

Nature's Mystery Awareness School

Warriors of the Noble Heart & Tenders of the Inner Tide

Three-year Mentorship Journeys for girls and boys, ages 9-12 and 11-14.

In this time of rising social challenges, when many children in the modern world begin to turn away from nature in search of acceptance into popular culture, we offer a valuable opportunity for deepening connection, friendship, adventure, and service.

Our *coming-of-age* journeys are for the adventurous of heart, boys and girls who are ready to take their first steps into adulthood. Together we learn to honor the feminine and masculine energies within and around us, as we deepen our sense of belonging with all of whom we share this land. The fundamental format of the journey will remain consistent for all three years, with the curriculum shifting each year from awareness of self, to awareness of community, to awareness of the planet as a whole.

Mentorship

As mentors, we bring our presence, authenticity, and life's experience to guide and support the cultivation of each child's unique strengths in service to our local and global communities. Our approach is inspired by teachings and life honoring practices held sacred amongst our ancestors and indigenous cultures around the world. Through deep listening and trust in our ongoing relationships with the children, we craft activities and challenges that inspire each participant to access their inner wisdom and confidence.



Year One - Self



explore our potential and the limitations of personal power, as we learn to better care for ourselves and those whom we hold most dear.

The first of three years is about orienting ourselves to our ecologically unique bio-region and exploring how it influences the development of our individuality. We will sharpen our senses through awareness games, contemplative activities, embodiment exercises, resilience skills and open exploration. All activities and discussions are designed to inspire introspection, as we traverse the edges of growth and strengthen the bond within the group. Through our explorations of old-growth forest, oak savanna, rivers and waterfalls, mountain peaks, and coastal ecosystems, we will have opportunities to test our endurance, strength, and agility of mind in a safe, supportive environment. While our time together promises to be an enjoyable and enriching experience, challenges will arise. It is through such challenges that we learn to overcome discomfort,

Year Two - Community



We are blessed to live in a part of the world that has an abundance of individuals and communities dedicated to both innovative and ancient practices which steer our society toward a more harmonious relationship with the natural world. **In year two we expand our awareness to include the culture of our family, friends, and neighbors, including those who grow our food and those teaching us how to cultivate a resilient and compassionate local economy.** We will find inspiration in the stories and practices of the stewards of local biodynamic farms, permaculture education centers, cottage industries, homesteads, and intentional communities, where we will engage our bodies, dirty our hands and sharpen our minds as we help with natural building, food production, and tending the surrounding plant and animal communities. We will also explore practices that support the holistic health of these communities, including compassionate communication, song circles, and interactive theatre.

Year Three - Earth



In year three we broaden our lens of the world even further to include our planet as a whole. Watching the migration patterns of the salmon, birds, and butterflies, along with the waters and winds, will help us deepen our relationship to all other beings with whom we share this Earth. We will look at how our understanding of community shifts when we take in the teachings and stories of elders, change-makers, and travelers from across the globe, with special attention given to the representatives of indigenous wisdom. Participants will leave this year with a more profound realization of the universal interconnection of life. They will be further empowered with the courage, strength, and support of their community to live mindfully, in integrity with the values each of them holds most dear.

Elements of the Journey

1) Monthly Nature Excursions – Once a month, we depart from our meet-up location in Eugene to explore the beautiful terrain around us. Each place offers unique opportunities for self-discovery and nature connection. During our time together, we will learn about local flora and fauna and the ways various people of the past and present interact with the land. As we attune our bodies and minds to the lessons that surround us, we will learn to listen deeply to what is present in each precious moment. We integrate sense attunement practices with “bushcraft” (native botany, herbalism, bow drill, pit fire, basketry, and the like). Outings are a full day, 9am – 5pm and take place on a Saturday, approximately two weeks after the Wisdom Council. All trip locations are located between 30 and 90 minutes from Eugene. Transportation is provided throughout the school year, though we do ask for volunteer drivers for our end of the year camp.

2) Monthly Gathering & Wisdom Council - Council is an ancient communal practice of speaking and listening from the heart. The guidelines presented provide a sacred and safe space for exploring questions that lead the children to a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world. From 6-8pm one evening each month we will gather to discuss a different topic and whatever questions are most alive for us. The council itself lasts between 45 minutes to an hour. The rest of the evening includes some free-form social time and guided activities. Each participating family will host us for one gathering during the school year, for which an adult guardian of the hosting family is invited to join (typically Fathers with the boys, Mothers with the girls)*. Our first gathering, coinciding with the Autumn Equinox is a welcoming ceremony in which parents and siblings are encouraged to join. The last council of the year, all Mothers/Fathers come to share some of their own story and wisdom with the group.

