Welcome to the Renewal of Creative Path. Thank you so much for reading this, and taking time to consider this special process. This is Jon Young for the 8 Shields Institute. This process is dedicated to both our ancestors who cared about us—7 generations ago. I am also dedicating this to the children who are waiting their turn to come to this earth, 7 generations into the future. Through this dedication we invoke alignment with what truly matters in our lives, and in the lives of our families, friends and communities.

Among traditional people worldwide, it is common to wait for winter to look inward to track ourselves, and the patterns of our lives. It truly is a good time to work on inner tracking—especially since the light outside is less both in time and intensity. We tend to spend more time indoors and in reflection. It’s natural.

That said, this process can be done at anytime of the year, and can be done in small ways each and everyday. This is simply a process of recognizing connection in our lives and the relationship of connection to creativity.

The Renewal of Creative Path was inspired by the process shared with me as a teen by my mentor Tom Brown, Jr. From there, my elder Ingwe added layers of connection through a village approach to nature connection. Later, traditional Mohawk elder, Jake Swamp, added some gems. When I was teaching Art of Mentoring in Kauai in the late 1990’s, I described this process to my traditional Hawaiian friends and family. They in turn shared a similar practice that they do during this season as well that lasts from November through March and is called Makahiki.

From this gathering of tools and processes, and from years of applying them in my own life, I consolidated what I received from these experiences, and from my experiences as a mentor. I have been applying these tools with hundreds of people over fifteen years and have witnessed many emergent patterns that are very helpful to learn and integrate into our lives. These processes are presented
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here in a summarized way this Quick Guide to the Renewal of Creative Path.

The document you are currently reading preserves all of the steps of the ROCP process, but has been edited and reformatted with the help of the 8 Shields team and the Weaving Earth folks from Northern California who utilize this process in their nature connection immersion program each year.

Some Suggestions On How to Approach ROCP

The ROCP is a process that helps us to align ourselves with our true creativity, our connections to our visions, dreams, and truths and our connections to the world around us. It provides a mirror to help us align with our north star, and to orient that north star within the interconnected web of life that we are a part of.

The ROCP process relies heavily on inner tracking as a foundation for understanding connection and creative visioning. As such, this is a very healing process. Just as we can read the trail an animal has left on the landscape and understand nuances in its behaviors, we can also read the trails of our inner world. When we apply our tracking skills on the inner landscape and we search for our inner light, we learn some of the most important lessons of our lives. We can learn to understand the ecological conditions of our inner landscape and understand what feeds our inner fire so that it burns bright.

Winter is an ideal time to do this—the longer nights and shorter days seem to support us, and it can be done anytime. If we are surrounded and supported by others doing the same, we often go further and get stronger results.

Read through this document to get an overview of the process before you start. Then figure out when and how you will activate this process for yourself—and determine if you will be working with
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others. If so, you will want to share this quick guide with them so they too can get an overview. Then you will plan a gathering, or gatherings to facilitate the process together.

To start with, it is best to give yourself as much time as possible over several days, and even a couple of weeks. It’s good to start your own personal analysis at your first opportunity to get some good time to yourself. Remember that in traditional Hawaiian communities, this process lasts from November through March, so give yourself time. During the Makahiki process, the people gather on a Saturday and potluck by the water so the children can play while they visit and share conversation. It is not a “formal” facilitated process, everyone is guided by their own curiosity and need to share with one another for reflection.

In the traditional settings where I have witnessed Makahiki and other related processes, I have seen this occur as a very organic and natural flow among people who know each other well, and who share love of their families, community and bioregion. Let that guide how you approach this—it really about strengthening relationships with trusted and caring stakeholders in your life. Consider who these people are.

The best will come from this if we really honor our own organic creative process. Take your time. The ideal is to first do this alone (separately) as much as possible with reflection on our own personal lives. Record your results in a journal—this will be something you will most definitely want to look back on year after year.

Next, share insights and patterns with people you are close to: e.g., significant others, families and close friends. Ideally, the people you choose to share with have also engaged their own personal ROCP process, but that isn’t necessary for you to share with them.

After sharing with your closest allies, you might share next with extended family (as long as they are open to this), then in circles of
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colleagues and co-workers, extended communities and finally as a nation—wherever this fits into the fabric of our relationships. This process involves one or a handful of individuals from each smaller circle carrying a unified message from the smaller circle to the larger circle, and so on.

These successive steps may not all be feasible for you personally at this time, but it is nonetheless valuable to know that sharing these insights in ever widening circles—from the personal to the global—is part of the vision and really helps the process go to another level. Our global network has shared with us that the ROCP process has been really helpful in building connected communities.

