

# **An Organizing Manual**

**for the**

## **Village Life**

**of a seven-day meeting of**

# **The Bioregional Movement**

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# I. Basic Definitions

## 1. The Bioregional Movement

Membership in the Bioregional Movement begins on that awesome day when being a part of Planet Earth and all its living systems and geographical subparts becomes primary in defining what we call “Home.” On that day, nations, states, cities, races, cultures fade to a secondary role in home definition. We become one human family, one species in collaboration with all the other species of life that make this planet a viable home for living beings.

The bioregional movement also emphasizes finding our sense of place, becoming regional beings who ground ourselves on some continent, in some broad biome of living forms, in some local bioregion of human and other-than-human life. We take geography seriously and learn to map our way into meaningful definitions of our specific home places.

The bioregional movement is a loose association of people, an open invitation to all people, to become active in ecological restoration, sustainable society building, and the pioneering of an Earth-based culture with fresh expressions of thoughtful wisdom, bodily awareness, and courageous motivations.

The movement espouses a universal mode of cultural experimentation. No sectarian beliefs or dogmas or ritual practices are superimposed on anyone. No final economic or political dogma is taught, though the movement is fully critical of the established Earth-destructive systems of economic and political collusion, and espouses alternative formations of economic and political living.

No brief statement can exhaust the idea of bioregionalism, for bioregionalism is a response to the vast turning point of our times and to the necessity to commune with the full mystery of the natural cosmos.

## 2. The Image of Ceremonial Village

When we gather for a week in an encampment of many hundred people, we propose to form ourselves in an exemplary life together, the sort of life we would wish for the whole Earth in the centuries to come. Some Native American peoples have set up what they called “ceremonial villages,” villages not meant to be lived in permanently, but set up temporarily for nurture, educational, and motivational purposes. This is a good image for what we intend to be in our seven-day encampments. We are something more than a conference of educational intent, something more than a congress or a council for political decision-making, something more than a gathering for cultural experimentation. We are all those elements and more. We boldly wish to be a village of the 21st century social life we espouse. It is as if we have been sent back to this decade from some future time. We are attempting to live now, in spite of all our imperfections, the social life toward which we wish to move.

Then after the healing power of such seven-day encampments, we return to our ordinary local places and invest ourselves in making elements of this ceremonial village become manifest in those places.

## 3. The Default Designs for Village Life

“Default Designs,” as that term is used in this manual, means those designs for our village life that we use unless there is some pressing reason to change them. These are well-proven designs

which we have developed over many years and have come to expect as elements of our common life together.

### **a. The Morning Circle**

Each day after breakfast the entire group is invited, indeed strongly encouraged, to assemble together for clarification on the living of the ensuing day. This design is perhaps the most important of all the designs for keeping intact the life of the week-long village.

The default agenda for a Morning Circle:

1. A gathering procession, song, dance, or ritual
2. Orienting talks on bioregionalism or the designs of village life
3. Clarifying and achieving consensus on the schedule of the day
4. Making necessary announcements as determined by the administrative coordinators  
(Only urgent announcements are made; the plethora of announcements can be posted on conveniently located bulletin boards and/or published in a daily new sheet.)
5. A closing ritual

### **b. The Plenary**

On some mornings the Morning Circle can be expanded into a longer meeting of the whole body. This working body of the whole we call "the Plenary." It may also meet after the noon meal. It uses the consensus decision-making process and is the main political body of the village. Only decisions made at this meeting determine the ongoing policy for the currently functioning village life and for the time and place and qualities of its future encampments. Decisions made between Plenary sessions need to be brought to the next Plenary for review and confirmation or reversal.

The default agenda for a Plenary Session.

Any of the items listed above for the Morning Circle plus:

1. The approval of consensus facilitators
2. The announcement and revision of a decision-making agenda
3. Reaching consensus on this use of time.
4. The facilitation of the approved agenda.

### **c. The Clan**

The Clan is a small group of eight or so who meet every day for personally relevant talk and for planning and doing village work assignments. Meeting for 30 minutes right after morning circle seems to be the best time. This design has proved very useful both as a means of caring for ourselves and as a means of doing our common work in a most collaborative and fair manner.

