

# **Output 6: Capstone Year Review**



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# Output Specification

Welcome to my Output 6: Capstone Year Review. The purpose of this output is to convey both the structure of my last year's learning pathway, and its outcomes; the things I have created and learned in the last year. My goals for this output are to create a document that is useful and engaging to myself and others, to fulfill all the Gaia University requirements, and to complete it before June 12<sup>th</sup>, when I will begin working full time at Camp Winnarainbow. Because this output conveys a huge amount of information, and in order to finish it in a timely manner, I have chosen simple, repetitive formats, and have not gone into great detail about any one topic. Consequently, some of the information in this output might be difficult to understand without having my previous five outputs available for reference (you can find them online from [my Mahara profile](#)). In designing this output, I followed a simplified GaSADIE design process, which you can read in the Appendices on page 3.

# Project Specification

Although it describes my year's pathway as a whole and reports on many of the projects I have engaged in throughout the year, this output is also the outcome of a specific project, that of reviewing my year and reflecting on the shape of my pathway and what I have learned. I designed this process very intentionally, using a GaSADIE type design process (on page 2 of the Appendices). In designing this project, I learned a lot about what helps me to gain clarity. As part of the survey phase of my design process, I wrote a list of things that help me to gain clarity when I am feeling confused or have a lot of information and experience to integrate, and that list continues to be useful to me. I also pushed my edges in staying accountable to the design that I had created, and going back to the design process when I needed to do things differently than I had planned.

# Pathway Review

*This section describes my learning pathway, first giving a brief overview of the shape of my pathway, and then checking in with my accountability with my learning commitments throughout the year.*



## A Brief Overview

My school year (about eight months long) began in September at the Gaia University Transformative Action Learning event at Earthaven Ecovillage in western North Carolina, where I would live for the next eight months. My pathway began with a burst of energy and inspiration around the concept of regenerative entrepreneurship. In my LIPD, I outlined a pathway towards becoming a regenerative entrepreneur, which would involve pushing my edges around technology and finances especially. I began to create a business called Intima, offering a Games Night that focused on skills for intimacy and personal connection. I was working mostly on this project for the first three months or so of my year, while also working part time at Useful Plants Nursery. Over the course of the winter, however, a major shift occurred in my pathway. I began to lose steam for regenerative entrepreneurship, and to ask myself what I was most deeply committed to, and what I really wanted my life to look like. I also began a new intimate relationship, which brought up my deep longing for family and home. I dropped Intima, and began to focus on my home life at Earthaven. I redefined my capstone thread as Creating Home, and focused my energy on the four major areas of Home that I identified in my OP 5; Food, Family and Community, Livelihood, and Inner work. Now, having left Earthaven for the summer, I look back and see that the Home I have created for myself there is invaluable to me, and I am grateful that my pathway has led me to this awareness of what I most deeply want.

# Accountability

Although I am satisfied with the results of my learning pathway, I recognize that throughout the year, there have been several times in which I was not accountable to the learning design that I had created. Whether out of conscious or unconscious resistance, I chose to let go of certain parts of my pathway without fully acknowledging that I was renegotiating agreements that I had made with myself. This resulted in stress and confusion for me, and was a missed opportunity for learning about dynamic adaptability and ongoing design. Some times when I was out of accountability this year were:

- When I stopped doing the research outlined in my “Action Learning Courses” and did not renegotiate that commitment.
- When I dropped Intima and did not redesign or tie up the loose ends such as the blog and website.
- In the last few weeks since my Output 4 was written, when I have not done my weekly learning journal about the four areas of home, and have not renegotiated that agreement.