After the process is completed, it can be renewed each month and more often when necessary, tying our Renewal Of Creative Path to all the seasons of our lives. It is good to apply the ROCP process monthly in small ways, and daily in even smaller ways. It’s about building a muscle of awareness that detects, communicates with and builds connection to your own inner fire—that is creativity. As I like to say again and again:

“Culture is doing its best when it connects its people to nature, to one another and to themselves.”

This renewal process is a part of that—a cultural element that connects us to ourselves and remembers our connection to others and nature; thereby giving us more determination to design and effect connection outcomes in our lives.

Creating a “Connected Container”

When engaging the process first as an individual, we recommend doing so with as much intention as you can. Set aside some time for yourself when you don’t have other commitments. Leave behind
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possible distractions: cell phones, for example. We call this “pushing back the world.” It can be hard to do so—life asks much of us, and there are often many demands on our time, from family responsibilities to work to the pull of technology. Though it can be hard, “pushing back the world” to create some time and space for yourself is a vital part of this process. If you can’t fathom doing so, ask yourself:

“Who are the people in my life who could support me to take this important time for myself?”

Could someone you know care for your child or children for a few hours, or take on a few items from your to-do list? Ask for support if you need it.

Once you’ve pushed back the world, find a comfortable place inside or outside where you can relax and focus on this process. You may want to start with gratitude and setting intentions. Perhaps you can burn incense or smudge. The important thing is to treat this time with care. Remember that you are drawing up and out of yourselves some very precious memories and energies. Treat this time with respect and love. Care for your needs physically, mentally and emotionally during this time. What works for you?

When sharing with others, approach the process similarly. Make this a special time for you and those you are sharing with. This does not need to be elaborate, but it might be helpful to think about a basic protocol. Here are some suggestions from a peacemaking protocol that we often use for our meetings and gatherings.

• Take care of biological needs first (rest, food, water and comfort);

• Tend to the space (smudging, beautifying, adding symbolic things, lighting a candle or a fire);
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• Bring the hearts and minds together (gratitude and intentions);
• Personal check-ins (How are we doing? Anything need to be spoken for those gathered to feel present? Be brief but complete);
• Agree upon process, goal and agenda for the time set aside (Which parts are we doing? Who goes when? What if we don’t complete the whole process this time? When to continue and how?);
• Sharing (take turns, take breaks, keep it fun!);
• Gather points of unity, a unified message and greetings to the next circles to be shared with, and conclude with proper closure.

The Steps of Renewal

The renewal process is made up of eight steps. You might be able to do all of these steps in one sitting, but we recommend spreading the reflection out over a period of days, perhaps even weeks. You may decide to share with your loved ones as you go (after completing each step, for example) or to share once each person has completed all eight steps. What’s important is to have some time to reflect as an individual before you meet up with others.

You might also revisit earlier steps after completing later ones. The steps are arranged linearly/consecutively, but there is definitely a circularity and interconnectedness present in this process. Feel free to add to your insights from previous steps as you go. Find your own authentic way and relationship to this process!
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Step 1: Review of What Connects us In Our Lives

Brainstorm a list of the things (activities, places, processes) that connect you to nature.

Create a second list of the things that connect you to people.

Finally, create a third list of the things that connect you to yourself.

Consider times when you felt very connected to the earth. If you are doing this process for the first time, you may want to reach back all the way into childhood to create a running list of times when you felt this connection. If you are coming back to this process after a year, consider the times when you felt connected to the earth since your last renewal. You may also have remembered older experiences not previously recorded in your renewal reflections. Write them down!

Here are some questions to ponder when considering moments of connection to the earth:

What were the circumstances?

How old were you?

Where were you at the time?

Who was with you?

How was this honored, remembered or received?
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What were the factors of these times that contributed to the good energy and connection you were feeling from the earth?

What do all these events have in common?

What are the things you take away from these experiences in terms of values, of commitments in your life, or ways you can add to the quality of your personal, family and community processes?

What would you like to see more of in your life going forward?

Connecting Questions:

What is happening here with connection?

What patterns am I / are we learning from this?
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What is it teaching me on deeper levels?

How is it helping me?

How is it helping me to help others?

Step 2: Journaling Obstacles to Connection

Now that we have looked at ways in which the connecting aspects of our lives have moved through us and brought so much goodness, we need to look at what has not. Ask yourselves:

What in the past has created obstacles to fully living, experiencing, honoring, recognizing, remembering or otherwise celebrating these moments and the teachings within them?
Unprocessed grief and hurts from our past can block connection. Examine what else blocks you. Ask yourselves:

What disconnects me from myself, nature, my ancestors and others?

