



# 2024 NATURE VIGIL PARTICIPANT BOOKLET



# Booklet Sign Off Sheet

**Receipt of this page by The Four Directions office is required before you arrive on the land at the Nature Vigil. By March 25, 2024, please sign below, scan or take a photo and email this page to [elinor@extraordinaryconversations.com](mailto:elinor@extraordinaryconversations.com)**

By my signature below I confirm that I have read and understand all the information in this booklet and take responsibility for my experience on the land.

Signature: .....

Print Name: .....

Date: .....

Please feel free to contact Ellie Trainer at (416) 937-2226 or email [elinor@extraordinaryconversations.com](mailto:elinor@extraordinaryconversations.com) if you have questions or need additional information at this time.

I'm looking forward to our journey together!



Patrick O'Neill

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 02**    **BOOKLET SIGN OFF SHEET**
- 04**    **WHAT IS A NATURE VIGIL**
- 05**    **LOCATION/DRIVING DIRECTIONS**
- 06**    **PREPARING FOR YOUR NATURE VIGIL**
  - Mental Preparation - The Four S's
  - Physical Preparation Including Camp Gear Practice Run
  - Should I Fast?
  - What NOT to Bring
  - What to Bring
- 09**    **REMINDERS WHILE ON THE LAND**
- 10**    **APRIL 15-21 SCHEDULES**
  - Daily Schedules
  - One Page Overview
- 15**    **MAP OF THE LAND**
- 16**    **WORKING WITH YOUR ASSIGNED PARTNER**
- 17**    **INTERACTING WITH NATURE**
- 23**    **RETURNING HOME - INTEGRATION**

# What Is A Nature Vigil?

*“Time alone in nature is an archetypal and transforming experience. This retreat in nature is less about the outer landscape and more about the geography of the inner world. As the chattering mind recedes, a more ancient way of knowing attunes you to inner truth. Drink before you are thirsty, sleep before you are tired, ride the silence like a slow desert wind carrying you ever inward, and deeper. Sitting alone in this spirited place, perhaps it is possible to answer the old Zen question: “What was the face you had before you were born?”*”

– PATRICK O’NEILL

Many cultures have used time alone in nature as a rite of passage and for spiritual work. A Nature Vigil puts us in direct contact with the spirits of land and place and with nature and all of its lessons. When we can get away from our fast-paced, demanding lives and slow down, sit still, and keep silence in nature, we can deepen learning, reflect and integrate, and process from the heart rather than the head.

The Four Directions Nature Vigil may differ from other types of wilderness experiences you may have had or heard about. This will be a healing quest, not a test of your endurance. It is not like a regular camping trip either: there is no hiking, swimming, roasting marshmallows, or recreation. Instead, you will find a spot and stay put there the whole time. There will be support all around you, and attention has been paid to safety and security. A base camp crew will support you physically and take shifts so that someone is available around the clock if you need anything. The base camp crew also supports you spiritually, as they pray for each of you every hour while you are out on the land.

Over the years, our experienced staff has supported thousands of people – many of whom have never camped overnight – to have a safe, deep and meaningful experience on the land. We encourage you to take this opportunity to spend time in solitude, on the land – to fast, meditate, pray and envision a path with heart and meaning. However, if you cannot camp out on the land, a Modified Nature Vigil, where participants spend their retreat time in a retreat room is also available. ***Space for Modified Nature Vigil is limited so please let us know as soon as possible if you wish this option.***

Spending time alone on the land without distraction is an incredible privilege and one to be honored and fully engaged. This is a time for stillness, silence and reflection, so minimal distractions are important. It is a time to leave computers, cell phones, books, and anything else behind that will take attention away from the silence and reflection of the ceremony. A journal is encouraged to capture thoughts, dreams, and visions.

# Location



The 2024 Nature Vigil will be held at:

**Four Springs Retreat**  
**14598 Sheveland Road**  
**Middletown, California**  
**PHONE: 707 987 4510**

It is secluded on 280 acres of oak woods and open meadows that was once Pomo Indian land. Four Springs has operated as a retreat since 1956. Established by the founders of the Guild for Psychological Studies, Elizabeth Boyden Howes, Sheila Moon and Luella Sibbald, it has been home to retreats and seminars in religion and psychology for over fifty years. Four Springs has become a sacred place to generations of people whose inner work has helped shape Four Springs and has been nourished by it. It is a sacred sanctuary recognized around the world as an inspirational setting for reflection, study and personal transformation.

It is approximately 85 miles from San Francisco, just north of the Napa Valley. San Francisco, Oakland and Sacramento Airports are all about two and one half hours distance by car.

