

# **Call of the *Wild* Resiliency Within — Inspirations and Strategies from Nature**

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*Wild Resiliency* is the capacity, arising out of our deepest creative spontaneity, to orient toward hardiness, wholeness, and transformation. It is the courageous willingness to be loyal to our greatest potentiality, our *wild joy*.

## **Why *Wild* Resiliency**

In the mid-nineties I found myself in one of the crux positions of my life: My success in the world of business was beyond anything I imagined I might ever achieve: to work with international clients of prestige on issues of leadership and executive development and organizational intelligence in support of change and transformation. I was only a small time consultant, in the scheme of things, but I was making more money than I ever thought possible and having fun; yet there was something missing for me in this work.

The personal rewards of the work were enormous. I found it deep and soulful, to work at the levels of identity and vision and mission and values with people, holding out such questions as “Who am I?”, and “What is my work in the world?” Yet I often woke in the dark of the night haunted by a feeling that I was also not getting the results of deep change and transformation that I believed our world required(s) of us.

I sometimes felt I was supporting an organization’s spirit and capacity for creativity, only to watch the resulting resilience be applied toward efforts I considered lacking in reference for their larger impact in the world. I too often felt the newly released spirits of creativity and

empowerment were ultimately being used by a larger organism to bolster an economic and social system that was out of balance with the future I sensed to be rushing in upon us.

“Am I supporting an accelerating pace of insensitive globalization, and so also supporting the destruction of the very world of nature I hold dear? Am I contributing to the economic and social injustices unintentionally fostered upon third world peoples by a privileged few?”

The people I worked with were good people, even *great*. They inspired me with their beauty. But I was haunted, so I committed to take a year out of my consulting practice and keep an old promise that I made to myself as a thirteen or fourteen year old suicidal adolescent: that if I ever lived to a place where I could celebrate life, to where it somehow made *sense* to me, that I would track that journey and write about it. My youthful heroic dream was to share what I had learned — so others would perhaps not have to feel the pain I did.

In this soupy mix of keeping an old promise to a younger self, and of trying to gain perspective on the work of human change and transformation that I had been engaged in for some twenty years, I took that year, and more, out of my consulting practice to write a book. A memoir.

Ten years later now, and with three memoir manuscript drafts scattered throughout my life, I am presently working on the book that is perhaps the one I originally dreamed of writing. *Call of the Wild Resiliency Within* is the book that could not be seen without my first going through the requisite processes of so much complexly intermingled birthing and dying, rebirthing and propagation, again and again.

The Swiss psychiatrist, Carl Jung, came to a difficult place in his own life when he realized he did not consciously know the myths by which his life organized itself, what it was that moved and motivated him, but that was out of sight and of which he was unaware, perhaps the way the moon moves the oceans. In this desire, to make the invisible visible to himself, he found he began to return to his childhood pleasure of building things with stones. He then made the choice to take this energy and build himself a home out of stone, chiseling and carving the blocks and setting them himself.<sup>1</sup>

It was in this return to his childhood passions that Carl Jung began to find his way out of what might well have become a lifelong depression. It was this return to what I have come to think of as his *wild joy*, led by what I think of as the innate *wild resiliency* within, that propelled him into becoming one of the great explorers of human nature that he is.

Carl Jung became a model for me as I sought to plumb the depths of my professional disillusionment, and of my simultaneous attraction to the beauty of the work. And also as I attempted to track, through story, how I have come from a place of suicidal ideation, as early as the third grade, to where I was: to a place wherein, in my best moments, of celebrating life, of looking both out upon the world and in upon my soul with what Alan Moore calls “butterfly eyes;” i.e. “Seeing beauty and potentiality everywhere in the world.”<sup>2</sup>

Nature has been, indeed yet is, a powerful teacher for me on this journey, as is true for so many of us. Like Jung in his time of difficulty, I too fell back into doing what it is I loved to do as a child, into my *wild joy*. I took the luxury of spending more time in Nature. Now you should understand that commingled with seven years with the U.S. Forest Service as a forest fire fighter, I also became a ‘wilderness therapist and guide,’ running rivers and rock climbing and leading wilderness expeditions with clients as varied as youth-at-risk to transitioning millionaire entrepreneurs and corporate executives. (Perhaps all those rocks for bedmates put rocks in my head after all. You can decide.)

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But now, I took more time for myself to again wander aimlessly like a child through deserts and mountains, following faint game trails and rocky paths and rivers smooth and knuckle gripping white. So it was that an awareness dawned within: as I let go of the demands of proving myself in the world; as I let go of trying to be good enough; it grew in my cellular structures as I increasingly allowed the shedding and consuming and digesting and letting go of the structures of who I thought I was.

