



My Sweat Lodge Story

October 29, 2009

I have been encouraged by my teacher and leader of 8 ½ years, Rainbow Lightning Elk, to write this piece and speak out on the Sweat Lodge. My experience and relationship with the Sweat Lodge is one that is deeply respectful and revered. I have experienced approximately 50 sweats – and have participated and been in training for 7 years in most every aspect of the Sweat Lodge. Leading the construction and build of the actual structure, including the fire pit, gathering stones and wood, and running rocks.

My 1st time to sweat was in 2001, in Sandpoint Idaho, with Rainbow Lightning Elk and Lone Eagle, teachers and leaders of the 13th Moon Mystery School Kivas, which happened once a month for 18 months in 2001 – 2002, of which I was a student. The Sweat Lodge at that time was unique because a man and woman together ran it – and it is an indelible memory for me. An ancient ceremony dating back thousands of years, many parts of the Sweat Lodge ceremony speak to me. The structure is round so people sit in a prayer circle. A certain amount of hot stones are brought in to the “womb pit” in the center of the Sweat Lodge– the number determined by the guidance of the shamanic aspect of the Sweat Lodge – and water is poured over them while prayers are said. The door is closed while this is happening. There are 4 “rounds”, to honor the 4 directions, and after each round the door is opened for water to be passed around to the participants. The rounds last anywhere from 15 – 30 minutes.

While inside my 1st Sweat Lodge, after the 2nd round when the door was opened, my enormous fear of the dark and enclosed spaces that had been with me since childhood was at such a level that I jumped up and headed for the door – not paying attention to the hot rocks in the “womb pit”! It was so intense that I thought “I have to get out”! The Water Pourers in the Lodge, Rainbow and Eagle, said for me to sit down – doing this for my safety. They helped me connect more deeply by grounding to the Earth and doing some deep breathing because I was having a difficult time getting a breath. I was sitting beside an assistant teacher of the Mystery School – and at the request of the Water Pourers –she held my hand, which was extremely helpful for the aspects of me that needed support and grounding. I am truly grateful, and the whole time – was aware that it was **my** choice to be in there, to stay or leave, and to face my huge fears that I desperately wanted to heal. I did not want to leave before it was over, knowing that if I did my fears would just increase. And I was tired of my fears running the show in my life! In the Sweat Lodge, I witnessed this time and time again – people would have difficulty and our leaders’ assistance (not rescue) in helping move someone through their pain and fears was amazing. Together they would offer

tools and teachings with open hearts to help us transform our saboteurs. Because of that profound experience – I continue to sweat and feel that it is the most powerful ceremony for healing, purification, and transformation. It is my desire to run a Sweat Lodge in my community in the future and in doing so; I honor my ancestral lineage, which is Choctaw, Cherokee, and other mixed blood peoples.

I feel that the Native American saying of "today is a good day to die" is a deeply spiritual way to live – knowing that "today" could be my "day". Through the loss of my husband of 25 years in March of 2008, I had the opportunity to meet death more intimately – so much that I have begun to think about my death. How do I want to pass out of this life – what kind of death do I want? What is a good death? These are powerful questions that I think we all should think about especially around this major sweat lodge experience in Sedona, Arizona with James Ray. If it is my time – I am glad to go in a sacred ceremonial way. I do feel that we are at choice at some level around our death – how awake, aware, and alert are we willing to be when it is our time? I watched my husband be amazingly conscious until he crossed over – and I feel that was one of the most precious gifts I could receive. That experience helped raise the most important questions that I feel many humans avoid.

I have deep compassion for the families of the 3 people who crossed over – especially because of the blame and negative energy surrounding the whole experience. We have no idea what these people were experiencing – and treating them like they were victims and had no choice is a true disgrace to the spiritual evolution of this planet and especially the sacredness of this ceremony.

I send prayers of healing to the families that lost their loved ones, to James Ray, and I pray for the protection of the Sacred Sweat Lodge ceremony and the Lineages that carry it.

When I wake up in the morning – I feel it is wise to be grateful for this day and my life– since I do not know that it could be my last!

I want to honor and again thank my teacher, leader, and guide, Rainbow Lightning Elk for her assistance in this writing. I say "Wado" (thank-you in Cherokee) for her commitment to excellence and the expansion of consciousness of humans. She has taught me to move out of my comfortable little box and go where I've never been before – the unknown – for that is where the answers are!

To All My Relations!
Mountain StarLight