*For more information about Four Springs:*

[www.foursprings.org](http://www.foursprings.org)

*For Driving Directions:*

[www.foursprings.org/travel.htm](http://www.foursprings.org/travel.htm)

## **Nearby Hotel Accommodations**

If you are considering staying in a nearby hotel on April 14 or April 21 there are a number of lovely hotels and spas in Calistoga. Calistoga is approximately 18 miles from Middletown and the Four Springs Retreat.

# Preparing for Your Nature Vigil

---

## MENTAL PREPARATION - THE FOUR S's

You will get the most out of your Nature Vigil experience if you consider the four S's ahead of time and practice them to the best of your ability during the Nature Vigil. They are powerful tools for self-reflection and integration. Consider which ones might be the most challenging for you, and what strategies you might use while on the land if you feel challenged.

**Silence:** When you still the outside voice, the inner chatterbox voices also begin to quiet down and you will hear the wisdom voice. The sounds of nature will become more apparent and have messages for you. Silence is golden! Keep in mind that others are nearby, and that any sounds you make (chanting, singing, talking to others) may disturb someone else's Nature Vigil. Rattling and drumming are permitted between the hours of 8 am and 8 pm, but please do it quietly and be mindful that not everyone will appreciate the extra sounds.

**Stillness:** Once you find your campsite, you will remain there except for the pre-arranged time when you meet with your Nature Vigil partners. Please try to stay within 20 feet of your tent, because wandering about will also disturb other participant's Nature Vigil experience. We spend so much of our day in motion, that it is a gift to be able to settle in one spot and stay there.

**Solitude:** This time is for you, to be spent in your own reflection and deep inner work. If you are near other people, try to arrange your tent opening or day camp set up facing away from your neighbors so everyone can feel some degree of solitude.

**Setting Intentions:** We come to the land with the intention to do no harm and leave no trace. At the end of the Nature Vigil, we will share our seeds of learning in three categories. To prepare yourself, think about this question prior to going on the land:

*What is the heart of my learning this year in relationship to my self, my one-to-one relationships, and my group, community, or collective work?*

---

## PHYSICAL PREPARATION INCLUDING CAMP GEAR PRACTICE RUN

It is important to prepare well. Start assembling your gear **at least 10 days prior** to the Nature Vigil. If you do not camp much or have a new tent, please practice setting up your campsite prior to arriving on

the land. There will be people to help you the first day, but it is far better to practice and feel sufficient in your abilities to set up your own tent. In addition, if you are a heavy caffeine drinker, think about whether you want to start weaning yourself off of caffeine (that will take 3-4 weeks before the Nature Vigil), or use chocolate covered coffee beans during the Nature Vigil.

---

## SHOULD I FAST?

Give some thought to whether you will fast or not. If you have any health conditions or take medications that might be affected by fasting, check with your doctor first. This is a self-care healing Nature Vigil, not a test of your endurance, so do not fast unless you are

healthy enough and really want to. Some people do a partial fast, with the master cleanser and fruit, protein bars, or other easy to pack and carry food items. Master cleanser is a solution of pure maple syrup, lemon juice, and cayenne pepper that is added to your drinking water. If you cannot decide, just bring along some food. You can always choose not to eat it.

---

## WHAT NOT TO BRING

Mind altering substances of any kind are not allowed (alcohol, drugs, etc.).

Due to fire danger, please do not bring candles, matches, lighters, magnifying glasses, mirrors, crystals, or other objects that can spark fires. No open flames are allowed on the land because of the fire hazard.

---

## WHAT TO BRING

The table on the next page lists some of the essential items you will need to bring on the land.

### **Special Note for Modified Nature Vigilers:**

Bed linens are supplied, but you'll need to bring your own towels.

**SUPPLIES TO BRING****WHY IT'S NEEDED**

TENT, SLEEPING BAG, TOWEL  
2 TARPS OR GROUND CLOTHES, THERMA REST  
CAMP MATTRESS, SUNSHADE

One tarp under your tent, one inside to keep you drier and to sit on during the day outside your tent. A blow up mattress cushions the impact of hard ground. If your tent does not have a flap that you can extend as a sun or rain shade during the day, you might want to bring an umbrella or extra tarp to protect you from the sun.

STAKES AND A HAMMER/MALLET

It's often windy on this land, and the ground is very dry and hard. You need metal stakes and a hammer to pound them in with. Metal stakes will secure your tent better in high winds than plastic stakes.

2 ONE GALLON CONTAINERS FOR  
DRINKING WATER  
IF YOU ARE FASTING - A 25 OZ CONTAINER FOR  
FASTING SOLUTION

One container for mixing with the fasting solution, if you choose to use it; one for plain water for drinking and washing up. And one to hold the fasting solution you will be mixing into your drinking water. There will be water stations nearby, so you do not need large containers. You can bring empty ones and fill them up there.

