

FIRE CEREMONY

Liidlii Kue First Nation
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FIRE CEREMONY

A fire ceremony is a powerful Dene practice used to release unwanted energies and attachments from the past and make space for new intentions. A fire ceremony can be used to release unhappy memories, fears, negative emotions, and anything that you are holding onto that doesn't serve your Higher Self.

Fire allows for rapid transformation. It provides the avenue to let go of the old story and drama, to transform, to renew and to be reborn. Through fire ceremony, you honor your lessons and old belief structures by placing them in the fire and turning them over to Spirit. By releasing these old patterns and beliefs into the fire, you heal deeply at the level of the soul without having to experience them at the literal and physical levels.



Fire ceremony, one of the core ceremonies in many medicine traditions, is typically held around the full or new moon of each month when the veils between the worlds are the thinnest. In the past, when fire ceremony was taught, it was only done with a teacher for years and years before ever doing it alone. Now, the Dene say that the earth and our civilization are in such great peril that fire ceremony should be held by anyone who is willing to step in. The fire itself will become your teacher and will let you know immediately if your intention is pure.

HOW IS A FIRE CEREMONY PERFORMED

Put fresh boughs around the fire pit till you make a complete circle, always clean up fireplace prior to and after all fire ceremonies, add tobacco and dispose of ashes, put ashes in a large river or creek that is close to fire area. In the cleaned up fire pit, spread tobacco on the ground on the inside of the rocks till you make a complete circle, then put two juniper branches on the ground pointed in the four direction first branch pointed North and South, once juniper branches are in place put two pieces of kindling pointed in the same direction as the branches.



Each of us brings food preferably traditional food or something to burn that we would like to rid the emotions associated with our past (on the Full Moon) or a prayer request of something new (during the New Moon), that will burn, turn to smoke and release into the ethers.





We may bring pictures, drawings, or intentions written on a piece of paper for the past or the newness. For the past, after we have burned and released the emotions associated with it, then we have something prepared that is written down on a clean sheet of paper. This would be something new that we would like to call forth from our Creator. For the newness, the prayer request is then burned and released into the ethers thereby replacing the past emotions with new ones.

1. We form a circle around the fire and start with signing ourselves in and a prayer to Mother Earth, ceremonialist will hold container up for spirits to look at food in the four directions then kneel on the ground at the eastern position, both male and female use one hand to hold birch bark gift container with items and the other hand touching the earth while praying, once done praying raise birch bark containers with items to Father Sky, say a prayer of thanks, then the drummers start drumming a prayer song, and continue with drum song till all directions are thanked, for each direction station feed a handful of food from the containers to the fire giving thanks to that spirit, then end with same continued drum song till items given are burnt. (Our family then joins hands and say an Our Father prayer, upon leaving the circle we would shake hands with participants thanking them for their support) Use past, present and modern prayers, everything works.
2. For any ceremony, always open sacred space – call in the sacred directions, east, south, west, north, mother earth, father sky. Drum a traditional prayer song and call in divine support from the Spirits, Higher Self, God, the Universe, spirit helpers, your guardians and ancestors.
3. Ask the spirit of the fire to help you release what you want to let go of and ask the spirits of the earth to receive what you are releasing. Place item in the fire while you name what you are releasing (you can say it out loud or in your head). BLOW into the fire, with the intention that the unwanted energy you are releasing is going out with your breath. If anything, else comes up during the ceremony, name it and release it. Thank the fire and wait for it to go out. Give gratitude to the divine and the spirits of the elements: earth, wind, fire, and air.

Don't worry about doing it perfect, it is the intention that matters. Let your intuition guide you and have a flaming good time!





Keep in mind, no one is obligated to speak during a Fire Ceremony. Anyone can participate without stating what they are releasing or calling forth.

The things we address from our past or call into our future can be shared with the group or kept to ourselves as we go through the Fire Ceremony.

YOU WILL NEED ANY OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS;

1. A fire place where you can safely burn a fire. If you live in an apartment, it is best to find a place outdoors where you can safely burn a fire.
2. Items such as a drawing, picture or written intentions that you would like to release from your past.
3. Anything else that you feel would serve you that needs to be released.
4. Use grandfather wood as it does not throw sparks, gather kindling and dry birch bark to start fire.
5. Tobacco, Sage, Sweetgrass or Juniper are a must.
6. Wooden Matches (preferably wind proof)
7. Axe or large knife to make shavings and kindling.
8. Traditional foods, berries, bannock, moose fat, fish, dry-meat, tea, salt or even a small carved stick or decorated willow, no bones (de-bone and put bones back on the land or on a cache)
9. Use dry birch bark tube to feed items to the fire, always add tobacco.

In strict Dene custom - the burning of sage, sweetgrass or tobacco is burned along with the past, which is given as an offering.

