

Woman's Way  
RED LODGE

Quarterly Hearth Letter

Spring 2012 Issue 13

CONTENTS:


From the hearth	2
Kelly steps up	3
FlagHoop facilitators	4
New members	4
3 Rivers Hoop	5
Admin help hired	6
Grace from Switzerland	7
Solstice dreams	9
Spirit son in Kenya	10
Support CEPACET	11
Repurposing	13
Earth's gurus	14
A woman's world	16
Crone journeys	17-19
Due respect	20

Cover photo by Anne Lohr; poem by  
Mary G.L. Shackelford

We thank Sarah, Anne, Mary, Maraiah,  
Drai, Amy, Sharma, Erin, Jim, Kristina,  
Marianne, and Jared for their images; and  
all our Hearth Letter contributors: Amy,  
Kelly, Connor, Sarah, Susan, Mary, Kristina,  
Sage, Therese, Marianne, Mary, Maraiah,  
Sharma, 3 Rivers Hoop; and Maraiah for  
her excellent proofreading.

Thank you! Thank you!

Your timely submissions are welcome.  
contact [hearthletter@wwrl.org](mailto:hearthletter@wwrl.org)  
for guidelines.



Pussy willows  
Pink and silver – early,  
Before the season turns.

My hands are growing old  
In shape and strength and lines  
Etched into my skin  
Pink and silver  
Like ice worn long  
Upon the water's surface  
Contracting and expanding  
With changes in the weather.

# Greetings from the hearth of Red Lodge!

by [Mary G.L. Shackelford](#), board chair

**2012** brings Red Lodge to an important place. We have passed the five year mark with careful, thrifty management of our resources. We are blessed with support from a good (and expanding) membership base, and we've created, launched and continue to deliver amazing programs, activities and services. It's time to take a breath as we look ahead to what calls and inspires us. At our annual board retreat in January, we affirmed our mantra for 2012: Keep It Simple Sweetie or **KISS**.

We look outward to our members to fan the spark that Red Lodge ignites inside you. We encourage you to nurture the passion that inspires creativity and commitment to participate. Look for opportunities in your own communities that might blossom with meaning, connection and service. People are yearning to deepen their relationships - with the Earth, with each other, with their own healing and growth, with their work.

Red Lodge can support you as you launch new ways to enliven the sacred feminine in your community. Bringing attention to and awareness of the sacred in your daily life can be as simple as reaching out to friends to share a Red Lodge Earth Day activity. Check out [Member Creations](#) for resources and ideas; list what you can offer on [our website](#). Share your ideas, thoughts, stories and wisdom by writing a story for *Hearth Letter*. Tell people about Red Lodge; encourage them to visit our website, subscribe, consider becoming a member. Red Lodge makes a difference; Red Lodge changes lives. The world is calling us out!

And, as we look within here at the hearth, the Red Lodge board is committed to addressing our leadership challenges. To lighten the work of board members, we are working to simplify and streamline board responsibilities and relax term limits. We've engaged [Amy Morrison](#) to help with administrative tasks. We are reaching out to members with organizational development experience to get advice. And we welcome your interest in Red Lodge leadership. If you have ideas and/or would like to participate or mentor, please [contact me](#).

We have some changes on the board: we are delighted to welcome [Kelly Ziniewicz](#) to the board as we explore a new Community Weaver role for our Long Dance representative.

And, Debbie Fank recently recognized that changed circumstances call her to focus on what's next for her personally. Debbie has served WWRL in numerous roles. We deeply appreciate her years of service and her many wonderful contributions! So much has flowed from her big heart as she has given generously to nurture individual women, the energy of East Gathering, the Enumclaw/Buckley Hoop, Plateau Drum Circle, and Red Lodge itself, both at the hearth and in the big picture. Debbie writes, "I cherish WWRL and will continue to embrace and support it in my own private way."

## ATTENTION NEW MEMBERS:

Do you like to write? Would you like to contribute to *Hearth Letter*? We're looking for ways to connect with new members, and we want to include a story featuring a new Red Lodge member in each issue. Are you interested? Contact [hearthletter@wwrl.org](mailto:hearthletter@wwrl.org)



# Kelly answers the call for Community Weaver!

Red Lodge was founded to share the ways and wisdom we learn together through our 20+ years of co-creating Long Dance and to offer opportunities throughout the year to carry and deepen into the medicine ways we share during our weeklong summer retreat. Dreaming of possibilities for 2012 during our Annual Meeting in December, many Red Lodge members expressed desire to strengthen the Long Dance/Red Lodge relationship. As more intentional connections with ceremonies arising out of Long Dance experiences are woven into Red Lodge events, the deepening possibilities for how we can nourish and support the interweaving inspire us.

To that end, the Red Lodge board committed to renew, re-invigorate and re-envision the board position for a Long Dance representative. The idea for a Community Weaver surfaced - someone willing to step into a leadership role to seed and follow through with energy and ideas for mutual support; someone who can be an active bridge for sharing and communicating between Red Lodge and Long Dance. At a recent Long Dance Wisdom Council, Kelly Crow Woman expressed her willingness to assume the mantle of this position.

“It is a great gift of service and just a wonderful thing to have Kelly join us (again) on the board of Red Lodge,” says board chair Mary Shackelford. “Kelly is a woman with huge heart, big spirit and a wealth of skills and experience in her medicine bag. We are lucky and grateful for this stepping up!”

I joined Red Lodge September of 2006. I attended my first board retreat in January of 2008 as the new Treasurer. I stepped down from that position in May due to a busy time for me with business and family.