3) Year End Rite of Passage Camp – At the end of each year, the *Warriors of the Noble Heart* join the *Tenders of the Inner Tide* to share with each other some of what they have learned. Each group undergoes a series of age-appropriate challenges to prove their readiness to take the next step on their path. They will also have an opportunity to demonstrate their maturity through service to their families, who are invited to join us for overnight camping and the closing ceremony to honor our children for their completion of the year. Boys and girls are responsible for clearing campsites, building, and tending a central fire, preparing food and cleaning up afterward. Year one is a five-day intensive with one overnight for which families are invited to join; year two includes two family overnights; and year three includes a participant-only, three night camping expedition.

4) Additional Elements

Parent Wisdom Councils – These parent-only councils enable us to strengthen connections between families, share challenges and celebrations, and discuss ways to support the children along their mentorship journey. Our parent councils will take place once at the start of the school year for orientation, once mid-year as a check in, and a final council at the end-of-year camp, as a year review.

One-on-One Mentoring – Mentors may be available to offer additional support. Additional costs may apply depending on regularity and duration.

Personalized Training Routines– At the start of the journey, we will discuss personal routines, striving for a consistent balance of aerobic/anaerobic exercise, creative expression, and meditative nature-attunement time. Mentors will work with each participating family to support the growth and development of their child.

Commitment

Far more than another extracurricular activity, *coming-of-age mentorship* and *rites-of-passage* are a crucial missing link in our society. A serious commitment and prioritization on behalf of everyone involved is necessary for the highest integrity of this journey. Priority will be given to families able to commit to the full three-year duration. A minimum commitment of one-year is required to apply.

Curriculum

Themes explored include: Body awareness and boundaries, personal and communal values, stillness and intuition, cycles of the earth, personal power and voice, leadership, self-resourcefulness, darkness/unknown, friendship and belonging, brotherhood/sisterhood, ancestral and personal wisdom.

Teaching Tools: Nature immersion; sacred space; compassionate communication; authentic relating exercises; inspiring stories of men and women (current, historical, and personal); legends and lore of the Pacific Northwest; empowerment exercises; service projects and ancestral skills; independent and group challenges; movement and stillness practices; song, theatre, and non-sectarian ritual.

Values We Evoke: Gratitude, patience, confidence, humility, honesty, integrity, creativity, courage, curiosity, and joy.

Hosanna, Lead - Girls Mentor

Hosanna cherished her Rocky Mountain childhood home. A move to suburban Texas at age nine led to a gradual disconnection from the natural world. The contrasting values between these two states awoke many realizations about right-relationship and balance with the Earth. As a high school freshman, she formed an environmental club that led educational campaigns year-round and an annual middle schools' sustainability seminar. She also organized a successful campaign with the city council to improve greenway access to her high school. Through this activism she connected to the Sierra Club's youth chapter and the Texas Climate Summit, training fellow youth leaders in organizing local social action for environmental stewardship.



Since 2010, Hosanna has been creating roots in the Southern Willamette Valley. Here, outward activism turned inward through solo nature quests, contemplation, and simple living. The wild places of the Pacific Northwest and especially the old growth forests have held her, healed her, and inspire her to greater service. She works closely with the medicine wheel teachings, learning from the metaphors of elements, animals, and seasons to holistically understand human psychology. A practicing ceremonialist certified in Transformative Arts facilitation, Hosanna is passionate about kindling creative thinking and authentic expression in both children and adults. Her life is also colored by singing, herbalism, learning ancestral skills such as primitive pottery and basketry, and cooperatively creating meaningful ceremonies and celebrations that bring her community together in praise of life.

Hosanna lives near Cottage Grove, on a 40 acre off-grid homestead. Here she lives without electricity and is every day humbled by the lessons of an unfamiliar, yet ancient way of life. She thrives in cooperative living and has studied group facilitation and consensus in four distinct intentional communities. Her training in empathic mediation and conscious communication are skills she contributes to her greater community.

Nathaniel, Lead - Boys Mentor

Though I have had many elders in my life, I would have to say that my primary mentor throughout childhood was the natural world itself. The meadows, marshes, and forests of my childhood home were always there for me when I was in need. They held me, as they held all the animals around me. They demonstrated to me the value of stillness and deep listening. They taught me acceptance of impermanence, the endless cycle of death and rebirth, the necessity of both darkness and light. Perhaps most importantly they taught me reverence for the unfolding mystery of life in all forms.



I became interested in learning about other cultures at a young age and began my travels as a teenager. I first learned about rites of passage while exploring the Aztec and Mayan cultures in Mexico and Guatemala. My interest was peaked and in college I traveled to Africa to see what more I could learn from indigenous wisdom to help heal our world. I camped with the Bedouin along the Gulf of Aqaba, visited with the Masai in Kenya, and traveled alongside Hutu and Tutsi through the war torn regions of Uganda and Rwanda. I saw firsthand the effects of war, AIDS, genocide, and ecological devastation, the full impact of which was felt following a motorbike accident along the coast of Zanzibar, in March 2000. I had been robbed multiple times before I was airlifted to Nairobi where, after my insurance provider refused coverage, I was released from the hospital, penniless and severely disabled. It was there on the streets, that I began to understand the real meaning of poverty and the value and privilege of U.S. citizenship.