The awareness that came upon me is this: *resiliency in nature is the capacity to be loyal to one's deep nature.*

It was a knowing: resiliency is *innate* to Life. Therefore, to enhance my own resilience was and is a matter of sourcing and accessing the deep Self within, the Breath-of-Life.

It is not and can never be Larry Glover who is *wildly* resilient; but the Life Force within me is innately so.

Thus *Wild Resiliency*®, as a conceptual living systems and ecological model of Wellness, Hardiness, and Wholeness, grew within me as a gift. The gift I would share with you, however, is a meme, a way of thinking and perceiving and being in the world, that grants access to greater creativity, choice, and response-ability. It is a way of strengthening the power of our own arrival in the world.

*Wild Resiliency* provides both the frame that I found previously missing in my work with organizations, and it helps me understand the journey of my own life and that of others; specifically, thinking in terms of *wild* resiliency places the concept of resilience within the frame and context of nature, where it belongs, and it helps me frame how it is some thrive under 'stress' and adversity while others are consumed by the same.

It has been said that if stress was the hot item of the nineties, resiliency is the up and emerging awareness of this decade. The positive psychology movement, of which our growing interest in resilience as well as in all things spiritual is part, is big, and it is growing. Speaking of this trending interest, Patricia Aburdene writes in *Megatrends 2010: The Rise of Conscious Capitalism*: "Spirituality in business, having quietly blossomed for decades, is an established trend that's about to morph into a megatrend." (Aberdene 10) And so is our interest in resilience, I will add. The insights and skill sets the positive psychology movement is bringing to light are invaluable for us at this pivotal time of our history. (See the Bibliography for a few suggested resources.)

Open you awareness to the trending usage of the word resilience and you will be struck by its increasing pervasiveness, in relation to everything from people and organizations to consumer products. In the last week of mid-March 2006, I have heard President Bush referenced as "a very resilient man who will quickly put behind him the embarrassing Dubai Port Deal (The United Arab Emirates' failed bid to manage major U.S. ports). Additionally, the "terrorists" and insurgents in Iraq are now frequently referenced as being "more resilient and robust that we anticipated.... They are evolving and we are just trying to evolve faster!" Computer network systems are marketed as being 'resilient,' and Apple Computer's conversion to a new operating system was marketed as being more crash resistant. And indeed I love it for that resilience.

Who doesn't want more resilience for themselves, their products, and their business or organization? Who doesn't want more resilience for their family and their community and even for their nation or religious beliefs? Who doesn't feel the challenges and pressures of the rapidly changing world we live in?

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These challenges and pressures are an economic boon to the pharmaceutical industry; but they are costing the rest of us billions. “The World Health Organization predicts that major depression will be the second-leading cause of disability by the year 2020 ([www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/heartbreak.cfm#5](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/heartbreak.cfm#5)). . . .Employers can safely assume that the experience of the general population with depression and anxiety will apply to their organizations, and therefore is something they shouldn’t ignore.” (Jones 16)

We find ourselves living in a world of converging historic, economic, ecological, global, cultural, scientific, religious and nationalistic forces that could make the recent New Orleans’ hurricane Katrina disaster look like a picnic. Or like just another day at the office. (Think of the effects of one dirty bomb in New York City, or LA, or...; consider a flipping of the ocean currents....) Every institutional component of our social support network faces the challenge of re-creation amidst failure: from education to health care to religion to justice to economic and national security....

I like to think of the times we are living in as a river, and any among us who are fellow river runners understand why. Imagine with me that we are all going down the great *River-of-Life*<sup>3</sup> together, floating down and doing just fine when we begin to hear the distant roar of a rapid. But it’s still around a bend and we can’t see much until we come around and then see... a great big side drainage coming in. And now we know the cause of the growing roar we are floating into, the cause of the rapid that lays in the adventurous path of our journey.

But if we look down upon our circumstance with the eyes of Eagle, we see that there is not one side canyon coming in but more side canyons than we can count simultaneously coming in from both sides for as far as our eyes reliably can see. And all this confluence is causing a narrowing of the river’s channel at the same time that all the debris washed in from the side drainages are creating turbulent rapids filled with big waves and pour-overs and boat eating holes and accelerating water speed.

We *are* entering the fabled *Narrows*. *The Narrows* of epic adventure proportions, the chair gripping time — were we in a movie, the time when those not aligned with the currents of things-to-come will crash ashore; other’s will flip in whirlpools and on eddy lines and be swallowed by holes the size of entire organizations or even industries. This is the bio-geophysical era on earth of the Sixth Great Extinction.<sup>4</sup> *And it is not only the ‘other than human’ world that is subject to mortality and the laws of extinction for failure to navigate the Narrows we are now entering.*

Those who do not honor and respect that, like forest, we too are water and fire and humus, that we too are sustained by stability and by change and transformation, by the deep silence and by the shadow of death, those who do not identify with nature as their model of renewal and rebirth, propagation and letting go... will not make it, or will have less grace in their lives, be they individuals or organizations or countries.