I originally joined Red Lodge out of a need to connect with like-minded women. I wanted to learn and understand more about woman’s way. I continue to feel this calling. My life has recently been turned upside down with my youngest child moving out to attend school in Portland and selling our 20 year old business Espresso Parts. (We sold Olympia Coffee Roasting Company in November of 2010.) It has become clear to me that space is opening up so that I can commit to furthering my education in the woman’s way.

My hope is to inspire the Red Lodge board and the Long Dance Community to continue to work together as we bring ourselves more into the World. Red Lodge and Long Dance are deeply connected and need to support each other. I offer my skills with an open heart to listen and communicate in helping to facilitate this relationship. I look forward to working with the Red Lodge board as we explore what is the best way to move forward.

Thank you! Much love, Kelly Crow Woman

## New facilitators step into leadership with FlagHoop



Erin McCusker (left) and Gina Marie Harris have accepted the leadership baton from Madrone as the Flagstaff, AZ, Hoop enters its 3rd year. Both women have participated in the Hoop since it began and are looking forward to carrying on the Red Lodge energy in new and deepening ways.

## WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!

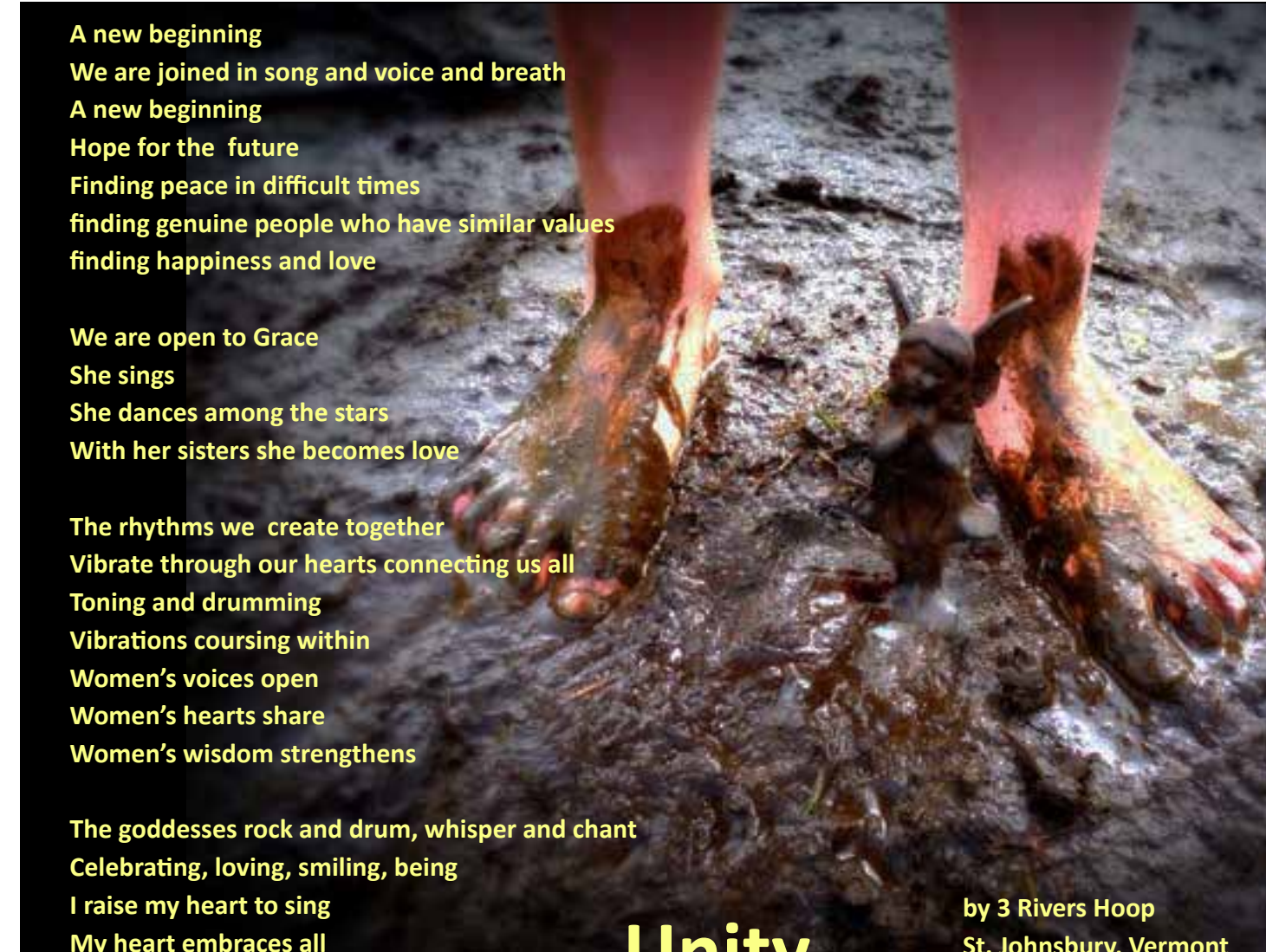


We send out a heartfelt welcome to our two new **LODGE SISTERS** hailing from Seattle, WA!

We are very happy to welcome three new **SUPPORT CIRCLE** members from, Flagstaff, AZ and one from Olympia, WA!

## YOUR MEMBERSHIP NURTURES RED LODGE.

CLICK HERE TO [JOIN](#). CLICK HERE TO [RENEW](#). CLICK HERE TO [DONATE](#).



