

Dear LMCommunity,

### **AYNI-The Sacred Reciprocity**

The Last Mask Dreamteam discovered Ayni is an essential guide for our LMCommunity in response to our dreaming. Ayni is the energy of relationship among all beings, natural and spiritual, and it provides a basis for sustainable community life. The word Ayni (pronounced I'nee) translates literally into "sacred reciprocity." At its core is the act of giving. Ayni teaches that what has been given is energy, no matter its form, and cannot be kept - it must be passed onto another.

The "Three Sisters" garden provides an example, on a small scale, of how Ayni works in community. Planting corn, beans and squash in the same mounds is common in traditional farming societies, and is a sustainable system that provides long-term soil fertility and a healthy diet to generations. According to Three Sisters legend, these crops must grow in community because they need the beneficial company and aide of their companions. Corn provides a natural pole for bean vines to climb. Beans release nitrogen into the soil, which fertilizes the plot and feeds the following years' corn. The bean vines also help stabilize the corn plants, making them less vulnerable to blowing over in the wind. Squash vines are living mulch, shading emerging weeds and preventing soil moisture from evaporating. Spiny squash plants also help discourage predators from approaching the corn and beans. At the end of the season, the crop residue is incorporated back into the mound and transformed into nutritious organic matter for the next generation of crops.

When Ayni is in balance, as it is in the Three Sisters garden, the exchange feels so natural that we may take it for granted. Each crop simply and beautifully contributes to the garden by its very uniqueness. But Ayni flows and nurtures from heart-to-heart in an essential way that we humans need as well, and our community is a potentially lush garden where we may all thrive in the joyful balance that results from each individual's unique contribution. Ayni is what puts heart into the human level of LMC. It is an aspect of our being and an intended way for us to find connectedness. Imagine the possibilities of a sustainable garden of our combined energies, where simply being our authentic selves nourishes the soil and celebrates the fruits of our labor with each harvest!

The ancient spiritual teachers of the Andes teach that Ayni is the foundation for how people relate positively and productively to each other, as well as to nature and spirit. It is one of the five principles making up "The Andean Way."

For more information, please visit: <http://www.andeancodex.com/excerpts.html>

Ayni reciprocity has many levels. At a basic level, it is the concept that one doesn't receive something without giving in return, nor give something without receiving in return. Actions are not motivated by guilt, duty or jealousy, but by pure love. The honor and respect that exists within giving is the sole motivator for the giver. At a community level, it means working together as a group for the group, sharing ideas and resources,

helping one another and having a sense of responsibility, not just for now but for many generations to come. At a universal level, in its purest form, think of Ayni as breathing in deeply from the Universe and breathing out completely. The subtle awareness of receiving Ayni on the in-breath and giving Ayni on the out-breath opens the channels to allow universal energy to flow freely through you.

The practice of Ayni requires intention, love and impeccability. Giving and receiving must be done in a harmonious energetic exchange, albeit between persons or a person and the earth, a river, or an animal. For example, the earth provides us with sustenance, shelter and fertility, and we give back to the earth by tending it and making sacred offerings. Similarly, a teacher or mentor shares her wisdom and we may give back in monetary exchange, sincere love and gratitude, and by practicing the teachings to deepen the experience.

It is possible for money to be an expression of Ayni, although in our culture we often run into mixed messages about the exchange of money. Money can harmonize Ayni when it is given and received in a conscious and balanced interchange. When we walk in Ayni, all that we do comes from a heightened understanding of sacredness in everything.

In the service of True Love, the Big Vision, and the Dreamteam

The Ayni Project