The predators and parasites of fear and terror will prey on the minds and souls of those who do not biotropically (bio-tropism) orient their life force toward vision, learning, love, and compassion, who do not set their roots into Earth and into the community of life.

Way back in 1987, Tom Peters wrote the classic book, *Thriving on Chaos*. He and others were already using the metaphor of *constant whitewater* to describe the environmental climate businesses faced. Then the organizational chime became, “It’s like driving your car down the road at 70 miles an hour while you change the tires..., no, while you dismantle and remanufacture it.” We’ve all heard the evolving turns of these metaphors.

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And government is no less impacted than the private sphere. Mr. Donald Rumsfeld in recent years has talked about the military downsizing and reinventing itself — while we are at war. “It’s not easy. There will be mistakes,” I imagine him saying.

All organizations have their particular challenges but there are some we all share. We must all contend with global (and local) climatic destabilization; with rising fuel costs and the looming end of peak oil supply; with immigration issues and perhaps the most massive scale of human migrations ever seen upon the planet; with the ever increasing speed with which our competitors get their innovations to market; with the outsourcing and migration of jobs and facilities and even professions; and with the political forecast of an endless war against terrorism, and the accompanying destabilization of the trust and security so vital to prosperity and abundance..., and so much more.

Now we are in the territory where *wild* resiliency becomes useful. My Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus defines *resilient* thus: “1 (of a substance, etc.) recoiling; springing back; resuming its original shape after bending, stretching, compression, etc. 2 (of a person) readily recovering from shock, depression, etc. buoyant.” (Oxford 1282-3)

Great. Who doesn’t want to be able to “spring back” after a difficult day at the office or at home with your loved ones? Who doesn’t want to “recover” readily from shock or depression?

I suggest however, that bouncing or springing back, though useful, is not enough for us in the world we live in. Nor is the “(of a person) *readily recovering*....”

Bouncing back works great for rubber bands and thermostats... but it is not, I repeat, not how living systems operate. (Though I admit it ‘looks’ that way to eyes trained and entrained to see it as such.) *Wild* resiliency in living systems, in all dimensions of human affairs, in Nature, is fundamentally and essentially about learning. It is about the verb of community, and about co-evolution. It is about flexibility and adaptability in service of — recovery *and change and transformation*, about tacking our sails into the *Winds-of-Change*<sup>3</sup> as we search for equilibrium while living at the edge of chaos, disequilibrium.

*Wild* resiliency is about elasticity as a strategy for wrapping our bellies-hearts-and minds around life’s challenges so we can digest and be nurtured by them, so we can change our shape to accommodate the dynamic demands of the Narrows. Resilience in nature is about diversity and entangled complexity and interdependencies and non-locality and fractals and holograms and fields of attraction and about composting and flows of energy... and about so so much more. But simply put, it is about the capacity to be loyal to your own *wild joy*: it is about trusting the animating Breath-of-Life within.

If Life’s resilience were reduced to *recovery* we would all still be amoebas. Or for those who will not go back that far with me, to my esteemed and elastic ancestors, you can stay *recovering* and hanging out in the stone age, if you like. “No Joe! Don’t chip that stone on the other side *too*. We don’t do that.”

Thinking of resiliency simply as springing back or as recovery, for me lacks depth, and it is too suggestively mechanical in language; and it fails to acknowledge and invoke the spirit of creativity so vital to our thrive-ability. It also fails to create space for a vital discussion having to do with what I call, *The Shadow Realms — Transformation and the Great Unknown*.<sup>3</sup>

All of this is part of how I ended up thinking in terms of *wild* resiliency, attempting to distinguish it from and to honor a space for *the shadow side of resilience*, i.e. staying the same; having your mind made up; being possessed of an unchanging worldview. “Don’t confuse me with the facts!”

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Now, it is easy to dismiss this kind of thinking at first glance as simple rigidity and inflexibility of mind... but I suggest there is something more going on. I suggest: *rigidity and inflexibility are themselves defensive "recovery" strategies; they are expressions of resilient behavior carried to an extreme, in loyalty to a sense of self that has become an object, an identity fixed, corralled, fenced inside a known and named and 'safe' world.* Now of course defense mechanisms (note the mechanical language) are immune responses serving a sense of identity and are necessary to our functioning and survival. However, *denial* and *rigidity*... can also great examples of bouncing back to original shape or form as life-threatening and self-destructive strategies of recovery. This is life unconsciously living in the *Shadow Realms*, moved and swayed and motivated by lunar tidal forces we choose not to invite into the circle of awareness.