A new beginning  
We are joined in song and voice and breath  
A new beginning  
Hope for the future  
Finding peace in difficult times  
finding genuine people who have similar values  
finding happiness and love

We are open to Grace  
She sings  
She dances among the stars  
With her sisters she becomes love

The rhythms we create together  
Vibrate through our hearts connecting us all  
Toning and drumming  
Vibrations coursing within  
Women's voices open  
Women's hearts share  
Women's wisdom strengthens

The goddesses rock and drum, whisper and chant  
Celebrating, loving, smiling, being  
I raise my heart to sing  
My heart embraces all  
Unity in love.

## Unity

by 3 Rivers Hoop  
St. Johnsbury, Vermont  
March 2012

Women from 3 Rivers Hoop gathered in early March for a potluck to map out our nine-month journey together. Many women are stepping up to service this year, taking turns to create ceremony in pairs. We are working together to support each other and blossom in our sisterhood. Our circle is now complete with eight returning members and five new sisters. Soon all thirteen women will sit together for the first time. We will tie intention bundles to our dream catcher and plant seeds facing East to honor new beginnings.

As the hours wore on and the stars came out, we realized it was well past the time we planned to leave and we hadn't yet drummed! We quickly took out our instruments and gathered in the great room of our hoop sister's house. She smudged us, and I read *Starhawk's The Charge of the Star Goddess*. A new sister said, "What's our intention? We need to set an intention." We agreed to drum for fun and sisterhood. We drummed, rattled and played flutes. And our song was better than it has ever been! When the music ended, we each wrote a line to create a group poem.

We have grown to more fully embrace the power and purpose of ritual. We are guided by our inner knowing to find the best ways for us to open to mystery and beauty. On each step of the path a different sister sees something new and speaks her truth, and we find our way together.

## Coming of age: Red Lodge hires our first independent contractor

**G**REAT NEWS!!! Red Lodge recently engaged Amy Morrison as an independent contractor to help with administrative tasks. In 2012, the board is committed to addressing Red Lodge's leadership challenges, and hiring Amy is one of several positive changes intended to support continuity and create new energy in the leadership circle.

"We are thrilled and very lucky to have Amy join us," grins board chair Mary Shackelford with delight. "Not only is Amy experienced and highly skilled in fundraising and organizational development for nonprofits, she shares the values and principles at the heart of Red Lodge."

Amy writes: I am somebody who enjoys working in the background, doing the necessary administrative work and tending to the details so the leaders can be great Leaders. I take pride in being part of an admin team that creates a Whole that is bigger than the sum of its parts.

A few years ago Joanna Macy came to Vashon Island, and I was struck by what she said about this time of the Great Turning -- how there were three groups of human beings helping it happen: those working the land, growing food sustainably; those protesting oppression and speaking out for a more just and humane world; and those working on a spiritual level-- singing, praying, drumming and dancing for peace and understanding. I have mostly resonated with the social justice piece, but the work to be done is a three-legged stool, each support intrinsically vital.

There is no other group I have heard of around here that is doing the spiritual piece like Woman's Way Red Lodge. You are a gift to our humanity, everywhere, and your work with different hoops and women of different countries gives me hope that divisions are breaking down, that we share collective responsibility for change, and that shifts are happening.

When my second daughter was born, I was asked to take part in a Women's Circle/Festival Guild, studying the wheel of the year, celebrating with festivals, and connecting the rhythms of the earth with those in our bodies and hearts. At the time, I was also a La Leche League Leader, providing breastfeeding support to new mothers. Now, I am part of the Hestia Retreat and serve on their Circle of Directors. I greatly appreciate working with women, and I know I can learn a lot from WWRL about peace, gratitude, and heart-centered living.

I am passionate about working with nonprofits, particularly in capacity building, governance and fundraising. I look forward to learning even more in these areas and sharing best practices with WWRL. That said, I am very impressed with the solid work the founders and volunteers have done to date, and I promise to continue the care and attention they have given. Thank you all. With Love, Amy



# Circle of Grace sends sister blessings from Switzerland

*Red Lodge is delighted to welcome our new lodge sister Marianne Grasselli from Pery, Switzerland! She is the creator of Circle of Grace, and when she discovered our WWRL website, Marianne was inspired to reach out and connect. Our sisters in Switzerland wish to introduce themselves to share their "intentions, joys and heartbeat!"*



Le Cercle de Grâce (the Circle of Grace) was created in the French speaking part of Switzerland by Marianne Grasselli in 2000. Marianne had finished her training as a music therapist and was looking for her roots as a woman, in relation to her difficult past. Her training in shamanic art therapy brought her into contact with Native American symbols and powerful connections with feminine experiences.

So she created what she desired for herself, but which did not yet exist — an initiation for women, inspired by the Medicine Wheel; the powerful rhythms of the shamanic drum, which bond us to Mother Earth's heart; and the voice — a spontaneous voice rediscovered and no longer imposed upon by social expectations. Through this initiation, women can reconnect to Mother



Nature by creating talismans through which they honor themselves. A ritual during which each woman presents herself personally to the Circle closes the ceremony.

In fact, the true quality of this initiation is the change in how we women look at one another, putting competition at a distance and accompanying each other as soul sisters. This initiation remains as a base of our circle; every woman who desires to become part of the Circle goes through this initiation. Hence, when we are all together we have this experience in common, whether we lived this initiation 10 years or three years or two weeks ago!

