

# An Old Teaching about Kinds of Time

Dr. John L. Hoff

A native American medicine man of the Lummi tribe was present at an important moment of beginning for the Goodenough Community. He introduced the following teaching about time. The truth in this teaching is important to helping you understand how this community, as a consciously organized system, commits itself to being conscious of the systemic nature of our life.

To receive this teaching it may be helpful for you to take a few deep breaths and hear Gary Hilaire speak to you from across the years, sharing with you teachings his mother and father gave him from their parents, back into the far distant past:

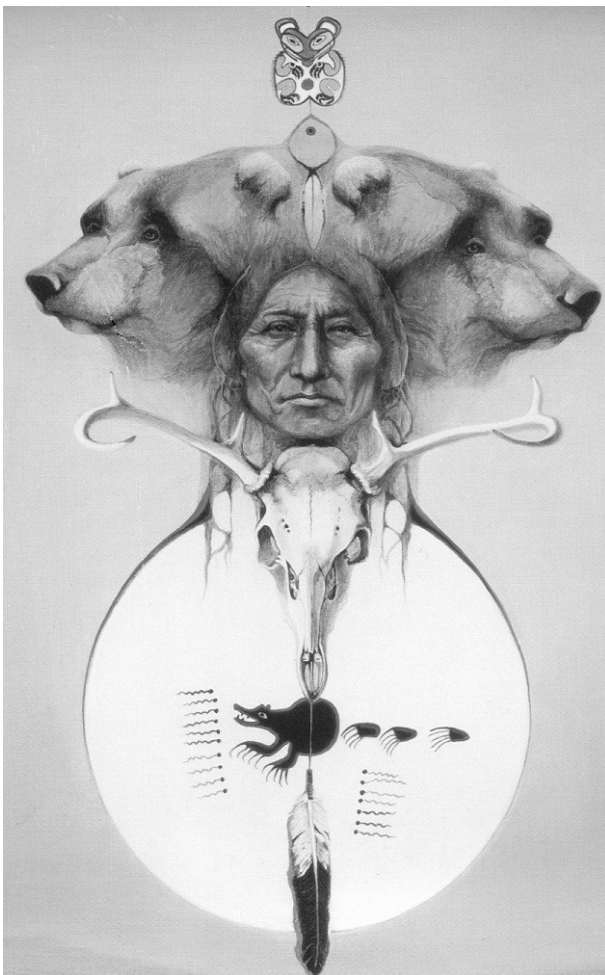
**Our people have always known that there are four kinds of time.** When our elders tell us that every thing must be done in its own time they mean that we should reflect on this teaching about the kinds of time and how to do things in a right way, in the right kind of time.

***The first kind of time has both a beginning and an ending.*** It is called the time of the ***Weaver*** because there is a time when the rug is begun and a time when it is finished. You white

*people call this clock time and you break it into tiny little pieces a second long. When you are in this time you must not relax too much because this time has an end. The job can only take so long. Unfinished work lies around and gets dirty and broken. This first kind of time is about productivity. We need our will and discipline in this kind of time. Most work time like this, when we have a task and it must be done before sunset, is time when we are working with other people and then time is our friend, for it insists that we work together and be orderly and efficient in what we do. In this world of time we respect each other by being true to the beginning and ending times, for they are our teachers about using this time well.*

***There is a second kind of time and it is the time of the Friend.*** It has a beginning and no ending. It has a beginning because you did not always know each other. You can remember the first time you met. In fact, the beginning of Friend time is very important and is remembered fondly. Details are talked about often. But something happens to friends that causes them to know this time has no end. They spontaneously offer to be blood brothers; they exchange gifts from the heart that say

## Bear Spirit sees all directions.



**Bear Spirit  
sees the past.**

*there will be no end ever to the friendship. They make promises that they would die for each other. They make plans to live for each other. This is not only a time of commitment and full hearts; it is also a relaxed time with nothing to do. It is this time that other people call "Indian time."*

**Bear Spirit  
sees the  
future.**

***There is a third kind of time that has no beginning but has an ending.** It is usually called the time of the **Warrior**. The people who work together in this time are all knowing they are sons and daughters of the spirit. They have no beginning, they were never born, they always were a people, yet in this kind of time, they are facing an end. Whether the warrior dies or not, he must be ready for an ending. That ending may be his death or another's, yet the end of this time is always some kind of death. There is another way we talk about death among our people, but it is not about the death of the body. It is a dying-in-life of someone who cannot enjoy it here. Sometimes a person rises up from this death very happy. This is a teaching about facing into our fears and having the courage to know ourselves., You can just drift on forever being like you are or you can choose the time of the Warrior who invites you to face your fears and be done with them.*

**Bear Spirit in  
man lives only  
now in the  
present.**

***The fourth kind of time is the time of the Shaman.** It has no beginning and it has no end. Our shamans, our medicine people, our elders often talk to us about this time that is beyond time. It's not an ordinary time. Our minds can only name this time, but it is for our hearts to live in this time. This is a time to know what is holy or sacred. It is a time for experiencing the spirit world. It is in this time that we let the spirit world talk to us. We don't talk much. Spirit talks to us and through us. Spirit speaks much in silence.*

*So here you have four kinds of time. It is good for you to have each of these kinds of time in your life because you choose them. Since most of these are shared times, it is good for us to be close together and make these good times for ourselves.      October 1982*

This teaching story is often asked for. Even at first hearing, one is aware of some fundamental truth which one already knows. There are different kinds of time, wholly different experiences happen between and among us. The selection of meeting or program formats and of leadership is mostly related to choosing one or another kind of time. As a connoisseur of good times, I encourage you to discern the kind of time you want to share as a Weaver, Friend, Warrior, and Shaman.