This is all part of what I consider 'domestic resilience,' or 'politically correct resilience', all of which is, in fact, overly domesticated resilience. I speak to the extremes to illustrate my point. Consider the following quote on a struggle with addiction.

"I had reverted completely back to type. Congratulations, Miss Wurtzel: you are the same as ever. Your resiliency, your ability to bounce back to your old habits, is admirable. You are to be commended for your stubborn desire to stay the same. Your uniqueness has made you a common idiot." (Wurtzel 233)

Now all of us, surely, likewise have experience with changing or trying to change no longer desirable habits and behaviors, attitudes and thinking. Our own if not that of others! And at this conference, it is a safe bet we have all experienced the resilience inherent within established organizational patterns of identity.

"That's the way we do things here," is a cry for stability and familiarity heard in families and businesses and Churches around the globe. Fundamentalism itself, in all of its religious and economic and political and personality guises is nothing less than this same plea: an expression of the need for stability, control and power, for familiarity. And it is 'resilient' in this resistance against threats to its identity<sup>5</sup>, as all life inherently is. Indeed, this immunity and defense and evolutionary impulse is shared by all life, ranging from bacteria to corporate board rooms to terrorist cells. It is key to understanding and to accessing our own *wild* resilience.

We will never however, appreciatively optimize the dynamic challenges *The Narrows* present to our identity, be they issues of social and economic justice and responsibility, or organizational re-creation, or new strains of the avian bird flu, or drugs and addictions or terrorism or thrive-ability in times of uncertainty or... without honoring the living nature of this shadow side of resiliency's expression, apart from resiliency's current positive psychological emphasis. Everything is Alive! And everything, everything, casts and carries a shadow, as well as a 'light' side.

## **The Transformational Adventure**

Looking out at today's world, and looking inside my own body as well, I resonate with the desire and life requirements of familiarity and stability in my life. I too like comfort, appreciate its warmth and glow, and know it, also, to be a dangerous master. But wherever I allow it to establish itself as master in my life, it is resilient in its demands for domination.

Take the matter of worldviews: When was the last time you changed yours?

Worldviews feel so much a part of us that — to hold a worldview in suspension — to step outside one’s skin and look in upon one’s own organic filters of assumptions and beliefs and attitudes... these structures that give shape to our *Power-of-Arrival*<sup>3/6</sup> — is not unlike crawling out of one’s skin! Shape shifting skills are invaluable for such a challenge!

I am not suggesting we all become ravens or coyotes for a day, though now that I think of it..., or that we lightly discard and change the things we hold so dear and sacred to ourselves as our worldview. I do believe however, that the *wild* resilience within each of us invites us on a journey, on an adventure of grand proportion. That is part of its function in Life, to both call us out onto the heroic adventure of transformation, and to grant us access to the resources we require when the times get turbulent.

An expression of the transformational adventure, now calling out to humanity, I believe is this: it is an exploration of the self, and of the Deep Self; of the nature of reality; of our participation in shaping our experience of reality; and to then consider how we are now informed about the issues of business and social and economic justice, as they are held in the light and shadow of nature.

Consider this quote from the excellent book, *A Simpler Way*, by Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers.

Systems create themselves and pursue paths of their own making. If we want to work with a system to influence its direction — a normal desire as we work with human organizations — the place for us to work is deep in the dynamics of the system where identity is taking form. ... *If we want to change what has come into form, we need to explore the self that has created what we see. ... A self changes when it changes its consciousness about itself. ... It is essential to remember that all change originates when we change our awareness of who we are.* (Emphasis added) (Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers 100)

Herein is the applicability of *wild* resiliency to the topic of social justice and responsibility, and to sustainably accessing nature’s proclivity for abundance: If we are to talk of such, we must first answer the question: Of whom do we seek this for? To whom does the ‘social’ refer, in ‘social and economic justice’?

This is a question of *Deep Identity*. It goes to the very heart of our perception of our *Ground-of-Being*<sup>3</sup>, i.e. the worldview of our *Power-of-Arrival*. Do we seek this justice, equality and responsibility for self or for our family or our tribe or an economic class or our nationality or our race or gender or ... for our species? With what exclusivity do we seek it? Do we include the polar bear? Or the Inuit, who’s now thawing northern landscape, is forcing the relocation of entire villages? Yet it is we in the ‘developed world’ that are the primary contributors to this environmental destruction.

Are we our “brother’s keeper”? Who *is* our brother anyway? And who is the self, or the *Self*, that would even ask this question about who we include in the ‘social’? Who *is* our family? Our Tribe...?