This first connection to our sacred woman self continues throughout the year in the seasonal encounters of The Circle of Grace. We have evening gatherings at Equinox and Solstice. We are always about 12 to 16 women. A month beforehand, Marianne sends us a seasonal intention in the form of a thought, something-to-do for ourselves, a natural creation (with objects from nature) to elaborate for this evening or objects to bring with us. We are all welcomed into the Circle without judgment. The evening begins with greetings from the women both absent and present and news from one another.

In the middle of our circle, there is the huge rainbow snake inside of which the Elders of the Circle place all their lifetime's moulting and shedding. Sometimes, the serpent moves and dances with the women! Within the circle, the center can become a mandala of sand, flowers, an illuminated altar filled with candles.... changing with each season. Afterwards, Marianne proposes a musical structure which nourishes the intention of this evening; this is always done by means of our personal drums or our spontaneous chanting.



--- MORE

Her main intention is that each woman finds her own personal way to unite herself with the season through this spontaneous music. Words are not necessary, it's the experience of the group which is important. The more reserved women and those more exuberant find their place. Through her drum, Marianne maintains the structure while leaving a place for each person.

We often create ritual objects which we offer or transform during the evening. The possibilities are infinite and always in connection with Mother Nature. The Elders have the last word. They have their own spiral-shaped speaking stick with white fur. They do not speak on their own behalf but in the name of the community and in relationship to what was lived and experienced that evening.



The women of the Circle can ask for a personal ritual. They are accompanied by Marianne and by godmothers, women of the Circle who have already gone through the initiation, a type of mentor. All the women of the Circle are able to participate since these rituals are included in our evenings together. Since the Circle has become larger, these personal rituals are in small groups of 8 women maximum. The women involved meet several times to elaborate their needs, explore how to symbolise them in relation to the medicine wheel, natural forces, the interior allies and create their rituals. For example, we have created rituals on abortion – the healing of our line of descendants; family secrets – the wounds of our fathers (and to heal our relationship to men); the family totem; the celebration of a couple.

We feel very close to you, dear friends of the Woman's Way Red Lodge. Your roots join ours. Your creative and musical approach and respect of each and every woman in her most intimate and sacred being is also our credo. Marianne's site is [www.espritdefemme.ch](http://www.espritdefemme.ch). On the first page, there is a link with a video of the Swiss television. You can see our group celebrating a woman's entry into her menopause. This is what we are able to share with you, due to our geographical distance which separates us. As of 2012, we are going to make a new step: encourage women of the Circle to take turns with Marianne in the preparation of our evening encounters. So the Circle turns, becomes richer with all our capacities and our infinite potentialities.

We hope to have given you an image of who we are. And we send you our warm greetings from Switzerland !





**In 2012, we continue our evolution as an organic, grassroots organization. Members are active in many ongoing programs; Sweatlodges, Hoops, Drum Circles, Summer Solstice Ceremony, and 13 Moons Crone Journey are all being co-created. The Plateau Area Hoop, entering its fifth year, is planning a Bone Lodge with the newly-formed Olympia Hoop. Anne Lohr is “dreaming up” a new workshop around dreams, and Red Lodge is looking for other creative ideas.**

**IF YOU’RE INTERESTED IN OFFERING  
A RED LODGE PROGRAM OR WORKSHOP  
PLEASE EMAIL [PROGRAMS@WWRL.ORG](mailto:PROGRAMS@WWRL.ORG)  
CREATE ON!**

**SAVE THE DATE      JUNE 20/21      VASHON ISLAND  
24-HOUR DRUMMING VIGIL TO HONOR GAIA**

Come for community, connection and celebration. Join the big medicine drums as we drum, sing and dance to make a joyful noise for peace and earth healing.

Noon to Noon.

- Singing, Drumming, Dancing
- Sacred Fire
- Spirit Canoe
- Pipe Ceremony
- Hold The River Sweatlodge
- Salutation to the Sun
- Singing Crystal Bowls

Friends, families, young, old -  
All are welcome!

Come and go as you like, or make  
a commitment with the drums.

Watch for details and schedule.

**SOLSTICE  
CELEBRATION**





## Spirit Son: paths cross, hearts join, ideas are shared and change happens for women in Kenya by [Connor Sauer](#)

**H**ard to say for sure when the tug in my heart came, causing me to answer a note from Kenya. Jared Akama Ondieki reached out across the waters and called forth a fire in me that had been simmering for a very long time. My Dad had just died, huge personal changes were unfolding, and life found me in Santa Fe amidst the unknown, little support, and total anonymity. Jared and I still consider that God put us together for some divine reason almost 4 years ago, so we began to exchange ideas and dreams.

Most of our initial exchanges revolved around democracy and peace, Jared being inspired by his ideas of America, me being inspired to share what the Constitution foundationally laid down under our feet and in our hearts here. Over time, the nature of our exchange changed, and Jared grew more intimate about his life in Kenya. I believe Jared has a natural, intrinsic wisdom and ethical living standard, born and raised up in him by his traditional family. Particularly his grandfather, who would take him into Council meetings of the men when he was very young, even against the wishes of other Elder men of the council. His grandpa was a wise soul.

The idea of growing food came through Jared during an on-line conversation about gender interactions in our respective countries, and the reality that people find it hard to consider higher moral principles or enter into higher learning when they are hungry. Jared looked into many things and landed on the garden idea when he recognized that many women were forced to trade sex for the privilege of buying fish to sell. When I asked Jared about addressing the men on this, he very wisely said that the best way to create change in Kenya was through the women. So the gardening project was born as a major program of [CEPACET](#), the non-profit Jared started to foster peace and change in Kenya. Jared has a wise soul!