The default agenda for a Clan:

1. Introduce new members
2. Review village work assignments and responsibilities
3. Use the remaining time in a talk and listen format. The recommended talk and listen format divides the time equally among all members of the group and appoints a timer to tell each person when his or her time is used. In that allotted time, each person may say anything they wish without being interrupted or questioned by the others. The others just listen. This is deep wisdom: being affirmatively listened to by a group is quite refreshing and healing. It is also very instructive to the listeners--providing vivid experiences of the actual lives that people are living.
4. Resolve confusions that can be handled by the attending Clan members

5. Close with a group hug.

#### **d. The Council**

The Council is the main programmatic working body of the meeting. Here proposals are developed for Plenary consideration, for the proceedings of the meeting, and for action after the meeting. Here are some of the Councils now being recommended: Ecology, Education, Health, Spirituality, Indigenous Traditions, Art & Celebration, Youth, and Children. Other Councils can be organized upon request. Councils may be any size and if quite large may need to subdivide into smaller working groups. For example, the Ecology Council might sub-divide into working groups on networking, local empowerment, continental support of specific places, organizing the bioregional movement, mapping, planetary strategy, or deep ecology.

The default agenda for a Council:

1. Approve focalizers or facilitators
2. Select recorders and translators
3. Perhaps sing a song
4. Introduce members unless there is a fairly quick sub-division of the Council, in which case introductions can best be made in the sub-groupings.
5. Perhaps approve a question for a disciplined round of responses
6. Set overall context for the work of the day and/or week
7. Start work together and then perhaps divide up into groups
8. Perhaps reassemble for reports and ritual closing

#### **e. The Workshop**

The workshop is an hour and 20 minute event initiated by a presenter or presenters who have something to share and their own means of sharing it. It is assumed that at least part of every workshop would be open discussion, questions and answers, or some other participatory process.

The default agenda for a Workshop:

1. Introduction of leaders and translators
2. Selection of recorder, if desired
3. If practical, introduce all attendees
4. The presenter-initiated talk or process
5. The presenter-led question and answer period or some other participatory process
6. Closing announced in time for attendees to move on to the next event

## II. The Default Weekly Schedule

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00	Breakfast Meal & Village Coordination Meetings							
9:00	Gathering Celebration							
9:30	Morning Circle							
10:30	Clan Meetings							
11:00	Regis- tration	Opening Plenary					Plenary	Plenary
		Clan Meetings	Councils	Work- Shops	Community Work Day	Councils		
2:00	Noon Meal							
3:30	Regis- tration	Councils	Work- Shops	Work- Shops	Community Work Day	Work- Shops	Plenary	Clean Up
6:30	Evening Meal							
8:00	Regis- tration	Celebrations						
11:00	Quiet Time from 1:00 pm until Sunrise							

### 1. The Registration Day

In the registration process, each participant is asked to choose a **Council** and is assigned a **Clan**. The turtle pendant indicates the completion of registration and should be worn at all times. The Clan assignment can be fixed to the back of the turtle pendant and a colored string can indicate the Council choice.

Clan assignments can be completely random or persons who have attended previous village encampments may be placed in each Clan to give each Clan some informal leadership. The work assignments should be pointed out during the registration process--especially to the members of those Clans who have work assignments the first day. Perhaps all registrants should be apprised of their work assignments for the week and enabled to see the fairness of the work construct and its flexibilities. If the details of the work structures are prepared ahead of registration and explained to each registrant, this will avoid many problems later on.

Also, the turtle pendant can serve as an entry pass to the grounds and perhaps as a meal ticket. A more elaborate meal ticket may be preferred. It is highly recommended that only registered persons be admitted to the meal lines. It is also highly recommended that camping and cooking on the grounds by non-registered persons be discouraged.

If possible a breakfast meal should be served to the meeting organizers and volunteers who are setting up the meeting. At this breakfast meal, the first administrative meetings of the week can be held. At 2:00 pm, the first meal, perhaps only a snack, for early arrivals might take place. By

6:30 the kitchen needs to be in full swing and a meal provided to all registered persons. Organizers and early arriving volunteers will need to prepare those first meals, since the work structures cannot begin until Monday morning. And the registration process needs to begin early in the day in order to provide meal tickets for these meals and begin organizing volunteers to prepare them.

