

1-1-1995

## The center of the universe: A ceremony at Pipe Spring Sweat Lodge

James E McCarty  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds>

---

### Repository Citation

McCarty, James E, "The center of the universe: A ceremony at Pipe Spring Sweat Lodge" (1995). *UNLV Retrospective Theses & Dissertations*. 545.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.25669/lb8f-ju05>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Retrospective Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact [digitalscholarship@unlv.edu](mailto:digitalscholarship@unlv.edu).

## INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

# UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
313/761-4700 800/521-0600



THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE;  
A CEREMONY AT  
PIPE SPRING  
SWEAT LODGE

by

James E. McCarty

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Anthropology

Department of Anthropology  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
December 1995

**UMI Number: 1377646**

**Copyright 1996 by  
McCarty, James E.**

**All rights reserved.**

---

**UMI Microform 1377646  
Copyright 1996, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**


**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized  
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

---

**UMI**  
**300 North Zeeb Road**  
**Ann Arbor, MI 48103**

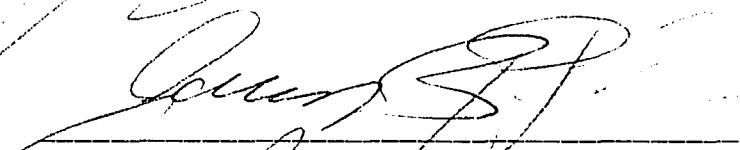
©1996 James E. McCarty  
All Rights Reserved

The Thesis of James E. McCarty for the degree of Master of Arts in Anthropology is approved.



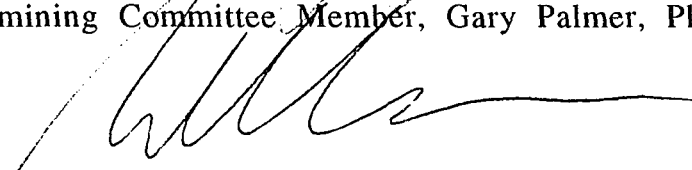
---

Chairperson, John Swetnam, Ph.D. Anthropology



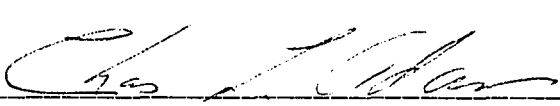
---

Examining Committee Member, Gary Palmer, Ph.D. Anthropology



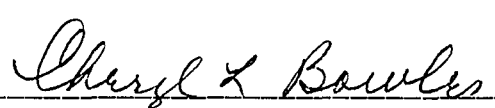
---

Examining Committee Member, George Urioste, Ph.D. Anthropology



---

Graduate Faculty Representative, Charles Adams, Ph.D. English



---

Interim Dean of the Graduate College, Cheryl L. Bowles, Ed. D.

11-30-95

University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
December 1995

## ABSTRACT

The Sweat Lodge at Pipe Spring is a healing place for many people. The spiritual leader of the lodge is a Southern Paiute man who conducts open ceremonies so that all people may participate in the process of cleansing body and spirit. The ritual process brings together the positive effects of group interaction and fosters spiritual growth for individuals and the group. The Lakota style sweat lodge ceremony was introduced by an Assiniboine man and the ceremony has incorporated Paiute and Christian elements through cultural adaptations. Though the ceremony has been borrowed and has undergone some changes, its effectiveness as a place of spiritual and physical healing remains strong.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2 THE SETTING.....	1 3
CHAPTER 3 PREPARING FOR THE CEREMONY .....	2 1
CHAPTER 4 THE CEREMONY .....	2 5
CHAPTER 5 THEORY.....	5 9
CHAPTER 6 COMPARING BENN’S SWEAT LODGE TO A LAKOTA SWEAT LODGE .....	7 8
CHAPTER 7 CEREMONIAL LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION.....	8 5
CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION.....	1 0 1
APPENDIX I PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS.....	1 0 4
AND PROTOCOL APPROVAL.....	1 1 8
APPENDIX II SWEAT LODGE GUIDELINES .....	1 1 9
APPENDIX III PLAN VIEW OF CEREMONIAL AREA.....	1 2 2
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	1 2 3