Some of these obstacles may be self-limiting patterns of our own minds, habits and emotions. Some of our obstacles may be wounds. Sometimes we tell ourselves that personal obstacles don’t exist—even though they can and do. Or, we might tell ourselves “I don’t deserve this,” when we really do.

Even if we see the obstacles in our lives, we may be afraid to speak of them with others. Perhaps you have experienced alienation or unwanted attention by expressing these things. Maybe you lived in a place that had no access to nature or community at times when you felt you needed this. Or maybe your life commitments, life circumstances or personal patterns prevented this kind of quality time to occur.

Whatever the reason, track these patterns and ask how are they in your life now?

Are these forces still acting on you?
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What obstacles are in the way of you feeling and living in a way that is good and balanced?

Connecting Questions:

What is happening here with respect to blocks to my / our connections to self, nature and others?

What patterns am I / are we learning from this?

What is it teaching me on a deeper level?

How is it helping me?

How is it helping me to help others?
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Step 3: Tracking Patterns of Synchronicity & the Help of Nature

C.G. Jung, the eminent psychiatrist, first coined the term “synchronicity.” It is used to refer to connections, parallels and interrelated phenomena in one’s life that seem to defy explanation. Perhaps an old friend you haven’t spoken to in a decade “randomly” pops into your head. A day later, you receive a phone call from that friend “out of the blue.” Such events tend to be described as “wacky coincidences,” but we contend that there are deeper energies and patterns at play.

These occurrences might be mystifying at first. But the old folks say that such synchronicity events are actually the norm. They needn’t worry us… in fact, we should be worried when they aren’t happening.

When have you experienced synchronicity in your life?

Who was involved and what were the circumstances?

What dream patterns (recurring dreams, vivid dreams, dreams that have later come true in waking life, etc.) have you had in your life?

What connections to animals have you had again and again?
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What patterns are forming from this?

Connecting Questions:

What is happening here with synchronicity?

What patterns am I / are we learning from this?

What is it teaching me on a deeper level?

How is it helping me?

How is it helping me to help others?
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Step 4: Inventory of Gifts Analysis

What have people told you about your own personal gifts, talents and creative powers?

Have you heard any of these reflections consistently?

Are there reflections about your work, your conduct, or other forms of your expression that you remember hearing about?

When do people tell you that you look most alive and lit up?

What patterns have your aunt, grandma, uncle, neighbor, co-worker, friend, love, and / or other people in your life noticed about you?

Many wise teachers contend that we are often unaware of our own gifts—we need others to help us discover and see what they are. We may not even like the gifts we have, nor feel like they are anything special or worth noting. But we give them because they come naturally to us; we give them because it helps our families, friends and communities. There are probably patterns to this. Take
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some time to consider these patterns and the feedback we’ve heard from others.

What gifts have others seen in us?

What gifts do we see in ourselves?

Connecting Questions:
What is happening here with my / our gifts and strengths?

What patterns am I / are we learning from this?

What is it teaching me on a deeper level?

How is it helping me?
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How is it helping me to help others?

Step 5: Backtracking the Stepping Stones of Visions & Gifts

Next, we look for our soul’s purpose. Consider this little story from my life. Over thirty years ago, Tom Brown said to me:

“There are times in your life when you feel like events taking place are like a stepping stone on the path of your vision. When you stand on one of these stones, you can see the other events from the past that are also stepping stones. Look back on your life, the stones of your vision light up in a path all the way to your birth, and beyond. When you look forward in your life, you can see these stones leading beyond your life into the future.”

Here are some clues: time may seem to stand still when we’re on a stepping stone. We might feel fully alive and excited, as if electricity were running powerfully through our body. We might notice an intersection between a sense of the familiar and things that are seemingly inexplicable, a union of the known and deeply unknown.

These are often moments of elevated consciousness, when we feel most connected to something greater than ourselves and/or can sense ourselves connected to our ancestors and the unborn generations. This is about our vision and mission in this world—yet there is rarely a tangible “instruction” from these moments. It is more of a feeling or creative force moving through us.

The first time you consider stepping stones in your life, you may not feel you have any such memories. That's fine. Sometimes you have to review this process a few times before things come to the surface for you to see. Above all else, remember this: we are each born with
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an internal sense of our path; it is part of what it means to be a human being. This step of renewal helps us to remember what that is.

Remember, it doesn't matter if you have these memories or not. Just think of things that form a pattern in your life and make note of them.

Connecting Questions:

What is happening here with my / our re-experiencing of elevated moments and vision?

What patterns am I / are we learning from this?

What is it teaching me on a deeper level?

