

Jon Young – Biography – <http://JonYoung.org>

Jon Young grew up in Monmouth County, New Jersey, and was mentored from from the age of 10 as a naturalist, tracker, survivalist, and mentor in a native American tradition by the tracker and author Tom Brown, Jr. This mentoring forms the basis for Jon's work.

Jon worked off and on for many years at Tom Brown's Tracker School as an instructor, special guest and children's program development specialist. In 1994, Tom reminded Jon that he was the only one Tom had mentored the way Grandfather (Tom's elder native mentor) had mentored Tom. This sparked Jon's interest in trying to capture and preserve these special nature-connection mentoring skills.

Jon received his BS in Environmental Science in 1983 from Cook College, Rutgers University, with particular emphasis on natural history and anthropology and a focus on how native cultures helped their children understand and connect with the natural world.

From 1984 to 1994, Jon was mentored as naturalist, tracker, cultural specialist and mentor by the African Akamba elder M. Norman Powell (Ingwe). Ingwe, born in 1914 in Capetown, South Africa, grew up neighboring the Akamba tribe in Kenya, East Africa. He supported Jon as the honored elder and co-founder of Jon's newly founded Wilderness Awareness School (1983, Monmouth County, NJ).

Inspired by his mentoring with Tom Brown, Jr., fueled by his studies in natural history and anthropology, and guided by the elder Ingwe, Jon has pioneered blending Native mentoring and cultural techniques from around the world with a broad array of tools for connecting with nature and developing refined and holistic tracking skills. Out of the Wilderness Awareness School, which was originally founded as a high school nature club and which helps people reconnect with their native environments, Jon developed a system that is now called "8 Shields Cultural Mentoring".

This system tracks processes and mentoring techniques that are built into the design of one-on-one mentoring programs, family mentoring practices, community-based mentoring and more traditional modes of education. The 8 Shields Cultural Mentoring model has now influenced well over 100 nature and eco-community programs in the United States, Canada and Europe, and is also used in his consulting for organizations, government agencies and communities worldwide.

In the mid-1990s, Jon created the Shikari Method for track and sign data collection utilizing trained citizen volunteers to document activities of numerous wildlife species. This approach was used for various projects for the State of Washington on Natural Resource Conservation area lands, cougar monitoring, carnivore studies in suburban corridors and for an annual volunteer wolf survey to assist projects of the USFWS and the Wolf Recovery Program of the Nez Perce tribe (1998 to 2003). It is currently being utilized in the Bay Area of California for conservation land monitoring.

Jon has utilized the 8 Shields Cultural Mentoring model to develop and enhance community development for communities interested in working with peace-making as it relates to nature connection. This has evolved into a network of communities who, among other things, supported the release of Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature in the fall of 2008.

Jon has given over 1000 public presentations and has helped many PhD and Masters students as well as undergraduates with the completion of their degrees on topics ranging from native education to wildlife tracking.

Jon is married and has six children, and truly wants his children and future grandchildren to experience the joy and benefits of living in a whole and healthy world and as part of a remarkable community of mentors!