Registrants may also be asked if they are planning to conduct a **workshop**, whether they have already turned in their workshop form, and, if not, given a form and instructed on how to fill it out. (See Day Two discussion below for a full explanation of a recommended workshop scheduling process.)

## 2. The First Day: Orientation Day

Establishing the **Morning Circle**, the **Clans**, and the **Councils** is the main task of the first day.

The **Morning Circle** on this first day will need to be extended into an orientation Plenary for all persons, both new and experienced. This Plenary is a ritual of beginning for all attendees. At this Plenary we can begin orienting everyone to the village design and we can review the basic tenants and history of bioregionalism. We can welcome everyone to the place of meeting. We can introduce the key administrative leadership. We can introduce the Council focalizers. And we most certainly need to explain carefully how everyone can be involved in the decision-making processes. This includes an explanation of the Administrative Center and announcement boards. It includes an explanation of the openness of the Administrative Meetings at breakfast time. It includes an explanation of the consensus process to be used in Plenaries and Councils.

Then **Council** meeting places for the afternoon need to be clarified.

We then conclude the morning in **Clans**, allowing a full 60 minutes for Clan organization and the first meeting of the Clans. If the Clans get off to a good start this first day and if meaningful bonding and interest in Clan membership develops, both the working together as Clans and the care provided in Clans can be enjoyable and fruitful. If Clans are not smoothly formed and well attended this first day, the work structures may suffer for the entire week. Further, we must not minimize the value of having a “family” of diverse backgrounds with whom to meet and share experiences.

In the afternoon block of the first day, the default schedule calls for the first meeting of the **Councils**. This is the best way to orient new people: put them in a Council along-side experienced persons and let them go to work. All the details of orientation do not have to take place on this first day. Elements of orientation (and review) can take place during each Morning Circle all week long. Spending the whole day in Plenary this first day is a serious mistake. Get people into smaller more participatory contexts as soon as possible. A two-hour Plenary should be long enough to get people clear enough to function meaningfully in the whole round of village life.

At the beginning of the Councils meetings on this first day, the focalizers can be prepared to give a short but inspiring talk about the task of their Council and its potential work for the week. This talk can satisfy some of the need people feel for orientation. And, in these smaller groups, questions can be fielded from those who are still feeling disorientation.

## 3. The Second and Third Days

The morning of the second day can have a relatively brief Morning Circle, and then everyone can go into a 30 minute Clan meeting to be followed by a second Council meeting. These designs will now be familiar to those who attended the first day. The **Workshop** is an additional design

to be introduced the second day. Workshops can begin on the afternoon of the second day and take place both morning and afternoon on the third day.

The main task of this Plenary is to explain the workshop scheduling and clarify how everyone can choose and find the workshops of their choice. Doing oral pitches for these workshops is not required if the following process has been used. Have everyone who wants to conduct a workshop be given a form for doing so when they register. This form may also have been mailed out to registrants before they came to the meeting. This form needs to ask for these four items: (1) the title of the workshop, (2) an illuminating sub-title, (3) the presenter(s) name(s), and (4) a sentence about the presenter(s). The form needs to also provide space for a translation into English or a translation into Spanish. The entire form needs to be no larger than a half sheet of paper. If the translation has not been completed when the presenter registers, translators can be made available to assist with that task in the registration area on registration day. Then the half-page workshop form, with translation into both languages, is placed on the bulletin board at the administrative center or near the Morning Circle gathering place. A workshop coordinator assigns each workshop a place and a meeting time, and all this is posted clearly. Presenters can approach the workshop coordinator with suggestions and changes as needed. If all this has been done, then all that remains to be done at the Morning Circle of the second day is to clarify any confusions that have arisen or to iron out any difficulties with the scheduling.