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ultimately I owe a great debt to Benn Pikyavit for his patience and personal interest in this project. Without his help and understanding, this project would not have been possible. This thesis also became possible because of the valuable assistance from other individuals. The chairman of my thesis committee, Dr. John Swetnam, gave his time and valuable recommendations regarding writing style whenever needed. Dr. Gary Palmer was instrumental in helping me develop the chapter on Identity Construction, as well as the entire thesis, and gave constant assistance in helping me to develop an appropriate writing style. Dr. George Urioste consistently gave me his encouragement and support in performing my fieldwork. Finally, it was Dr. Charles Adams who advised me to always write for the broadest possible audience and I have tried to do that with this thesis. I must also thank all those individuals who allowed me to interview them for the sake of this project. Their contributions have allowed me to develop my own understanding of the ritual process of the sweat lodge at Pipe Spring. I give my thanks and appreciation to all those people I have mentioned above. I take full responsibility for all errors in this work, and share credit for successes with all those who assisted me.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

I present my readers with an account of a man and a sacred ceremony. The man is Bennjamin Pikyavit, a Southern Paiute spiritual leader from Pipe Spring, Arizona. As a spiritual leader, he conducts the sacred sweat lodge ceremonies at the Kaibab Paiute Reservation. (Miller 1994) We met at a series of Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) meetings that were held at an archaeological repository where I worked in 1994. I was assisting a group of consulting cultural anthropologists from Tucson, Arizona, who had been contracted to conduct interviews with various Shoshone and Southern Paiute Bands. Benn was the tribal representative from his reservation.

When I first saw Benn walk through the door at the repository, I remember saying to myself, "As soon as there's a break in the meeting, I need to make sure I go over and introduce myself to that guy." Why did I have that feeling? That was a question I was unable to answer at the time. It would be much later that I was to understand what had happened that day.

Nearly two years after I had met Benn at the repository, a co-worker, a friend, revealed to me something very surprising. Benn had actually seen me prior to that so-called first day at the repository. I had been working at the main office one day when Benn was there too, and he saw me. My friend told me that, "Benn saw you in the office that day and he came right over and asked me

some questions about you. He asked me if you worked there or if you were a student, whether you were married or single, but most of all I remember that he said you looked like you were a lonely person. He said he had the feeling that you were all alone, that you needed some spiritual help."

So, nearly two years after I had an unexplainable feeling that I needed to introduce myself to Benn, I found out that he had already prepared himself for the meeting that I thought had occurred purely by chance. And to some degree it was an accidental meeting, but for me the idea still remains that Benn had somehow projected himself into my conscious perception that day at the repository. Somehow, I don't know how, Benn had made me feel that I needed to meet him. He did it just so he could help me.

Since our very first talks together, Benn has indeed helped me. He has introduced me to his native philosophy, a philosophy that contains traditional elements and new elements. As a spiritual leader for the Kaibab Paiute Band, Benn conducts a Lakota style sweat lodge ceremony that he learned from an Assiniboine man about seven years ago. The lodge was specifically dedicated to be an *open* sweat lodge, in order that all people may attend. This is an account about Benn, a Southern Paiute spiritual leader who conducts an *open* sweat lodge so that all people can be afforded the opportunity to experience a spiritual awakening, to understand the world in a new way, a better way. With Benn, they find the *center of the universe* inside the sweat lodge. I present a detailed description of the ceremony with the intent that the reader will be able to feel, as I was able to feel, the *spirit of the lodge*.

All of the data presented here regarding the sweat lodge ceremony at Pipe Spring are based on interviews with Benn and ceremonial participants, and my participation in and observation of the ceremonies, for which I frequently acted in the capacity of fireman.

