

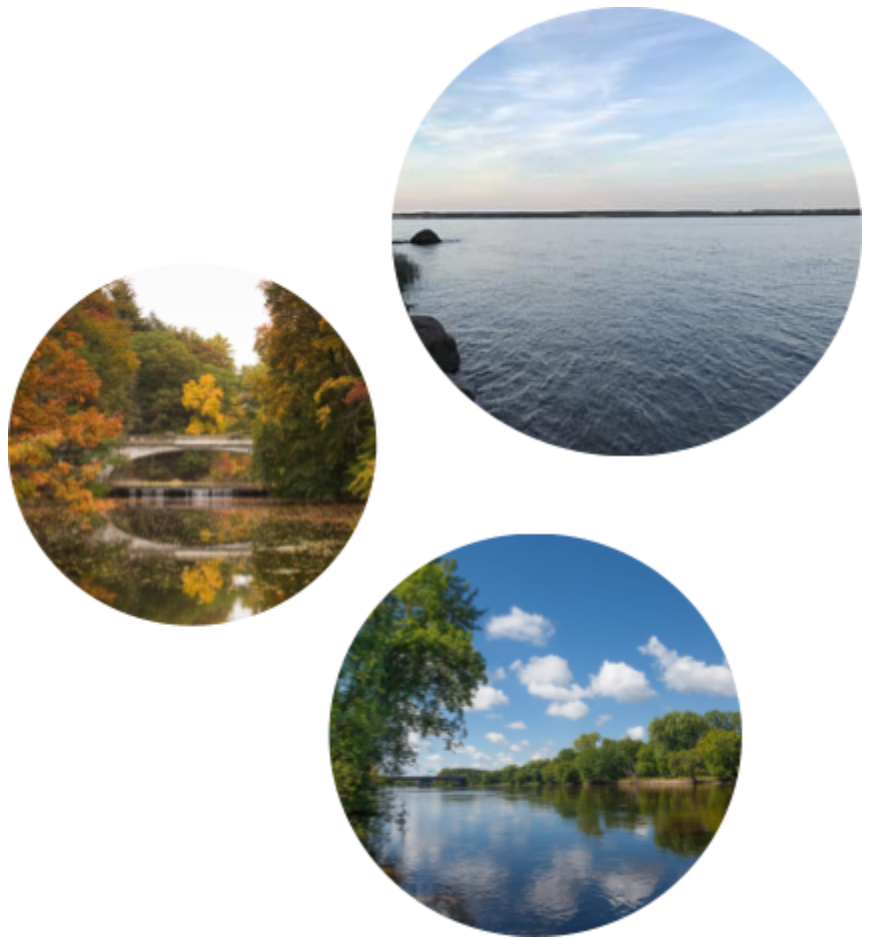
Edge of the Woods Ritual

Shared by Jonel Beauvis with Aida Cuadrado Bozzo for the [Calling In & Up](#) community

Description: Aida Cuadrado Bozzo experienced this ritual as a welcome to the Akwesasne Indian Reservation and was given permission to share it by community member and friend Jonel Beauvais. It is well-intentioned and comes from a beautiful place.

The purpose of this ritual is to clear individually and collectively from the toxins of systems of oppression as they have impacted us as women identified people of color.

Please attribute the culture keepers who have offered this to the collective.



history

Iroquois culture, including the Oneida, puts great importance on the concept of “guest,” particularly those guests of an official nature. This importance has given rise in turn to the “Edge of the Woods” protocol and ceremony, whereby a settlement could welcome official delegations and other visitors, not only to afford hospitality, but also to assure safe passage. The protocol included expectations of certain behaviors by the visiting parties as well as by the hosts.

It should be obvious that any unannounced visit in our ancestors' times might be perceived as a potential threat. To assuage the fears of the destination settlement, and to decrease the likelihood that they would be met with hostility, visitors would set up camp some distance away and build a fire to announce their presence. On detecting the smoke from their fire, the village leader would convene a meeting to designate runners to greet the visitors and escort them to the village.

When the runners reached the visitors' camp, they did not enter it immediately, observing first from a safe distance to determine numbers and weapons, if any. Once they determined it to be safe, then they would go into the camp and ask where the visitors were from and what was their purpose in coming.

When the runners were satisfied, they would escort the visitors into the settlement. As they entered the meeting place, the visitors were made as comfortable as possible, and then the leader or another designated speaker would greet them, announce their presence to the people, and conduct something like the following welcoming ceremony:

ceremony

Supplies: Cloth/tissue, cups of water for everyone, feathers

Instructions:

- Have each woman grab a cup of water, cloth/tissue and a feather.
- Half of the group makes an inner circle together facing out, and the other half makes an outer circle. Both are facing each other.
- Have the women, wipe each others eyes, ears, and hand each other water at the time of the ceremony
- Read the History (above) of how the Iroquois entered a camp and would be welcomed, then add:
 - “Ladies of Power 50 I welcome you into this inaugural moment so we may enter together into a ceremony of interdependence so we can build power together as we create a new world.

- You have come with a troubled mind through all obstacles and burdens. You kept seeing the places where they met on whom we depended, my sister. How then can your mind be at ease? Let us welcome you and rid you of your pain and burden
- With this softest of this cloth, we wipe away the dust, tears and the all of the injustice, pain and horror that you have witness, so you may be able to see all that the Creator has provided us here on the earth, and that you may see clearly the generations ahead of us and the brilliance that stands before you.

[Each person wipes their partner's eyes]

- With this white feather, we brush away the dust from your ears, along with it we wipe away all of the hurtful words that might have been said to you, so you may be able to hear what your sisters tell you and make a decision based on a right understanding of the issue presented.
- Now we take water from one of the clear, clean springs of the earth and give you a drink to wash away the obstruction from your throat and enable you to speak and eat freely. To remove any negative words that you may have spoken and remove all the pain that has choked your voice. So that you may Perhaps you may also have a message for your sisters and that you may continue to speak against the tyrannies of the world and bring about a new world. [While it is being read, drink water and pass the cup]

[While it is being read, wipe with the feather]

- Now we stand you up and brush away all the things that may have accumulated upon you from your travel to get here from your head down to your feet. So that your feet may become unstuck in the ground.

attribution

Curriculum designed and piloted by Aida Cuadrado Bozzo, Trish Adobea Tchume, and Viveka Chen, as part of [Calling In & Up](#)

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