

From the Desk of Rick Doblin, Ph.D.

“We’ve grown from a tribe into a corporation,” Bruce Poulter and Marcela Ot’alora said to me several weeks ago with a mix of emotions. Bruce and Marcela are two of MAPS’ lead therapists and trainers of other therapists. Their comment has reverberated with me ever since. MAPS and the MAPS Public Benefit Corporation now number about 140 full-time staff and growing, with another 100 or so therapists around the globe working part-time on research into MDMA-assisted therapy for PTSD in countries including the US, Canada, Israel, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Germany, England, Norway, Portugal, and elsewhere. We’re starting MAPS-sponsored research into MDMA-assisted therapy for eating disorders in the US and Canada with additional therapists. We’re in discussions with over 60 different research teams around the world interested in exploring collaborations with MAPS on Investigator Initiated Trials (IITs) researching a wide range of clinical indications for MDMA other than PTSD. Furthermore, MAPS recently received a grant of \$12.9 million from the State of Michigan for a three-year study of cannabis for PTSD in 320 veterans with research locations at Veterans Affairs Administration (VA) facilities in Tampa and Ann Arbor and private practices in Detroit and Phoenix.

In 2000, MAPS had three staff and raised about \$550,000 in donations. That’s when Marcela first started working with MAPS as a therapist on our first ever study of MDMA-assisted therapy for PTSD research in Spain. The Madrid Anti-Drug Authority made the heartbreaking decision to shut that study down while in progress—despite a clear safety record. Michael and Annie Mithoefer, two of our other lead therapists and trainers of other therapists, started working with MAPS later in 2000 to try to start MDMA/PTSD research in the US. MAPS was more of a family then, smaller than a tribe.

In mid-2001, when MAPS had five staff, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) organized a conference on MDMA (Ecstasy). In his closing remarks, NIDA official Jerry Frankenheim, Ph.D. commented on Ecstasy neurotoxicity research and made a rather hilarious and profoundly erroneous speculation that, “In the future, it [MDMA/ Ecstasy] will be called Despair.” I reported this dire prediction in the next MAPS newsletter but suggested that MDMA will instead one day be called...FDA-approved!

In 2011, MAPS had 15 staff and raised about \$1.5 million. That’s when Marcela and Bruce started working with MAPS as a husband-wife co-therapist team on our Phase 2 study in Boulder. We were a tribe at that point where everybody who worked at MAPS knew everybody else who worked at MAPS, communications were direct and we were all accessible, we had no lawyers on staff or business development people, media mentions were few and far between, and we had the constant challenge of

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fundraising. There wasn't even a hint that near the end of 2021 there would be hundreds of for-profit psychedelic companies!

We've grown so substantially over the last decade that we have now evolved from a tribe into a small number of corporations. MAPS, the non-profit corporation, was started in 1986. In 2014, MAPS created a wholly owned subsidiary, the MAPS Public Benefit Corporation (MPBC) to conduct MAPS' clinical research and market MDMA should we obtain FDA approval. Public Benefit Corporations are a modification of capitalism that are for-profit but maximize public benefit rather than profit. MAPS also wholly owns the for-profit MAPS Europe, created in 2018 to coordinate with European regulators. MAPS Canada (2010), MAPS Israel (2020), and MAPS Deutschland (2021) are affiliated national non-profit organizations with similar missions but independent Boards of Directors and trademark agreements with MAPS.

MAPS is a family again, but now of corporations. In the process of scaling, we have created our own bureaucracy with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), career ladders, human resources staff, and procedures. It's gotten to the point where I feel a need to create an SOP for when we can deviate from SOPs! Our challenge is to continue to create the shared sense of mission, dedication, collaboration, and perseverance, with an emphasis on optimizing patient outcomes, just like when MAPS felt like a family, and then a tribe, into our new growth into a family of corporations. The enormous scale of the need for healing from PTSD and so many other mental health conditions (and the so-far favorable balance of safety and efficacy that is in the process of being established for MDMA-assisted therapy for PTSD in our Phase 3 studies) are compelling reasons for MAPS itself to scale from family to tribe to corporation. We're passionately committed to retaining our soul as we develop a larger corporate structure.

In one small example of retaining the soul of MAPS, I'm happy to report both that we do have a detailed employment manual and that one of the details is about a concept called "smokable tasks." These are work tasks, different for each staff person, that they think, and their manager agrees, they do better while under the influence of marijuana. Smokable tasks for me primarily include strategizing, protocol design, and editing of regulatory submissions; for other staff that may include even working on complicated spreadsheets.

As MAPS grows from family to tribe to corporation, I'm reminded of a poem called *Stages* from Hermann Hesse's final novel, *Magister Ludi: The Glass Bead Game*.

*In all beginnings dwells a magic force
For guarding us and helping us to live.
Serenely let us move to distant places
And let no sentiments of home detain us.
The Cosmic Spirit seeks not to restrain us
But lifts us stage by stage to wider spaces.*

As MAPS continues to scale, our wider spaces will include global access to MDMA-assisted therapy for PTSD, as a start. It's with profound thanks to the thousands of MAPS donors, to hundreds of subjects in our studies, and to our increasing number of staff who, over the last 35 years, have brought us to this cultural inflection point. Rick Doblin PhD. MAPS Founder and Executive Director.

Rick Doblin

Rick Doblin, Ph.D.
MAPS Founder and Executive Director

