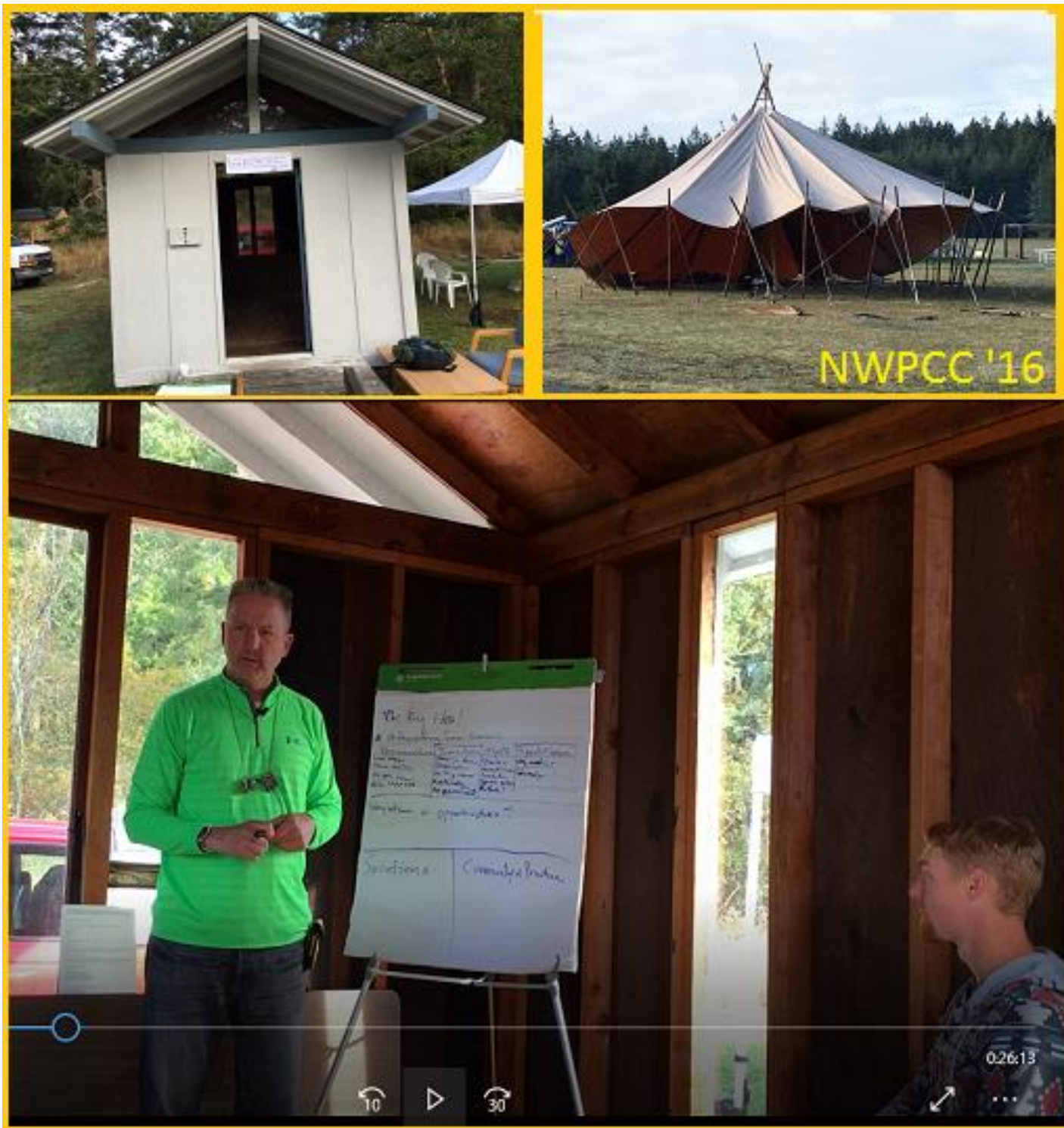




[“Re-Sourcing Community Resilience”](#) - **[“Integrating Permaculture, Transition, SpiritNature and Mythology.”](#)** Video and Transcript from 2016 [NW Permaculture Convergence](#) Workshop: **[“Tearing Down the Silos”](#)** by [Mythologist](#) Willi Paul and Friends.