I attended my first sweat lodge ceremony early in 1994 and continue to visit the reservation several times each month. After participating in the ceremonies for about three months, I was able to gain Benn's trust. I had mentioned to him, even before attending my first sweat, that I was a cultural anthropologist, interested in learning about the sweat lodge ceremony for the purpose of writing this thesis. He said little at the time, only "We'll see." The manner in which he said "We'll see" did not fill me with optimism, though, in gaining his approval for my project. Experience had taught me that whenever someone said "We'll see" it was usually a euphemism for "Not a chance!" Nonetheless, and aside from the anthropological significance of the ceremony, I was *personally* interested in learning more, so I began to participate in the sweat lodge ceremonies at least twice a month.

As the months went by I soon forgot about using my sweat lodge experiences as a foundation for a thesis. I never mentioned it again, nor did Benn. I became content to simply participate in the experience and did not complicate my interaction at an anthropological level. I took no field notes and did not attempt to gather any data from Benn or other sweat lodge participants.

The first two ceremonies I attended were in southern Utah, approximately thirty miles northwest of St. George, Utah. That particular sweat lodge was usually conducted by a Paiute man named White Eagle, a friend of Benn's, but in those two instances Benn conducted the ceremonies. As that first ceremony began to take shape, White Eagle gave each participant a strip of red cotton cloth, telling us that we should either wear it tied to our arm or we could fasten it to the willows inside the lodge. It was a symbol, we were told, of our commemoration of all the people who have lived before, whose spirits still live, who visit the sweat lodge to guide the participants. I sat to the right of Benn, as is the custom for the *first-timers* as they are called.

After those first two sweats at White Eagle's sweat lodge, Benn invited me to attend ceremonies at the Kaibab Reservation. Until that time I had simply assumed that White Eagle's lodge (The Peoples' Lodge) was the only sweat lodge that Benn attended. (See Appendix for an outline of Guidelines for The Peoples' Lodge) Benn has been the spiritual leader of the reservation sweat lodge for six or seven years. During my visits to the reservation, Benn and I became more than acquaintances; we became close friends. He invited me to stay at his home on the reservation whenever I visited to attend the sweat lodge ceremonies.

By attending those first two sweat lodge ceremonies in Utah, Benn was allowing me to meet other people while he observed me. He asked them what they thought about me. He was verifying my intentions, my ethics. Once Benn was satisfied about my motivations, I was invited to subsequent sweats at the reservation. At the first sweat on the reservation in Arizona, Benn approached me and said, "You will be my fireman today." I was totally unprepared for such an assignment. I spoke up quickly, pointing out my inadequacies after having only attended two sweats, and those having been at a different sweat lodge as well. Benn said, "It will be all right. I will help you. The spirit will be with you. You just listen to me and make friends with the fire. That's what you need to do. I guess you need to start learning some time and now is a good time."

With some reluctance, but also with the spiritual reassurances from Benn, I said that I would be honored to be the fireman. I treated the assignment as an honor, pleased to be held in such regard that I would be afforded the opportunity to perform in the capacity of fireman. "I'll be Benn's assistant," I thought. "It's a good thing to be the fireman."

I was privileged to be the fireman at many subsequent sweat lodge ceremonies. It was only later, though, that I came to fully understand the

importance of having been asked to participate in the role of fireman. Working closely with Benn gave me a unique perspective of the sweat lodge experience. After the ceremonies we went to his home where we discussed our mutual experiences. There were times when we only spoke for fifteen minutes, but there were other times when we talked for a few hours. He was always willing to discuss certain topics, but I had to accept the fact that it was usually Benn, and not me, who chose which topics were appropriate to discuss. He was sincerely interested in the discussions. I recall one occasion when, after both of us had gone to bed, Benn awoke, came out to the living room where I was sleeping on the floor, and said, "We have to talk some more. There are some other things that we didn't cover that we should talk about. Is that okay?"

One morning we awoke early. Benn said, "Let's drive to town and have breakfast at the cafe." Usually I would prepare breakfast at the house, but on that day we went to the cafe instead. It was now several months since I had first asked Benn if I would be able to work with him on my thesis. I was no longer considering it a viable possibility since he had not mentioned the matter. I had never mentioned it to him again either.

