



International Holistic Learning Conference at OISE in Toronto

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www.astralsite.com/holistic

Since its founding in 1997, this international conference has gathered leaders in the field of holistic education. The term, holistic, means a unity of physical, psychological, spiritual, ecological and cosmological qualities. This whole way of understanding is now emerging on the planet in all fields of study. The 2005 SUNY publication, **Holistic Learning and Spirituality in Education: Breaking New Ground**, a collection of papers from the Holistic Learning Conference, crystallizes the central themes: educating the soul; partnership education; nourishing adolescents' spirituality; education and the modern assault on being human; the Eros of teaching; personal creativity at soul work; pedagogies of compassion; meditation, masculinity and meaningful life.

My work in holistic education has been and is to identify, heal and encourage students, teachers and leaders of all ages who experience life holistically. Surprisingly, to live with that unity of physical, psychological, spiritual, ecological, and cosmological qualities is difficult because of our culture's predominant narrowing of what it considers real and valuable. The result of living with holistic experience is best captured by the pattern of the orphan. By orphan, I mean the one abandoned, ignored, degraded, attacked, thrown away as not good enough to keep. If persons following the orphan path are able to survive it and choose to work in a way that puts an end to the violence that wounded them, they become healers and teachers through which the culture is transformed. At the root of this calling is the wisdom tradition.

Since 1996, I have been presenting sessions called, **A Gathering of Orphans**, and I am published in this work. In the spirit of holistic education, I strive to present in a way that includes my own wholeness. The sessions are part music, part storytelling, part healing ritual, and part dialogue/sharing. My session at this past conference was called, **Keeping a Foot in Both Worlds**, and examined the importance of knowing a variety of ways to teach in concert with the influence of the spiritual worlds.