

Explorers of Sacred Lands

Nature's Mystery Mentorship Journeys for Boys and Girls Ages 8-10

This nine month journey is designed for boys/girls and their families who are not ready or able to make the full commitment asked of them for the three year Coming of Age rites-of-passage journeys; *Tenders of the Inner Tide* and *Warriors of the Noble Heart*. The Explorers journey is an opportunity to initiate new friendships, to bond with the natural world around us, and learn about our roles and responsibilities as stewards of the greater web of life. We explore together new and ancient wisdom of what it means to be fully human, awake and aware of the challenges that lay before us, and the lessons of our past, while fully experiencing the present moment.

During Explorers we touch briefly on each of the themes that comprise our lengthier Mentorship journeys; exploring our relationship to how the elements of our environment shape who we are as unique individuals, how together we create community, and how each of us influences the planet as a whole through our daily actions. All this is done through opening up our senses more fully to the world around us, engaging our bodies, our minds, and our souls through open and guided exploration of the magical lands that surround us, including the ocean, mountains, wetlands, and waterfalls, as well as intentional communities, organic farms, and permaculture education centers. Seasonal potluck gatherings and bi-monthly sharing circles will provide an opportunity for participating families to strengthen community bonds and friendships among the children. **We will complete our year together with a two day, one-night camping trip. All parents and siblings are welcome and encouraged to join us for the overnight.**

Our journey is designed for one group of six boys and another of six girls. There will be opportunities for both mixed gender and gender specific activities and dialogues, as the boys and girls groups spend time together and apart on each of our outings. The bi-monthly gatherings will be gender specific. (Participants who identify more strongly with non-traditional gender identities are welcome and can choose one group, or move between the two.)

Elements of the Journey

1) Bi-Monthly Gathering & Sharing Circle (September, November, February, and April) -

Every other month, the boys and girls groups will gather separately for two hours on a Thursday evening. These circles are an opportunity to share in deeper questions and conversation, challenges and games, as well as free form socializing. Each gathering will be hosted by one of the participating families and will provide a sacred and safe space for exploring the questions that are most alive in our hearts and minds as facilitated by the children's mentor. One adult guardian is invited to join us for each of the gatherings. Our first gathering, coinciding with the Autumn Equinox will be a welcoming ceremony, in which both parents and siblings are encouraged to join. During the last gathering of the school year, parents will have the opportunity to share some of their own stories and wisdom with the group.

2) Bi-Monthly Nature Excursions (October, January, March, and May) – Once every other month, we depart from Eugene for a terrain with diverse qualities, each place offering unique lessons and opportunities in our exploration of self and environment. During our time together, we will learn about local flora and fauna, including poisonous plants and dangerous animals, and about the ways various people of the past and present interact with the land, attuning our bodies and minds to the lessons that surround us as we learn to listen deeply. Outings are a full day, 9am – 5pm and take place on Saturdays. All trip locations are located between thirty and ninety minutes from Eugene. Transportation will be provided, though we may ask for volunteer drivers.

3) Seasonal Potluck Gatherings - During months that our excursions are not already planned, participant families are encouraged to create space build community in a wholesome and intentional way through sharing meals and other activities. The format and duration of each of these gatherings will be determined by the hosting family, in agreement with all participant families. (These events will be free of drugs and alcohol and the use of any electronic media).

4) Year End Overnight Camp Out (June) – At the end of the school year, around the time of the Summer Solstice, the Explorers and their families will come together for an overnight camping adventure to celebrate the accomplishments and growth of the past year. The boys and girls will share with their community about what they have learned, as well as undergo age-appropriate challenges to help develop greater patience and confidence in service to their families. There will be a ceremonial closing to our year on our last morning together.

Curriculum: Our curriculum will be customized to best help each individual child uncover their unique gifts, to overcome their challenges, and to step boldly onto their path. Themes that we will be exploring include: body awareness and boundaries, personal and communal values, stillness and intuition, cycles of the earth, personal power and the voice, darkness/unknown, friendship and belonging, brotherhood/sisterhood, and ancestral and personal wisdom.

Teaching Tools: Nature Immersion, Sacred Space, Compassionate Communication, Inspiring Stories of Men and Women (current, historical, and personal), Legends and Lore of the Pacific Northwest, Empowerment Exercises, Movement and Stillness Practices, Song.

Values We Evoke: Curiosity, Joy, Gratitude, Patience, Confidence, Humility, Honesty, Integrity, Creativity, Courage.

Some literary sources of inspiration:

Rites of Passage

Bill Plotkin: *Soulcraft, Nature and the Human Soul, and Wild Mind*

Mircea Eliade: *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*

Julie Johnson: *The Thundering Years*

Girls & Women

Tami Lynne Kent: *Wild Feminine*

Janet Lucy & Terri Allison: *Moon Mother, Moon Daughter*

Lucy Pierce: *Reaching for the Moon*

Mary Cipher: *Reviving Ophelia*

Boys & Men

Michael Meade: *Men and the Water of Life*

Robert Bly: *Iron John*

Robert Moore: *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover; The Archetypes of Initiation*

Malidoma Some: *Ritual, Power, Healing and Community*

Hosanna, Lead Girls Mentor

Hosanna cherished her Rocky Mountain childhood home. A move to suburban Texas at age nine abruptly woke her to an understanding of the earth as sacred, invaluable, and very much in need of intelligent stewardship. 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 led a successful campaign with 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.

In 2010, Hosanna's journey of reconnection to self and nature brought her to Oregon; back to the same land her ancestors had pioneered over a century ago. 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 opened her eyes, heart, and mind to the magnificence and preciousness of all life, especially her own. She feels inseparable from, as well as at home in, nature. She works closely with the medicine wheel tradition, using the metaphors of elements, animals, and seasons to understand human psychology. A practicing ceremonialist certified in Transformative Arts facilitation, Hosanna is passionate about kindling creative expression in both children and adults. Her life is also colored by painting, pottery, singing, herbalism, and gardening.

Hosanna lives near Cottage Grove, on 40 acres of off-grid land creating a multi-family homestead. She lives without electricity, cooks on fire, and is every day humbled by the lessons of an unfamiliar, yet deeply human 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. Hosanna sees that there is a great need for healthy models of communication, and is inspired to integrate communication exercises that cover consent, conflict resolution, and public speaking, within the context of these mentorship offerings.

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 of the 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 AIDS, genocide, and ecological devastation, the full impact of which came in March of 2000, following a motorbike accident along the coast of Zanzibar.

I had been robbed three times before I was airlifted to Nairobi and 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 my 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 was hired 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 operating primarily on consensus decision making models.

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. I enrolled in the Waldorf teacher education program here in Eugene and founded Nature's Mystery Awareness School the following year. Now with two teaching degrees and nearly two decades of experience as an educator under my belt, I am excited to finally offer the first of a series of mentorship journeys so many years in the making!

Cost and details: In order to provide the richest possible experience for all participants, application is required. Program enrollment will be limited to six boys and six girls. Individual and small group mentorship opportunities will be offered for any children not selected for this particular journey.

Program cost is \$750 (Nominal transportation and supply fees may apply.)

**Our scholarships are designed to provide greater access to nature education for those in need. You can fill out a form online, or give us a call to discuss your situation. If you are able, please consider donating toward providing financial assistance to families who would otherwise be unable to attend and creating more nature immersion opportunities for the children of our community!

TO APPLY: Please mail a completed application along with a 25% deposit (non-refundable upon acceptance) to Nature's Mystery P.O. box 741 Cottage Grove, OR, 97424. Please call 541.521.8658 for more information.