of July. I began praying for something to do by mid August and in the second week of September the Grandmothers appeared. They were the answer to my prayer.

Another important teaching came to me in November of that year and although it was not directly connected to the Grandmothers, this lesson about truth, honesty and the power of intention became an integral part of my work with them.

Before I met the Grandmothers I had lunch one day with a group of friends and the subject of truth came up. As we talked I realized that although I had always considered myself honest, I wasn't one hundred percent. This bothered me as the desire to be at one with God had taken root in my heart. Now I looked hard at everything in my behavior that seemed to separate me from this goal.

As I listened to my friends I reasoned that to be in harmony with the spirit of God, I needed to behave as I imagined God would. It was time to stop repeating habits I knew were wrong. After we parted, I thought about what I needed to do.

It was time for me to give up any kind of cheating or lying, no matter how harmless it might seem. No more exaggerating stories to look better and no more downplaying my behavior to win an argument with my husband. No cheating.

I decided to simplify my life by cutting falseness out of it. When I caught myself in the middle of embroidering the truth I stopped and responded as honestly as I could, even when it hurt. I held firmly to my resolve--most of the time.

However, the final commitment to truth came at Meinrad's workshop in New Mexico. The way she lives her life and the power in her teaching moved me so that I took my desire for truth one step further. As I stood in her garden, I made a vow to live only in truth. There and then I asked that all falseness be taken away from me. I remember feeling frightened as I did this. It was a big step and I knew it.

After I got home my left front tooth began to ache. This was an old crown that for thirty years had never given me a bit of trouble, but it was throbbing now.

As the ache increased I imagined the worst—what if I needed a root canal? Then, while driving home from an errand one day, I remembered to ask why this tooth was hurting. No sooner had I formed the question than I saw myself in Meinrad's garden, making my vow and asking that all falseness be removed.

I had heard the saying, "Be careful of what you ask for because you might get it," but this was amazing. My request had been taken literally.

As soon as I understood what had happened, I re-worded my vow and the pain was gone in a day. When I made the vow, my intention had related to falseness in my thoughts, words, and actions, but because I hadn't made myself crystal clear, all falseness was being removed—including the tooth.

This experience graphically taught me about focused intent. It was this sort of intention I would need to work with the Grandmothers.

The Grandmothers are goodness and purity itself. I immediately saw these qualities in them and wanted them for myself. They helped me with this desire by frustrating me each time I came to them with a question not well thought out, an intention less than pure. They simply wouldn't appear unless my desire for their help came from my heart, not my mind. Initially I was so eager, in such a hurry, to contact them that I didn't realize the importance of journeying with a pure intention. I learned quickly.

(excerpted from: *The Call to Power: The Grandmothers Speak* by Sharon McErlane.)
For more about the Grandmothers, see: <http://www.grandmothersspeak.com>