When the smoke rises into the ethers and is carried away to the Creator there should be a quiet or meditative break to embrace a new awareness of transformation in your life. It is also symbolic that you can offer up a bit of food you wanted and only ate half of so that you could offer the other half in thanks.

THE VALUE OF IMAGERY

Do not minimize the value of imagery in Dene ceremonies. The Spirit of the Creator is real. This is a way of demonstrating our gratefulness and thanksgiving to our Creator. When we pray to our Source and Supply who is the Creator; He can, will and does affect our lives. So, honoring Him and showing Him, respect is part of this ceremony.

After your fire gets going, each person may contribute to the prayer and then the items are offered to the fire. Tell Creator and all the Divine Spirits that you have called forth that you offer these things in thanksgiving. Meditate and feel the presence of the higher powers all around you. Singing praise, playing drum music either through tapes or instruments may also be used.





A TIME FOR CELEBRATION

You can sing, dance and enjoy yourself. Experience a feeling of thanksgiving that your prayers are already answered. This is a time of celebration. Every Divine Source you called in is present, so give thanks and believe you have already received.

MOST IMPORTANTLY

"Therefore, I say unto you, what things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mark 11:24

REFLECTIONS ON FIRE CEREMONIES

Coming to a fire ceremony symbolizes our willingness to burn away all that does not serve us and invites us to reconnect with our deepest desires to surround and nurture ourselves during each Earth cycle. The gift we prepare for the fire represents what we intend to release, invite into our consciousness, give gratitude for, commit to, dedicate for others, etc. It is an offering to feed the element of fire and to rekindle and remember not only who we are but what our Divine purpose is now.

DENE SEASONAL CEREMONIES:

1. **Summer Solstice** (June 21) to honor the South as a time for healing of our physical body and that of our spirit.
2. **The Autumn Equinox** (September 22) is our West fire for facing and healing our emotions and moving our intentions ever closer toward impeccability.
3. **The Winter Solstice** (December 21) is our North fire to honor all our ancestors and teachers (from the seen and unseen) and to recommit being our own best teacher.
4. **The Spring Equinox** (March 20) is our East fire that reminds us to open our minds (and heart) to always seeing and knowing the Truth.





Community Fire;

For thousands of years, people have gathered together around fire to cook, stay warm, use the light to see into the darkness, celebrate with ceremony and give gratitude.

Over those years, many hundreds of people have been “called” to share the energy of the fire and our circle. I come to the fires to hold space for others to play in the energy of the fire and our community. It thrills and feeds me to be allowed to participate in these seasonal celebrations.

When we share this ceremony with others, it is our privilege and necessity to enlighten them as to why and how we conduct this rite. It would not honor the fire or them to be uninformed or unprepared for what is available to them.

Meeting before the ceremony to help them find and prepare their gifts or stick would be appropriate. Making sure they have proper attire, women using dresses and both men and women using moccasin's only – a drum to hit, etc. – so they can become part of the tempo and rhythm which allows us to entrain as one with the fire.

Then and only then are we ready to meet the fire as a friend rather than a foe.

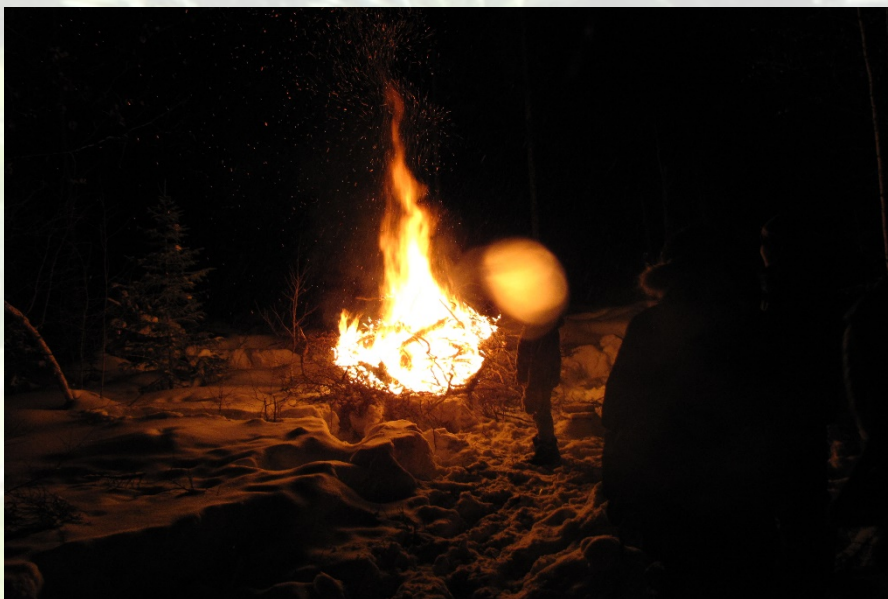
Consciously collecting the materials for a ceremonial fire;

As in most conscious acts of celebration, the ceremony begins long before the day of the fire. The wood that is gathered for the fire is from grandfather trees around our community.

