

*In this time of sudden and seemingly unending global turmoil, amidst revolutions, protest movements and calls for democracy that are often identified as “youth” movements, what place do we as crones have? The essays in this installment of Crone Action ask important questions: What kind of foundations are we laying for the future? Do we, as crones, have special responsibilities for society as a whole since we are (presumably) free from single-minded devotion to our concerns for family, career, or ego-satisfaction? Or are we, to put it baldly, simply “waiting out our time?” To the last question our contributors this issue give a resounding answer — “no!” What are your answers?*

*Send your ideas for Crone Action stories and your submissions to [editor2@bbimedia.com](mailto:editor2@bbimedia.com)*



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**P**eople leave presence in a place, even when they are no longer there.”

— Andy Goldsworthy



# THE TRIBE

## of Wise Old Women

*Ring of Brodgar, Orkney Islands, Scotland.*

**W**e are the tribe of wise old women. Like the Ring of Brodgar, erected during Neolithic times on the largest of the islands north of the Scottish mainland, we are a circle of stones: stones still standing, stones who have fallen, stones not yet peeking through the earth.

We're the tribe of wise old women, a circle of stones who are the future's foundation. We are stones now come to hand to build a world of wakened consciousness. This world, like any other, grows stone by stone, decision by decision. It's made of soul and body, mind and heart.

## A Conspiracy of Crones

A pod of whales, a murmuration of starlings, a gaggle of geese...what would the collective noun be for crones?

Many of us have become newly-independent creatures, forging a life for ourselves that transcends the culturally-prescribed roles we had for so many years. We are cutting loose, breaking new ground, marking out new trails at last, with a fierce and urgent joy. Bringing us together in a flock or a herd, or even in a gaggle, would be a bit like herding cats.

And yet...

If there was a collective noun for us, I think it might be ...“conspiracy.” Because one of the most surprising — and utterly delicious — things I have discovered about being an elderwoman is that all the time we are exploring these new freedoms and creating these new lifestyles for ourselves, all the time we are busy being independent, enjoying our solitude, deepening our relationship to Nature and to our own creative pursuits, we are doing it together. We are supporting each other, sometimes in obvious, tangible ways and sometimes in mysterious, numinous ways we can only sense.

For there definitely seems to be some unspoken, mostly unacknowledged kind of free-

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“Are we as fully committed to our creation as the elders of the past were to theirs?”



*Skara Brae Dwelling*

Stone by compatible, un-mortared stone, the Neolithic people living on the isles in the north built their homes, their places of work, their places of communion with Mystery. Clearly they built with a consciousness that made different assumptions than the consciousness of the world into which we were born just last century. They seemed to be aware that the unique properties of each individual stone had its right place to be in the final creation. Perhaps they also assumed that each person's gifts were present at just the right time to take their proper place in the fertile unity of all living beings.

Our wisdom, too, can fertilize the soil where our next generations build their homes, their families and communities, their hopes and dreams. The question is, are we truly willing to do this? Are we as fully committed to our creation as the elders of the past were to theirs?

masonry that operates between crones. We send each other secret, wordless signals. Have you noticed those little smiles of recognition that happen in the street or on a bus as we sense the passing presence of another ‘one of us’? Have you noticed the accelerated development of friendship that happens when you sit down with a new acquaintance of similar age and the same zest for life? We are more open than we used to be, more willing to let ourselves be seen, more able to trust. And more intuitive too: more attentive to the subtle energies that connect us by invisible threads to each other and to all the other life forms around us. Nowhere is the sisterhood more keenly felt than at the Crones Counsel gatherings, each one both a homecoming and a new adventure.

There is a sadness, though, in the realization that there are millions of “third age” women who don’t know what they are missing. Women bemoaning their lost youth and trying to recapture it or who, through caution or particular circumstance, stay locked into the old ways, pursuing “business as usual,” and suffering the gradual onset of meaninglessness. I know a woman for whom all that is left is the frantic scramble each morning for something — anything — to fill the day, to pass the time until there is something on TV in which she can lose herself, until she is able to cross off another 24 hours in the seemingly endless wait for death.

What is it, I often wonder, that makes the difference? Why do some people, as they age, lose their zest and shrink into the shadows whilst others find themselves wading ever more deeply into life? I wish I knew.

But what I do know is that whenever something new starts moving in the collective unconscious, it isn’t long before it swells into greater visibility and starts popping up everywhere. There are more of us than there used to be; that is clearly reflected by the rapidly increasing number of websites, blogs, books and organizations concerned with conscious, joyful ageing. The conspiracy of crones is widening daily, as we speak. And that, dear sisters, is very good news indeed, don’t you think?

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“We’re a circle  
of stones,  
the tools the  
earth provides  
for this place and  
at this time.”

World-building is hard work, especially in a culture which insists that only the young are up to the task. Our young, and their young after them, have their necessary roles in the human epic as it unfolds. Our job, as wise old women, is to be their cultural foundation grounded in wisdom.

They don’t realize how badly our wisdom is needed. That’s no reason for us to abandon us all to the folly of living without it. The question is, Is the world as it stands – well, as it spins – a good enough place? Not perfect, but genuinely good, and good enough?

Where it is, let us revel in it. Where it’s not, let’s get to work with the tools that are at hand: ourselves, each other. We’re a circle of stones, the tools the earth provides for this place and at this time.

**W**e're the light of stones not  
yet on earth. Let's stand up  
and circle."

Like the Ring of Brodgar, we are the body of time; time, the mute who speaks, the deaf who sings, the one who, though blind, still sees.

Time is our mentor, but one we grow beyond. As our bodies age, we weather, just as these stones do. Refined and redefined, our essence begins to show. Eventually, we may become so transparent that it's clear we're made of earth that carries light; so transparent that it's clear we're star-born. We're deeply connected not only to Gaia, but also, as her children, a part of the far-flung worlds, the unity in which she lives, moves and has her being.

Which may be just what The Ring of Brodgar was created to anchor, by a tribe who knew themselves as part of the Wholeness.



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Today we're scattered stones wading in the water, revealed by the light, waiting for the fullness of time.

But we're a tribe of wise old women. Isn't it getting to be time for us to stand up and count ourselves in? Isn't it time to become all we are capable of being? Time to come home to ourselves?

We're the tribe of wise old women, a bridge of stones unearthed, a road to stones still earthed, the light of stones not yet on earth. Let's stand up and circle, for ourselves, for each other, and for the tribe of human beings.



A few questions to help us focus:

- What do I value so much in my own life experience that I'd like children in seven generations to have their own version of it, too?

- What perspectives, talents or skills that I value are missing in the world? Which ones do I have to offer?

- Who needs what I have to give? Who has what I need to receive in order to fully give? Who might help me achieve my giving and receiving?



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