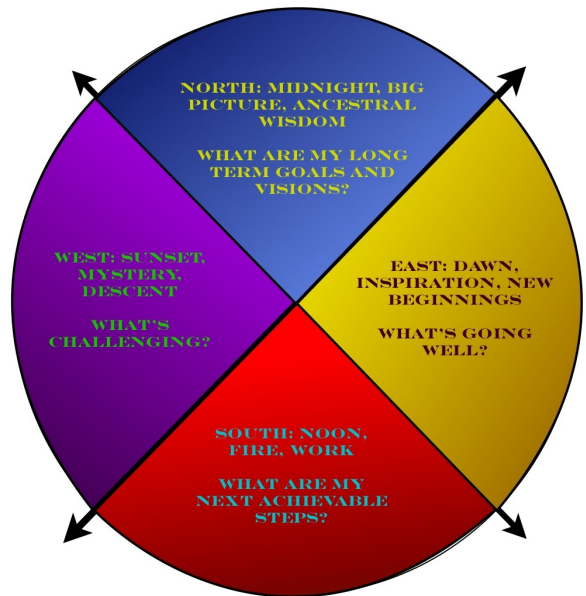
On the other hand, I have remained accountable to my long term goals and visions, and to my overall goals for this year, renegotiating them when my pathway shifted and checking in with them often enough to keep them in my consciousness.

# Output Packet Summaries

*Below, I have summarized each of the five outputs I created during my capstone year. For each one, I give a general introduction, a description of the process of creating the output, and some of the key outcomes of the creation of the output itself. Later on in this output, I will go into more depth on the outcomes of my various projects, both those reported on in these outputs and others. The blue areas of the title of each output are links to their Mahara pages, where you can download the files for review.*

## Output 1: Learning Intentions and Pathway Design (LIPD)

In my LIPD, I created the framework for my year. I identified my long term visions for my life and my goals for this year, and designed tools for tracking my learning towards those goals and visions. My LIPD is full of juicy content, including some very impressive and useful Prezi presentations, and at the same time it is lacking in clarity and organization and may be somewhat difficult to review.



### Process:

Before writing this output, I took an afternoon to go up on a mountain and sink into my vision for my life and my year. With that vision in mind, I followed a standard GaSADIE design process to design the output, focusing especially on the survey phase, in which I threw out on small pieces of paper all of the elements I would need, as well as ideas about structure, flow, aesthetics, etc. After that, much of the design occurred during the writing of the output. I also took a two week break in the middle of writing the output, and came back to it with fresh perspective on my goals and visions. The most challenging part of creating the output for me was creating the Skillflex Assessment tool, especially the graphic



design aspect. I learned a lot about graphic design, and also about what level of technological sophistication and complexity made sense for me in output writing. In future outputs, I chose to use less technological sophistication and more streamlined formats.

#### Key Outcomes:

- Goals and visions for lifetime and year
  - The goals and visions I discovered in the process of writing this output have guided and inspired me throughout this year, and I intend to continue using the visioning process described in the output in future visionings.
- Skillflex assesment tool
  - I created for this output a tool for tracking my learning in various skillflexes, which I used in the following two outputs. Although I eventually decided to stop using this tool, it was a great learning experience to create it.

## Output 2: The Birth of Intima



This is probably my favorite output that I have created, in terms of aesthetics, clarity, and the powerful learning experiences that it documents. It is about the beginning stages of a business venture that I undertook in the fall, my first experiment in entrepreneurship. Using carefully chosen images, elegant writing, and colorful sidebars for key learnings, the output conveys my learning in a fun and beautiful manner.

#### Process:

This output process was very enjoyable and low stress for me. I designed it in a natural flow, allowing myself plenty of space and freedom. In describing my process for writing this output, I identified four “waves” of thinking and action:

- First Wave: Collecting the pieces, looking at output requirements and what elements I wanted to include, and how those elements would meet the requirements. “Goals” and “Survey” phases combined.
- Second Wave: Creating the container, designing the aesthetic presentation of the elements I had chosen, designing for simplicity and beauty and ease of

creation

- Third Wave: Diving in, design by implementation, starting to write and create content.
- Fourth Wave: Reassessment and finishing touches, coming back to the OP after taking a break and finishing content and formatting.

This process was very effective, a good balance between structure and spontaneity.

Key Outcomes:

- Identification of my pattern of “roller coaster learning” in pathway reflections.
- Clear explanation of what Intima is, how it came about, and why it is important to me.
- Identification of several Key Learnings from the project of creating Intima, especially the insight into the importance of natural cycles in the creation of my business.
  - Seeing that my business was affected by the natural slowing down of winter helped me to adjust and to have reasonable expectations.
- Creation of new Learning Shapes
  - In revisiting the tracking tool that I created for my LIPD, I saw clearly how I had grown immensely in certain areas and still had a lot of growth potential in others.
- A beautiful and pleasant document describing a time of great growth and learning in my life.