How is it helping me?

How is it helping me to help others?
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Step 6: Releasing Expectations & Offering Forgiveness

Our uncle Paul Raphael, a peacemaker of the Odawa peoples from the Great Lakes region of Michigan, reminds us that every time we experience a loss or some pain in our lives, we are reminded of and feel again every time in our lives—including the first time—when we felt that pain. When those moments of suffering go unrecognized or are not tended to, they can take over our ability to see clearly, hear clearly and feel our connection to all things. Over time, if not worked through, they begin to shape how we show up in the world—emotionally and physically.

These concentrations of grief and pain in our lives are often related to the obstacles that we considered in Step 2. Here, in Step 6, we will apply a lens of forgiveness to these obstacles in order to release expectations and offer forgiveness.

First and foremost, start with yourself. Take the self-limiting patterns, obstacles and pains you identified in Step 5 and ask:

Have I forgiven myself for feeling these feelings and pains?

Am I relating to myself with compassion around these patterns in my life?

The patterns and pains we identified in Step 2 may involve loved ones and other people in our lives. We may feel anger and grief related to these individuals and the roles that they have played or that we perceive they have played in our traumas. Even if, or rather, especially if others are involved, begin nevertheless with forgiveness for oneself. Forgiveness is an inside job.
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Only after working with forgiving oneself can you consider what expectations you’ve had of others and if forgiveness for others is needed. In many cases, it may not be helpful to tell someone directly that we are “forgiving them.” This conversation can lead to more grief and trauma in the connection. Rather, forgiveness in many cases involves a willingness to let go of the characterizations of others that we have been carrying around and to make a pact with ourselves to no longer use these stories of another to inform what we think about that person or how we relate to them. This is forgiveness for the sake of another person—to no longer hold them hostage to our own stories—rather than forgiveness for the sake of oneself.

If you have been clearly wronged or offended by someone, the path to forgiveness could begin with sharing how their actions impacted you, emotionally or physically, provided that you feel safe to do so. Executing this well involves finding inner peace first. In cases where extreme trauma is present, it may be incredibly difficult to find forgiveness for another. Again, starting with oneself is crucial. Forgiveness in these circumstances is possible, and necessary, but it shouldn’t be attempted alone! Find support and anchoring within your community. Perhaps finding a witness for the conversation will serve.

Here are some words that could help:

“Now I ask for your forgiveness if there is anything I have done to offend you in any way. I forgive myself, and the people in my life who could not meet my needs when I had them. I commit to being there for those who reach out to me when it is possible for me to do so in a good way. I wish the same for you. I am thankful for our relationship because…”

Or whatever works for you.
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Connecting Questions:
What is happening here with releasing and forgiveness?

What patterns am I / are we learning from this?

What is it teaching me on a deeper level?

How is it helping me?

How is it helping me to help others?

A NOTE ON STEPS 1-6
It is VITAL that you do steps 1 through 6 before moving on to steps 7 and 8. Steps 1 through 6 are concerned with the inward gaze and reflection on our past experiences. Step 7 begins a process that draws on the internal but is ultimately more focused on moving into the future and manifesting a vision in the physical world, an external process. The following steps will be far richer if we’ve truly given ourselves as completely as we’re able to steps 1 through 6. Resist the urge to move right to design and visioning!
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Step 7: Weaving the Creative Scene Without Fear!

From all of the above processes, what have we identified as patterns we want to bring into our lives more effectively and completely in the coming year, decade and the rest of our lives?

Paint a picture as if you can do anything. Really identify what is your ideal dream life.

Describe where you want to live—the environment, the kind of ecosystems, the plants and animals, the people in your lives, the village or larger community patterns you wish to experience and / or participate in.

Describe your ideal day or days in a week, a month, and the four seasons—what activities are you involved in for work, fun, renewal, love, family, friends and community?

What are you doing when you are at your best and happiest?
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Ask the question,

If fear were not an obstacle, what would be my next bold move?

Just paint a picture!

Connecting Questions:

What is happening here with your / our creative scene development, especially as it relates to all the other learning that has come with this process?

What patterns am I / are we learning from this?

What is it teaching me on a deeper level?

How is it helping me?

How is it helping me to help others?
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Step 8: Join Up With Other Circles

From here, bring the connection learnings you have gained for yourself from your own stories and reflections to share with your most intimate relationships. Next reach out to the folks who you share space and home with. Then reach out to the world!

What will you do?

What has gone well in this process for you?

What has been challenging?

What are your goals for this next year and years to come?

What have you learned from this?

We will weave this together for the rest of the year. This is a great design process!

Have fun and Happy Renewal!