Interestingly, *the self that has created today’s problems of social and economic injustice is not the Self that is capable of either answering these questions, or of resourcefully and creatively responding to the challenges of The Narrows*. “Today’s problems cannot be solved with yesterday’s thinking,” as dear Albert Einstein is often quoted. Or, as Buckminster Fuller is quoted, from a slightly different angle: “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”<sup>7</sup>

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So this is the adventure I invite you to join me in: It is an exploration of Deep Identity. It is the adventure of looking to nature's resilience to see how we might be informed of the issues in question, not as outside observers, but as participants in Nature, as people again becoming indigenous to ourselves and to the earth, indeed, as people knowing ourselves as indigenous to the cosmos itself. It is the adventure of surrendering to the birth of the cosmos, to *Cosmogensis*, not as an event of some distant unimaginable past, but as to a process that is yet alive and well within you and within me. <sup>4</sup> We are, after all, made of stardust.

## The Ecological Self — A Tapestry of Relationships

The world looks different from here. Notice, our breathing is different, fuller somehow, easier, calmer. There is more... belonging. Smells different too. Tastes... interesting. Fresh. Vibrant. Feels... alive. The colors are vivid. Everything is alive! Every thing carries... presence. Spirit, I'll call it, for the sake of our conversation; but you call it whatever is most comfortable for you.

The danger to either of us however, is to think our naming 'it' means that we know it, that we have... contained or constrained it somehow. Tamed and domesticated it. This is the danger of confusing or miss-taking our *Power-of-Arrival* for our *Ground-of-Being*.

Such miss reading of the land was the cause of a civilization's demise in each example of Jared Diamond's book, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*; GM's troubles are of the same ilk, as is a war against terrorism that kills civilians in the name of righteousness and self-defense; they are a misreading of the landscape. Spirit or Presence, whether embodied as tangible bottom line realities or not, does not appreciate being dishonored, fenced-in, claimed or owned or demeaned or contained or denied in such fashion. Lack of respect or honor for 'what is' pretends from it a loyalty to ourselves that does not exist, as though we could *possess* Life's wild wondrous and mysterious Nature; and so an ultimately divine life force morphs into a "demonic energy." This is the essence of 'the shadow' concept in psychology, and of "blowback," in politics, and in business. <sup>8</sup>

The Torah forbid the Hebrews against even speaking the very name of you know what and whom, for this very reason, to ward against the dangers of domesticity's shadow; to ward against people confusing a name for the thing itself. The ancient Chinese Sage, Lao-tzu, said it this way.

The tao that can be told

is not the eternal Tao.

The name that can be named

is not the eternal Name. (Mitchell 11)

In this context, I invite you to look at something with me, here. This is an Aspen. It is one of my favorite trees; they are in the poplar family, same as cottonwoods. See how white barked it is. Rub you cheek against the cool smooth bark, like this. Now we both have white cheeks!

In this spirit of play let us now allow ourselves to experience the Presence we stand within; not with the mind's reaching out to dissect an object, but with the invitation created in the crucible of an opening heart, with the wholeness of a body opening to the wild wonder we stand within, the deep time that feels intimacy and awe in every breath.

Straight 80 foot tall thick white trunks stand graceful, like humbly proud sentries guarding the gate to... to our bio-gnosis, our coming into an intimate knowledge of life's accumulated wisdom, particular to this locality and to our own lives.

Sun light cascades through the verdant green trembling leaves, dappling us, and the forest itself with a playful hide-and-seek dangling of light and shadow. The gentle breeze caresses our skin and plays a happy gig with the dancing leaves. An odorous earthy smell of musk informs us of elk who have recently passed this way, mingling the presence of their passing both with the smell of nearby pungent pines and with time itself; they are still among us. There is a silence here; it is loud. We hear our breath, feel the air in and out, and sense within our chest the beating of our own heart.

And the knowing within our hearts tells us this: *the elemental nature of the world, and of the self and the Self too, is one of relationship*. There is both a hidden and a visible, an enfolded and unfolded, an implicate and explicate nature to the world, to use physicist David Bohm's language. It is possible to see the evidence of relationships, but not the *relationship* itself.

Yet there is no ant without the den, no bee without the hive, no fruiting mushroom without the underground mycelia network, no aspen tree without the community below the soil's surface, and no human individual without the Community and *River-of-Life* upon which we depend, and of which we are. To live is to be within the organizing field of influence of a *Tapestry of Relationships*; it is to be an *Ecological Self*.<sup>3</sup>

The medicine of Aspen will help heal our vision and thinking, our heart's knowing, when we are ready. As with all trees, aspens live in symbiotic, mutualistic and parasitic relationships with various fungi. Mycorrhizal fungi attach themselves to and even penetrate their hyphae bodies into the secondary root systems of the aspen trees. Their neural-like mycelia networks then extend endlessly throughout the forest floor like dense and thin fine hairs crisscrossing and weaving a nutritional uptake web that becomes visible to us in the familiar fruiting body form of the mushroom. [Not all fungi or mushrooms are mycorrhizal.]