A TROWEL, TOILET PAPER, MOIST WIPES

You will dig your own latrine near your campsite

CLOTHING - LAYERS  
TOOTHBRUSH, TOOTHPASTE  
OTHER MINIMAL ITEMS NEEDED

Dress in layers. In April, the average temperature is in the high 60s during the day and low 40's at night. Bring rain gear just in case.

HAT, SUNSCREEN, MOSQUITO REPELLENT,  
BEN'S INSECT & TICK REPELLENT

For obvious reasons! Detailed information on how to prevent tick and other insect bites and ways to deal with sun and heat is provided here.

A 40 FOOT ROPE

If you are afraid of snakes, you can make a circle around your campsite with a rope. Snakes do not like to cross over a rope.

TECHNU OR SIMILAR POISON OAK PRODUCT

There is poison oak all over the land. If you are exposed, immediately rinse the area with Technu and come to base camp to shower.

FLASHLIGHT AND EXTRA BATTERIES

It gets pretty dark at night!

A WATCH OR CLOCK WITH ALARM

You will meet with your Nature Vigil partners to check in once a day. It's easy to lose track of time so set an alarm.

2 GENDER-NEUTRAL GIFTS

You will have 1 or 2 Nature Vigil partners. Please bring a gift to share; not something that you purchase, but an item in your possession that you would like to share. You might even choose something precious to you as an exercise in letting go. The point is to find gifts that have meaning to you.

A JOURNAL AND WRITING UTENSILS

A Nature Vigil is not the time to write the great American novel, but bring along a journal to record the thoughts you do not want to forget.

OPTIONAL: CAMP CHAIR, RATTLE,  
DRUM, FOOD

If sitting on the ground is hard for you, bring a small camp chair for your comfort. The use of a drum, bell, rattle and click sticks are supported 8am-8pm.



# Reminders While On the Land

## **From the Anchor of the North**

- Leave keys and cell phones in basket at Base Camp
- No smoking anywhere except in designated area - Cabana near the pool
- Water refill spots are located at the Lodge
- You can make multiple trips to your power spot
- Base Camp will be praying hourly - tune in
- When fearful - say name, use Chilton posture, pray, sing
- Go over the map and land area, note boundaries and stay in bounds
- Do not pitch tents under dead branches

## **From the Anchor of the South**

- Use your sunscreen
- Wet washcloth or neckerchief around neck for managing heat
- Drink before you are thirsty, rest before you are tired
- Sip your water - no gulping
- Fasting solution is available - lemon juice, maple syrup and cayenne pepper - it will act as a cleanser and keep electrolytes up
- If coffee/caffeine withdrawal, chocolate covered coffee beans are available at Base Camp
- If not fasting, keep food in tight containers inside your tent
- Layer clothing

## **From the Anchor of the East**

- This is strong healing land
- Stay open - the Nature Vigil is never what you think it will be
- There's no need to go far from your spot
- We come to do no harm and leave no trace
- Bring back any trash
- Be childlike and open, look and listen
- Night time skies are wonderful - enjoy the stars
- Due to fire risk - No matches, crystals, mirrors, candles, etc.
- Instruments can be used from 8am - 8pm

## **From the Anchor of the West**

- This is a Healing quest not a Warrior quest - practice good self care, ask for help
- When in doubt, ask questions
- The rhythm of the land is slow
- Sleep is healing - drop in
- Rest, re-dream, replenish, reflect
- Be in relationship with the silence
- Watch for poison oak
- Use your tarps to cover the spot before raising your tent

## **From the Anchor of the Magnetic Center**

- Walking/prayer stick while walking for snakes and if you choose, rope around tent
- Honor animals and other creatures of the land
- Brush off clothing for ticks, tuck your pants in your socks
- Woodpiles and rockpiles are habitat for snakes, ticks and spiders - take watchful steps and don't disturb them
- Visitation of an animal is a blessing
- Whistles for emergencies - at night turn on flashlight inside tent so we can see you in the dark
- Place one tarp inside the bottom of your tent to keep out rain water and other moisture

## **From the Anchor of the Dynamic Center**

- For any concerns, return to Base Camp in silence and check in
- There is always someone at Base Camp to meet you and also to pray for you every hour on the hour while you are on the land
- Hardships come when you over-ride your body wisdom - again self care
- After you dismantle your Medicine Wheel on Saturday (leave no trace) and return to the Dream Circle

# Overview and Schedule

*“In the sweet territory of silence we touch the mystery. It’s the place of reflection and contemplation, and it’s the place where we can connect with the deep knowing, to the deep wisdom way.”*

– ANGELES ARRIEN

## SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

### MONDAY, APRIL 15

All participants plan to arrive by 9 am. Give yourself ample time so you do not have to rush. Upon arrival, park in the designated Parking area by the Orchard. There will be people to greet and direct you. Following a morning learning session and lunch, you will take your camping gear to the

Dream Circle where you will set up your tent and we will walk the land. We will have dinner together and there will be an evening learning session that goes until 9:30 pm. At that time, you will be introduced to your Nature Vigil partner(s). Everyone will camp together in the Dream Circle this first night. Modified Nature Vigilers will spend their retreat time in a cabin.