Benn and I were part way through our morning meal when Benn said, "I've decided that I'm going to help you." At first I wondered what he meant. Then I said to myself, "Benn thinks I need his spiritual guidance." He had told me, when we first met, that, "You have some problems to work out. You have too many walls up around yourself. Those walls will keep you from knowing other people and knowing yourself." I assumed he was going to help me eliminate some of my walls. I asked, "Why do you keep thinking I need your help with those walls?" He answered, "I'm talking about your thesis project, Jim. What are you talking about?" I responded, "I thought you forgot all about that."

"No," he said, "I just needed to get to know you. I found out what I need to know so I've made a decision to help you with your project."

Benn's decision to help me, of course made me very happy. At that moment I thought to myself, "I should have been keeping notes all along." But I had not. It would not have been ethical, I felt, so I had become a participant only and had not performed the anthropologist's role.

Having been at Benn's right hand for those first months, though, I was able to develop a sense or *feel* for the best means of obtaining information from Benn. He enjoyed discussing matters with me, so I was able to gather data within a framework that most appealed to Benn. Once he brought up an issue or a topic, it was appropriate to discuss it. Conversely, if I attempted to open up another issue that he had not initiated, he would say, "How come you want to know that? Let's talk about this instead."

The interviews were informal, usually integrated with the particular activity which we were involved in. While gathering wood, for example, he told me about the exchange of tobacco for the ceremonial wood. I learned that the wood became sacred, became ceremonial, when he exchanged tobacco for it and prayed to the spirits. The reciprocity to the four winds, to Mother Earth, to Father Sky, to the sacred direction within us, is a central element in many Native American cultures. (Garrett and Osborne 1995, Powers 1982, Kehoe 1989, Mooney 1965)

When Benn wanted to discuss ritual practices, he would initiate the discussion. I learned to avoid bringing up new matters that he was not discussing, or, if I did bring up a new topic, I would always try to relate it to a topic that we were currently discussing. Turning abruptly to new matters was not an effective approach, but by guiding the conversation gently, by linking different topics together, I was successful.



It was also instructional to observe Benn when he spoke to other people. I listened carefully when I was with him. He would counsel people, telling them, "Listen to your heart. The spirit is with you when you can listen to your true heart. It is a way to gain balance in your life." He explained to me,

I try to teach people about self honesty and respect. If a person is honorable and respectful of nature then they will attain a level of spiritual morality. They will be able to overcome problems in life; the problems of conflict; the problems with marriage; the problems of addiction to drugs; the problems of too much self pride.

He was telling me about his philosophy of life, how to understand life, how to understand yourself in the world, how to understand the world. Benn was explaining his world view to me. Robert Redfield (1952: 30) states that,

"World view" differs from culture, ethos, mode of thought, and national character. It is the picture the members of a society have of the properties and characters upon their stage of action. While "national character" refers to the way these people look to the outsider looking in on them, "world view" refers to the way the world looks to that people looking out. Of all that is connoted by "culture," "world view" attends especially to the way a man, in a particular society, sees himself in relation to all else. It is the properties of existence as distinguished from and related to the self. It is, in short, a man's idea of the universe. It is that organization of ideas which answers to a man the questions: Where am I? Among what do I move? What are my relations to these things?

Benn exists in a world where the sacred and secular are not separated, where he is guided by *the spirit that moves in all things*. He gives his knowledge to all the people who participate in the sweat lodge ceremonies and notes that "It is my way of being a part of *the spirit that moves in all things*. It is my job to do these things, to help people whenever I can, to be responsible for them, because I am a spiritual leader." Anthony F. C. Wallace (1961: 100)

noted several characteristics of what some anthropologists refer to as a primitive world view;

(1) that the distinction between self and that which the self confronts is blurred, so that man tends to see himself as united with nature, rather than standing apart from it; (2) that man participates in maintaining this unitary system of man-in-nature, rather than dominates or changes it; (3) that the universe is morally significant, because all of nature is animate and hence man's relationship with nature, like all social relationships, must be moral.