What does a Fire Tender Do;

Traditionally the Dene have held week-long ceremonies where the fire is honored and tended 24 hours a day. I myself have sat and stoked a fire in the middle of the night into the dawn by myself. It is an amazing experience – one can never predict the magic that can show up for you in the alone, quiet times with those fires. I've also worked with fires to fight fires as a firefighter for 30 years, experiences with fires has made me respect and honour fire? Everything knows fire land animals, water animals, birds, man and natural ecosystems

Fires are NATURAL, being able to see life and death in a continuous battle, being there alive and able to witness it is an honour.





As a group fire tender, one is expected to:

- a) Direct the assembling of the firewood with the community.
- b) Ready the birch bark containers, using tobacco create a circle and tobacco to mark the North-South and West-East axis in the fire pit area.
- c) Puts down Juniper in the four directions.
- d) Puts 2 kindling on top of Juniper in same direction
- e) Gather 24 to 30" sticks and set up in the shape of a teepee.
- f) Medium to large logs are placed around the outside of the fire-pit to be used as the fire is established.



Lighting the fire:

Always start fire from the east (the direction of fire in our medicine wheel and the direction where our central fire, the Sun, rises every morning. If you want, ask for the eldest and youngest or birthday people to light the fire. Remember to provide a wooden match or a long handled lighter to start the fire, hopefully wind proof.

Stoking the fire and adding logs when needed;

Logs usually need to be turned and rearranged for even burning. Remember to allow fires to burn without being disturbed. It is important to know how long you intend the fire ceremony to last. This will determine how many logs you will be adding to the fire. Even though it is safe to leave fire embers at the end of the ceremony (in a fire pit), it is important to honor the fire by staying with it until the flames are complete.

Feeding the fire;

Some of our fire ceremonialist bring many gifts to feed the fire throughout the ceremony. This can be anything from flowers, incense, prayers and prayer bundles and personal treasures. Put all paper request in dry birch bark tubes since the ashes often float up into the air and can light people's hair or clothing on fire.

Stalking the fire;

I delight in walking around the fire and watching it from all angles. During our ceremonies, people are encouraged to move from their spots with the ceremonialist in a clockwise direction. Some people want to dance around the fire. Others like to remain still and feel the energy from that one space.





What does a Fire Ceremonialist or Leader(s) do;

These duties/privileges can be performed by several members of a group:

- a) Assign or determine who will be the ceremonialist.
- b) Assign or determine who will welcome and set the intention for the ceremony.
- c) Share any information about the current phases of the moon and stars, or current holiday.
- d) Determine when the fire is “friendly” to receive our gifts.
- e) Assign or determine who will instruct new participants as to why and when they might choose a direction to offer their gift to the fire.
- f) Assign or determine who will instruct on how and why to hold space when participants go to offer their stick by protecting their back.
- g) Please welcome all who want to participate in this service.
- h) Determine when it is time to offer gifts and give directions on how to offer them to the fire.
- i) Be directed by Spirit to interject comments and questions to create a community of celebration.
- j) Be open to receive and to be the empty vessel.

What do the participants bring;

- a) Bring an open heart to hear and connect with the heartbeat (vibration) of the earth
- b) Bring a rattle or drum to build and hold a vibrational container of honor and celebration
- c) Bring your friends and loved ones to share the magic with





CEREMONIALIST

Ceremony is the intentional focus of energy and attention on ourselves as Spiritual Beings Having a Human Experience and the aspect of Life that we are commemorating as a sacred component of that experience. Ceremony both sanctifies and reflects the sanctity of important transitions and their impact on our human psyches.

In ceremony, we invite the participation of other beings and dimensions into our experience and in so doing increase its depth and meaning and embrace the teachings that are transforming us.

We use simple tools to stimulate our senses so that we involve more deeply all aspects of ourselves. The scents of incense or essential oils; the sounds of invocations, chanting and songs; the feel of warmth or wetness from fire or water or the touch of a loving hand; the words and actions that issue from deep within us – all stretch our souls and connect us with Life from eons past and future.

Fire Ceremonies - Equinox & Solstice;

The mystery of fire lies in the way that it transmutes energy into light and warmth. Fire can cleanse, nurture and refine when properly respected and used. Acknowledging that life experiences change us, we consciously choose to release what no longer serves and to invoke the energy of positive change for what is to come. In this way, we celebrate with Fire the Great Mystery that is Life and our transformation on the path.

