



Linda's T'ai Chi Weekly Handout November 17, 2024

The White Wolf



The practice of Tai Chi and Qigong was taught among the various cultures that existed in villages and towns scattered about the hills and mountains of China. Qigong was taught as a way to relax, heal, meditate and gain balance, strength and posture.

T'ai Chi and Qigong dates thousands of years ago and is rooted in stories, legends and mythology. Like Tai Chi and Qigong, every culture has its own stories to tell.

Storytelling among people provide the framework for how we perceive the world and live our lives. Stories preserve culture and transmit cultural information from one generation to the next. In short, stories keep civilizations alive. Storytelling is at the core of culture. It is how histories are passed down, how customs are shared and how traditions become endemic to a group. Shared culture is rooted in a shared tradition of communicating. The stories a group tells communicate what a culture values and believes in. Storytelling is as old as culture. Many societies have long-established storytelling traditions. The stories, and performances thereof, function to entertain as well as educate. Storytelling is universal and is as ancient as humankind. Before there was writing, there was storytelling. It occurs in every culture and from every age. It exists (and existed) to entertain, to inform, and to promulgate cultural traditions and values. (National Geographic)

Oral storytelling is telling a story through voice and gestures. The oral tradition can take many forms, including epic poems, chants, rhymes, songs, and more. Not all of these stories are historically accurate or even true. Truth is less important than providing cultural cohesion. It can encompass myths, legends, fables, religion, prayers, proverbs, and instructions.

The Native Hawaiian word for story is “mo’olelo,” but it can also mean history, legend, and tradition. It comes from two words, mo’o, meaning succession, and olelo, meaning language or speaking. Thus, story is the “succession of language,” since all stories were oral. Native Hawaiian stories included the tale of the first Hawaiian, who was born from a taro root. Other stories tell of navigation across the seas.

There is one story not related to Tai Chi or Qigong but rather comes from Native American cultures. I want to share it with you today as I found great inspiration and comfort. It is unknown from which tribe this story comes but I believe it is ubiquitous. It could be Navajo or Cree or as in this story, Cherokee.

All good stories begin with “Once upon a Time....” As does this one.

The White Wolf

Once upon a time, there was a Cherokee grandfather who told his grandson, "Grandson, there are two wolves inside of me. One wolf is white, good and altruistic, generous and kind. The white wolf wants me to be strong and compassionate, wise, courageous and forgiving. The other wolf is grey mean and greedy, violent and angry. The grey wolf wants me to be vengeful, cruel and cunning. The two wolves are in a constant fight within me." The grandson, with wide eyes, says, "But which one will *win*, grandpa?" And the grandfather says "The one which I feed."

T'ai Chi and Qigong has the capacity to feed our inner wolf- the one that wants us to be strong, compassionate and wise. When the world feels unsettled or chaotic it is time to feed the inner white wolf. I am making every effort to avoid feeling cynical and worried about the future. I am making efforts to enjoy what is within my power-family, friends, music, art, nature and good health.

And, I am grateful to each of you for being a part of my world. You are my inner wolf- the one I wish to feed.

Peace,

Linda