WHAT: Sweat Lodge Ceremony: Three-World Journey

WHERE: Six Crows Alliance, 3646 Hart Road, Twin Lake MI 49457

WHEN: Noon-Evening Wednesday, January 1, New Year’s Day

WHY: To examine and gain a fuller awareness of who we are and the true state of our “ordinary” reality in its many aspects by means of journeying through the Middle World, where the hidden things of “ordinary” reality are revealed, providing clarity of purpose and direction for the coming year. Instead of making resolutions, we will be amping up our resolve.

COST: There is never any charge for attendance at Six Crows Community spiritual events, open to all with open minds and hearts. Donations to help with costs are always appreciated, but never expected.

BRING: A dish to share for Feast following the Ceremony; drums and rattles etc.; bedding if staying over (let me know – linda@sixcrows.org).

RSVP: email events@sixcrows.org; call 231.828.5030; Facebook invitation if you are a member of the Six Crows Alliance group. (If you’re not and are interested in becoming a member, email or call to request getting added.)
DETAILS:
We used to hold a Sweat Lodge Ceremony every year on New Year’s Day, and got away from it. Some of you have asked for a winter Sweat, so as an alternative to winter solstice celebrations, I am bringing the tradition back for the upcoming New Year.

New Year’s Day 2014 falls mid-week and some of you will have to work the days before/after, so we’ll light the fire at Noon, aiming to be inside by 2 pm. Bring something light and “breathable” to wear inside the sweat, and a couple towels. Bring a dish to pass and we’ll follow the ceremony with pot luck and fellowship. Bring drums and such as there is a good possibility a drum circle may take form. As always, any of you who live a distance away are welcome to stay over.

Some of us consider Samhain the start of the new year while others anticipate its arrival with the first green shoots of spring. On this secular New Year, we’ll turn our focus toward our mundane world. Thus this won’t be a traditional sweat, but will feature a three-world guided journey (Upper, Lower, and Middle) with emphasis in the Middle World.

The Middle World is the “non-ordinary” present-time counterpart to our “ordinary” reality. You could say that the Middle World is the hidden reality of the world we live in. By hidden, I mean everything from missing objects to missing information as well as the “hidden folk,” from nature spirits to the deceased, to ancestors. You will be warned that navigating the Middle World is often not easy. You may face trials, discover information that is difficult to face, or encounter formidable beings, even departed individuals who don’t know they’re dead. Remember that blessings come by way of working through our trials. Be reassured that this “non-ordinary” counterpart to “ordinary” reality is neither guided by benevolence/malevolence, nor human ethics (nature spirits for instance, are simply nature, neither bad nor good.) So this journey is not about good or bad, but about truth.

Take note: we will begin our journey by visiting the upper and lower worlds to connect with some spirit teachers and helpers for our work in the Middle World. If there are masters or other residents of the inner plane with whom you would like to connect during this ceremony, set your intention, do whatever research you need to ahead of time, and come prepared for a potent ceremony.
Please make a strong effort to arrive on time as the building of the fire and dressing of the lodge are part of the ceremony. No worries if you have never sweat before. There will be instructions, explanations, and safety guidelines.

As usual, this event is open to all with open minds and hearts. I look forward to celebrating with Six Crows family and friends.

Here is the writeup about Sweat Lodge Ceremony that we put in our annual Gathering Program Booklet:

Joseph Campbell, when asked, “What is the easiest way to experience spirit,” replied, “Participate in an ancient ceremony.” Sweat Lodge Ceremony is among the world’s richest ancient ceremonies in meaning and symbolism. Various forms are found among indigenous people in North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Eastern and Western Europe. The intent is to “die” to outdated energies, and be reborn out of the dark lodge, which represents the warm, moist, dark heat of the womb from which we came, emerging into the cool, dry light of the physical world.

Sweat Lodge Ceremony is among the most potent of ordeal rituals, promising visions; messages; redemption; healing; rebirth; and a deepening connection with and support from the Unseen World. It is in fact a universe unto itself. Transcending culture, it mirrors the vastness of human consciousness, making manifest the Divine Consciousness within, throughout, and beyond all creation. Ceremonially, it is used in worship, healing, meditating, and celebrating. In some Native American circles, a sweat lodge ceremony is held before Sun (Thirsty) Dance, Vision Quest (Fast), and other important ceremonies. As we are all children of the Earth, Sweat Lodge Ceremony can also help us connect with aspects of our being represented by the four elements of creation: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water, and renew our connection with the Earth Mother and Sky Father. Whatever the occasion, the purpose is to journey deep within our being.

The lodge itself, a covered, willow-framed dome, is a symbol of the womb of Mother Earth. The fire that heats the stones is a symbol of Father Sky. Its wisdom begins with the harmonious interaction between father and mother, and male and female aspects in the creator and creation.

Between the lodge and the fire pit is an altar, a mound of earth which was taken from the center pit in the lodge, and piled in front of the door. The altar is marked off in quadrants for this purpose. Here you will see sacred objects and tools, such as herbs to be used in the lodge by the facilitator.
Here you may place personal items for blessing during the sweat. It is traditional to give the Facilitator tobacco as a request for prayer. Gifts of sacred herbs such as sage and sweet grass, and any other gifts you wish to make to the facilitator and fire tender are acceptable. These may be placed on the altar.

Inside the lodge, the facilitator guides participants in prayer, song, and meditation, typically during four rounds. The “door” is opened between rounds for air flow, drinking water, to permit participants to exit/reenter as needed, and to bring in additional Stone People and water for the next round.

Personal preparation is advised. If you can skip the meal prior to the sweat, and better yet, fast for a full day, your body’s attention to the digestive process and your inner focus will both narrow. Do hydrate well with water. It’s also a good idea to abstain from toxic substances such as recreational drugs, alcohol, and caffeine before sweating, enhancing attention and purification. This applies equally to all of our bodies, mental, emotional, and spiritual, as well as physical. We set the stage by creating sacred space through ritual, drumming, song, prayer, and finally, silence, stillness, sacredness, and contemplation as we light the fire to heat the Stone People, and prepare the lodge in a ceremonial attitude. Enhancing trance state will assist the spiritual connection you seek for messages, visions, healing, release, etc.

We have heard critics tell facilitators “this is not the traditional way.” When you have participated in Sweat Lodge Ceremony with different facilitators, you realize that each develops a personal style. Furthermore, ancient ceremonies evolved with exposure to other ideas and cultures. This is a way we as humans may help consciousness expand. Approach Sweat Lodge Ceremony with a humble heart, and inside the womb with the water, the greens, the Stone People, the Earth Mother, the Sky Father, the Spirits of our Ancestors, and the Masters who came before us, you will remember your place in the web of life, at one with the Spirit that moves through all things.