

# Winter Solstice Story and Journey

This ritual was held at a beach near our home, with the invitation to camp overnight and join us for a sunrise dip into the Salish Sea to welcome the return of the light.

The set up for this ritual was complex. You could simplify this if needed.

We set up battery operated string lights to light a path for ritualists to follow on a nighttime walk. There were a couple stops on the journey. Everyone got a candle to carry on the journey.

**Stop 1 – Altar to Water** – had bowls filled with sea water, simple instructions and a sample Water Self Blessing written on posterboard, lit by candles. Each person was invited perform a simple self-blessing with the sea water.

**Stop 2 – Altar to Fire** - a beautiful lantern lit altar depicting solstice and the birth of the Sun. There was a basket of solstice gifts, one for each participant. The gift bundle contained a wax egg fire starter (to be taken home), and a seed bomb.

**The walk:** we laid out a route for ritualists to follow, mostly lit by strings of lights to follow. The walk started and ended in a beach shelter. In the beach shelter, we laid out a spiral labyrinth using string lights. After the beach walk portion, people walked the spiral to the central altar and put their journey candle on the altar.

## Gather and Land Acknowledgement - Sandra

- Welcome everyone to Winter Solstice Ritual. (I don't have any notes from this welcoming and don't remember the exact theme, but something solstice-ish)
- We acknowledge we gather on lands stolen from the Suquamish and Coastal Salish peoples. Although most of our cultural lineages are different than the original peoples who inhabited this land, we hope we bring honor to this land with our prayers, our customs, and our good intentions. We encourage each other to foster the spirit of remembering, reconciliation and restitution to the indigenous peoples who still live here today. A MINUTE OF SILENCE

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## Grounding: XXX

- Continuing to take long slow deep breaths, ground down and become rooted in this good earth, our mother, our only home. Feel your connection with her becoming enlivened, even in this time of cold and darkness. Feel that even though she is sleepy and sluggish, she is still very much alive - the mycelium weaving connections, the underground water still flowing, the rocks holding everything together. Presence yourself right here, right now. In the darkness, in the wind, the sound of the Salish sea murmuring in the background. With a long slow breath, let go of any thoughts or cares you brought with you from your day. Welcome yourself to solstice night. Feel the pull of the darkness, the beckoning of the silence. Let yourself spiral into the holy dark.

## Circle Casting: XXX

- Tonight for solstice, we will not draw a physical circle to contain our ritual. Rather, we create a container of connection. We weave a web of belonging. We bring to the

forefront that which connects us, that which binds us into community. Look around you, you will see some faces you know almost as well as your own. And you will see some faces you hardly know at all. But we are all connected in this human tribe. Each of us belongs here. There are some things we can pretty much assume. If you are here, you probably have a deep reverence for the Mother, this good earth, our only home. By your presence here, you are also announcing that you value the celebrating of the wheel of the year in community. We could also pretty much guess that you share in the theology of liberation, the desire of freedom from oppression. And we could also guess that you recognize the presence of the ancestors in your life and have some spirit or divinity that you connect with. So, we let these threads of connection begin to weave our sacred circle on this solstice night. We let the warp of our individual hearts and the weft of our belonging in community form the fabric of our container.

**Performed Song – “Weaving”** (unfortunately, I do not have a recording of this song)  
**Calling in the Humans**

- To continue casting the circle and stitching together community, each of us will come up to the altar, pick up a candle, light it, and say or sing your name. Allow the whole of us to welcome you by echoing back your name to you. Then offer us a gift by telling us something about you that needs to be known. In the space of a breath - very important, brevity with impact - you could tell us something important about you, some gift you bring to your community, some piece of deep gratitude you are feeling right now. Set an intention for this ritual, something that feels alive for you in the darkness, some magic you want to do. Remember, something you can say in one breath, something that will weave your heart into this beautiful solstice fabric tonight. I will begin (leader models). When all are done, leader says something like “Even though your journey into the darkness tonight is a journey you take alone, know that you do so within a circle of belonging, a container of community and safety. And with that, the circle is cast.”

**Calling in Elements – 4 volunteers were called for:** This was impromptu, and they were given no specific directions, merely told to be led by spirit and speak their heart. They called in East/Air, South/Fire, West/Water, North/Earth.

**Calling in the Ancestors – volunteers were called for, anyone who wanted to speak** This was impromptu, and they were given no specific directions, merely told to be led by spirit and speak their heart.

### **Story Channel Context Setting - Sandra**

- The act of sitting around a fire in the darkness, telling stories, is as old as humanity itself. We tell stories to make sense of the world around us, to find our common ground, to establish our sense of belonging and learn the lessons of our ancestors. Winter solstice has hundreds of stories associated with it, from all over the world. And though we don't share lineage with all these ancestral stories, most of them have some common thread woven through. Over and over, in cultures all over the world, we hear the idea that time stands still for a moment. You lose yourself to the night, turn inward, take stock.

Our word for solstice, from Sol - the sun and Sistere - to stand still - the day the sun stands still. While the stillness reigns and darkness holds sway, we pause, we listen, we

sit in the stillness of the pause between breaths, waiting to hear what the darkness has to offer. Story after story of a long night of darkness, finally giving way to the coming of dawn when the Great Mother again gives birth to the Divine Child Sun. Tonight we offer our gratitude to the darkness, we savor it in all its richness.