## Output 3: The Fruits of Collaborative Visioning: Core Commitments and Soulful Finances

This Output is the most information dense of all my outputs. It is packed with information about design, specific projects and their outcomes, learnings and unlearnings, and templates and tools for others to use in their learning processes. The output focuses on design processes and benefit to the reader, while explaining my process of collaborative visioning with my friend

Lily. We created a set of questions together to explore what commitment meant to each of us, and also to analyze our finances in preparation for becoming involved in a business partnership. This output describes the learning that resulted from





that project and offers ways that others can do similar kinds of work for themselves. When I look now at this output, I am amazed at all the detailed learning and growth that it contains.

#### Process:

In designing this output, I followed a more formal process than in the previous output. This output was created in a businesslike manner, engaging both deep introspection and the warrior energy of doing what needs to be done in an attitude of service to my larger vision. The process of designing the output was as follows:

- First thoughts: free write about the output
- Goals and intentions
- Expansion
- Contraction
- Design
- Implementation
- Evaluation

For each of these steps, I had a list of several questions that I answered in writing on my computer, or in the case of implementation a prompt for action. I learned a great deal in the process of writing this output, especially in the process of taking my learnings and creating templates for others to follow in their own learning journeys.

#### Key Outcomes:

- Identification of different kinds of design processes that I used in this Output Cycle
  - In this output, I did a lot of looking back at different kinds of more or less unconscious design processes I had used, and bringing them to consciousness by naming the steps involved in them. One that I particularly appreciate having identified is the following, used by Lily and I often in our collaborative process:
    - What's alive right now?
    - What is our intention or goal for this time?
    - Holding space, waiting for something to arise
    - Following the thread
    - creating an action plan
- Templates for examining your relationship with commitment and for soulful

financial analysis that could be used by others to do the kind of introspection that I did for this OP.

## Output 4: Strategic Planning for Food Security



This output describes my process of beginning to think about my long term strategy for meeting my needs for nourishment and food. I hired a friend with a lot of experience in thinking about food systems to help me through a logical process for making decisions about how to create my life around the food I want to be eating. This output describes the process we went through, and outlines that process in such a way that the

reader could follow it as well.

Chronologically, this was the last output that I wrote, and when I look back on it, I can see that I was tired and overwhelmed and did not put my heart into its creation. At the same time, I was clear in the output itself about the fact that output writing was not my highest priority at the time, and that my goal for the output was to create something clear and useful with a minimum of effort. Although I wish I had had more energy to devote to this output, I honor the choice that I made to focus my energy on other aspects of my life.

### Process:

This output process was very streamlined. By looking at the output packet requirements and review criteria, I created for myself a set of questions that form the bare bones of what an output packet needs to answer:

- What was the project?
- How does it fit into my pathway?
- How was the project designed?
- What were the outcomes of the project?
  - What were its effects on others?
  - What were its effects on me?
    - What did I learn or un-learn?
    - How am I different as a result of the project?

After creating these questions, I wrote content sections to answer them, mostly remaining on a surface level and using a lot of copy and pasted material that I had already written. This process resulted in an output that fulfills the basic

requirements, yet lacks some of the artistry and soul that I find in my other outputs.

Key Outcomes:

- a template for the reader to design their own food strategy.
- Increased clarity regarding the kind of food that I want to eat and how to go about getting it.

## Output 5: Creating Home

This output, written in late march as my OP 4, was changed to OP 5 because it reports on my capstone thread of creating home. The output describes what Home means to me and why it is so important to me, and describes the work that I have been doing in four areas of creating home; Food, Livelihood, Family and Community, and Inner Work.



Process:

This output process was very challenging for me. I was feeling very resistant to output writing, wanting to focus my energy on the day to day aspects of my life rather than this kind of meta-level reflection. In the end, however, the act of creating this structure for describing the various aspects of my life and uniting them around the thread of creating home was very beneficial to me, offering me clarity and purpose and deepening my appreciation for and commitment to my life's pathway.

