

Intent and the Circle: Interview with Sandra Ingerman

Meg Beeler

Every shamanic gathering has the potential of being an energy field. When we feel the connection, commonality, and energy in a group, we are in its field: it is palpable, it feels larger than us, and it is focused. Generally, however, fields seem to happen spontaneously, to us and around us, *without volition*.

What if, with shifts of intention, we could consciously create energy fields through our shamanic work? What if we could find ways to feed and be fed by our connections every day, giving and receiving sustenance beyond our wildest dreams? What if we could participate in and maintain energy fields long distance, without being physically together, without needing the constant reassurance of email, texting, and phone calls? What if such a field changed our sense of connectedness and support in the world?

Sandra Ingerman has been working intentionally with long-distance energy fields for a number of years, in workshops, with her long-term groups (Teacher Training and Working In Community), and through her Transmutation News. In this interview in July, 2011, we spoke about how we can feed, nurture, and grow the energy field of the groups we work with.

Meg Beeler: Why don't you start by talking about your experience of energy fields.

Sandra Ingerman: Whenever I'm in a group of people, it doesn't matter if its at a workshop or with two people sitting together and having a deep conversation, it always feels like there's an energetic power that begins to build up. Its almost like there's an entity, a spiritual energy that becomes alive, when a group of people come together. The group contributes to this energy, can tap into it, and can absorb that energy for each person's health and well-being. The energy continues to build throughout our time together in my workshops.

I began to get curious about what would happen if a group actually *intended* to keep building on an invisible field of energy after they went home to their regular lives. What would happen, even though we weren't meeting together physically, if a group was willing to continue to build on that invisible field of energy—*daily*? What if there's a way to be able to access that energy and use that energy on behalf of personal healing, healing of the group, healing of the planet, and for inspiration?

Beeler: How would you describe what happens when people in a group energy field focus their intent?

Ingerman: The energy itself builds, and in its state of beingness, it creates a field of energy, without action, that transforms.

The example I always give is someone who's considered a great guru or spiritual master or spiritual teacher. Oftentimes when people are in the room with someone filled with spirit, they're healed by their presence. That spiritual teacher/master/healer/guru isn't *doing* anything such as directing that energy and isn't consciously working with that energy. It's the energy that the person exudes. Their presence just naturally transforms everything in the room.

So I wanted to know what would happen for cities or communities if a whole group created a strong healing presence? What if the group energy is just radiating, just shining, with no intention to do anything, and just by the presence alone, it lifts up the vibration, the frequency, the energy of everybody who is in that city or in that community? Ultimately if you have enough people who are willing to create a particular field of energy, what would happen to the planet itself?

Beeler: What tells you that a person or people are radiating a field in that way?

Ingerman: I happen to be a kinesthetic person, I don't see auras. There are some people who see auras, who see colors, when they're in a spiritual field. For me it's a palpable energy. It's something that I feel in my body. *I feel bigger*, more expanded, because of the intention and the sacredness of the conversation, or the meditation or the ceremony that is going on.

This is kind of a crazy thing to say, but whenever I am in a workshop or in a sacred space where there's a lot of spiritual energy, my nose runs and it's a physical sensation I get all the time. I always know how much power is in the room by how much my nose runs [laughing].

Beeler: [laughing] That's great. You've been thinking about this for a long time. How have your personal life and experiences been affected by noticing energy fields and developing them with other people?

Ingerman: For me it's a feeling that there's an energetic community of support around me. That really makes a difference for me and in my work. For example, with the teachers I've trained, we've come together every two years in a reunion. At each reunion I've tried to get people to find some little ceremony they can do everyday. At the last reunion, we made rattles specifically to connect with the circle. I asked people to just even shake the rattle once a day. This doesn't even take five seconds, just to connect with the circle, create a stronger field, and give gratitude, prayers, and blessings to everybody in that circle.