According to Wallace and Redfield, Benn's world view can be classified as "primitive." But the term "primitive" carries with it a pejorative tinge, so Benn is more in favor of another term, so perhaps *nature-based world view* would be a more accurate phrase. The definition quoted above, however, is quite accurate, and Benn indeed makes no distinction between man and nature, or between nature and the spirit world. It is all one world, made up of nature, and filled with spirits as well as people.

Benn eventually communicated his world view ideas to new sweat lodge participants before the ceremonies began. It was an orientation of sorts. I could hear him speak solemnly, softly, with the conviction of belief that was based on personal experience. He talked about the sacredness of the lodge, the ceremonial area, how the sacred circle was a symbol that should be respected and understood. He commented that "The lodge is the *center of the universe* where everyone is equal. It is the place of beginnings, the womb of Mother Earth, where we all come from. It is also referred to as the Buffalo's Hump."

It is important to note that there are different kinds of sweats: men only; women only; children only; and "open" sweats. I have attended the open sweats and men only sweats. The atmosphere was somewhat different between those two types of events. Regarding a men only sweat, Benn told me

one evening that, "This sweat will be for men only. We will have a quiet sweat. It will be a good sweat."

Benn has a certain personal habit of subtly understating how he feels. Later he told me more about his feelings. He told me,

What I was really saying before was that men only sweats will be more solemn. They will be very rewarding experiences. Men only sweats have a different kind of energy. I remember going to a men only sweat one weekend not long ago and we held a prayer circle. When we all joined hands I felt this *snap* of electricity. It ran right through me. It was real strong. We all felt it.

I remembered that weekend too. Benn had left a message on my phone. He said there would be a sweat on Sunday and hoped I could make it. I had been monitoring the weather reports for several days before Benn's phone call, noting that there had been a lot of rain since the previous weekend when Benn had to cancel a sweat because of too much rain. While I have been to sweats in the heat of summer, the snow of winter, and the rains of various seasons, there had evidently been so much rain that the entire region became completely soaked, so Benn was concerned that folks would not want to make the trip. He was also considering that there would be no dry wood available. However, as it turns out Benn and three other men held a very last-minute sweat on Sunday, in spite of the rain.

It began that Sunday morning. Benn was visiting a married couple (I'll call them Jake and Jane) for a Sunday morning breakfast. As it happened, two of Jake's friends from northern Utah had driven down unexpectedly for a visit. One of the men stated that he had a physical complaint that had lasted for about two years. He had no knowledge of Benn's work as a spiritual leader, nor that Benn conducted sweat lodge ceremonies. Nonetheless, the man wondered,

"Maybe I ought to attend a sweat lodge. It might help me with this problem."

Benn was not in the house when the fellow made the comments but he soon heard about it when he went back inside. He decided they should hold a sweat for the man, in spite of the heavy rain.

Jake owns a large piece of land and he had some dry wood that was being stored out in one of the fields, so he and Benn drove their trucks out to the fields for the wood. They evidently struggled with the muddy conditions, and it took them some time to complete their work. But, they were successful in gathering enough wood for the sweat. They held a four man sweat while it rained, but Benn remembered that,

It was kind of funny (strange), you know. The rain stopped just long enough for me to get the fire started. Then a few minutes later a gentle wind came up. Talk about perfect timing. It (the wind) worked just like a bellows, so pretty soon the fire was going real strong. I knew right then that we were doing a good thing to hold that last minute sweat.

Benn selected Jake to be the fireman. Working the fire is very hot work since the fire needs to be stoked continuously. It is also necessary to stand very near the fire in order to remove the many stones for the lodge. Arms and legs become tender and red from the close proximity to the heat. Jake mentioned that,

I got really hot working the fire, then I asked the spirits for a little help. Pretty quick the rain started back up again and it cooled me off just at the right time. I was really kind of surprised. But it was later though, when we were inside the lodge, that something totally wild happened. I was sitting next to Benn and staring into the stones for a while. Then I closed my eyes. All of a sudden I saw this huge white buffalo in front of me. It was charging me! I tried to move out of the way, to dodge it, you know, but it knocked me back against the wall of the lodge! Pow!! I opened my eyes for a second, then closed them again. Then I saw the buffalo grazing peacefully in a meadow. Nothing like that ever happened to me before.