I did not follow a formal design process for this output. I did identify my goal for the output, which was to gain clarity around my life's pathway, what I was doing and why. After that, I had a revelation about the concept of Home, and wrote the introduction to the main body of the output. With that concept in mind, the rest of the pieces of the output came into place as I was writing them. Overall the process was haphazard, but nonetheless resulted in an output that I feel proud of. I also have made this output available to the community where I live, and have gotten very positive feedback from folks who have read it.

Key Outcomes:

- Organization of my life around the thread of creating home.
  - Having my diverse experiences in life organized this way gives me valuable clarity of purpose.
- Conceptual framework of Home as “an environment that meets universal needs”
  - This understanding of what home means to me is very helpful to me in designing my life.
- Identification of a needs based design process
- Creation of a new tool for tracking my learning, journaling about my learning in the four areas of home identified in the output
- A recipe for Roadkill Squirrel Stew (found in the appendices)

## Projects, Outcomes, and Key (Un)Learnings

*In this section, I have listed some of the projects that made up my year's pathway, and identified the outcomes and key learnings that resulted from each project.*

### Designing my Year

Description:

At the beginning of the year, I took some time to reflect on my goals and visions and design my pathway. This process resulted in my LIPD.

Outcomes:

- Goals and visions for my lifetime and my year
- Design for my learning pathway
- “Learning Shapes” skillflex tracking tool
- “four questions in four directions” visioning tool

Key Learnings:

- The importance of fatherhood and family to me
- Understanding of my capacity in the skillflex areas I was tracking
- How to break down longterm goals into tangible next steps for acquiring skills

### Intima

*Design, Website and Social Media, Games Night*

Description:

Intima is a business that I created in the early fall. The idea was to do

events and one-on-one support in the arena of intimacy skills. I created a website, became involved with the Asheville Tantra School, and hosted several events, before putting aside the business to focus on other things.

Outcomes:

- Website and blog (intimagames.com)
- Several Games Nights with several participants each
- A small net financial loss (which I considered an investment in the future of the business until I decided not to continue with it)

Key Learnings:

- How to create a website and blog using Wordpress
- How to use Hootsuite to link social media accounts
- Facilitation skills and holding the energy of a group
- Allowing natural cycles
- Remaining accountable to my commitments
- That this kind of entrepreneurial livelihood is not right for me at this time

## Collaboration with Lily

### *One-on-one support sessions, Commitment, Finances*

Description:

My friend Lily and I designed and implemented a process of collaboration around Intima. We traded one-on-one support sessions about issues we were working with, and created a set of questions and assignments around commitment for each of us to complete separately and share with each other. We also analyzed our finances in preparation for business collaboration.

Outcomes:

- Several one-on-one support sessions in which we helped each other to identify and process challenges in our personal lives
- A set of questions about commitment and answers to those questions,
- A detailed report of my personal finances for the last year and projected into the next year.

Key Learnings:

- Skills for helping someone to process their personal challenges
- A redefinition of commitment and a big shift in my relationship to commitment and my ability to make commitments and follow through on them
- Seeing that my financial situation was unsustainable and deciding to

focus more energy on financial stability

### Men's sauna ritual

#### Description:

My friend Giles and I designed a sauna ritual for men at Earthaven. The idea of the ritual was for each man to discover and take on a quest, a project of service that was challenging and of benefit to the community. About five or six men attended the ritual, although I believe that most did not follow through with their quests.

#### Outcomes:

- A ritual with five or six attendees that built connections between the men and inspired them to take on difficult projects (even if they didn't follow through with the ones they were assigned in the ritual).

#### Key Learnings:

- The importance of good convening (we didn't put a lot of energy into inviting people and didn't get the turn out we wanted)
- Balance between holding a strong container and allowing for spontaneity

### Father interviews

#### Description:

During the sauna ritual, I chose a quest of talking to three fathers each week about fatherhood. I only ended up interviewing three fathers total, but I did have some beautiful conversations.

#### Outcomes:

- Three conversations with fathers about fatherhood

#### Key Learnings:

- The importance of wanting to be a father, not just doing it because its expected or because your partner wants to
- A new respect, admiration, and understanding for fathers through hearing stories of difficulties and how the three fathers I talked to handled them.