Most of us don't just go down the street or a mile away to meet again with our spiritual community. *People in our spiritual community can be all over the world*. If we can feel that palpable energy from being in the presence of others, who were coming together to do spiritual work, we can have it without being in each other's physical presence. For me personally, it feels meaningful: I feel like I have support in my life and support in my work [from her widespread spiritual community]. I'm *part of something* and I'm not just on this path by myself.

Beeler: So in that long-distance community support, do you envision or experience individual people, or do you simply feel the group energy?

Ingerman: I simply feel the group energy. I really don't see individuals. That energetic field is beyond the individual. It's an energetic expansion. The only way I can put it is, when I'm doing spiritual work, when I'm in a very sacred space, I feel very big. As I said earlier I don't see auras, but being kinesthetic I *feel* myself energetically taking up more space on the planet. For me, the field is that part of ourselves that is invisible, that spiritual part of us that's beyond our skin that keeps growing and growing--and radiating light and love--and so, for me, it's beyond the individual. It's about the spiritual part of ourselves that's beyond personality, beyond the body, and beyond the skin.

Beeler: That certainly has been my experience as well. There's a really drastic shift between thinking, 'Oh Susan is going to support me through this difficult time' and thinking that the group is going to support me. It doesn't matter what person or persons are "there" because the field itself is present.

Ingerman: Right, right.

Beeler: So what qualities are necessary for the field to be not just created but sustained? What qualities do the individuals participating in it contribute or exhibit?

Ingerman: Well I think the key is intention. People do not have to grit their teeth and hold their intention every minute of the day. It's more like relaxing into an intention of 'I am making a choice' to be part of a transformative spiritual community. And 'I am willing to feed the energy and the positive part of the circle and perceive everybody as being healthy and successful and going through life riding the waves,' all the waves that life brings us, in a very graceful way.

Most people who are drawn to the work that I do have a deep love for others, for life itself, and for the planet itself, and so having a sense of love and wanting to do this from a place of love is important. It's about making a choice to be part of something bigger than oneself. So for me intention is important, and coming from a place of love, and not from a place of ego like 'what am I going to get from this?' Some people can get into an egoic needy place and this keeps feeding and creating more separation which does *not* allow that field of energy to expand, grow, radiate, and be a transformative force.

Beeler: What about people's subtle and hidden disbeliefs? You are always talking about the toxic thoughts that get in our way. For me personally, putting aside certain disbeliefs has been a crucial part of participating in these energetic fields. Do you think that's important for everybody?

Ingerman: Well, [laughing] I have a basic belief and I'm trying to discreate this belief, that most people in the West who come to spiritual work doesn't actually believe in the power and potential of spiritual work. People new to the work don't have the experience yet to prove the power of the work. Basically we've been brainwashed by the Western culture, the "rational" which tells us that fields of energy don't exist. The spiritual world doesn't exist. You know it's too "woo-woo," you know all those things we were brought up with.

I'm not exactly sure how we transcend that disbelief because it's a seed that's been planted in us and the roots run so deep. I'm not exactly sure how it gets weeded out. But new plants can be planted in the garden. New seeds can be planted in the garden. The seeds can grow into plants that replace the belief that spiritual work isn't *valid*. Experiencing the results of the work helps to lessen the voice that pulls away from our spiritual practices.

When I teach shamanism I ask participants to observe *what are the results you are getting?* Do you notice a shift in your own personal health and in your own personal state of well-being? Do you find yourself moving through life more with grace and ease? As people start to get the experience, slowly—it doesn't have to be a miracle thing that happens overnight—of noticing that I've been feeling better, then that voice [disbelief] starts to quiet.

[cut?]

What if it is possible to create transformation on the planet by doing spiritual work? The 'what if' question opens up a space for something else to happen. I personally believe it's somewhat unrealistic that people who grew up in a very rational culture are just going let go and suspend their beliefs. I do believe that the left-brained part of ourselves that judges and criticizes spiritual work starts to quiet over time by experiencing the actual power and change from being on a spiritual path.

Beeler: That's a really good way of putting it. I also have been wondering how important the wisdom of meditation and silence is in creating an energetic field? [Woods Shoemaker, Ingerman's husband, leads short meditations during each long-distance gathering in group conference calls.]