--- MORE



--- CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

**M**y own role in this unfolding was initially to send money as I could. Advise, encourage, question, and notice things, such as an early picture of a man with a pack on his back in the demonstration garden. When Jared said he was spraying chemicals, I asked him to please do organic, sending information. When I asked Jared if the women were saving seed and he said no, I asked the women to save seed so that they could replant, share seed, and have some to sell. On it goes. They are gracious, attentive, courageous people. I don't know if the women sing to the seeds and plants yet, but I did ask!

Somewhere in the mix of the years, Jared adopted me as his "Spirit Mom", and I adopted him as my "Spirit Son." I took the name of ConnorMa, or MomConnor. I do treasure it, and found myself wanting to support Jared, his life, work, inspired contributions in ways that I could not do alone. I approached Red Lodge about making a donation to CEPACET and supporting the women's project; WWRL jumped on board with full heart, becoming a major supporter in many, many ways.

This project, I believe, has the potential to change the face of Kenya, through the women, from within Kenya. It doesn't get better than that. As part of his CEPACET work, Jared has written a fascinating and thorough report, hoping to attract larger supporters. In it, he writes:

--- CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

[Click here](#) for Jared's full report, which is well worth reading. There is also a moving [YouTube video](#) documenting CEPACET's garden project. Red Lodge is proud to continue supporting Jared and his work, and I encourage and appreciate your participation! Donate here and Red Lodge will send your contributions to CEPACET.

**DONATE TO CEPACET**

This is a large project with many challenges, and all assistance is greatly appreciated. You might consider giving a little each month, or make it a regular occasional gifting. Every little bit helps! One of my inner dreams is to go to Kenya to meet Jared and the women, with some SISTERS! We sure could put our community heart to good use there! Thank you for any and all.

The Kilimo Bora Kwa Kina Mama Project began in 2009 with an aim to provide the women with technical know-how and to popularize extensive food crop cultivation as a means for income generation. It sought to provide 100 widows, who initially were fishmongers, with an alternative means of income generation away from the preying eyes of the fishermen who have taken advantage of their dependency syndrome. The women were trained in the following areas:

- General understanding of Agriculture
- Agricultural trends around the country
- Food security and causes of food insecurity
- Types of soils and viable crops
- Food crop production for income generation
- Climate change and environment conservation.
- Women's economic empowerment
- Marketing
- Savings and access to agricultural loans



Fishing is the main economic activity in the district due to its proximity to Lake Victoria. To provide for their families, most widows practice fishmongering as a source of livelihood. However, the cultural beliefs do not allow women to venture into the lake to fish for themselves. As a result the women have to depend on the male folk to do the fishing and sell to them at wholesale price to enable them to sell at retail prices for consumers. The male folk however, have taken advantage of this situation and despite the money paid by the women for the fish, they have imposed a law of “no sex no fish” which results in high HIV rates among the women.

This prompted CEPACET to design the Kilimo Bora Kwa Kina Mama project which provides the women with an alternative source of income. The first phase described above has now grown and is continuing to change lives. Conditions for individual women and their households have improved greatly since the beginning of this project. Everyone who is part of this project is able to get food for subsistence use and for sale. The women are now selling produce and using the money to meet some of their needs and even make small savings for the whole group. The project has also benefited the entire community. Before, many people often went hungry due to the high cost of food shipped from far away. With the project's produce, people can access fresh vegetables at affordable cost, and this is a great blessing to the society.

It is imperative that efforts to empower women be supported selflessly by all people to achieve a lasting impact. The Kilimo Bora Kwa Kina Mama project has not reached its full potential. There is need to continue supporting this project in all ways possible so that it reaches its full potential and achieves self-sustenance.

I want to thank Mom Connor Sauer for her support and always being an inspiration and my mentor towards this journey of giving hope to our people here in Kenya. I connected with Mom Connor through the Light Workers women's circle link in 2008; since then our friendship has grown stronger. Through her I have met amazing people who have touched our lives here in Kenya in a big way with their generosity. Such a group is my wonderful sisters I am yet to meet in Woman's Way Red Lodge. I look forward to an opportunity to drum with all of you here in Kenya someday!

--- Jared Akama Ondieki



## The power to repurpose

by Sarah Strafford

Each time we step up to the dance - any dance in our lives - we ask to release what no longer serves us. We trust that spirit will assist us with that intention and that we will fill up those released spaces with what truly serves us. How would it change things if we were to ask for those spaces to be repurposed instead of released? Would that help us evolve into a place of wholeness where we can fully receive the richness of our authentic self? Would it feel more integrated to believe that we have the power to repurpose?

One day I was outside turning the compost and as I returned to the house to make a meal from the food left behind by some guests, I was fully present to how wonderful it was to repurpose these things. I was giddy with the knowledge that I got to take what others perceived as excess (they couldn't take it with them) or waste (if I don't want it no one else will) and find new spaces for it. Whether the food is recycled or composted or cooked or frozen and/or shared with the goats and the chickens - everything gets a second chance.