TIME	ACTIVITY
<b>By 9am</b>	Participants arrive. Park in Parking by the Orchard. You will be met by members of the Anchor Team in the parking lot. Please leave your gear with them and it will be delivered to the Dream Circle (Ritual Meadow). Go to the Lodge
<b>9-10am</b>	Welcome reception in the Lodge
<b>10am-12:30pm</b>	In session under the canopy in the Dream Circle
<b>12:30-1:30pm</b>	Lunch in the Lodge
<b>1:30-5:30pm</b>	In session in Dream Circle and on the Land <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3pm: Participants set up tents in Dream Circle (Ritual Meadow) Modified NV participants take gear to assigned rooms</li> <li>• 3-4pm: Pilgrimage of Honor - Walk the Land</li> <li>• 4pm: Return to Dream Circle</li> </ul>
<b>6-7pm</b>	Dinner in Lodge
<b>7:30-9:30pm</b>	In session in Dream Circle
<b>9:30pm</b>	Participants go to their campsite in the Dream Circle (Ritual Meadow) Modified Nature Vigil participants go to their room

**TUESDAY, APRIL 16**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>
<b>8:30–9:30am</b>	Breakfast in the Lodge
<b>9:30–12:30pm</b>	In Session in Dream Circle
<b>12:30–1:30pm</b>	Lunch in the Lodge
<b>1:30–5:30pm</b>	In Session and On the Land in the Dream Circle
<b>6–7pm</b>	Dinner in the Lodge
<b>7–9:30pm</b>	In Session in Dream Circle
<b>9:30pm</b>	Participants go to their campsite in the Dream Circle (Ritual Meadow). Modified Nature Vigil participants go to their room.

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

Someone will come through the Dream Circle with a bell to wake you around 5:30 am. Take down your tent and pack up before you join the group for a breakfast at 6:30 am. When breakfast is over, you will get your fasting solution and head out to set up your campsite for the next 3 days and 3 nights. Pick a place with some shade and level ground, that is within your comfort zone. After you have your spot, you will meet your Nature Vigil

partner(s) and create your shared medicine wheel where you will share your intentions for the Nature Vigil. At this time you exchange gifts. When that process is complete, you will show each other your spots and then check in together at Base Camp (Lodge), marking your spot on the Anchor Team map. Once settled, except for support needed at Base Camp, the only time you will leave your spot until Saturday morning is the time you arrange to check in with your Nature Vigil partner(s) on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

TIME	ACTIVITY
<b>5:30am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You'll get a wake-up call from the Anchor Team</li> <li>• Please pack up your campsite and leave your gear in the Dream Circle (Ritual Meadow)</li> </ul>
<b>6:30-7:30am</b>	Early breakfast in Lodge
<b>7:30- 9am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pick up your fasting solution at the Lodge</li> <li>• Get camping gear from Dream Circle and move to your chosen campsite on the land</li> <li>• Set up campsite</li> <li>• Create medicine wheel with partner</li> <li>• Show Nature Vigil partner where your campsite is</li> <li>• Return to the Lodge and mark your campsite on the Base Camp map with a member of Anchor Team</li> </ul>
<b>By 9am</b>	All participants are settled in their camp site on the land or if Modified NV in their cabins
<b>Rest of day/ evening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There will be no lunch or dinner served this day. People who must eat please bring your own food, eg: trail mix, power bars, apples/fruit, nuts, hard boiled eggs, etc.</li> <li>• There will be water stations set up at the Lodge</li> <li>• The Lodge will be our Base Camp with members of the Anchor Team always available to assist you should you need anything</li> </ul>

## THURSDAY, APRIL 18 AND FRIDAY, APRIL 19

- On the land in silence
- **By 9am: Signal your Nature Vigil partner**
- Reminder: The Lodge will be our Base Camp with members of the Anchor Team always available

Please come check in if you have any concerns or medical questions

- There will be no breakfast, lunch or dinner served. People who must eat please bring your own food, eg: trail mix, power bars, apples/fruit, nuts, hard boiled eggs, etc.
- There will be a water station at the Lodge