### Art Of Intimacy Class

#### *Co-teaching, Being a student*

#### Description:

This was an eight week class taught at Earthaven by Steve Torma that



explored four areas of intimacy; Self Awareness, Emotional Intimacy, Communication, and Sacred Sexuality. At first, I was co-teaching the class, then partway through I decided to step down and become a student. Also in the class were my girlfriend and her primary partner, so we got to use the skills we were learning in our relationships.

Outcomes:

- Lots of juicy connection, both in class and outside
- A small amount of income from the few classes I helped teach

Key Learnings:

- Lots of skills and tools for communication and emotional intimacy
- The three areas of attention; observations, thoughts, and feelings
- The phrase “when you said x, I made it mean...”
- Philosophy and practice of non-violent communication

## Relationship with eli and Jonathan

### *Emotional processing, Food, Oakley, Summer commitments*

Description:

Around Christmas time, I began an intimate relationship with a woman named eli Swiftcreek. She is in an open relationship with her primary partner Jonathan, and they have a baby together. This relationship challenged me to grow in many different ways, and has been a huge part of my pathway for the last five months. Their lives are very centered around food, so my being involved in their food system by working on the farm that they live on, helping to cook and clean, and learning about food from them has been a big part of our relationship. I have also spent a lot of time caring for Oakley, their fifteen month old baby.

Outcomes:

- A set of commitments that eli and I have made to each other for the summer, and written down. These commitments, to me, are representative of the closeness that we have built and our desire to continue to be a part of one another's lives
- A vision of us living as a family together in an equal three person partnership, and an intension to experiment with that vision and see if it works for us

Key Learnings:

- That my doubts and anxieties and fears can be welcomed and held and that they don't necessarily mean that this relationship isn't right for me

- The value of service and how much joy it brings me to be of service to this woman and her family
- The importance of food and family in my life
- The complexity of family
- Balancing my need for integrity and honesty when I am feeling heavy or sad or afraid with mine and eli's needs for joy, play, and ease
- And much, much more

### Working at Imani Farm

#### Description:

For the last five months, I have worked about four hours a week at Imani Farm, the farm where eli and Jonathan live, doing chores such as fixing fences, moving hay, weeding, pruning, shoveling muck, and other assorted farm tasks. I have been doing this work for food credit, which I have given to Jonathan and eli in exchange for sharing in their food plan.

#### Outcomes:

- Many hours spent working on the farm
- Strong muscles, dirt under my fingernails, and a sense of groundedness and connection to my food
- Income in the form of food credit
- Good quality meat and milk and eggs from happy animals eating high quality grass

#### Key Learnings:

- The value of physical labor for me emotionally
- Learning the attitude of doing what needs to be done without complaining
- Lots of little details about farm management such as how to pack a truck with hay, how to build a bamboo trellis for beans and squash, how to fix a woven wire fence, etc...

### Food system design advising

#### Description:

I recently hired Jonathan as an advisor to help me think about food and design a plan for my future food system. I chose Jonathan because this topic is his passion and he has thought a lot about it, and also because he has an amazing capacity for rational and logical thought that I felt would be a good balance to my

more emotional and intuitive style of decision making. We spent a couple of hours talking about food and he assigned me questions to answer on my own, which I did.

Outcomes:

- A set of questions and answers about food, what kinds of food I want to eat, how I want to be involved in its production, what kinds of experience I will need, etc...

Key Learnings:

- Awareness of what kinds of learning experiences I would need to have in order to be eating the food I want to eat in the way that I want to.
- The complexity of some of these questions around food, and that in the end I will make a lot of these decisions emotionally anyway.

## Men's group

Description:

Since about January, I have been involved with two different but related Men's groups, the official ManKind Project (MKP) Integration group in Asheville, and the unofficial MKP-inspired group led by Giles at Earthaven. I have attended both of these groups semi-regularly. The group works with four archetypes of the sacred masculine, the Lover, the Warrior, the Magician, and the King, and the energies that each of those represent. The work is about feelings, integrity and accountability, introspection and shadow work, and big picture vision and giving blessings.

Outcomes:

- Feeling more comfortable and connected to men in general and especially to the men of these groups
- Feeling more confident and connected to the divine masculine energies that we work with in the groups
- Knowing that I have a support network of men who I can call on at any time to help me through my struggles and challenges in life.