The default weekly schedule suggested above provides eight workshop periods of 1 hour and 20 minutes each with a 10 minute break between--two periods on the afternoon of the second day, four periods on the third day, and then two more periods on day five. If there are 12 places for workshops to meet, this schedule provides space for 96 workshops. Other events may be scheduled in the evenings before, during, or after the evening meal. These events need also to be scheduled with the assistance of the workshop coordinator. Anyone wanting to attend any of the scheduled events can go to the bulletin board and find all the information they need. If more information is needed, access to the workshop coordinator can be provided. In the next major section of this manual, the full functioning of the administrative center will be outlined.

#### **4. The Fourth Day: Community Work Day**

The community work day will need to be planned by the site committee before the meeting begins. This day can be contexted at the opening Plenary on day one and then again at the Morning Circle on day four. If day four is not a convenient day to do the community work day, day three is a possibility, but day four is by far the best day for a work break from the other forms of work. This day can be a most exciting and rewarding experience for all involved. It needs to be carefully organized and enthusiastically explained to everyone.

#### **5. The Fifth Day**

The morning of the fifth day is the last day that Councils meet before they take their resolutions and reports to the Plenary on day six. The main burden of the Morning Circle on day five is to clarify how the Plenary on day six will be conducted and what and how each Council needs to prepare to do its presentations.

#### **6. The Sixth Day: Plenary Day**

This is a crucial day in the week-long meeting. A careful agenda for resolutions and reports needs to be constructed and excellent facilitation provided for these six or more hours of Plenary time.



## **7. The Seventh Day: Wrap-Up Day**

The last Sunday morning of the week may need to include a wrap-up Plenary, wrapping up the loose ends left from the sixth day Plenaries and preparing for the dismantlement and clean up of the encampment. The breakfast meetings of the coordination committees can begin the evaluation of the entire meeting. Perhaps part of the Plenary time can also be used for evaluation.

The clean-up processes can surely begin on this day and hopefully be completed on the following day.

## **8. Scheduling Flexibilities and Priorities**

The daily and weekly schedule is open to change throughout the week and these changes are proposed and consensed upon in Morning Circles and Plenaries. Morning Circle must be attended to participate in the scheduling changes. Attending Morning Circle is also the surest way to be fully informed about the schedule for that day. Announcements of schedule changes do, however, need to be posted on the program announcement board and/or printed in the next day's newsletter.

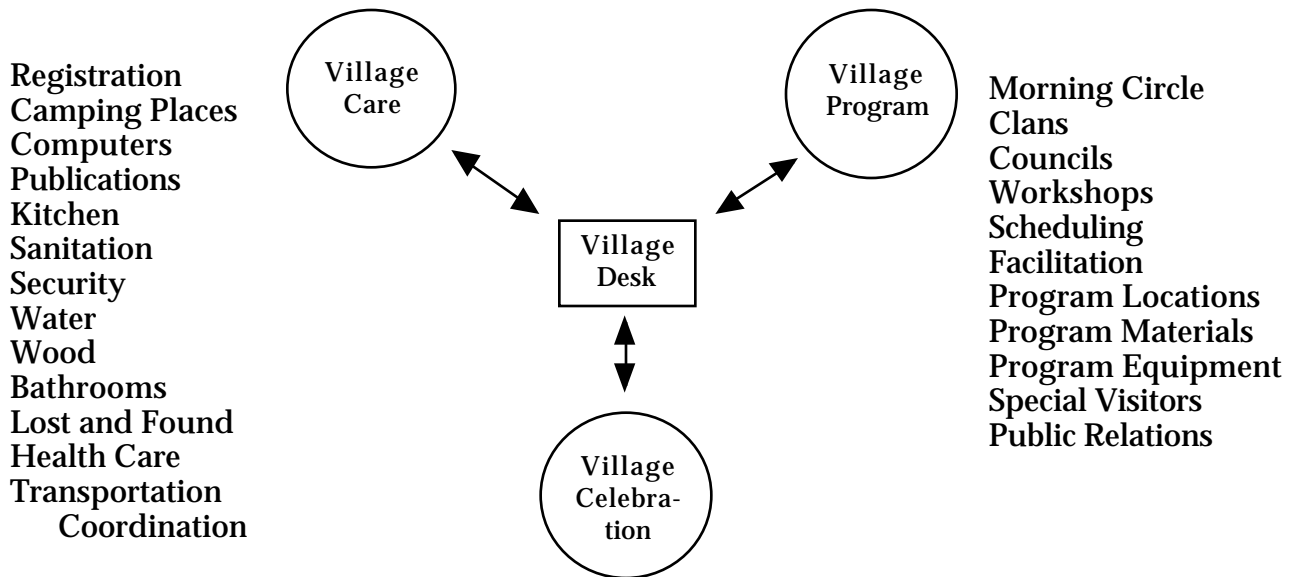
The default agenda includes a Quiet Time scheduled from 1:00 pm until sunrise. The village life suffers sleep deprivation if drumming and other loud noises are permitted to extend throughout the night. A sunrise celebration is encouraged, but its location might be placed somewhat distant from the sleeping tents.