Being out here in Hawaii has reshaped much of how I walk upon the earth. This did not come easily as I have certainly encountered many of my own self-limiting beliefs about being able to live my dreams when paying work is scarce and my entire support network lives on the mainland. I put all my trust in the land, and slowly I have listened to the teachings of the compost pile and the recycle bins. After asking them what it means to give something a second chance and then acknowledging how those choices are made in my everyday life, I started to understand how anything being repurposed impacted my life as a form of nourishment. Not just food nourished, but mind and soul feeling more nourished by their connection to this practice. There is something intrinsically whole about being able to take a belief that no longer serves you and know that the power of that belief can be repurposed to nourish another belief. It is a unique form of energetic composting where you work with all parts of your being in order to sustain and nourish your continued connection to who you truly are and how that is authentically expressed in the world.

Much of our medicine comes to us in the way of repurposed objects. Doesn't it make sense that we could take this practice to the level of our beliefs and administer the medicine to ourselves? So the next time an old pattern comes up or some stinking thinking fills your troubled mind, check your energetic compost and receive the power of repurposing your beliefs.

# When we pay attention..... Earth's animal gurus show us

by Sage Abella



**A**re we paying attention? In the midst of the most simple things is a call that is rising. Can you hear it?

I'm walking with my friend, Jennifer. She lives in the upper story of an historic white building with a covered boardwalk porch that goes around the inner sides of a courtyard. Long wooden stairways lead up to the three levels of the old building that used to be a popular California hot springs retreat for tourists in the late 1800's. We're walking her cocker spaniel pup, Cara Mia, and catching up like old friends do.

Suddenly our conversation is sliced in two as a huge bald eagle screeches from behind us and lands, all talons and wild whirling wings, at my feet. It's an eagle like I've never seen, every feather pure white. The bird lunges for Cara Mia. Jennifer drops to her knees to grab the dog. The dog runs, the eagle chases. In only a couple minutes of wings, yips and screeches, the eagle eats the dog.

Jennifer and I stand there completely stunned. The eagle has flown away and all that's left of the tussle is a couple stray eagle feathers resting lightly on the tops of bushes down in the center of the courtyard. Still shaking, I walk down to gather the feathers and when I pick each of them up, they speak to me in a gentle hiss like an exhale or a snake. They say, "You carry our medicine now. Tell the woman how hungry Nature is, tell the people."

I wake up and get out of bed. What is Nature hungry for? In the last few months, my dreams have left me with many simple and deep questions, all of them having to do with the Earth. As a child I was taught we have five senses, our ability to see, hear, touch, smell and taste. As a woman, I've learned the most important sensing organ I now have is my dreambody.

There is a larger, magical part of my physical experience where my consciousness has the ability to lead the way. My dreambody is that consciousness which can travel anywhere without a car, fly without wings, meet

--- MORE

--- CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

with friends who live miles away, commune with long-dead ancestors, visit high mountain lakes after scanning the territory from above like a bird, have conversations with animals and landscapes as if they were speaking English, receive physical healing with tangible physical sensations and meet to learn from wise elders (who sometimes show up as trees).

Dreams are calling to us more than ever. Last week, I lived in a cabin I thought was at the edge of a lake until I stepped off the front porch into neck deep water. Behind the log cabin was a small marsh where men were riding quads and motorcycles through the high tule grasses. The marsh called out to me, "Sage, save us!" I spent the whole next day, awake, going through my life, taking kids to school, cooking dinner, wondering how I could save the marsh.

The earth is dreaming into me. That night I was walking through a tall, old growth pine forest. Many of the trees had fallen like giants' toothpicks because beetles ate them from the inside, at their core. I knew the trees were all one species, planted the way people plant things, not the way the forest seeds herself - a monocrop banquet for the beetles. The trees leaned down and said, "You can heal the trees and the path, just collectively love us."



I woke up to an answer that is easy. It doesn't involve a big mediation plan, doesn't take an understanding of biology or science, doesn't need machinery or moving earth and paving a new road to get there. It doesn't take a council. What it does is invite us into conversation. What is the earth hungry for?

She is ravenous for us to be in relationship with her; appreciating the way our eyes love the textures of the trees, the way we breathe deeper beneath wide open arms of a blue sky, the way gentle chattering of the birds calms us (birds who know how to be in conversation both with each other and with humans). We are biologically designed to be intimate with Earth. When that intimacy is present, a whole new set of choices and lifestyles can emerge on both an individual and collective level.

This morning our little red hen followed me down the hill to the car to take the kids to school. I opened the door, and she hopped into the driver's seat. My dreams have also taught me to read the symbols and the signs in my waking world. Animals of the Earth, a wind who shows up from the West, and a rain storm all are part of the larger consciousness I move around in; they are both wider and more cellular parts of my own consciousness. I don't think it was a mistake that this hen, who usually only moves around with her own flock, energetically followed at my heels and hopped into the driver's seat for the day.

Earth is talking with us. Can we listen? Will we respond before the white eagle comes to take our little dog away? Nature is hungry for an active relationship with humans. Can you hear it in your dreams? Will you have a conversation with a friend and start calling up that collective love of a pine tree in the forest or tomato plant in your garden? Can you spare five minutes each day to sit in nature and learn you belong in the midst of nature's wise web? Today I choose to listen to my Guru Hen and to act on what it means for her to be in the driver's seat.

# Book review: psychic women create alternate culture

by Maraiah Lynn Nadeau

Why do I love Sally Gearhart's 1978 novel, *The Wanderground*? I have been drawn to re-read it many times over the 30+ years I've had it. I've given copies as gifts. It's not that I'm a fan of future fiction. I find sci-fi and fantasy books challenging, as I stumble over invented words, concepts and odd names.