Ingerman: For a powerful sacred field of energy to be created, *people need to feel the field in every cell of their being*. They must be able to fully *concentrate* and *focus* on the practices, set a strong *intention*, and feel great *love* in their hearts.

If people are just going through the motions, simply following the directions, whether in ceremony or meditation, without profound involvement--with focus, concentration, love, and a cellular feeling of oneness--then there is no power.

I think that any powerful sacred field of energy actually gets filled through silence. When the field of energy is a non-doing state, to be able to build that field, we have to be able to sink into that part of ourselves that is non-doing, and that is still, and that just *is*. In that state our energy can pulsate together because it's outside of time and space. It has the opportunity to pulsate together, and through a place of non-doing, to create a very powerful energy that is palpable to anybody who is in it.

Beeler: I wonder if you have experienced energetic fields in sacred places, such as at Stonehenge or Machu Picchu?

Ingerman: Yes. I haven't been to South America, but I've gone to Stonehenge and many sacred places in Scotland, Ireland, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and France. I could really feel where people have been working from a place of oneness and love in those sacred places. I could really settle in to an incredible feeling of love.

Egypt has actually been the easiest place for me to give people an experience of the sacred. In Egypt when I take people into the temples and some of the sacred sites, it's not like there was once a god or goddess who once lived there, the energy is *still* there, it never left. I don't even have to come up with a formal ceremony to do. I just have to tell people to close their eyes, and take a deep breath, and people start having incredible spiritual experiences.

Bandelier [Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico], where the Anasazi live, is a real example of energy that's still present. It's not gone. I always tell people who come to my workshops in Santa Fe to visit this extraordinary place.

Beeler: So was that your recent experience at the SSP conference [May 2011] when people spent a day at Bandelier as part of the conference?

Ingerman: It was really wonderful. I love the energy at Bandelier, and I love to take people to experience the field of energy there.

In my heart I wanted to create a sacred experience for this group. In preparation, Woods and I went back and forth to Bandelier before the SSP conference. I kept walking the land, imagining a group was behind me, to learn what I needed to know.

All the pieces fell into place; the group was able to experience the magic of the land and really feel the spiritual energy. The spirits came together in partnership with Jose Lucero and all of us at the conference who were creating the space. What it left me with, because I don't take groups to as many spiritual places as other shamanic teachers do, was the realization that at the SSP conference people got so much more than I could give them just sitting in a retreat center or hotel. There were great teachings that we all received from being on the land and merging with that energetic field that has been created for so many hundreds of years.

Beeler: Would you say that the sacred places like Bandelier *feed* people—both people's experience and the connection they feel? Is that correct?

Ingerman: Right, and you feel like something bigger than you is here. That's often what really touches people, that this is bigger than my mind can really hold or embrace, there's something that's not tangible that I could wrap my mind around, there's something special.

When people start to feel the energetic field then several things can happen. They may start opening up to the spiritual wisdom of ancient people who were in these places all over the world. They may experience their own spiritual nature or intuition, or their own spiritual wisdom starts to flow through, giving them an experience of inner wealth, inner happiness, and inner bliss that meets the energetic field that is around them.

Beeler: When people return home from a conference like that, how would you suggest that they develop or grow their experiences of sacred place and group energy?

Ingerman: I did teach a little bit of the transfiguration work, teaching people how to step out of an egoic personal state and to experience their own radiant light and how to bring *that* back to their communities. We talked about the power of being embodied, because part of that conference was to teach that shamanism is not about leaving our bodies. Shamanism is a power that we can experience when we're *in* our bodies, when we're actually walking through the earth, being connected to ourselves and experiencing that expansive part of ourselves that can greet the spirits, and tap into our own inner wisdom as well as the wisdom of the ancient people. So that was the theme that we kept focusing on over and over again, and through dance and through being out in nature, people got that experience for themselves. Hopefully they were able to take that home with them, instead of taking home a lot of notes.