## SATURDAY, APRIL 20

In the morning, we ask that you stay in silence until breakfast. Pack up your gear and return to the Dream Circle by 8:30 am and set up your camp. (see below for list of actions before 8:30am). You will meet with your Nature Vigil partner(s) at the Dream Circle, still in silence, to go to brunch at 11:30 am. Once in the dining room, you may break your silence, but do not share your experience yet. After brunch, we

return to the Dream Circle and everyone shares their seeds of learning. Everyone will have important lessons to share. Be mindful about sharing only your seeds of learning, not stories about your experience so that everyone has a chance to speak. Dinner will be served at 6pm and we will return the Dream Circle for a teaching session. Everyone will camp together in the Dream Circle this last night. Modified Nature Vigilers will spend their retreat in their room.

TIME	ACTIVITY
<b>By 8:30 am</b>	Pack up camp. You and your Nature Vigil partner will have deconstructed your shared medicine wheel and have come off the land. Take your gear to the Dream Circle and set up camp. Confirm with Base Camp that you and your partner are in from Nature Vigil.
<b>11am-12 noon</b>	Brunch in the Lodge
<b>1:30-5:30</b>	In Session in Dream Circle
<b>6-7pm</b>	Dinner in the Lodge
<b>7-9:30pm</b>	In Session in Dream Circle
<b>9:30pm</b>	Participants go to campsite in Dream Circle. Modified Nature Vigil participants go to their room

## SUNDAY APRIL 21

---

**TIME****ACTIVITY**

---

**By 8:30am**

- Participants will have packed up their gear
  - Everyone bring your gear to the Lodge
  - Your camp gear will be shuttled from the Lodge to your car throughout the day, as time permits
- 

**8:30-9:30am**Breakfast in the Lodge

---

**9:30-11am**In session in Dream Circle

---

**12-1:00pm**Lunch in the Lodge

---

**1:00pm**

Depart. Take your time going home because you will be in an altered state, in nature's rhythm.

---

# Nature Vigil Overview

APRIL 15 - 21, 2024 (ONE PAGE REFERENCE)

## MONDAY, APRIL 15

**9am:** Participants arrive. Park in parking area by the Orchard. You will be met by members of the Anchor Team in the parking lot.

Please leave your gear with them and it will be delivered to the Dream Circle in the Ritual Meadow. Go to the Lodge

**9-10pm:** Welcome Reception – Lodge

**10am-12:30pm:** In-Session – Dream Circle under canopy tent

**12:30-1:30pm:** Lunch – Lodge

**1:30-5:30pm:** In-Session – On the Land

- 2-3 pm: Participants set up tents in Dream Circle - Ritual Meadow. Modified Nature Vigil participants take gear to assigned rooms

- 3-4 pm Pilgrimage of Honor – Walk the land

- Return to Seminar Room

**6-7pm:** Dinner – Lodge

**7:30-9:30pm:** In-Session – Dream Circle

**9:30pm:** Participants go to their campsite in the Dream Circle.

Modified Nature Vigil participants go to their room

## TUESDAY, APRIL 16

**8:30-9:30am:** Breakfast - Lodge

**9:30-12:30pm:** In Session - Dream Circle

**12:30-1:30pm:** Lunch - Lodge

**1:30-5:30pm:** In Session - Dream Circle

**6-7pm:** Dinner - Lodge

**7-9:30pm:** In Session - Dream Circle

**9:30pm:** Participants go to their campsite in the Dream Circle.

Modified Nature Vigil participants go to their room

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

**5:30am:** You'll get a wake-up call from the Anchor Team. Please pack up your campsite and leave your gear in the Dream Circle

**6:30-7:30am:** Early breakfast – Lodge

**7:30am:** Pick up your fasting formula - Lodge

- Get camping gear from Dream Circle and move to your chosen campsite

**By 9:00am:** On the Land

- All participants will have set up their campsite, created shared medicine wheel and shown their Nature Vigil partner where their campsite is. Return to the Lodge and mark your campsite on the map. The Lodge will be our Base Camp with members of the Anchor Team always available

- There will be no lunch or dinner served. People who must eat please bring your own food, eg: trail mix, power bars, apples/-fruit, nuts, hard boiled eggs, etc. There will be a water station at the Lodge

## THURSDAY, APRIL 18 & FRIDAY, APRIL 19

**9am:** Signal your Nature Vigil partner

- There will be no breakfast, lunch or dinner served. People who please bring your own food, eg: trail mix, power bars, apples/-fruit, nuts, hard boiled eggs, etc. There will be a water station at the Lodge must eat please bring your own food, eg: trail mix, power bars, apples/-fruit, nuts, hard boiled eggs, etc. There will be a water station at the Lodge

## SATURDAY, APRIL 20

**8:30am:** Pack up camp. Deconstruct your medicine wheel with your partner. Bring your gear to the Dream Circle and set up camp. Check in with Base Camp.