Through their mutualistically symbiotic mycorrhiza associations, aspen trees receive increased nitrogen and phosphorus uptake from the fungi's mycelia network, and the fungi access sugars from the aspen. The aspen tree's root system is effectively multiplied and its immune system is further enhanced through this relationship, and consequently, so is its hardiness and resilience. So the next time you look at an aspen tree, ask yourself: Who, or where, or what is the self (tree) I am looking at?

A deepening and expanding of any answer we might postulate is available to us if we just hang out underground with our aspen a while longer. What we find is life, with something on the order of 50 billion bacteria in a spoonful of soil.

“Jeremy Narby has calculated some amazing numbers in relation to this intelligent DNA. If the DNA packed into the invisibly small nuclei of each of our cells (along with protein and water) were stretched out, it would be about six inches long. End to end, the DNA of our several trillion cells would extend so far that it would take a jet plane traveling one thousand kilometers per hour over two centuries to reach its end! After this surprising result, Narby calculated that a single handful of living earth contains more DNA than that of our entire bodies—because bacteria are packed far more closely in soil than cellular nuclei in our bodies.” (Sahtouris 377)

Such is the living earth community our tree is rooted within, with its vast network of roots embedded in intelligence. The root system of any one tree is interlaced with and actually joins with that of other trees. In fact, all the aspens are connected to each other in this fashion. And in fact, they are all *one living organism*. All of the aspens in our grove are likely to be clones of each other.

They can and do reproduce through seeds, but their primary method of reproduction is through the sprouting of new shoots off of their root system, producing what botanists call a *ramet*. The trees we see are simply the fruiting body of an enormous and extensive underground self, one that may be as much as 8-10,000 years old and which is also currently the largest organism known to exist. It will go on living and reproducing long after any single individual ramet or tree is fallen and rotting on the ground. The fallen tree's disintegration and rotting is a visible indicator that bacteria and fungi are feasting on its 'dead' flesh, aiding the tree's return to soil, out of which yet more aspen trees will again grow and be nurtured.

Assuming that we have fire in our forest, that is. You see, aspen trees need fire. They are the first trees, along with lodgepole pines in our Rocky Mountain forests, to come back into disturbed and burned areas. Aspen's root systems have evolved in concert with fire in such a way as to be resistant to fire and actually be stimulated into the sprouting of new shoots by its presence. When you see an aspen grove, chances are, you are looking at an old fire scar. Fires shape the forest, and aspens, because of their relatively high moisture content and resistance to burning, also shape the way a fire burns through a forest.

So now, who and where is the self you see when you look at an aspen tree?

Such reciprocity and reciprocity and co-evolution, as exists between fungi and trees and aspens and fire, are forest. *This communion and cooperation provide a context for and are present even in the presence of competition and natural selection, those fierce aspects of nature we have characterized as being "red in tooth and claw."*<sup>9</sup>

It is Hawk who gives Squirrel his alertness, and Squirrel who gives Hawk the accuracy of his dive. It is Mountain Lion who gives Deer the grace of her speed, and Deer who gives Mountain Lion the patience of her stalking. Jackrabbit gives Coyote the usefulness of a family to hunt with and Coyote gives Jackrabbit her bounding leaps and quick turns. Milkweed gives nectar, along with its pollen, to Bee who gives pollination to Milkweed. The parasite, Mistletoe, steals nutrition from Oak, but surviving Oak becomes hardier in its resistance to Mistletoe, forcing Mistletoe to become more resilient against Oak's immune system....

Reflected in this *Tapestry-of-Relationships*, in the entangled complexity of a Self, in all of this we have nature's energetic economic system — of which we are not separate. Reciprocity, reciprocity, symbiosis, mutualism, parasite and host, predator and prey, these are as much a part of our lives and Selves as are they are part and parcel of a forest community.

And I suggest, as all the rocks that I have slept with and made love to for all these years have sworn to me, without a hint of secrecy, that an idea, a corporation, an ideology, a consumer product... each can play one or more of these roles in our lives. It is those of the human realm, however, who do not orient biotropically, who do not orient toward the love of Life, who do not know that the resources of the earth and the gift of life itself, can never be owned but are always on loan to us, that are the predators and parasites and unaware that we must have the fierce courage to perceive the presence of.