In our particular culture, we're *so* addicted to methods and techniques. The shadow side of workshops and conferences is that we keep creating technicians, and technicians are not what the planet needs right now. By giving people the *experience* of personal healing, personal transformation, and the depth of their own spiritual selves, we can get them more in touch with that inner state. Then when they go home they can translate it into their personal life.

Beeler: I've been exploring ways of creating energetic fields in some groups I belong to. I've noticed that even though people have the intention of staying connected, of staying in a field together, our normal habits are hard to overcome. We assume we have to connect via email or telephone or seeing each other in person. It is a challenge to really believe that you've got this field going all the time.

This is different than my experience with our Working in Community group, because I connect with the group every single day in my meditation, and so it's always there for me. My sense is that the energy field is strong because we connect every day, and because we've been together over a period of time to make it a strong space.

What are your recommendations for taking an inner experience and bringing it into people's lives and groups? I'm not asking for techniques. But I'm asking for ways of thinking.

Ingerman: Well, a couple of things. When working with a small group, actually give the assignment of no email, no chatting, and see what it's like to hold this space. Then come back together through email a month later and notice if you were able to hold that space. Sometimes we have to take the chatting out of the experience.

Basically I suggest to every group to keep feeding the energy of the circle. What I mean by feeding the energy is thinking good thoughts about the experience and the circle every day, and sending blessings to everybody who was in the room, hoping that life is bringing to them the healing they need.

I bless everybody in the circle every day as I bless the teachers who I've trained with my rattle every day, and those in the field of our Work In Community every day. I also hold in love and light the global community that engages in spiritual work in behalf of all of life.

It's not thinking about individuals. It's allowing myself to be filled up with the experience, not the details of what happened. It's feeling the good feelings in my body. I remember being in that circle, being in that room, being out on the land together, what it felt like when we held hands, what it felt like when we all went our separate ways on the land together, but were holding together as one group. The important thing is to continue to tap into that feeling, because the memory starts to fade. That's just a normal thing that happens.

You go into other groups, you go on with your life, and the memory starts to fade. You can't exactly remember what you did, but the feeling should still be in your body. As you keep holding those feelings then it's almost like bringing a spark with you, to light another fire when you go into another group you work with. The spark that got ignited for you by being in one circle ignites the fire in a good way in a new circle—because that energy continues. Energy doesn't end, it just continues. So how do we keep carrying that energy without having to focus on 'what did we learn?' 'what did we do?' because that part does fade away.

Beeler: When I lead a group over time, I am holding intention and thinking about the energy field constantly. I've noticed that, even when the group has developed that field very strongly, people's experience of it varies. Can you comment on what's essential for getting beyond our need for personal connection into a sense of the communal connection?

Ingerman: Well I'd like to give an example. In April I went to Boulder to teach a beginning workshop on shamanic journeying, a workshop sponsored by Sounds True, one of my publishers. The intention was to film the workshop live to use for an online course where people would be watching the course from home to learn about shamanic journeying.

I was very nervous about how the group was going to do with cameras and microphones everywhere. I was guided before I went to the workshop *to keep calling in the future participants to our space*, and so I kept doing that throughout the entire weekend. We kept welcoming everyone into the circle present and future. Every time I gave an instruction to the group like 'now it's time for you to journey to the lower world to meet your power animal for this,' I'd also say, 'those of you at home, it's now time for you to darken your room and set your intention, and follow the instructions that are being given here.'

And every time we would hold hands in the circle, I'd ask everybody to open their hearts and invite in the future participants, for possibly years to come, because who knows how many times this course might go online. It was incredible how people in the circle actually felt the room get crowded every time we did any kind of invocation inviting everybody who was watching this online course months later to be part of our circle. Most of the people in this workshop didn't have experience with shamanism. They came in fresh and with no expectations. But they felt the room getting full with the energy of the future participants who were not physically present in the circle.

Another example of building a field of energy is my monthly column in the Transmutation News. It is translated into 14 languages and has approximately 7,000 subscribers. For 13 years, since I started writing the column, we've been building an energetic field that people can enter at any time. People can feel part of an energetic circle that is working together from a place of love to help the planet and all of life itself.

