**Samhain Ceremony 2016-Lisa, Heather, Sandee, Julie**

***Intention:******1.*** *Write your own Autobituary;* ***2.*** *Go behind the veil and speak to a departed soul;* ***3.*** *Be present at your own celebration of life as you lay in state and receive from your sisters words of how you enriched their lives and those you touched with your presence.*

***Time:*** *3:30-8:00*

***Setting:*** *The room had a comfortable bed in the center (our altar). The pictures we brought of those that had passed were around the bed. There was a veil down the center of the bed with a bouquet of red roses. A mask was on the pillow.*

**3:30:** Shoes, food, purses etc. are deposited and carrying their journals, their veil and picture of a loved one that has passed, each woman moves through the veil for the blessing.

**Blessing:** As we were brushed with a feather we were welcomed to the time when the veil between the worlds is the thinnest (don’t have actual words). Then we received anointing on our foreheads and received a gift of a scented balm. She said: “Welcome to Samhain.  May the dark mother guide and protect you as you journey through the veil.”

**Call in the Directions:** (adapted from: http://elkinvanaeon.net/Rituals/Samhain\_Ritual.html)

East: We Summon You and Call you forth

O’ Ancient Ones of Thought and Sound!

Rising, moving in concentration,

This season’s night in clear still air,

Vibrations felt, clear, resounding,

In the sound of drums pounding,

Of Life’s Breath and Heart-felt Love!

Come be with us this Season’s Night

Join us in our Holy Rite,

O’ Ancient Ones of Power. Ho!

South: Let us welcome South…

We Summon You and Call you Forth!

O’ Ancient Ones of Fire and Light,

Burning bright from balefires this dark night!

Smoldering ashes of times long past,

Leaping, Rising Consuming Young and Old

In Remembered Lives and Loves Untold!

Come be with us this Season’s Night

Join us in our Holy Rite,

O’ Ancient Ones of Power. Ho!

West: Welcome spirits, allies, energies of the West:

Place of endings, introspection and the void.

Let us float in the depths of your ocean and come to know our feelings and longings

Receive us as we dream into this dark time

And guide us as we journey home to our re-birth.Ho!

North: We Summon You and Call you Forth!  
 O' Ancient Ones,  
 Thrusting upwards to Skies so Dark,  
 and Deep within the Mother’s Heart,  
 Sacred Mountains and Stones of Power.  
 Come be with us this Season’s Night  
 Join us in our Holy Rite,   
 O' Ancient Ones of Power. Ho!

Within: To the Within, place of remembering and knowing, wholeness and connection to All that Is; receive us, remember us.

Mother Earth: By the earth that is her body

By the air that is her breath

By the fire of her bright spirit

And the water of her living womb

Our circle is cast

And we are between the worlds

And what happens between the worlds

Changes the World.

Blessed be.

**Sandee**: “Our intention tonight is to connect with our ancestors and to remember that we are all on the same journey”.

**Sing:** “We All Come from the Goddess”

**History:** At the end of October, the doorway to the dark half of the Celtic year swings open.  The dying sun is swallowed up by the lengthening nights; the green fields of summer have become brown and dry; leaves drop to earth, and animals prepare for winter sleep.  It is Samhain, meaning “summer’s end”, and it is the season of frost and firelight.  It is said that Samhain is upon us when the faeries commence to blast every last growing plant with their freezing breath, blighting any nuts, berries and fruits remaining on the summer stalks and vines.  It is therefore the time of preserving and storing food for the winter, and preparing for long dark nights; time by the hearth, time for sharing stories, dreaming into the dark, and introspection.  In Scotland, Samhain ushers in the reign of the Cailleach Bheur (Kalex Bheurach), the hag queen who rules over the winter season until the return of Bride in early spring.  Her name literally means “veiled one”.  She personified the cutting winds and harshness of the northern winter.  At winters end, some said she turned into a gray boulder until the warm days were over.  But others declared that she became Brigit, the beautiful young goddess of spring.  On the threshold to the dark half of the year, the Cailleach has much to teach us about darkness.  Having harvested kernels of our soul’s growth this year, we now begin clearing our inner fields of leftover stalks and stubble.  By doing so, we align ourselves with the cosmic cycle of death and rebirth.  This time on the sacred wheel of life creates a natural pause, allowing our thoughts to move towards death and the common fate we share with ancient gnarled pine trees and grasshoppers freshly hatched in September.   With this pausing, when the veil between the worlds is thinnest, we remember departed family and friends and begin to face our own mortality and crossing to the other side. Samhain provides a place in which to look at and begin to get comfortable with the idea of our own death and the deaths of our family and friends. From this important awareness we can choose to live more consciously with focus and intention and passionate awareness of our life and the choices we make.

**Visualization preface:** “Speaking to a Veiled One” (We paired up with the person sitting next to us. Our partner put on their veil as we spoke to them.)

“We are about to have the opportunity to speak to someone who has passed. You may choose to speak to someone that you have personally lost. Or you might choose an ancestor that you heard stories of, but never knew. You might choose a figure from history-someone who lived in another time, or a hero or villain that you somehow connect with. You may ask for future guidance from them, if you so desire. This is your chance to say something that was left unsaid in their lifetime.

Our intention is that you speak to someone who is beyond the veil, and have a chance to express your fears, or your loss, or your regrets, your love, or your question. Our hope is that, in their Silence, you will find the comfort or the answer or the connection that you seek.