Imitation and camouflage are widespread strategies in nature; we in the human realm are not separate from that, from the false promises of love and virility and belonging and security.... We are not separate from nature. *The only question is: What is the role we choose to play upon the planet, in the lives of each other, and within our own?*

Yes, we cannot but stand here in a ‘grove’ of trees, an ecological community of energetic roles. Notice however, that back in the ecosystem of our aspen grove, intelligence and wisdom dictate that there is no waste, and in this there is great economy and there is abundance, all wrapped in response-ability. Everything, everything, even the limestone bedrock ledge with fossils in it, is Life in a process of recycling itself, again and again; the soil too. And herein is life’s key to its resilience: this complexly co-mingled repetitive pattern of birth, propagation, death and rebirth.<sup>10/11</sup>

Always this letting go, so something new can be born. Always. Always. Always. The endless change, the evolution of life and of ecosystems toward greater and greater complexity. Life eating life is a great feast of transformation and change. *Metabolism*, is the Greek word for change; anabolism and catabolism being the component building up and breaking down of life.

Metabolism is how our cells sustain us. Literally through the eating and digesting of other life, changing and transforming the energy of another’s form into the form of our energy. It is life’s gift to us, this Breath-of-Life we embody. Here. Now. Today.

But all life must pay its dues, as you and I someday will too. And it is with the surety of this knowledge that Death becomes our Advisor. Our constant Ally—that stalks us even as we stalk it, in the great dance of life.

And it is in the embracing of this Breath-of-Life that animates us, in all of its facets, in the embracing of the *wild joy* that is uniquely yours and mine, in embracing our place in the community (communion) of things, in the embracing of even our own death and our Life... in our identification as the essence of our *Self* with that which is beyond naming, with the Tree of Life out of which we sprout like ramets, that we gain access to our greatest creativity, and to our own *wild* resilience.

## **Our Journey Baek Forward**

There is knowledge and memory in the heart, and wisdom too.<sup>12</sup> Learning to listen, to re-member and to again trust our heart-bodies is part of our journey back into indigenaity. That we have learned otherwise is a mingling of our personal and collective stories; a Cartesian revolution taught us the world was an object, and that we ourselves are too; we fell into the trap of thinking our naming of parts and dissecting of wholes would domesticate our *Ground-of-Being*, make it predictable and controllable. But we are an embodiment of Life’s impulse for creative spontaneity and joy, and that impulse lives within us yet, as our essential and elemental even if forgotten nature.<sup>4</sup>

Now Quantum Science and chaos theory and consciousness studies and the new biology of living systems are converging with the ancient perennial wisdoms to deepen our knowledge of our true nature, returning us to wonder and mystery and awe and respect and beauty and vibrancy, where we belong: standing tall in our Aspen-Body-Wisdom, our “butterfly eyes” looking out upon the world, and in — upon our Deep Self.

I give you permission to distribute this e-book to anyone as long as you don’t change it, don’t charge for it and that you keep my name and contact information on it. [larry@wildresiliency.com](mailto:larry@wildresiliency.com)

Our hearts know that all of life is family, and therein is our hope and challenge for a thriving future of abundant sufficiency and justice for all. Should we fail to take our proper place at Life's table, including our turn on the plate, Mother will do with us what we refuse to do for ourselves. If we would support social and economic justice and responsibility, we must begin in the only place we have any control, and that is of course within our own selves. We must open to all the ways we are violent against our self, and against others, so we can see our participation in the scheme of things, and how it is that what we do to another is what we do to our Self.

Many people wonder how long we have to turn things around. It is really not a question of some critical turning point, but of nurturing more viable systems even as the old ones decay. One metaphor for our changing world is Norie Huddle's story (*Butterfly*) of a caterpillar's metamorphosis into a butterfly. After consuming hundreds of times its own weight daily as it munches its way through its ecosystem, the bloated caterpillar forms its chrysalis. Inside its body, new biological entities called imaginal discs arise, at first destroyed by its immune system. But as they grow more in number and begin to link up, they begin to survive. Eventually the caterpillar's immune system fails, its body goes into meltdown and the imaginal discs become the cells that build the butterfly from the spent materials that had held the blueprint for the butterfly all along. In just this way, a healthy new world, based on the principles of living systems, can emerge through today's chaotic transformation. (Sahtouris 364)

The Aspen-Body-Wisdom and the "butterfly eyes" and *wild joy*, that all await our claiming, will carry us far on our journey of transformation, as we orient our organizations and our selves into the currents of wellness, hardiness and wholeness, coursing down the *River-of-Life*.