The point I'm trying to make is that each and every one of us can start sending support and blessings to spiritual practitioners all over the world, no matter what particular method they use or what tradition they use. When you start sending blessings out to those working on behalf of the planet, you feel a palpable energy, a breathing together with the heartbeat of the earth. It's through intention.

It doesn't have to be anything that you learned. It's by sending good thoughts, by blessing and giving thanks and honoring everybody who's working together, who really love all the life on the earth. Then you feel a field growing and having a positive impact in your own life. You're not connecting with people's personalities, with their egos, you're just connecting with that spiritual energy, that spiritual love, that spiritual light, and allowing that to grow and be strong.

Beeler: That's a wonderful example. I can feel it in your voice. It seems very related to how you talk about visioning and dreaming. It makes me think of something that happened recently where I was meditating. All of a sudden I had a palpable sense of meditating with all 9 billion people on the earth. It was all very beautiful, and I came out and thought, "Wait a minute, there's not 9 billion people on the earth yet." [laughing]

Ingerman: [laughing] Right, right.

Beeler: So it's been really interesting to return to that seed of connection with all people, and feed and re-imagine it. The heart opening of that experience is astonishing.

Ingerman: Absolutely. That's a really powerful experience. Over 10 years now in my workshops I have had people journey to descendants in the future and ask them how they heal with light and sound and different frequencies than what we're using today. Because I've led this journey for so long, I started to feel a bridge being built between the future and the present. It wasn't like a solid bridge of stones, steel, or planks of wood. It was an energetic bridge. There was a palpable connection with the future that I had not felt before. I love being able to travel through that bridge from both sides. I love working together with our descendants.

It has been important to understand there is going to be a future, sending blessings to those in the future, and doing what we can to leave our descendants a good world. We can sit together in meditation, journeys, and ceremony, beyond time, inviting all the circles of the worlds of all times to be part of that energetic field of love.

Beeler: And it's like feeling the energy of a field: once you've experienced it, you want to keep experiencing it—hopefully not as Buddhist teachers say not just trying to have that high—rather feeding it and making it stronger. And observing the flow of energy, sometimes strong and sometimes not.

Ingerman: Yes, it's the principal of reciprocity. The principle of reciprocity is the basic teaching in shamanism about the flow of giving and receiving. We often lose the natural flow, living in a modern culture. It's not where you only focus on what you are going to get back. It's a natural flow of your giving, your blessing. You are feeding the energy. It naturally flows back to you in a real feminine way, not by quantity, but by quality.

Beeler: So have you found that there's a community of people, teachers, other shamanic workers or other people out there who are working in similar ways with energy fields?

Ingerman: When we're talking about building a field, it's actually anonymity that's most important: once you bring in any ego or personality, that stops that field of energy from flowing. The energy flows through *being*, stillness, and the pulsation of oneness.

There are thousands of teachers all over the world who are building on this field of energy, but oftentimes, nobody knows who they are or what they are doing. That's the great power of the work, it's not about the big names, because it goes beyond all of that. It goes beyond the names, it goes beyond the body, it goes beyond the numbers. We are talking about the quality of the energy field. So I really appreciate those on the planet who are teaching, but doing it from an anonymous standpoint, because in a lot of ways I think that builds the field even stronger.

I'm not trying to say this in a judgmental way. What I'm calling a "teacher" is anyone who is helping others to create this particular field of energy. Teacher is a label that goes to every person on the planet who is creating the field in many different ways and places that go beyond our definition of 'workshops.'

Beeler: I love that image. And it brings up a question that I hadn't really thought about—the tendency in our culture for people to go to experts, to go to the well-known, to go to a conference, and want to work with so-and-so because they have a big name. So often, this isn't meant as a criticism, it's easier to find out about Sandra Ingerman than it is to find out about Susie Jones, you know?

