

## 1 Preparations for building the sweatlodge

The sweatlodge is one of the holiest ceremonies of the Lakota Sioux culture.

This kind of ceremony is very helpful to clean your body and soul. It also exempts your mind from mental and psychological wounds.

Does it sound interesting? Do you want to participate in a traditional sweatlodge ceremony?

Then you have to follow some holy and important rituals.

Before your sweatlodge can start you have to search for a suitable location for this ceremony.



After you have found one it is necessary to clean and consecrate it with sage to get rid of bad energies who could be around. In the next step the chief prays to every direction. He is communicating and praying to the spirits in the north (*Waboose*), the south (*Schawnodese*), the east (*Wabun*) and the west (*Mudjekeewis*), while he is fanning the smoke in the four directions.

When all the preparations are done a holy place arises which is ready for the following healing ceremony.

(by Vöst Sina und Reicheneder Lisa)

## 2 Stones (the grandfathers)



First, we searched for 48 **grandfathers** at a local stone pit<sup>1</sup>. After they agreed to come with us, we took them back to the lodge. There everyone chose a specific stone in each of the three rounds and put their prayers combined with some tobacco in the grandfathers. In the next step the fireman placed them on the fire pit where they stayed for one or two hours until they are hot enough to be used for the sweat lodge. As soon as everybody entered the lodge, the spirits told the sweat lodge leader how many stones would

be necessary. This step was repeated in every round. The leader threw some herbs, such as sage<sup>2</sup>, and water, symbolizing the **grandmothers**, onto the hot stones which turned into steam<sup>3</sup> immediately. When the grandfathers met the grandmothers a transformation of the prayers occurred which carried them up to the holy spirits.



<sup>1</sup>Steinbruch, <sup>2</sup>Salbei, <sup>3</sup>Dampf

By Teresa Sturm and Anna Menacher

### 3 The Building of the Sweat Lodge

After the place was hallowed<sup>1</sup> we began to build the Sweat Lodge. For the framework<sup>2</sup> we used some grazings<sup>3</sup>. They were excavated in the ground and the opposing grazings were tacked together with a cord<sup>4</sup>. Thereafter like the ritual prescribes we bound some red cords off the grazings. These cords signified our wishes for the Sweat Lodge.



Once everything was done we had to put the covers<sup>5</sup> on top of the building. So the heat and all things which happen in the Sweat Lodge are protected. And another reason why we laid these covers on top of the building is because it has to be absolutely dark inside. So the basic scaffolding<sup>6</sup> was built and we had to do the next step of the ceremony.



By Steffi Prechtel and Michelle Prochnow

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<sup>1</sup> geweiht

<sup>2</sup> Gerüst

<sup>3</sup> Weiden

<sup>4</sup> Schnur

<sup>5</sup> Decken

<sup>6</sup> Grundgerüst

#### 4 Altar

In front of the sweatlodge entry we made an altar out of humus. After we built the base we decorated the altar with flowers and sacred symbols. For examples rose hips, a dreamcatcher or personal attributes.



#### Sacred fire

Each of us took three stones and gave them with a prayer to the firemen, who stack them into the fireplace. After that ceremonial part we placed the wood around the stones before the firemen lit it up.



#### Tobacco ties

Before we have entered the sweatlodge we put our prayers, wishes and thoughts into a tiny bag, filled with tobacco, called tobacco tie. They get put into the sacred fire at the end of the whole ceremony.

By Kristina Ittlinger and Laura Antoni



## 5 The sacred ceremony of the sweatlodge

Before we entered the sweatlodge every participant had to be smudged with white sage to clean the body and the spirit. Inside we sat in a circle around the hot holy stones and started the ceremony. The basic ceremony consists of 4 rounds to set free the inner part of the spirit. Beginning with the first round we invited the great ancestors, followed by expressing our personal wishes in the second round. In the third round we expressed the wishes we have for relatives and friends and our surroundings. The ceremony ends with thanking for all the energy that was released.

The sweatlodge ceremony is the beginning of the transformation process to set body, mind and soul free.

By Idris Al-Abyad und Bernadette Murr



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