When I first heard what this novel was about, I scoffed. A world of women without men? Oh, and they can fly and talk with plants. Get real! But once I started reading, I found it surprisingly real. Something resonated in me. So much so that I once told a man that if he truly wanted to understand what women were about, and was willing to read just one book, this would be the one.



Along the lines of *Ecotopia* or *The Fifth Sacred Thing*, this is a story about a world gone out of control, with the bad getting worse to a horrifying degree. Every evil, greedy, misogynist trait has grown to nightmarish proportions in most of the world. As in the other novels, there is an alternative society of people who have escaped and are trying to survive and thrive. *The Wanderground* is mostly set in such a world, this one a world of women and girls, living in nature. They have developed psychic powers, using telepathy with each other, with plants and animals. They also have evolved thought-provoking social structures and ways of preserving their history and values.

The younger ones have known only this new world; the older women are survivors of the Escape. There are Hill Women, in disguise, on rotation to keep tabs in the City. We share the tensions of these spies, and the violence where the worlds intersect. (I do not recommend this for women who are extremely sensitive about anti-woman violence: some of it is rather graphic.) Yet most of the stories are of the new life, with much harmony and grace. This new society is interlaced with a world more familiar to us -- of women's meetings, politics and debate over the role of their gay-men allies in the City. Those of you with cats will smile at the role cats play in this world of telepathic women.

Sally Miller Gearhart has been well-known for decades, not mainly as a novelist, but as the founder of a ground-breaking radical Women's Studies program at San Francisco State University, and for her decades of academic and political excellence as a feminist (and animal-rights, environmentalist, and GLBT) educator, speaker and activist. I heard her speak long ago and found her remarkably articulate.

*The Wanderground* is readily available for about \$4 used, also new or as an e-book.



# Walking the crone's journey

by Susan Pitiger

I started this journey after a long walk around Capital Lake in silence with 60 others. With every step, I breathed Bless You, Thank You to Mother Earth. I realized that, at this age, my life is about what I am giving back; I knew I wanted to really BE ME before I died. As a way to honor myself and to be seen stepping into who I am now, I asked Kristina Turner to help me prepare for a Croning Ceremony.

This 13 Moons Journey led me on a life review to gather the gold, the gifts that each of life's challenges and joys brought. The harvesting has resulted in wisdom, that deep inner knowing. As I reviewed my journal from this Journey, I was amazed at how much gold I uncovered using the many different tools Kristina shared with our circle of budding Wise Women.

We created a hoop with the spokes of our spirit umbilical cords to contain and connect us as we embarked on our Journey for the gold. Drum journeys were an integral tool; I accessed the moment of the sperm penetrating the egg and felt ancestors pass their

--- MORE



## Now I know what I know!

by Mary Mitchell

Clarissa Pinkola-Estes calls intuition "the soul-speaking voice".

For me, it is the lost treasure of my wild woman spirit that I have hunted for all my life. I have learned to recognize its signs, its scent, its tracks, but almost always I have been on my own on this hunt – alone and many times lost and lonely in this pursuit of the Inner Voice. Now I am part of this circle of women, all of us intent upon seizing the fire of our True Natures. We have had a map to go by – although not one that fits any GPS I know of! We have had a map reader, two wonderful guides, and we have had each other...companions of the way, companions of the heart.

For me, 13 Moons Journey has been a giant step of moving from intuition to knowing. Always apologizing for myself...that's how I used to be. But not any more. Now I see why old women are cranky. They know what they know; I know what I know, and people who want to tell me I'm wrong can just get lost.

We need this; we need this knowing. We need people, especially women, who know their own voices and trust themselves, especially in this turning time. Don't you agree?

La que sabe  
Woman who knows...  
La que sabe  
Gather the bones.

La que sabe  
There's a river below  
La que sabe  
Guide me home.

--- CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

energetic baggage on to me. This Journey has allowed me to transform my baggage into gifts of wisdom AND transform the ancestors' baggage AND pass on less baggage to my descendants!

We created Soul Cards to access wisdom on a daily basis. I learned to really feel my five senses and use them for information about the day or the moment. Play was up for us in this 13 Moons; we built a fairy house, we danced, we sang, we drew. We made an Earth Mandala, a doll, a staff, life card collages, mind maps and wrote poetry. We learned to use the Four Directions to help access the gold by looking for the beginnings in the East, the passionate growth in the South, the harvest and lessons in the West and the ending, transformation and peace in the North.



Investigating the periods of Saturn Return in my life allowed me to see amazing things. Using Byron Katie's tools, I touched into the darkest cloud of my shadow and experienced transformation with three incredible positive turnarounds. YES!! I received a precious missive with each woman in our circle acknowledging me and seeing me as REALLY ME!

The long-awaited Crone Initiation Ceremony was powerful, wondrous and deep. We were held by four Crones and the Mother Earth and all Her elements! Afterwards, we were welcomed into a circle of friends and family, and what a charge to be seen and witnessed by that circle! For our final meeting, we held a Wisdom Circle for us newly-initiated Crones to share the riches we gathered on this 13 Moons Journey with our community.

I now recognize the golden thread of my life as seeing all people as one family. I see that I am a grounded woman who trusts her inner knowing. I now honor the Pause, that moment of silence and going inside to check my inner knowing. In my community, I am a woman keeper of ceremony, the hub of a wheel, the cheerleader with good intent. Moving forward into this part of life, I continue to offer my community a monthly Medicine Wheel. With another sister crone, I offer bi-weekly Wisdom Circles. And Kristina and I are starting another 13 Moons Journey.