- So we share some stories with you tonight, from around the world, throughout time, in hopes that some spark will light for you...you'll find your soul's hunger...you'll realize what you need to lose to the night...receive some guidance from your ancestors or helpful powers...each of these stories will pose a question that may guide you on your journey tonight. Not only here during this ritual, but during the whole of the vigil tonight, on the longest night of the year. A blessed solstice journey to each of you.

### **Story Channel: Sandra introduces each of the 4 story tellers**

(we have four different community members tell a story of winter solstice from their lineage. Their stories were not scripted, they cannot be captured here. Be mindful in the recruiting for these story tellers, making sure they can hold the storyteller role. Each story should end with some kind of question we can all ask ourselves. These are the stories that were told at this ritual:)

- XXX tells the story of Amaterasu – from Shinto / Japanese. Amaterasu the sun goddesses. She is angered and retreats to a cave, plunging the world into darkness. The Gods try and try to get her out, but she won't emerge. Finally, the goddess Uzume does a very sensual dance that draws the Sun Goddess out of the cave and light returns to the world. Question: how can we find our joy and sensuality in the darkness and bringing forth hope?
- XXX tells the story of the Mexika / Aztecs... Coatlicue, the earth goddess, who becomes pregnant after a feather falls onto her. When Coyolxauhqui (the moon) and her brothers, the stars, discover their mother's pregnancy, they plot to kill her. However, Huitzilopochtli, the sun god, is born fully formed from Coatlicue's womb, ready to defend his mother. He defeats his siblings, dismembering Coyolxauhqui, representing the phases of the moon. Question: How do you emerge from the darkness transformed?
- XXX tells the story of Mothers Night - Frigga, the goddess of love and motherhood, gives birth to her son Baldur. She desperately tries to protect him from a prophesied death, but tragically fails due to overlooking the seemingly harmless mistletoe. Question: Is there something in your life that is harming you that could "come to light" in the darkness?
- XXX tells the story of Basque traditions for Solstice – Question: is there something that your lineage or ancestors would like to whisper to you in the darkness?

### **Walk in the Darkness:** after the last story is told, Sandra introduces the walk

Now we will begin a journey into the darkness. We have laid out a path of lights for you to follow, starting here on this boardwalk. Follow the lights. There are 2 places you are invited to pause and reflect. The first, an altar to water, where you are invited to do a water blessing for yourself. Then you walk a long way down the beach, seeing strings

of lights intermittently, following the lights when they turn left and head inland. After a bit, you'll find a second altar, an altar to fire, where you are invited to stop for a moment - and there will also be a very small gift for each of you there...don't forget to take the gift from the bowl at that altar. Then follow the lights again back to this beach shelter, enter in at that north end and follow the path as it spirals to the altar. Put your candle on the altar, joining all our lights together.

We will leave here one at a time (or two if you really want to walk as a pair), with about 30 seconds between each other. We will all try to walk at the same slow pace...You may come together at one of the altars...that's fine...just try to maintain noble silence.

Remember to bring your candle, feel free to put it in your pocket if you want more darkness. Consider this walk to be the beginning of your vigil for solstice night...steep yourself in gratitude... savor the richness of the silence...find your soul's hunger... realize what you need to lose to the night...listen...receive some guidance from your ancestors or your personal guides...you know what you need to do. Whatever you need to do to get ready, please do so now.

**XXX teaches and starts the walking song:** (whatever song you choose for this, make it a really simple chant song without many words. You may also choose to walk in silence)

Everyone starts singing. One by one, everyone leaves the shelter to do the walk. A couple people stay in the shelter. When the last "walker" leaves the shelter, the 2 people left in the shelter switch to the returning song.

### **Reconvening in Circle**

- Sandra and V stay in the shelter, singing the last people out, then switching songs to the "Welcoming people back from the walk" song

As people come back, they walk the spiral to the central altar, light their candle and put it on the altar. Then they join the circle and start singing in welcome to the other walkers

When all have returned

### **Sharing: XXX**

- Asking for brief shares from the heart, only if they have something important to say - it's ok to say nothing here but to remain in sacred quiet

- The small gift you each received on your walk is a wax egg fire starter. If you desire, you can use this to light a ritual fire tonight for your vigil...or tomorrow morning to welcome the sun's return. If you are camping here tonight with us, we can talk about how to use it ritually. Or you can save it for another time...maybe to light a summer solstice bonfire or a Beltane ritual fire to jump over.

Allow any shares to unfold, then

### **Container Farewell XXX**

- This piece of the solstice night vigil will now transition. If you are going home, may your night of darkness be blessed and beautiful. If you are staying here, we will all be on this journey together. Regardless of staying or going, everyone is invited back here at sunrise (ish) tomorrow for a quick dip in the Sound to welcome back the light and raise some energy. Bring drums, rattles, your voices.

- **XXX** offers a quick thanks to the directions and ancestors

- **XXX** takes down the circle: Now everyone, begin to reach out with your intuitive self and gather up bits of the fabric we wove to create this container. Pull in some of the energy from everyone here, parts of their stories and shares, gather up bits and pieces of the solstice stories that were told, gather it all up, all that energy we create by being together in sacred space - put some of that energy into your heart or whatever place you have inside you that will shelter it and keep it there for you in the darkness...savor it...and the rest we throw up into the heavens, into the holy dark, to feed all the ancestors and helpful ones watching over us.

The circle is open, but never broken, may the love of the goddess be ever in our hearts, merry meet - merry part - and merry meet again