Meal times are a crucial factor to keep in tact. To assure this, the Clans assigned to kitchen help, must make kitchen work one of their most pressing priorities and plan to have fun preparing food together. Food supervisors and hired help must also be apprised of the need to have meals ready on time, and need to be prepared to make full use of the Clans' help. Further, it would help if, at all times, there were a person in the kitchen who can speak both English and Spanish. If the day's schedule is delayed no more than 30 minutes, time for the day's activities can be recovered. But when we begin to run an hour late, serious sacrifices are entailed. In time scheduling, we might say that our aim is to find that flexible and patient, yet disciplined middle ground between harsh efficiency and total chaos.

### III. The Village Administrative Center

The administration of a small meeting can be done by a few people in an informal manner, but as our village life approaches 400 to 1000 people, a more formalized administrative design is necessary if we are going to avoid overloading a few people. We also need an adequate and simple format which practically enables all persons to participate in the decision-making processes. The following is a design that has promise in solving some of the problems we have been experiencing. This design, like all designs in this manual, is presented as a default design. Changes are always appropriate where needed. The following diagram places all the tasks of administrating the village life into three groups of tasks. These three sets of tasks are each given a physical space--a building, a tent, a table,---at the very least, a bulletin board. Let us call these places, **The Village Care Center**, **The Village Program Center** and **The Village Celebration Center**. Then, three sets of administrative coordinators are assigned to work in loose connection with these three administrative spaces.

#### The Village Administrative Center



Sun rise ceremonies  
 Gathering the Morning Circle 9:00--9:30 am  
 Sun set ceremonies  
 Evening Celebrations 8:00--11:00 pm  
 Quiet Time 1:00 am--sunrise

#### 1. The Village Desk

The village desk is a fourth physical place in the administrative center. It is located in easy walking distance from all three administrative centers. It is occupied from 8 am to 8 pm by one human being fluent in both English and Spanish or by two human beings, one fluent in English and one in Spanish. The village desk provides a point of contact with the administrative design for all participants at the meeting. It is also the first place to go as new people join the meeting. The task of occupying the village desk can be accomplished by assigning one or two Clans each day to this task. Each member of the Clan will thus need to spend no more than two hours doing this duty. The persons sitting at the village desk do not register people or solve difficult

problems. They link the inquiring person with the appropriate coordinators in the appropriate administrative center.

## **2. The Village Care Center**

The list of tasks to the left of the Village Care circle defines the array of tasks handled at this location. A bulletin board states where the appropriate coordinator can be found. Persons are perhaps working on computers at this location. The storage of various supplies like soap, toilet paper, and water may also be at this location.

## **3. The Village Program Center**

The list of tasks to the right of the Village Program circle defines the array of tasks handled at this location. A bulletin board states where the appropriate coordinator can be found. A large bulletin board with a complete schedule of all program events is also present at this location. This location may also be the check-out place for program equipment and materials.

## **4. The Village Celebration Center**

The list of tasks beneath the Village Celebration circle defines the array of tasks handled at this location. A bulletin board also exists at this location containing notices of celebration planning meetings, the locations of celebration coordinators, and other relative data having to do with this list of activities.

## **5. The Administrative Coordinators**

Each of the three branches of the Village Administration Center has three overall coordinators--at least one man, at least one women, at least one person who speaks both Spanish and English. Other qualities of human diversity may also be considered. Competence to do the job, however, is the first priority for all nine of these coordinators.