The ethical renewal of capitalism will not happen by top-down fiat—no matter how many reforms and regulations Congress, the NYSE or any other body legislates. It will be forged in the hearts and minds of everyday business people. The job of spiritual leaders is the massive infusion of consciousness and values system-wide, with or without the imprimatur of The Powers That Be. (Aburdene 58)

## Questions and Exercises for Exploring The Seven Keystone Ecological Processes of Wild Resiliency®

1. **Our Ground of Being — A World in Which to Be**
  - What is the nature of your world?
  - What are the mythologies and belief systems that inform and sustain this worldview?
  - If you were to map the landscapes of this world, what are its contours, shapes, textures and edges?
2. **The Power of Arrival — A Self in the World:**
  - Who are you? How expansive can you allow your identity to be?
  - What is your capacity for arrival in the world, for showing up? Where do you best express this capacity?
  - Where do you respond to the world by wanting to shrivel up, or hide?
3. **A Tapestry of Relationships — The Ecological Self:**
  - Where do your loyalties lie; who is your community, your tribe, your family?
  - What are the mutualistic, and the parasitic, relationships in your life?

- How clear and clean are your boundaries? Where do they serve you, and where, when or how do you serve them?
- 4. **The Fires of Renewal — The Great Burning:**
  - Where is fire burning at healthy intensity in your life?
  - Where is there an absence of fire? What needs to be consumed, or returned to a more elemental form, to provide you with nourishment?
  - Where in life is there danger of fire burning at destructive levels, consuming your livelihood or relationships?
- 5. **Shadows Reach — Transformation and the Unknown:**
  - Where and how do you affirm the Shadow Realms of Death, Transformation, and the Unknown?
  - What is it you are afraid or unwilling to look at in yourself or the world; the conversations you refuse to have; the dreams you will not remember?
  - Identify and explore a time in your life when transformation served you, or when it did not.
- 6. **The Winds of Change — Dynamic Balance at the Edge of Chaos**
  - Where and how do you affirm ambiguity, paradox and change?
  - Where and how do you hold to rigidity, inflexibility, to patterns of refusal and denial of what is, or what might be?
  - Where are you out of balance? What are your life practices for regaining balance lost?
- 7. **The River of Life — Wellness, Hardiness and Wholeness**
  - Where and how do you quench your thirst for renewal?
  - What is your practice and discipline for affirming life, everyday?
  - Where and how do you turn away from, or toward, your thirst for the fullness of your own potential, your Joy, your passions and desires?

## Notes

1. See Jung's *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections* for this story, as well as explorations of 'the shadow'.
2. <http://www.butterflyspirit.org> (Butterfly Gardner's Association)
3. See Questions and Exercises for Exploring The Seven Keystone Ecological Processes of Wild Resiliency.
4. See Thomas Berry's *The Great Work* for explorations of this.
5. See Karen Armstrong's *The Battle for God*, for historical examples and perspectives on how attacks against an ideology actually strengthened the identity of the attacked.
6. See *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*, by Peter Senge and colleagues for an excellent exploration of Presencing as a strategy and skill set for how we show up in the world, and with ourselves, i.e. our "Power-of-Arrival."
7. Don Beck's work with Spiral Dynamics is highly recommended for its exploration of human systems change and evolution. (<http://www.spiraldynamics.net>)
8. See Marion Woodman and Elinor Dickson, *Dancing in the Flames: The Dark Goddess in the Transformation of Consciousness*, for an excellent exploration on the energetics of the human shadow.
9. Lynn Margulis explores this in her seminal and fascinating work, *Symbiotic Planet: A New View of Evolution*.
10. See [http://users.rcn.com/jkimball.ma.ultranet/BiologyPages/F/Fungi.html#Characteristics\\_of\\_Fungi](http://users.rcn.com/jkimball.ma.ultranet/BiologyPages/F/Fungi.html#Characteristics_of_Fungi) for an excellent online biology reference.

11. *Tree: A Life Story*, is a great read, by David Suzuki and Wayne Grady.
12. Candice Pert's, *Your Body is Your Subconscious Mind*, and Stephen Buhner's, *The Secret Teachings of Plants in the Direct Perception of Nature*, are both excellent in their exploration of the heart, and indeed the whole body, as an organ of intelligence and wisdom.

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## Biography

Larry Glover, LISW, is founding director of Paradigm Ventures Inc., and of the *Wild Resiliency Institute*. The WRI is a convergence of thirty years in the human change arena, first as a therapist and later as organizational consultant and coach, and an intertwined twenty-five years as a professional in the out-of-doors as a forest fire fighter and wilderness guide.

Larry is presently writing *The Wild Resiliency Within: a poetic, mythic, ecological, and indigenous exploration of human resilience*.

Larry works with individuals and communities of intention in support of their *wild resiliency*<sup>™</sup>. His clientele is international and varied. He brings an action-learning orientation to his play and work, as well as an incorporation of poetry, mythology, and ecology, and an integration of the western and indigenous sciences. Larry is a Licensed Independent Social Worker, is a member of *The Global Resiliency Network* and an associate of *The Renewal Group*.