

# Envisioning the Psychedelic Community: Notes from the Symbiosis Gathering

*September 20, 2009*

**Meeting Attendees:** Writers, artists, visionaries, activists, community planners, scientists, psychonauts, seekers, skeptics, dreamers, researchers, leaders, healers, and mystics who came together to share their aspirations, inspirations, and considerations in support of building a sustainable psychedelic community.

## **I. Baby steps toward understanding and exploring our community on deeper levels**

*Our gathering began with general questions about the Psychedelic Community:*

- What do we mean when we refer to the Psychedelic Community, the Tribe, the Family, the Others, or the Psychedelic Underground?
- How do individuals participate?
- Which groups contribute?
- Who are our leaders? What is the leadership structure?
- What are our shared values? Do we want to document them?
- What are our common goals and objectives and where do we disagree?
- What counts as a psychedelic?
- How can we avoid pitfalls similar to the problems encountered in the 1960s and 1970s?

These questions were intended to inspire reflection and discussion instead of generating conclusions. Consider using them as prompts for discussions and debate in groups within and outside of the community.

We briefly reviewed the resolution presented at the World Psychedelic Forum in March, 2008. ([www.psychedelic.info/images/RESOLUTIONEN.pdf](http://www.psychedelic.info/images/RESOLUTIONEN.pdf)). This document is an example of one recent effort to bring cohesion to our shared values. It is a good conversation starter. Would you make any changes to it?

## **II. Gifts: What will people be saying about the contributions of the Psychedelic Community five to ten years from now? What legacy do we want to leave?**

*The first step in our interactive meeting was to imagine what gifts our community aspires to contribute. Key aspirations from the vision discussion are included below:*

- No prison for drug offences (What are your thoughts about drugs and minors?)
- More Erowids and sources of high-quality information
- Better quality control of substances
- Increased harm reduction info for users
- More research and development/better science
- More published, peer-reviewed data
- Training for use and facilitation

- Cohesive culture around psychedelic use
- Psilocybin approved for end of life anxiety treatment
- MDMA approved for treatment of PTSD
- More structured political lobbying
- Organic leadership model (e.g., rotating leadership structure like a flock of geese flying in formation or a mycelia model with “fruiting bodies” popping up when needed)
- Increased psychedelic inspired creative expression
- NEA grants for psychedelic/visionary art
- Freedom to practice healing arts (Shamans/Healers)
- Financial support for maintaining indigenous healing practices

Which gifts would you or groups you belong to add to/remove from this list?

**III. Gears: How are we going to make our shared vision a reality, change policy, organize our community, share wisdom, educate others, and maintain safety?**

- Fund and initiate more clinical trials and authoritative research
- Lobby for government funding for research
- Initiate and grow community organizing and activism around legality issues
- Start with marijuana legalization as step toward legalization of psychedelics
- Promote a shift from a *criminality* to a *health issues* mentality
- Create and document a vision for a new, collective paradigm with better education
- Establish centers for responsible use with accessibility for less affluent
- Analyze and report on how psychedelic use legalization has worked in other countries

**III. Potential Risks and Considerations**

*The envisioning circle identified some of the potential risks the community faces, and we discussed ways to avoid pitfalls. Some of the key risks the gathering identified include:*

| <b>RISK</b>   | <b>SOLUTION</b>  |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Conservative/Religious Opposition</b>   | Spread accurate information, be kind and compassionate, proactive outreach   |
| <b>2. Scientists acting unethically, inappropriate involvement with illegal activities</b>                                      | Set and maintain high ethical standards for researchers  |
| <b>3. Youtube videos and other media give wrong impression, inaccurate information, and depictions of abuse among community</b> | Establish self-policing (BRC ranger style) policies, provide education on safety, sensible guidelines on packages, respond to videos, supply correct information |
| <b>4. Irresponsible vendors/manufacturers</b>   | Bring them into the community and help them to not sabotage themselves in order to sell more in the short term   |
| <b>5. Irresponsible use, losing spiritual/mystical aspects</b>  | Shamanic leaders, lead by example, bring spirit into everything we do as a community   |
| <b>6. Opposition using emotional appeals to fear monger</b>   | Use emotional appeals to promote health and hope. Employ PR techniques ethically.  |

**V. Action Items: “To know and not to act is not to know at all.” – Japanese Proverb**  
*Below is a partial list of steps to take to contribute and extend the work we did together in the Lotus Pagoda:*

- **Become a member of an organization/Donate in support of research and education:**
  - Erowid: [www.erowid.org](http://www.erowid.org)
  - MAPS: [www.maps.org](http://www.maps.org)
  - Heffter Research Institute: [www.heffer.org](http://www.heffer.org)
  - Drug Policy Alliance: [www.drugpolicy.org](http://www.drugpolicy.org)
  - Add other organizations to this list.
- **Volunteer:**
  - MAPS: [www.maps.org/volunteer.html](http://www.maps.org/volunteer.html)
  - Erowid: [http://www.erowid.org/general/about/about\\_volunteers.shtml](http://www.erowid.org/general/about/about_volunteers.shtml)
- **Subscribe to podcasts**
  - Psychedelic Salon: [www.matrixmasters.com/podcasts/](http://www.matrixmasters.com/podcasts/)
  - Psychedelic Spotlight: [www.maps.org/podcasts/maps\\_update.rss](http://www.maps.org/podcasts/maps_update.rss)
  - Share links to other podcasts. Distribute a list of good ones.
- **Download/Distribute/Discuss the World Psychedelic Forum Resolution (2008):**
  - [www.psychedelic.info/images/RESOLUTIONEN.pdf](http://www.psychedelic.info/images/RESOLUTIONEN.pdf)
- **Check out Web sites/Forums:**
  - The Shroomery: [www.shroomery.org/forums/](http://www.shroomery.org/forums/)
  - Reality Sandwich: [www.realitysandwich.com/](http://www.realitysandwich.com/)
  - Psychedelic News: <http://drugpolicycentral.com/bot/psychedelics>
  - [www.drugsense.org/html/modules.php?name=Oldsite&page=active](http://www.drugsense.org/html/modules.php?name=Oldsite&page=active)  
Drugsense Chat is a place for activists to organize and coordinate their activities, and for the general public to learn and ask questions about drug policy and reform efforts.
  - [www.theworldcafe.com/twc.htm](http://www.theworldcafe.com/twc.htm)  
Find out if this site is an appropriate forum for launching a global dialog.

- There are dozens of good sites now. Share links to your favorites.
- **Other action items to consider:**
  - Write to reputable journals and request content on psychedelic research.
  - Read books and journal articles. Increase your knowledge. The Erowid and MAPS sites have great book lists.
  - Respond to misleading, irresponsible, or inaccurate youtube videos by posting counterpoint messages or response videos.
  - Attend the *Science of Psychedelics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* conference in San Jose in April, 2010: [www.maps.org/conference/](http://www.maps.org/conference/).
  - Introduce psychedelic topics to new audiences in responsible ways.

One final note: Most psychedelic use is still illegal in the United States. Please always assume that your identity is not anonymous on the Web. Consider your reputation and safety if you decide to get involved in psychedelic community building or discuss psychedelic topics with others. Also, consider whether or not your activities or conversations have the potential to put others at risk. The community needs respectable, well-informed, and trustworthy advocates. We are all accountable as ambassadors, community planners, and holders of the collective vision.