‘...In the long run, building community is about democracy. Many communities of practice and interest thrive under autocratic moderation, and they are useful as informed, interactive versions of refereed journals, but the power of increasing returns - where the community itself directs the growth of its size and value - can only emerge from an infectious spirit of voluntary collaboration.’ - [Howard Rheingold](#)

Dedicated to **Michael Pilarski**, [Friends of the Trees Society](#)

* * * * *

- Watch the [Workshop Video](#) (YouTube) -

- Read the Transcript -

Willi Paul: Thanks for coming. My name is Willi Paul. I come from the peninsula in the Bay Area and really welcome the moisture in the air. It's really unusual. I live with the drought. What I have in my heart is that we need to help permaculture evolve with things that we already have and integrate those forces because one of the basic tenants of this presentation is that permaculture can't do this alone. It's evolving too slow. It's underfunded. It's fractured. It's whatever you want to call it. But that's not what the focus is. I'm trying to get you to look at the synergy between Permaculture, the Transition movement, Mythology and SpiritNature.

So what I want to do first is ask you what permaculture is to you.

Audience: Responsible land management.

Willi Paul: Okay, good. Anybody else? This is supposed to be the positive stuff.

Audience: Community building.

Willi Paul: Okay. Community building. Anyone else?

Audience: A full circle of resources?

Willi Paul: Okay.

Audience: Great livelihood.

Willi Paul: A great livelihood. Okay. That's a good list. Okay. Now we're going to jump into something that isn't really part of the weekend, per se, but Transition. Who could tell me what a Transition is supposed to be like?

Audience: Powering down.

Willi Paul: Yes? How about localization? More localization.

Audience: Public community.

Willi Paul: Okay, good. See, now we're overlapping values, which is key. And what else?

Audience: A sustainable economic system? Sustainable economics.

Willi Paul: I'll just put sustainability. One more? Sir, do you know what transition is, just to pick on you?

Audience: I've only been exposed to like Transition Townes; you know? Mostly up in Canada. Responsive stuff on that.

Willi Paul: Okay. So that's kind of a re-focus of government, right? Localization. Okay, on to mythology.

Audience: Stories.

Willi Paul: Stories. What else about mythology is part of the force?

Audience: Passing wisdom.

Audience: Tradition.

Audience: Common symbols between cultures and people.

Willi Paul: That's cool. Also I would pose that mythology is also about projecting the future and taking a look at that, and getting ahead of the curve. So I'll put future here. All right. Now, I've had a long standing dialogue with permaculturalists about spirit versus religion, and as a person here standing here today advocating spirituality, not religion. That's where I got to.

So who can chew on SpiritNature as a force? What does that mean to you, if anything? Use just Nature if you wish.

Audience: A deep understanding of our connection as humans to the rest of the world.

Audience: Interconnectedness.

Willi Paul: But as an ecology.

Willi Paul: Nice. Who can give me a sense of what having a spirit for in nature is, and how we support nature? What is this all about? How can you verbalize that feeling?

Audience: Something that's a connection? Something that's different than just resources. It's like a different level of being.

Willi Paul: Okay.

Audience: Connection is something much larger than anything the human mind can hold.

Willi Paul: Cool.

Audience: Yeah, transcending the self.

Willi Paul: Right on.

Audience: (Laugh) It's like truth bumps. People who say goosebumps are truth bumps. It feels like that. It's ...

Willi Paul: Nice. Okay. Now we can start to see a pattern here of commonality, or maybe of just love and thought that you might want to try these things together. That's what I'm up to. Integration and opportunities. So let's talk about how mythology and permaculture intersect. What is there? Do you have a sense of that?

Audience: Hmm.

Willi Paul: You're not supposed to, you see. It's not really built yet. But we're going to work on it today. So there are symbols in permaculture that I've done a lot of work with. There are some stories coming, more and more, right? Bands singing songs. So that's the sort of bridging I want you to think about. It could be media, you know. It could be a website, or something like that. Does that make sense?

Audience: How does media interconnect?

Willi Paul: Oh, we're going to promote leading over here this morning, and the drum song, and then it gets out in my website - it's content. And the content would be part of bridging these two things together. Is that important? Or does that sound possible? I mean is that too sacred a thing to make media?

Audience: I just meant connecting it to myth, really, but okay.

Willi Paul: Well, I agree. And what about transitioning through a spiritual nature? Do you have any sense of how that would intersect?

Audience: Connecting with your heart.

Willi Paul: Okay.

Audience: Ceremonies and group work.

Audience: Yeah, ritual.

Audience: Yeah, ritual. Yeah.

Willi Paul: Yeah, ritual is a big deal. I would say that the gathering and the drum prayer this morning are rituals. And that could be charted and given to other folks to practice. That is part of what I'm trying to say here, to build this movement, we need to have ritual. Okay. Does anybody want to add anything to this sort of schema before we talk about solutions? Any other ideas?

Audience: I think – can I try my hand of an example of what you mean by media?

Willi Paul: Sure.