It was somewhat remarkable that Jake told me about his unusual experience since he frequently chides his wife when she talks to Benn about her many visions. He is not a person who admits to being spiritually based nor does he believe in visions. Jake is what Abraham Maslow (1964) has termed a "non-peaker," a person who experiences, yet denies the relevance to reality of personal experiences that can elevate a person to heightened spiritual planes. However, he was not hesitant to tell me of his experiences at that particular sweat. As in this example, I gathered data through interviews or participation in the ceremonies and assembled the data as a composite.

Field methods are difficult to plan in advance, especially given the dynamics of studying people and cultural events. Since I was dealing with sacred issues as well as personal ones, I developed a field methodology that complemented, disrupting as little as possible, the events and individuals I studied. The role of participant/observer facilitated my interaction with the event group and allowed me to gather data. As William Powers (1982: 1) points out, though, such data is many times gathered out of sequence with the way it is presented. Powers notes that,

As both participant and observer, the anthropologist plays a dual role. As a collector of ethnographic data, he is like a cinematographer who has been directed to shoot a number of disparate scenes for a motion picture. Many factors influence just how the scenes will be shot--time of day or night, appropriateness of the weather, readiness of the properties, costumes, and actors--all, or at least many of them, matters tied to the film budget. Thus a cinematographer may shoot scenes, just as the anthropologist collects facts, in a random, often haphazard way relative to the final production.

Like Powers (1982), one of the problems I encountered with my project was that I experienced some aspects of the ceremony, and ancillary events, out of sequence. For example, I attended the sweat lodge ceremony many times

before Benn invited me to help him gather wood. It was also after attending many sweats that I assisted Benn in gathering fresh sage for the ceremony. My challenge was that I had to take all of my experiences, sort them together in an appropriate sequence, then give the reader an accurate view of a single sweat lodge experience. I have assembled my description of this particular Paiute Sweat Lodge as a composite of many sweats and attendant experiences, such as gathering wood, herbs and stones for the sweat lodge.

My goal is to give the reader a thick description (Geertz 1973) of the sweat lodge ceremony. In addition to my description of the sweat lodge experience, I present a review of theoretical models in order to develop an understanding of Benn's motivational perspective regarding the revival of a Native American ritual, the sweat lodge. I illustrate how Benn, having become a spiritual leader, in some aspects fits Wallace's (1961) and Maslow's (1964) personality models. I also present material that is relevant to linguistic elements of the ceremonial experience, pointing out the importance of ceremonial language and how event scenarios are formed that contribute to identity construction. (Saville-Troike 1982) I have also included summaries of participant interviews that are found in the Appendix.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SETTING

The Kaibab Paiute reservation was established in 1917. It is geographically located on traditional Paiute land southeast of Zion National Park in southern Utah, and northwest of the Grand Canyon's North Rim Lodge. The present area of the Kaibab Paiute Reservation is greatly diminished compared to the area that was traditionally held by that culture group. (Stewart 1942, Kroeber 1963) Negotiations are being held to acquire a large parcel of land in order to increase the band's land holdings which would add needed grazing resources for their cattle. The land, which is adjacent to the reservation, would increase their tribal property by approximately four hundred square acres. With sparse financial backing, however, the land deal may be difficult to finalize. The need for the additional land may not be enough to overcome the financing problems.

Bennjamin S. Pikyavit is a spiritual leader for the Kaibab Paiutes at Pipe Spring, Arizona. He was born in 1948 at Filmore, Utah and attended elementary school in Fredonia, Arizona, 20 miles east of Pipe Spring National Monument. Later he attended middle school and high school in Phoenix, Arizona and Santa Fe, New Mexico. He later returned to the Kaibab reservation at Pipe Spring. His mother was a Kaibab Paiute who lived at Pipe Spring, and his father is a Pahvant Paiute from Kanosh, Utah, which is located a little south of Richfield, Utah.