**11am-12pm:** Brunch - Lodge

**1:30-5:30pm:** In Session - Dream Circle

**6-7pm:** Dinner - Lodge

**7-9:30pm:** In Session - Dream Circle

**9:30pm:** Participants go to their campsite in the Dream Circle.-

Modified Nature Vigil participants go to their room

## SUNDAY, APRIL 21

**By 8:30am:** Participants will have packed up their gear. Please bring your gear to check in with Base Camp. Modified Nature Vigil participants please bring your luggage to the Lodge. Your gear will be shuttled to your car throughout the day, as time permits

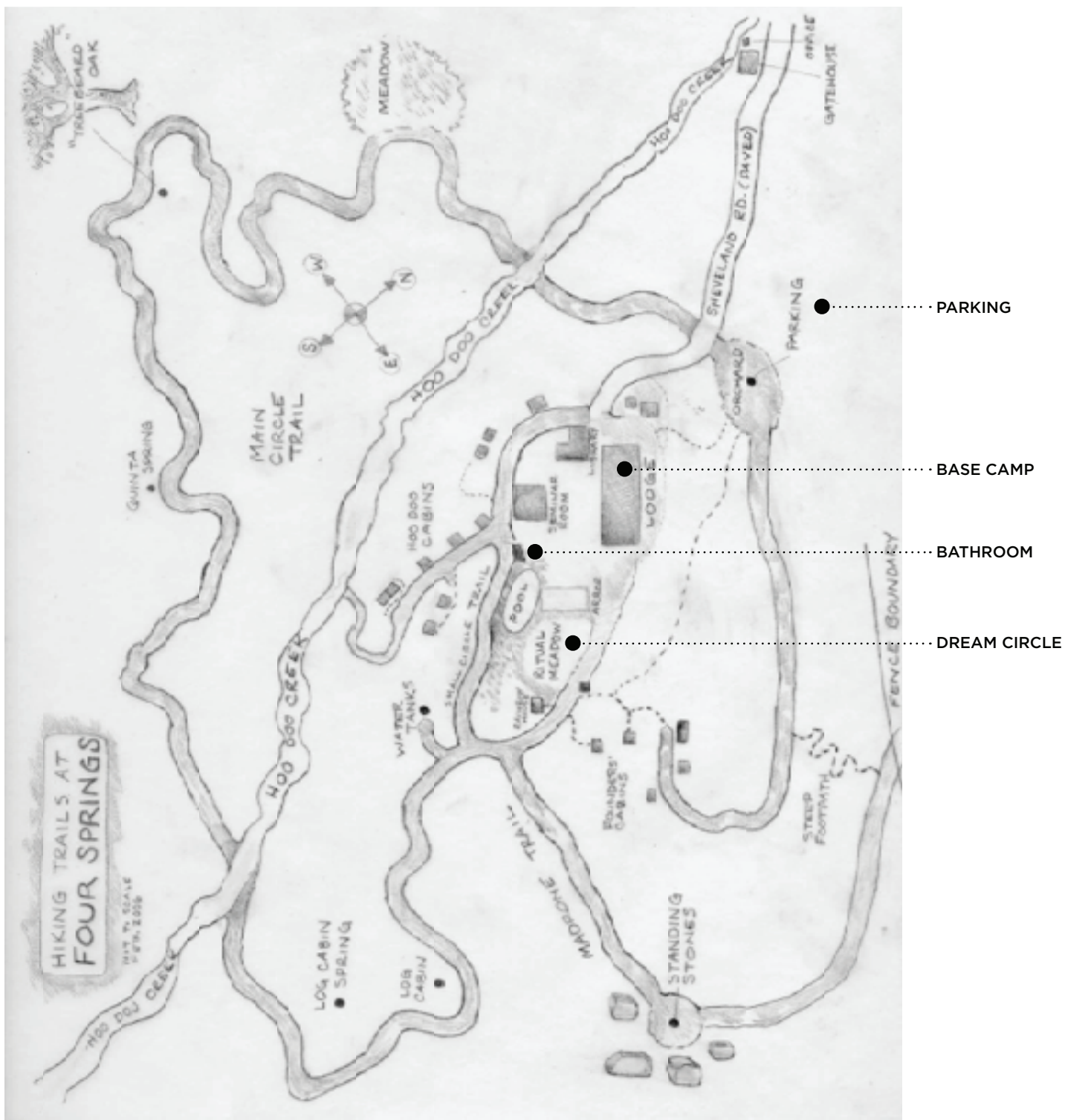
**8:30am:** Pack up camp

**8:30-11am:** In-Session – Dream Circle

**12:00-1:00pm:** Lunch – Lodge

**1:00pm:** Depart

# Map of the Land



## EMERGENCY MEDICAL FACILITIES

- Clinic in Middletown (open during business hours)
- Hospital in Clear Lake (18 miles north)
- Cellphone in Lodge available for 911 calls only