Audience: So like this morning I've been holding a morning circle over Zoom technology with the spiritual community that meets a non-profit community that I'm a part of. And so it's not necessarily creating like public media, per se, but like connecting us. Like I'm keeping the conversation going so that we're spreading it in our world, so it's kind of like human to human media, almost? I don't know if that makes sense or ...

Audience: Dialogue.

Audience: Yeah. They're keeping the dialogue going. And the support going in building the community. Like that's what I see about what you mean.

Audience: Cool.

Willi Paul: Yeah, I like that. You know, I have to confess, I'm a sort of a pessimist. I think we're heading toward a fairly large crash in this country and this world. So my opinion would be let's get that connectedness out there and share it as fast as we can.

Audience: Exactly. That's in the solutions kind of. It's like that's ...

Willi Paul: Right, correct. So we could put media here as a solution.

Audience: Always live.

Audience: Conversations. Yeah, builds support.

Willi Paul: Okay. So let's talk about solutions. My PDC teachers were all about solutions. We would talk about problems all the time; well, what about this, and what about that? Then they would flip it and go: let's talk about solutions, really. Make it positive. Make it an attraction. Get it going forward. So who has any ideas about integrating and getting these things out there. Your idea of humans is really good.

Audience: Like using our technology to actually connect us. Like not say it's connecting us, like Facebook kind of does it to excess, but.

Willi Paul: Yeah.

Audience: We have a group telling us, a sustainability group that actually did connect through Facebook.

Audience: That's awesome.

Audience: Yeah, it's really cool. It's been cool, except for the bogged down issue statement stuff.

Audience: I'm kind of new in the area, and one of the things I did to like, and I had never used it in the past, to meet people who had similar values and interests, like MeetUp.com where you form groups. And people who are like, you know, either new in the area, or they're getting interested in something that their friends and families aren't really into, and it's like, well, how do I connect with these people who share the same interests?

Audience: Yes.

Audience: You can create a group on there.

Audience: Meet-Up is great. Have you ever been on MeetUp? Have you seen MeetUp?

Willi Paul: Constantly. For years.

Audience: Yeah. You're like this is such a, you know. (CROSSTALK)

Audience: For me, like the thing that's appealing is just taking it away from a one-dimensional idea, and I like the idea of pulling in music, pulling in the community, pulling in yoga, where you got like there's one member in the family or whatever that's interested versus the whole community and really pulling it into where everybody's getting something out of it.

Willi Paul: One of the things I'd like to suggest we talk about is tradition. Because I'm really interested in making new tradition, which to many is a weird concept, because they have their traditions, they just really don't care. So it's a tough one. But why don't we create a new tradition out of this gathering this weekend? What do you need to have a tradition?

Audience: Repetition.

Willi Paul: Need some people.

Audience: Yeah, we need some people. We need some common ...

Audience: People action. Commonalities.

Willi Paul: People action, values. Repetition. I mean it needs to be taught and then carried on, right?

Audience: Right.

Willi Paul: So that's important, a carryover.

Audience: Yeah.

Audience: I like the idea that they were talking about where the elders are meeting with the young people because we need to learn from somewhere, and I feel like where I've learned a lot of stories and rituals from older people.

Audience: Agreed. Like multigenerational transition. Yeah.

Willi Paul: That's brilliant.

Audience: Allowing it to evolve also. Like allowing us to learn and keep growing together and the young people have got what they've got and the old people and like I think what you're speaking to is, to me, feels like an evolving tradition.

Audience: Not too rigid.

Audience: Right.

Audience: And being in that flow of like finding what's good, holding on to it and letting it go when it no longer required.

Audience: Something that's really live for me is the, I mean, the value of diversity and having safe and inclusive subgroups, I mean, we're not all the same. We don't all have the same values. We're very, you know, there's a bit of homogeneity around here.

Audience: Yeah. Healthy concept resolution to be able to do that.

Audience: Yeah, and just raising awareness of the value of differences.

Audience: Yeah.

Audience: And that, you know, whatever particular thing in the realm of all these concepts can be manifested in really different ways depending on what the community is and what the country is and what the cultural background is. We're not pushing to a monolithic unit anymore.

Audience: It doesn't serve us.

Audience: And there's a real tendency to, you know, whatever we're into is what everybody else is going to be into and it's not.

Audience: Not one answer.

Audience: Yeah, yeah, which is valuing ...

Audience: It's killing us.

Audience: Yeah.

Willi Paul: Diversity. Yeah, it's a big deal.

Audience: And just valuing it, yeah. Let's just do it. It's raising awareness.

Audience: Yeah, acknowledge the power dynamics that are in the middle of that and it's, you know, it's ...

Audience: Being open and being confronted too.

Audience: Absolutely.

Audience: Like we all screw up. You know?

Audience: Yeah.

Audience: Like being able to be called into that.