Benn lived with his mother, grandmother, and younger sister at the reservation. His father had left the family by the time he was about five years old. His mother was seldom at home, and Benn recalls that,

I was pretty much on my own except that my grandmother was always there. She was taking care of my little sister though. A lot of the time my mom was gone, chasing around somewhere. It was not a great situation at home. School was all right, I guess, but I didn't get too much out of the studies. I was really only interested in playing sports. That's what got me through school. I had a real good reputation from being in sports. It used to bother me, though, that I always felt like I was being put up on this pedestal just for doing sports, which I liked anyway. It just seemed funny, you know.

An army soldier from 1968 to 1970, Benn served in Viet Nam from 1969 to 1970. He performed as a duty soldier (MOS 57A10), working as a graves-registration specialist. His duties required a great deal of mobility. He worked primarily in the Central Highlands of Viet Nam and at Quin Nhon, Viet Nam. He attended basic training at Fort Lewis, Washington and Advanced Individual Training (AIT) at Fort Hood, Texas.

His military experience was very troubled. He spent some time in the stockade and was later sent to Ford Ord, California for special processing to Viet Nam. He ended up volunteering for duty in Viet Nam in order to be released from the stockade. While in Viet Nam, Benn was still facing some of the same problems he experienced in basic training and AIT, mostly getting into brawls and fights of one sort or another. Benn explained that he was usually forced to defend himself because of whatever situation arose, but he did not mind busting a few heads if he had to. Benn recalls,

Once I loaned a tape to this black guy but then later he wouldn't give it back to me. I kept on telling him to give it back but he told me it was his tape. That really ticked me off so things started to get a little nasty. He was with a bunch of his black buddies one day. I went over to him and



said 'Okay, I'll fight every one of you one at a time if that's what it takes.' Well, I didn't have to fight all of them 'cause the fight got broke up by some officer. And I never did get back that tape of mine.

Viet Nam offered the same temptations that Benn had become accustomed to in the States, so he began to use drugs on a daily basis. Inexpensive drugs were always available. Like many other American soldiers, Benn had found a way to deliver himself from the war.

When I spoke with Benn about his early experiences at school and in the army, he told me some stories that were difficult to believe, knowing him now. During his time in school he was involved in a lot of fights. Problems with the local authorities developed. He was sent to reform school for fighting but was later returned to public school where he finally graduated. Later he began to drink heavily and to use drugs. Benn found himself in jail more than once. It was not uncommon for him to brawl with the authorities themselves. Many of them still remember Benn's fierce temper. To know him now, one would never suppose that his past was so violent. After Viet Nam and school he was still a heavy drinker and drug user. He was still becoming involved in fights, vehicle accidents, or confrontations with the local authorities. Beating a police officer was no different to him than beating anyone else who trifled with him, so most of the local enforcement officers knew Benn intimately at that level. Some of those same personnel still reside and work in the area of Kanab, Utah and Fredonia, Arizona.

Today Benn is not involved with the police in the same way. He has changed his life considerably. He has been sober for fifteen years. He embraces native spirituality and recognizes the need to allow his own spirituality to emerge. He assists many people who need his help, he counsels people who have been jailed, he acts as marriage counselor for others, he

conducts the sweat lodge ceremony for virtually anyone who wishes to attend, he participates as a spiritual leader in funeral services, he gives Native American presentations for youth groups, and his efforts are affirmatively recognized by those whom he counsels or serves and by civic authorities.

I have accompanied Benn to several Paiute funerals at another reservation. Since he is a spiritual leader, Benn, along with other spiritual leaders and elders, is a featured participant in such ceremonies. The funerals I attended were held at a Reservation Community Center, a rather austere building with a kitchen, bathrooms, some small offices, and an auditorium with portable, foldout metal chairs. Food is generally served in the evening since the event can last a long time.