Key Learnings:

- Processes such as clearings and accountability checks
- Unlearning fear and distrust of other men
- Compassion for men's struggles and coping strategies
- How to facilitate men in their inner work.

## New Warrior Training

### Description:

In late April I participated in the New Warrior Training Adventure, the initiation program for the ManKind Project. The program is two days, and is chock full of processes and powerful inner work. I was amazed at the closeness I felt to the other men in the program, a kind of closeness I have never before experienced with other men.

### Outcomes:

- A clear understanding of my life's mission
- A deep sense of belonging in this community of men.

### Key Learnings:

- clarity about my life's mission
- That I can be supported by and close to other men.

## Family Constellations

### Description:

Family constellations is a healing arts methodology that examines energetic dynamics within families to help the client understand their own patterns and how their challenges are related to their family history. Over the last eight months, I have done several day long group sessions with Sheila Saunders, an excellent and well known family constellations practitioner who comes out to Earthaven on occasion. I also participated in the first class of what was meant to be a yearlong facilitation training series with Sheila, but there were very few participants so the series was cancelled after the first class.

### Outcomes:

- A new connection to and awareness of the fact that I have a child who was aborted. Thinking of this child as a real and present being rather than a life that never was changes my relationship with that situation drastically.

### Key Learnings:

- Many sayings and understandings of Family Constellations, including "I thank you for the life you gave me, and the rest I leave with you" and other kinds of things that children can say to their parents, or parents to children and so on
- New understanding of my birth trauma experience and how it has affected my life

- Understanding of the workings and practice of Family Constellations
- Learning about facilitation by watching Sheila, especially how to listen carefully and with a clear boundary to someone who is describing their experience, and not get taken in by their story.

## Working at UPN

### Description:

For the last eight months I have worked at Useful Plants Nursery, first part time and then full time starting in January. This was the most paid work I've ever done, and was a big growing edge for me.

### Outcomes:

- All of my monetary income for the last eight months
- Groundedness and rhythm in my life
- Lots of experience with and knowledge about various edible and medicinal landscaping plants.

### Key Learnings:

- Unlearning resistance to work
- Mindfulness in physical labor
- Seeing each plant as a sentient being in my care and to treat them with love
- How much I value having good, honest work to do.

# Looking Forward

*What are my plans for after Graduation? What will I do with the skills that I learned? What is my vision for the future of my life?*

This summer, I will be working at Camp Winnarainbow in northern California, where I have returned every summer for the last fifteen years. Having completed all my Gaia University requirements (except maybe a few guild calls), I will be free to immerse myself completely in the laughter and joy of children, and to let the cold stream wash away tension accumulated in my body from writing this output in less than a week. After camp, I will explore California a bit before returning to Earthaven to graduate in september. After graduation, I have solemnly sworn to myself not to design anything for a long time, and to simply immerse myself in the day to day realities of my life at Earthaven. Through the fall and winter, I will work on Imani farm and at Useful Plants Nursery, harvest tomatoes and can them with eli, play with Oakley, chop firewood, and read. After that, I imagine I will start to get the itch for another bout of designing, and go back to the drawing board once again.

My vision for my life is to be immersed in a web of giving, of support and nourishment that flows freely and abundantly between myself and the people, animals, plants, and other beings that I live with. My role in that web, my mission for my life, is to create life by challenging and nurturing others to discover how to truly be human. At this stage in my life, I am laying the foundation for giving that gift, and that looks like building my home and my family and my connection to my food, so that I can give from a place of abundance and groundedness. Although I do truly feel like I need a break from the world of design, I also recognize that the skills I have practiced in my work with Gaia University will be invaluable to me in creating this vision.



# Output Process Reflections

This output was written amazingly quickly and efficiently, with a minimum of stress. Having done a very thorough and effective review of my year, I was able to quickly create the content for the output. Since I needed to finish the output, and ideally the review process as well, before I left for camp, I chose in my design to use a very simple format. This served me well. In my original design for the output, I had intended to talk about some archetypal energies that I see as patterns in my year, but I found that I did not have space in the word count, and I also found that in trying to bring in that level of meta-thinking, I was creating less clarity and not more. My goals for this output were to finish on time, to fulfill all the Gaia U requirements, and to create an output that is useful and engaging to myself and others. I feel that I have achieved all three of those goals.