Audience: Yep. Yeah.

Audience: Just some light work.

Audience: Yeah, a big deal.

Willi Paul: Well, let's explore my possible solution to this integration. This is what this is about. And I'll introduce it by saying that a community of practice is typically a professional business group. It doesn't really exist to make money, it's about being together and talking, sharing having coffee and having an event every maybe once in a while. So that's what we mean about community of practice. It's about acknowledging the boundaries that's very important to have. So does anybody else have a sense of community of practice? Have you heard of that phrase before?

Audience: I have, and to me it sounds a little, it gets me a little nervous when I hear that, that it's kind of structured in ... I'm an engineer, so it's like this is what we do, this is like, you know. So do you have any thoughts on that?

Willi Paul: Yes, it's a transitionary tool. It's something that gets us to the next level. It's not about (inaudible).

Audience: So the meetings will stop at some point and there will be action.

Willi Paul: I don't know where it would go, I'm just thinking of jumping off the cliff and here it is. It's like a chamber of commerce, as you can read on this outline. It's a gathering, it's got a director and stuff like that.

Audience: A mission statement and everything.

Willi Paul: Mm-hmm. This organization is also online. It's more online than off, but it could be both.

Audience: Are you open to us like evolving it with you in this conversation? Like can we be on the story process? Because I think it's a great starting point and I think what you're saying it's important to think about like do we need, how much structure is really needed to have it be ...

Audience: And what does it again? What are you thinking would be valuable about that structure? Is it initially so that people can understand it and it's solid and it's clear? That kind of thing?

Willi Paul: Yeah, initially it's not about this fourscore sort of human from these four areas and drilling down that's really kind of what I see.

Audience: And maybe too rigid from this group, but the majority of people would feel very comfortable in that kind of structure.

Audience: And that's kind of what, because everyone's really looking at the economics sustainability really pointing towards business.

Audience: Stuck in capitalism still.

Audience: Yeah, stuck in the real structure, so, yeah, maybe transition it that way.

Willi Paul: What do you think of the COP idea as a traditional organization?

Audience: Yeah, it hasn't permeated through me yet, so I'll come up with something when I do.

Audience: I don't really understand what it would look and feel like. I've never been in a business community of practice. I'm part of an intentional community. That's a community of practice. But I've been in NBC practice groups, that's a community of practice.

Willi Paul: Good. Good examples.

Audience: There's so many ways that those things are integrated in my life, but I realize that that's not the case for a lot of people and it's not the case, you can see examples of it where it is silo'ed. So, you know, practices, there's a lot of different ways to get people to integrate previously silo'ed.

Willi Paul: To be honest, the biggest thing about this, for me is that it's a non-profit. It's not existing to make money. It's taking us out of that realm, out of that turn. I give up after that. You're giving me other examples of this COP and they're all valid. So don't get stuck on the COP, get stuck on how it works.

Audience: Have you heard of B Corporations?

Willi Paul: Yes.

Audience: I wonder if it would be successful to the B Corporation too, because I feel, to me, non-profits have this thing like we can't make money. And I don't think we need, to me, I feel like money could be a tool. We could allow it to be an exchange thing, or we can transition it into whatever we want. And like the non-profit, some people call industrial complex, can be something that is exhausting for people, because they've worked themselves to the bone and don't get paid enough. And I think that that's, it's like self-sacrifice, to a certain degree. And I think we can do better. And I think we have done better already with things that like are mutually promoted. Like when I hear you say business group I totally see how can we help each other do what we love and make the world better? And be better ourselves for it?

Willi Paul: Right.

Audience: And that's beautiful. And I, like your vision is really lovely and I'm excited that you have it.

Willi Paul: It's all yours.

Audience: That's awesome.

Willi Paul: Well, guys, I really would suggest that you keep in touch with me. I may actually put something like this together, I don't know, we'll see, but I'm really happy that you come and share your ideas. And, you know, as we go onwards, what you can find here ...

Audience: Could you tell the story of, like weave a story of what the formation of one of these communities of practice as you would love it to manifest, so that we can tap into the mythology and get some spirit coming through here with your vision. Because you've been working on this, and you have a story, and I will remember a story rather than a brainstorm.

Willi Paul: Okay. Well, there's a place in Oakland called Lake Merritt. And it's polluted, a storm water run-off pond in the Bay. So it's a pretty sad place. But if you would put together some storytellers, and some localization folks, and some technology from permaculture, putting those together you could address the solution to Lake Merritt, and you start heal not only Lake Merritt but yourself in this little group of people. And you could also create media to share your stories, to start getting out the word. So that's a quick one. All right, guys. Thank you. That's it. Thanks for coming. (APPLAUSE)