

# STANDING STONES: ALGONQUIN PARK

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Many times over the past few years, months and weeks stones have been important teachers in my healing and growth.

A few years ago, I completed a vision quest in Algonquin Park, an experience that concluded with a rock divination. I was instructed to find a rock and bring it to the closing circle. With trepidation, I asked what is my first step on my new journey. The pink and grey lines of the four billion year old rock I had chosen clearly indicated my best path. Of course, as with many opportunities to learn from the "spirit that lives in all things", I knew that it was best not to ask questions unless I really, really, really wanted to know the answers. I was shaken up, but thanks to the rock, I knew my best path.

A few months ago, I burned my hand on a cast iron frying pan while preparing multi-grain pear ginger pancakes and the burn remained a sore spot for hours. Bathing my hand in water relieved the pain, but every time I took my hand out of the water the pain returned, and my hand was becoming soggy and wrinkled. At bedtime while sitting around the campfire, I leaned back and put my hand on a cool round stone... just as large as

the palm of my hand. The cool stone fit comfortably in my hand and took away the heat of the burn completely. I slept with the stone curled in the palm of my hand and woke to a pain free hand with only a slight redness to remind me of my earlier accident.

While leading a Night Magic Canoe Trip in Algonquin Park, I sat on the beach with Saul, a guide who was sharing the canoe trip with me. Off-handedly, he mentioned something about the "Chi of Stones", a phrase from a film he had seen years ago. I knew immediately I was called to action. Even a stone can be a teacher.

After Saul left, I picked up a 10-15 kg boulder and looked it over. The stone wanted to dance. I knelt down and placed the stone on a stone base in the water, with the waves lapping over it. I chose to place the stone on a point, with the heaviest part of the stone up, defying gravity. I worked hard to steady the stone, balance it and began to turn it slowly on its stone base. It was wet and shimmered in the sunlight. As I turned the stone, I thought to myself, will the Chi of this stone, allow it to balance in an unnatural position? A voice in my head, and outside of me (in the stone) said, "I

can help, want to see?" and suddenly the stone was still and felt like it was locked in an unnatural position. I carefully took my hands away and to my amusement and amazement, the stone stood. I took a picture.

Over the next hour or so, four brother stones took their positions dancing, and then standing, seeming to defy gravity with their tips in the water.

All the while, the stones and I had conversations about life, change, balance, and much, much more. We worked together the stones and I to achieve something extra-ordinary. Canoe trip participants observed, and I was keenly aware that they too wanted the stones to defy gravity. It was not me who was making this happen, it was a combination of the efforts of the bystanders best wishes for the stones, the stones wanting to dance and me playing on the beach. They were all beautiful.

I took pictures. A rainbow adorned the sky. It was bliss.

Later, the stones wanted to do more. Like acrobats in a circus they wanted to have the audience "Oohhhh" and "Ooooooh". But can a stone, balanced incredibly out of the ordinary, support another stone on top of itself? After a few failed attempts I was delighted to see that they could! I ran to get my camera. Against the lake and trees, I was taking pictures that were beautiful. I couldn't resist the photographic opportunity. I was overcome with the moment and had a great idea for a picture.

I introduced a model into the setting. Jo had been practicing Yoga on the beach with some of the guests at the Retreat Centre while I had set up three or four standing stones towers. I invited her to take up a yoga pose on the beach and busied myself with the focus and lighting,

framing her in a yoga pose that was counterbalanced by one of the standing stones towers. Jo was having a difficult time balancing and I thought, this doesn't feel quite right, but I snapped off one picture anyway. I was wondering how the stones would feel about this. Was I mocking them? Disrespecting them? Suddenly, a tower of stone to my left collapsed. I had only taken one picture. Was this all bad? Were the stones trying to tell me something? Surely just an unsteady tower, I thought to myself. I'll build it better next time.

Jo came back to her Yoga class, a bit dismayed at the unsteadiness of one of her ankles that had recently been injured and inquired, "Has anyone seen my glasses? I was wearing them just before I went down to the beach." We all searched for a time, and were dismayed that we hadn't found the glasses, when I noticed Diane, peaking under the tower of stones that had collapsed. I laughed. "Don't even think about it," I said, "I know," she said, "but I just have to..." and she wrinkled her nose and winced. I turned my back, disregarding her highly unlikely search location, still chuckling about it. "Oohhhh," I heard the voice, and others chimed in, "Ooooooh." I swallowed hard. Embarrassed. I wanted to hide. The stones wanted to take an invisible bow.

Jo's glasses flattened. I hugged Jo and begged her forgiveness. I don't think she quite understood, but I felt completely responsible. I turned to the remaining standing stones and bowed my head, ashamed. In my heart I made the stones a promise, "I will never take another picture of standing stones with a human model, no matter how interesting the picture might be. That would make the picture the story. The picture isn't the story, the standing stones are... and I thanked them for allowing me to share their magic moment, standing proudly in the sun.



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