Ingerman: Right. Yeah. [laughing]

Beeler: So you and I see the thousands of people doing this work and there are a lot of anonymous [not well known] people. For someone who hasn't had these experiences, who gets really excited about an energy field and wants to explore them, how do they do that?

Ingerman: There are people who are drawn to names, definitely and I think that everybody who's written a book or been out there teaching for a while knows that some people are coming to workshops to meet a particular person. And there's nothing wrong with that, in that those people hopefully will be introduced to a field of energy that will affect them in a way that goes beyond the name and beyond their original attraction. That's the hope—that something gets stimulated inside of them, whether it's at that workshop itself or a year later, that a seed gets planted that is going to grow into a new wonderful understanding.

For other people who are not particularly attracted to a name, and are more attracted to a community of support, first of all you have to find what kind of a spiritual practice you want to do that really speaks to you. Not everybody's drawn to meditation, not everybody's drawn to shamanism, some people are more drawn to yoga, Reiki, and so on.

My advice is to find a group in your area that is coming together and notice whether there is an actual field of energy, a field of support that you can feel, a feeling of love equality for each person. If there's a lot of ego in the group, it might be a sign this is not the group you want to be in. When you find a group that works for you, then stick with that work and don't hop between different forms of the work and different groups, because that's just a distraction. That breaks the power.

Beeler: What about the issue of groups with leaders and groups that share power? Some of us have a long history of wanting 'leader-full' groups rather than 'leaderless' groups, to get around the problem of ego and one person being in charge of everything. My experience is that if you're working in a field of energy you're not going to have ego coming forth. Do you have any recommendations about that?

Ingerman: Again it's kind of like going to a teacher with a name. We all have to find what we need, what works for us personally. Some people still need to be around a person who's going to jumpstart that inner fire, and that's really fine. Some of us just want to know 'how do I happen into that state of being myself, I don't want to be lead into it.'

Because I teach shamanism and encourage people to start groups in their own local communities where they can come together and practice together, what I've always suggested is to share the leadership. For example, I was in a journey group for three years when I first started practicing shamanism in the early 80's. We had a very strong group, and we always took turns leading the group. We all had a place in the circle of equality. A group needs a person to say, "its time to start" and to focus the group. If the same person is always in charge an imbalance of power comes in. When you work beyond yourself in the higher good for the community, and for people in your community and on the planet, you want to share leadership.

Beeler: So many of my clients don't feel connected with everybody, they think they're alone in their experiences. It's very hard for them to believe that what we're talking about actually exists. You know, all the separation that exists in our culture.

Ingerman: I believe everybody has had an experience of feeling good inside themselves. If you really explored with those clients who never experienced a field of energy—did they ever go to a ballgame where everybody sang together? Were they ever at any kind of event where people prayed together in a particular way for somebody who was suffering? There's usually some event that people have been to, where people have been singing, opening up their hearts together, or having positive connections.

I've had the wonderful experience of meeting people for the first time at a lunch or dinner, discovering an incredible connection, and talking about deep and meaningful things. That's an example of the field of energy being built up. There are many different examples of people coming together, dropping their barriers, and going to a deep and meaningful place without even intending to. That gives the feeling of what a field feels like.

Published in *Sacred Hoop*, Copyright © 2011 by Meg Beeler. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author.

Meg Beeler is a **Shamanic Guide, Mentor, and Author**. Drawing on her lifelong passion for soul healing, heart opening, and reweaving the connections between all beings, she helps clients heal energy, soul, and spirit. Meg is author of *Weave the Heart of the Universe into Your Life: Aligning with Cosmic Energy*. She is founder of Earth Caretakers Wisdom School, creator of Energy Alchemy™ and a channel for compassionate ancient wisdom.

Meg is a lifelong explorer of shamanic, animist, and meditative consciousness who practices Earth-centered, nature-based, Andean mysticism. She brings a lifetime of teaching and experience in land-based community ceremony to her work. She was a Silicon Valley consultant and author of many technical books. Meg is a master gardener and chairs the non-profit Sonoma Mountain Preservation Group in the North San Francisco Bay Area. megbeeler.com