When I returned to school, it was with a profound sense of responsibility for creating positive change in the world. I began working with other students to create organizations like Students for Peace and the Responsible Consumer Network. I worked as Co-Director of the UO Survival Center and for nearly five years coordinated events with faculty, the student unions, and the Multicultural Center, learning group process and consensus decision making.

Not long after my graduation, I moved to Lost Valley Educational Center, where I worked as the Outreach Coordinator and studied Permaculture, eco-village design, Non-Violent Communication, and nature education. Many mentors began to appear in my life and in 2007 I was invited by a Tututni elder, from Southern Oregon to participate in Hambalecheya, a traditional Lakota vision quest ceremony. This ceremony began a long process of deep spiritual healing and has continued to inspire every day of my life since. Through months in silent retreat, meditating, practicing yoga and qigong, and serving others, I began to dream of a school that I would one day help to create. In June 2011, while studying indigenous healing practices and place-based education in the Amazonian Rainforest, I had a vision that told me it was time to return home and start that process. Within four years, I completed two teaching degrees in Waldorf education and founded Nature's Mystery Awareness School. I am humbled and grateful to share my experience and a little of the wisdom that has been shared with me to help guide the younger generations toward a more balanced relationship within the greater web of life.

Program Cost and Details

Starting in 2020, Nature's Mystery will be offering this 3-year journey through community supported mentorship. We feel inspired to structure an alternative economic model funded by the contributions of our community to make mentorship, nature connection and rites of passage more accessible for youth/families. Applicants will be selected to participate and receive the financial support of their community by three criterion – application, interview, and commitment.

If you would like to donate towards the cost of future participants, please visit our donor page.

Nature's Mystery Awareness School is a community-supported non-profit endeavor. We invest 100% of our time, energy, and financial resources in our mission:

“To cultivate a peaceful, socially sustainable, and ecologically regenerative future in the hearts and minds of today's youth.”

Ready To Apply:

- 1) Read this full journey description and the parent-participant agreements
- 2) Complete the Application (included below) and sign the Parent and Participant Agreements and mail it to Nature's Mystery P.O. box 741 Cottage Grove, OR, 97424.
- 3) Upon receiving and reviewing your application, we will schedule a time to interview the applicant and meet with your family.

Before the completion of each year, participating families are asked to re-commit for the following Spring.

*Tenders of the Inner Tide and Warriors of the Noble Heart are female/male gender specific coming-of-age journeys. We recognize and honor those of all gender identities and are working to establish offerings for those that do not conform to binary gender identifications. We hope to be able to in the near future and welcome inquiry and notice of interest.

Contact

For more information please visit Naturesmystery.org
Call 541.521.8658
P.O. box 741
Cottage Grove, OR, 97424

Warriors of the Noble Heart & Tenders of the Inner Tide Application
(please write legibly)

Parent 1 Name

Phone

Email

Parent 2 Name

Phone

Email

What does rite-of-passage mean to you?

What aspects of this journey are most exciting/important to you?

Please tell us why you feel that your child would be a good fit.

Are you able to host our group for one, or possibly two council evenings during the school year?

Do you have any specific skills, or resources, that you would like to contribute/share?

Do you have any scheduling conflicts that we should be aware of?

Does your child have any specific health concerns, or other special needs that we should be aware of?

This is a three year program. On a scale of 1-10, (10 being highest), how prepared are you to commit to all three years?

One year –

Two years –

Three years –

Is there anything else you would like us to know?

Warriors of the Noble Heart/Tenders of the Inner Tide Child Application
(to be filled out by the child, with parental support)

Name

Birthday

Draw a Family tree.

Explain the meaning and origin of your first and last name (to the best of your ability).

Who is the oldest person that you know? What is their age? What is one lesson that you have learned from them?

What are five kind deeds that you have done for your family and/or community in the past year?

What are three kind deeds that you have done for your animal community in the past year?

What is one kind deed that you have done for your plant community in the past year?

What do you consider to be one of your greatest strengths?

What do you consider to be one of your greatest challenges, or limitations?

What is one fear that you would like to overcome?

What is one goal that you would like to accomplish over the course of the next year?

This is a three year program, in which you will face many challenges and obstacles. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being highest), how prepared are you to commit to each year?

One year –

Two years –

Three years –

Nature Awareness Survey

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. **THIS IS NOT A TEST!** “I don't know” is a perfectly acceptable answer, but please follow it with your best guess. (Only write what you know in this moment. Do not use books, or other resources. **Parents: *no helping!***)

Where is the closest body of water to your house? Is it safe to drink?

What are the three most dangerous animals in Lane County?

What are three poisonous plants in Lane County?

What are the names of three Native American tribes in your area?

What direction is the sun in the sky at 2pm?

Which direction do daisies face at eight o'clock in the morning?

How long can a person survive in the wild without food? Water?

What common bird in your area has a white ring around its eye?

If you were lost in the woods, what is the first thing that you would do?