# Working With Your Assigned Partner

The first evening we are together, you will be assigned your Nature Vigil partner(s) for the duration of your Nature Vigil experience. This will be an opportunity for mutual support, collaboration and creative problem solving. With your partner you will do the following:

On Wednesday morning, create a medicine wheel together at a place of mutual agreement that is between your power spots.

- Each of you will gather two sticks to create the shape of the wheel and two rocks to place in each of the four directions. You will come to mutual agreement about whether you will create:
  - A cross which stands for the intention to do relationship work during your time on the land
  - A diamond shape which intends creative work
  - Each of you places your two rocks and your two sticks to create your chosen shape
  - If you are in a triad then the 3rd partner will double up two of the sticks and rocks in the medicine wheel
- Share your intentions for your time on the land
- Exchange your gifts
- Show your partner where your camp site is
- Check in at Base Camp together and mark your spot on the Anchor Team map
- While on the land, signal each other on Thursday and Friday morning by 9am, at a time and place of mutual agreement
- Arms straight up in the air means, “I’m OK” - you can then return to your power spots in silence
- Waving arms overhead means, “I’m not OK I need to talk”. You then connect, share the issue or concern and if necessary, come to Base Camp
- **IMPORTANT:** If your partner does not show up at your agreed time and place, go to their spot to check on them and make sure they are OK, then if necessary, check in at Base Camp
- Saturday morning, dismantle your medicine wheel with your partner before returning together to Base Camp - leave no trace
- Sit with your partner(s) at the celebratory breakfast

# Interacting With Nature

*“So often we are touched in ways that seem small and insignificant at the time, but which prove to be wonderful catalysts and blessings later.”*

**- TED ANDREWS, ANIMAL SPEAK**

There is an inherent wisdom and magic in nature that we have lost in the civilization of humanity and our lives lived in the fast lane. Being in silence in nature gives us the opportunity to slow down, reconnect with this wisdom and magic, and come away from our time there restored and transformed. We come to the land fully present, listening, with the intention to do no harm and leave no trace. With this intention, nature respects us as well.

Nature communicates with us through energy, symbol and metaphor. Whether it's a visit from a bird, deer, mosquito, ant, or other creature; time spent in the presence of a tree, flower or other plant - they can shift our perception, heal our internal wounds, and transform our life experience. Listen through all channels available to you - your body sensations, your eyes, your dreams, visions, and auditory senses. You will receive unimaginable gifts and blessings that are at the heart of the Nature Vigil experience.

There are many wonderful birds, butterflies, deer and other creatures on the land. A great resource for the “medicine” and symbolism that animals, reptiles and insects carry is the book *Animal Speak* by, Ted Andrews. He has also written a book called, *Nature Speak* which outlines the symbolism of landscapes, and specific trees and plants.

We often carry fears about specific animals, plants, and insects. It's important to be open to the messages available from all encounters, and it's also important to be respectful of, aware of and discerning about those which can be a health risk. There are some on the land. These risks can be avoided through preparation, knowledge and respect. This list includes:

- poison oak
- ticks
- any insect you're allergic to (bees, spiders, etc.)\*
- rattle snakes
- large wild cats

*\*If you have allergies and/or carry an Epi pen, please notify the Four Directions office prior to the Nature Vigil.*

## POISON OAK (TOXICODENDRON DIVERSILOBUM)

This warrior plant lives in oak forests and has an oil on its stems and leaves that when touched, creates a rash that is an allergic reaction, which can vary from mild to severe depending on the person. The plant looks like a leafy shrub and can grow up to six feet tall. In shady areas, the plant can grow like a climbing vine. The leaves usually have three separate leaflets, but there can be up to nine leaflets, each about one to four inches long. In spring, the leaves can be red or green. The plant produces small white, yellow, or green flowers. During the summer, leaves are green and the plant grows berries. In late summer, the leaves turn red and orange.

Be aware of where you step and where you pitch your tent in order to avoid touching the plant, getting its oil on your skin or clothes, and thus getting a rash.

The first photo shows the leaves when they are red. The second photo when the leaves are green.