For thousands of years our ancestors have marked the seasons of the year with celebration. These celebrations have served as a way for the communities of the earth to renew themselves and to bond once again with nature and give thanks.

This can be our gift of renewal and transformation, our time to listen and be with the rhythms of nature, and our opportunity to express our gratitude for the gifts of light, love and life.





Bring a gift to feed the fire;

- a) A stick decorated with your dreams, thanks, fears, anger.
- b) Beliefs Let the fire symbolically transform and transmute them.
- c) Bring your open heart to hear and connect with the heartbeat (rhythm) of the earth.
- d) Come and get in touch with the awe-inspiring, sacred planet we call home **MOTHER EARTH.**

Bring your friends and loved ones - Come gather with your community Bring a drum or rattle- COME CELEBRATE



House Blessings and Clearings;

Blessing ceremonies have been a part of every culture since the beginning of time. A House Blessing is a wonderful tradition for anyone moving into a new living space.

When we think of "Home", our minds are filled with numerous images and memories. We spend a great deal of time in our homes, so they have become an important part of our lives. Our homes shelter us from the world, bring warmth to our hearts, and help to provide comfort and safety. Our homes provide a place for celebrations with family and friends. Since we are usually not aware of what energetically occurred prior to our acquiring a living space, it is highly recommended that we intentionally clear and cleanse the space before moving in. When a home is filled with peace, love, and harmony, it can be a place of renewal. A sanctuary where we can recharge our batteries.

Blessing and Clearing your home ensures that the space will be filled with your positive energies and intentions. House Blessings and Clearings also make a great gift for a friend or family member, as well as for yourself.

Birthdays;

Our birthdays are a perfect opportunity to celebrate and honor where we have been on this life path and where do we want to go. Often people chose to call together their family and friends for a "milestone" birthday to sit in circle and to share and honor the contributions of their specialness. Please consider it for yourself and those you love.





Baby Naming's;

Naming ceremonies cross all religious and national boundaries. The tradition of embracing a new life as part of the community began in ancient times. The miracle of a birth is a time for celebration in the family and the community. Naming ceremonies take on different forms depending on the preference of the parents, but they all have some common features: welcoming the child into the community, announcing the names that have been chosen, making promises of commitment to the child, and choosing other adults to provide guidance and mentoring for the child. This provides a perfect celebration of a new life.



First Moon;

When a young girl begins her first menstrual cycle/first moon, she is welcomed by the women of her community as one of them. She is celebrated and acknowledged as a powerful, creative being with the gift of life within her.

The creative power of the feminine has from the beginning of time been a source of mystery and reverence. This honoring invites her to expand that creative power into every area of her life.

How would your life have been different; how would you have seen yourself as a female if you had received such a ceremony? It is time for all women to share with our young sisters the wonders and the value of being a woman. Please consider this ceremony for young women in your life.



Weddings/Hand Bindings;

Whatever form a partnership takes, the choice to link one's life to another creates another entity, the relationship itself. Weddings and hand bindings offer a public commitment to a community and invites them to love and nurture this new entity - the relationship. This ceremony also invites all present to re-examine and re-commit to the quality of any relationships they desire in their own lives, and thus the love of two becomes the cementing of many.





Divorces/Partner Separations;

Many people find that obtaining a legal divorce isn't enough to make them feel a sense of closure. They are choosing to participate in a divorce ceremony -- to heal their hearts, to forgive past hurts and mistakes, and to free each other to move powerfully into new and separate futures. Whether they participate together or separately in this ceremony, their statements and prayers of forgiveness and release, in the presence of a supportive group, can be valuable in creating closure and self-identity.



Elders;

Older women and men are now celebrating their aging years with a ritual to mark their life experiences and wisdom. They are creating their own ceremonies of elderhood to celebrate their self-sufficiency, longevity, and personal freedom to choose how they will share their wisdom for the betterment of their communities. We live in a society that does not normally give reverence and honoring to our elders. It is we, the elders, who must openly claim our place in the circle of elders and live with honor and contribution in that circle.



Death/Final Transition;

A personalized end-of-life tribute can be a beautiful way for one to honor a deceased friend or family member. It is appropriate to celebrate the life of this person who has passed over and it can be a valuable source of healing and a beginning to closure for those who grieve. It will help you create a meaningful, memorable tribute to those who have passed over.





During All Programs, We Kindly Request That You...

- 1. Please wear clean attire that covers the knees and shoulders.**
- 2. Females wear a long dress and moosehide moccasins, males wear moosehide jacket or vest with moccasins.**
- 3. Please turn all beepers and cell phones off or to blink/vibrate mode so that others are not disturbed.**
- 4. Please do not take photos without special permission beforehand. Video and audio-taping are not permitted.**



“Mahsi Cho”