After the visualization, your partner will veil herself. You may speak out loud, or speak in silence. She will silently be the veiled one for you. I will ring a bell, and prompt you to let you know when to begin. When I ring the bell again, we will sit in a minute of silence, so that you can hear the echo of what has been said. When I ring again, you will know to switch roles. Again, the next ring will be followed by a minute of silence. In that minute of silence may the spirits fill your heart with peace.”

**Visualization:** Now, close your eyes-become comfortably situated. We are about to embark on a journey. A journey to ready ourselves to enter a space where spirit can touch our lives.

Let yourself slowly open…You simply open your body and yourself to an opportunity to experience that which will come…

At this time, you find yourself sitting in a beautiful outdoor covered area…soothing raindrops serenade your peaceful moments as you breathe deeply and fully…/ You notice the complex smell of the saturated earth and the wet leaves…/ Everything is so, so vibrantly green…/ Leaves seem to dance for you with each raindrop that falls upon them.

As you rest and soak in the magic of these moments, your body feels lighter and yet more grounded in a safe and confident way.

Now you see in the distance a movement that you cannot explain. You are fully aware of your sensation of being both safe and curious. You are drawn to search out and connect with what created this movement. This is unknown, yet somehow familiar too.

You sit a while longer, saturated in what begins to be an even stronger, engulfing, calming warmth that covers and touches your entire body…/ You are being called to a warm nurturing presence.

You look about the wooded area ahead of you, lush with trees and gorgeous ferns…/ and you feel like you are being compelled to make your way down a path that appears off to your right. This path seems to head toward where you had seen the movement.

You first check in with yourself- asking yourself if it is safe to go into the distance to find something unknown. You scan your mind, body and heart for a signal so that you may proceed. / Your contentment in the decision comes. You wait, and enjoy this knowing for a time.

Soon, you stand and take steps, feeling a transformation as you make your way on the path. With each step you become more accepting of the truth of the expansive power within you.

Your awareness is stronger, that you are part of all of creation and that you have access to the power of all of creation. Oneness…You then become aware that you have crossed a boundary between worlds to a place where you can be seen by another fully.

You see a bench and simply rest in this place waiting for the next signal of what to do. When you hear the chime you will stay in this state, ready to receive information to continue.

(When the chime rings, the first of the partners turns to speak to their veiled one.) (Chime to end activity.)

**Poem:** “When Death Comes” by Mary Oliver

When death comes

Like the hungry bear in autumn;

When death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse

To buy me, and snaps the purse shut;

When death comes like the measle-pox

When death comes

Like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:

What is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything

As a brotherhood and a sisterhood,

And I look upon time as no more than an idea,

And I consider eternity as another possibility,

And I think of each life as a flower, as common

As a field daisy, and as singular,

And each name a comfortable music in the mouth,

Tending, as all music does, toward silence,

And each body a lion of courage, and something

Precious to the earth.

When it’s over, I want to say all my life

I was a bride married to amazement.

I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it’s over, I don’t want to wonder

If I have made of my life, something particular, and real.

I don’t want to find myself sighing and frightened,

Or full of argument.

I don’t want to end up simply having visited this world.

**Introduce Autobituary:** (see **here** for a formal practice of writing an autobituary)

We’re going to write our autobituary. A helpful way to do this is to write about how you would like to be remembered at the end of your life. What would you want people to say about you after you die. In my work, I find that reflecting on how one wants to be remembered helps us to focus on what matters in our lives. This task offers the opportunity to reflect, challenge and change the restrictive or negative aspects of our characters and lives. It can clarify and function as a valuable road map, helping us consciously choose the paths leading to , supporting and reinforcing, the best of ourselves.

Imagine yourself at your own funeral listening to someone talking about you.

* What did you accomplish that you are proud of? This can be minor, major and everything in-between. We are all made up of ordinary extraordinary.
* What did you not accomplish? Does this matter?
* How did you make a difference in the lives of others? Not sure? Then ask yourself, how do you hope that you made a difference in the lives of others?
* What did you enjoy? What did you find beautiful? What made you smile? What made you happy?
* How did I face challenges with integrity and courage?
* What hope sustained me?
* What fears held me back? What fears did I overcome?

Journal for 15 minutes

**Song:** “I Will Believe in the Truth”

**Introduction to Eulogy and Eulogy:** (This took a lot longer than was anticipated. We had 20+women and each woman received from 5-7 minutes. Not all the women had a chance to experience this activity. It is really powerful! We decided as a group to forego the sharing so that we could continue as long as possible with the Eulogies.)

**Introduction:** We have spoken to someone beyond the veil, and we have written our own examination of our lives. Now we will have an opportunity to imagine being beyond the veil and learning about the impact that we have had on each other’s lives.

We will have an opportunity to rest ourselves on the altar. We will lie beneath a veil, and people will speak of us, as they might at a celebration of our life. Know that sometimes it is hard to hear that we are important to others and can be even harder to hear that we are loved. We are many, so not all will be able to speak about each person. And sometimes it will be that someone has already expressed our own loving thoughts. Just speak as you are moved and with brevity. Remember that Magic is intent plus luck plus courage. Move to the center if you choose and when you are ready.

*(As each woman lay down on the bed, a sheer black veil was pulled over their body and head. Women spoke (in the past tense) of how each woman had affected their lives and the gifts they brought into the world.)*

**Sharing:** (Originally intended, but the group decided having more women experience the Eulogy was more important.)

**Closing Songs:** “How Could Anyone Ever Tell You that You Were Anything Less than Beautiful” &”May the Circle be Open”

**Dinner**