There are skin cleansers formulated specifically for Poison Oak. Of these, Tecnu is the most popular. It removes the oils from your skin. If you do come in contact with the plant, it's important to wash with Tecnu or a similar product as soon as possible to prevent a rash. We will have the wash in Base Camp, so you can come directly and use what we have in our supplies.



## TICKS

Ticks are scientifically classified as Arachnids (a classification that includes spiders). The fossil record suggests ticks have been around at least 90 million years. Ticks are present in California and a percentage of them are known to carry Lyme’s disease which can be serious when left untreated. It’s important to inform yourself about the risk and take precautions to prevent a tick bite. The simplest of these is to wear light clothing so you can see them, that includes long sleeves and pants, and tuck the bottom of your pants inside your socks in order to prevent a tick from crawling up your leg and attaching itself. Also, wear a hat and avoid rubbing your head in the overhanging leaves of a tree. Brush off your clothes and shake off your shoes before entering your tent, and store them in your tent over night. Tick repellent is available at your local pharmacy. You can bring this yourself in your camping supplies and we will have it available to you for your use in our Base Camp supplies.

If you find that a tick has attached itself to you, it’s important to remove it immediately. We will do this for you at Base Camp if you wish, put it in a plastic bag and freeze it so you can have it tested for Lyme’s upon your return from your Nature Vigil.

The **University of California’s Agriculture and Natural Resources** web site <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7485.html> has some excellent information about tick habitat, life cycle, prevention and bite treatment. According to their web site, “In northern California areas where Lyme disease occurs, usually about 1–2% of the adult *Ixodes pacificus* ticks and 2–15% of the nymphal ticks, on average, are infected with *Borrelia burgdorferi*.”

Photo below is of the stages of the Blacklegged Tick which is most common in Northern California.

As mentioned, there are several popular tick repellents which you can bring and/or use what we have in our Base Camp supplies. Below is a photo of some of the products you will find in your local pharmacy and/or camping supply store.



**Blacklegged Tick (*Ixodes scapularis*)**



## BEES AND SPIDERS

There are Honey Bees, Wasps and Spiders on the land. If you are stung or bitten, come to Base Camp and we will have first aid supplies to tend to it. As mentioned previously, if you are allergic to these bites or stings and/or carry an Epi pen, notify The Four Directions office of this before you come onto the land.

Most spiders are not poisonous, a few are. Do not put your hands in wood piles or move piles of wood as this is habitat for ticks and spiders, including the

Black Widow whose bite is poisonous. Black Widow spiders are easily recognizable. They're plump, black, and shiny, with an hourglass-shaped, red mark on their abdomens. Sometimes, this red mark may take a slightly different shape. In other cases, the spider may have red markings on its back too. These spiders aren't aggressive and only bite when they feel threatened. The bites usually aren't fatal, but they can still cause some serious and uncomfortable symptoms. Regardless, anyone who has been bitten, or who suspects they've been bitten by a Black Widow spider, should come to Base Camp immediately for medical treatment at a nearby hospital.



## RATTLE SNAKES

Most snakes on the land are harmless grass snakes and gopher snakes. Rattle snake sightings are rare and they do have habitat in California. They prefer hot, dry, rocky terrain. So walk with respect and presence on the land, and watch where you step. If you do encounter a rattle snake, back up and move away. A rattle snake bite is an emergency that requires immediate treatment at a nearby hospital. There have been no snake bites to date during

the many years of the Four Fold Way and Four Directions experiences.

The rattle snake has a triangular shaped head, triangle shaped markings on it's back and makes a distinctive rattling sound as a warning when approached or threatened.

The **gopher snake** which is common in the area and poses no risk, can also have markings on it's back, but it does not have a triangular head or rattles on its tail.



## LARGE WILD CATS

Cougars and Bob Cats have habitat in the mountains of California and are rarely seen as they are furtive and avoid human contact. Do not approach a wild cat under any circumstances. If you see a Cougar nearby, do not run. Make yourself big and tall, and blow your whistle loudly and continuously.

### COUGAR



### BOB CAT



# Returning Home - Integration

Medium to slow.....

Take time to ease back into your usual routine. It may take you longer to get ready for work the next few days because you have slowed down your whole system. The Nature Vigil will keep working you for a few days or weeks after you get home.

Please don't share your Nature Vigil experience with others until at least three people have commented about noticing some change in you. If your friends and family notice that you are calmer, more grounded, happier, more thoughtful, or any other change, then you may share your experience. Otherwise, the experience is for you to reflect on and integrate personally.

Many people spend some time creating a Nature Vigil integration tool...a collage, a poem, a piece of artwork of any kind. This creative work will help you integrate your experience and not forget the important lessons you were given.