In addition to these three sets of three coordinators, other persons are selected to coordinate specific activities as needed.

## **6. The Village Coordination Circles**

At breakfast each day, three meetings take place--one for each administrative center. Joint meetings may be held whenever this seems best. Let us call this joint meeting **The Village Coordination Circle**. Let us call the separate meetings: **The Village Care Circle**, **The Village Program Circle** and **The Village Celebration Circle**. The three overall coordinators for each Village center, along with all the specific coordinators for that center, and all other interested persons and volunteers, meet together and face the issues of that day. Anyone is welcome to these meetings, but each attendee must be made aware that a consensus process is being facilitated and an agenda is being followed.

## **7. The Mood Watchers**

In addition to the nine coordinators, there are three persons appointed as mood watchers for the overall meeting. These persons have no specific administrative assignments, but roam the entire village asking questions and listening for issues that need solution and looking for challenges that need responses. The mood watchers attend one or more of the breakfast meetings and report their findings or make their recommendations. The mood watchers may also add their

practical assistance to those arenas that are most in crises. These three persons may not be the only mood watchers in the village, but they are three persons expected to do this important work and are, ideally, persons who can be trusted to do it well.

These custodians of the overall mood of the village are servant leaders, not dictators. The Plenary is the overall authority. The administrative meetings, the administrative coordinators and the mood watchers derive their authority from the expectations of the whole Plenary that these tasks are to be done.

## **8. Other Administrative Roles**

Other administrative roles may be desired, such as:

- Crafts House Managers
- Snack Bar Managers
- Information Exchange and Book Store Managers
- Market Tent Managers

## **9. Hired Personnel**

Hired personnel may also be desired, such as:

- Kitchen Supervisors
- Meal Planners, and Food Shoppers
- Cooks
- Kitchen Workers
- Sanitation Workers
- Security Guards

These persons are hired and supervised by the appropriate administrative coordinators.

## **10. Burn-out and Democracy**

The purpose of this administrative design is not to make matters complex, but to spread out responsibilities to many people and yet maintain a practical unity and connection among every organizer and every participant in the meeting.

Burn-out is caused when a person has been put in the position of having to handle too many decisions about too many problems with too few linkages with other responsible and willing people. This design, flexibly and sensibly implemented, can spread out the decision-making and action demands in a logical and workable fashion.

Also central in the values being supported by this design is the value of democracy--of maximizing participation in all the decisions that are taking place in the village life. Unless people know where to go for information and how to get things done, they feel left out and revert to blaming they know not who for whatever troubles them. If people see clearly that there is an understandable and workable administrative design in place, they can throw their energy into being part of the solution to issues that arise.

# **IV. The Glory of Village Care**

(In this section of the manual, the details of doing village care can be spelled out--meal menus, sanitation practices, security models, the number of computers needed, the Voice of the Turtle

heritage, transportation models, health center wisdom, work structuring, etc.)

## **V. The Parameters of Celebrational Life**

(In this section of the manual, the details for doing celebrational life can be spelled out. What has been done in the past can be summarized, and why this heritage was useful can be explained.)

## **VI. The Purposes of Programatic Work**

(In this section of the manual, our experience on what it means to do good programatic work can be shared. This section might be designed to assist Morning Circle facilitators, Council focalizers and Workshop presenters to do a better job.)

## **VII. The Selection of a Site**

(The success of the meeting begins with the selection of the site and of the locally residing team of people who will set up that site for the meeting. This section of the manual can hold our wisdom on these matters.)

## **VIII. Recruitment, Brochures, and Publicity**

(In this section of the manual, we can share our accumulated wisdom on the details of successfully getting people mobilized to attend the meeting.)

## **IX. Financial Models and Methods**

(In this section of the manual, we can share our accumulated wisdom on all the details having to do money.)

## **X. Participant Mailing Lists and Proceedings**

(In this section of the manual, we can record our wisdom on producing a participant mailing list to give to each participant and our wisdom on preparing a manageable but informative proceedings of the meeting.)