**Hello Red Lodge members!** The groundwork is all laid for you to offer a Red Lodge sponsored workshop or ceremony in your community. There are forms on our website to guide you through the process of offering either a workshop or ceremony. WWRL can announce and list your events on the Red Lodge Calendar. And much more than that, Red Lodge is here energetically to join with you in enlivening the sacred feminine in YOUR community.

**We invite you to reflect. What might that mean for your community?  
Would you love to see women's sacred work blossom in your community?**

We encourage you to jot down ideas today about how you might begin. Keep them in a special notebook you can add to whenever a new idea pops in. You may be surprised how quickly your ideas grow with possibility for a Red Lodge sponsored workshop or ceremony. Plant the seed in your spirit. Water it with patience and love. We look forward to hearing what sprouts! [Email us.....](#)



## Red Lodge container supports glorious blossoming for crones on a 13 Moons Journey by [Kristina Turner](#)

Supported by the strong, energetic matrix that Red Lodge has been steadily generating for the past seven years, six women from ages 58 to 84 completed a 13 Moons Journey to wise women initiation this March on Vashon Island, WA. I have felt so honored to be a guide, with Susan Pitiger, on this Journey. When women courageously venture to review their lives, make art from what they are learning, look at their shadows in a new light, build sacred tools to walk with them, and go within to integrate their new-found wisdom, subtle and powerful changes make their eyes glow and their hearts speak truth. Each month, as we explored life review through art, guided meditation, poetry, storytelling and more, the unique character of each woman came more alive.

Throughout the year, especially when songs from Long Dance and Red Lodge gatherings were shared, I could feel the pulse of Red Lodge nourishing our circle's soul-deep journey. One of the most memorable circles on this year's journey was the month our circle met at Burton Hill under the big maple tree, drummed on Buffalo Heart, and made nature mandalas that expressed who we are becoming. Gradually, over several months, women on the journey began to ask questions. How many crones have been initiated? How many members does Red Lodge have? Who started Red Lodge? What else does Red Lodge do? They were invited to subscribe to receive the Hearth Letter. Some attended the Red Lodge Song Medicine and Hand-Held Spirit Pieces Workshops, and Imbolc Sweat Lodge. One has become a Red Lodge member. Red Lodge is weaving us in many ways.

When planning the Crone Initiation Ceremony for these 6 women, I was so grateful that I could call on other Red Lodge members to hold the bowl of this beautiful ceremony. Therese and Tere from [Sacred Groves](#) and

--- MORE

# Aho, alleluia, ashe and amen!

by [Therese Charvet](#)

I can't remember when I first heard the phrase "Aho Mitakuye Oyasin" (a Lakota phrase that means "All My Relations") at the end of a prayer. Saying "Aho!" at the end of somebody's prayer seems so emphatic, such a beautiful way to send words out to Spirit. Imagine my surprise (and chagrin) when a woman who had done Lakota Sundance attended sweatlodge here a couple years ago and told me that in the Lakota tradition, women do not say "Aho Mitakuye Oyasin."

That set me to thinking (again) about the issue of cultural appropriation around customs of First Nations people in North America. I wondered if using "Aho" was inappropriate. After all, we are not in Lakota country; we do not offer traditional Lakota ceremonies. In fact, including women on their moontime in our sweatlodges violates a Lakota taboo. Consequently, to respect Lakota people's traditions, I decided not to use the phrase "Aho" or "Aho Mitakuye Oyasin." And I find myself a little squeamish when I hear others of us white folks using it, which is what prompted this piece.

It is a beautiful thing to end our prayers with an emphatic punctuation like "Aho." In the past, I've occasionally ended mine with "Aho, amen, alleluia and ashe!" mixing up even more cultural traditions! Lately I've taken to saying "Aye" "So be it" or using the English phrase "All my relations." Because I am currently a student of [Si.Si.Wiss](#) medicine ways, the traditions of the Pacific Northwest First Nations, I sometimes use their practice of touching the heart and sending the prayer out as my hand moves up and out. And I make sure to share where that practice comes from and what it means.

Whatever I say and do, I want to express deep respect to the First Nations peoples of this land. When using a traditional phrase or practice, it is important to educate others about its source and send prayers of gratitude to the people of that culture. I start sweatlodges I pour with a "Calling-in-Spirits" song I learned on the Blood Reserve in Alberta, Canada. I received permission to share this song from the man whose song it was. To introduce the song, I say, "May any good and healing that comes from this ceremony ripple out to the First Nations people of this land whose ways were forbidden and repressed, and who still suffer the consequences of oppression. I honor the courage of those who kept these traditions alive despite the difficulty, and I thank those who have been willing to share these ways with our culture, despite this history. May there be healing for all of us!"

It is in that spirit that I send these words out to share these reflections with others. Blessed Be!

--- CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Maraiah Lynn from RoseWind Co-Housing joined us as honored crone guides. Nan was doorkeeper. Amy held the drumbeat on Buffalo Heart. What a gift! Each of the new crones was deeply moved by the service of wise women so closely connected through our common devotion to women's mysteries.

I was blessed to have my own crone ceremony ten years ago led by Grandma Billie Sockwomyn from Long Dance. She taught me that one of the unifying principles that guides community life is Give Away. When we receive something of deep value, it is essential that we give back our unique gifts and our gratitude so the flow of blessings in this world can continue. Co-leading this Journey sponsored by Red Lodge has been one way to Give Away the woman's wisdom that lights my life. I am so grateful.