A funeral ceremony can sometimes be scheduled to last up to twenty-four hours. At the events I attended, the caskets were positioned at the end of the auditorium, away from the kitchen area. There were several tables set up near the caskets where the personal belongings of the departed were laid out. The portable chairs had been set up on both sides of the auditorium, with a large space left open between them. The chairs did not face the caskets. Instead, the two groups of chairs on each side of the auditorium faced each other. In front of each of the large groups of chairs, and on each side of the auditorium, was a short row of four or five chairs, fairly near to the caskets. The spiritual leaders and elders sat in those chairs while they sang their Salt Songs or Bird Songs.

The Salt Songs are special songs and are frequently used for funeral ceremonies. (personal communication Bennjamin Pikyavit 1995) They tell the story of a variety of birds who are on a journey home. Carobeth Laird (1976: 242), married to and trained in linguistics by John Harrington, later remarried a

Chemehuevi informant, George Laird. She provides additional information about those songs,

. . . the Bird Song, which George Laird did not list as an hereditary song (although he stated that the Chemehuevis greatly admired the Cahuilla Bird Song) is for amusement -- and yet the Mohave Bird Song was sung on the solemn occasion of Mike Tobin's funeral. Still they say, 'Bird Dance [dance and song are used interchangeably in translation] is for fun.' The Salt Song, according to George Laird, traces the travels of a great variety of birds, each searching for its proper home; but it seems unlikely (though it is possible) that the present Bird Song is actually identical with or a part of the Salt Song as he knew it.

Certain songs indicated land ownership and hunting rights, and the song itself spoke of the territorial range of the owner. Unfortunately, there seems, to be no definitive answer regarding whether the Salt Song and Bird Song carried with them the ownership rights mentioned. Laird (1976: 9-10) points out that,

The Salt Song seems to have been allied with the Deer Song (one of the two most important hereditary song groups, the other being Mountain Sheep Song), but was itself very long, ranging over a vast amount of territory. Persons now living (1969) say that it had two separate branches. George Laird himself owned by inheritance both the Deer Song and the Salt Song. Although he had learned only snatches of each, he knew enough of the routes to be sure that the Salt Song travelled over Deer territory.

The Chemehuevi are linguistically and culturally related to the Southern Paiutes, yet no Paiutes spoke to me of the songs as being derived through heredity, nor that the songs reflected territorial ownership and privileged hunting rights. By the beginning of the twentieth century the strength of hereditary moieties was fading into the past. Today the songs are spoken of as public cultural property and appear to reflect no clan or family ownership rights. The single aspect of the Salt Song and the Bird Song that can be traced

historically and seems to persist, is their use at festive occasions as well as funeral ceremonies.

The spiritual leaders and elders accompanied themselves with gourd rattles, but there were no drums. When the singing began, relatives and friends of the departed went to the tables next to the caskets and picked up personal articles that belonged to the departed person. They walked in a counterclockwise direction in the open area in the middle of the auditorium. In the sweat lodge ceremony, the requisite direction is always clockwise. For funerals, though, the appropriate direction is counterclockwise. A Paiute man told me,

When we hold a funeral, we are really trying to relive parts of that (deceased) person's life. It is a symbolic thing where we try to remember that person by going back in time. That is why we walk the sacred circle backwards. We are symbolically journeying back in time to when that person was still alive, when they were still with us. The Salt Songs talk about going on a journey too.

The funeral ritual is a process that lets everyone remember the person who has departed. It is exquisitely symbolic with its Bird Song and Salt Song singers, and with the reversed direction of the mourners in procession, holding, as if to hold the departed, something that once belonged to them. Old people, young people, any person who knew the deceased, is likely to participate in the ceremony. A great deal of emotion builds up each time the elders sing, while the people begin their counterclockwise walk, going back in time, holding onto the personal belongings of the deceased. I recall that one woman became very overwrought. The spirit had touched her and she began to cry uncontrollably, then she fainted and everyone rushed to her, all of them crying themselves.

A memorial service is held one year after the funeral. During the memorial services, a deceased's personal belongings are destroyed by fire,

symbolizing the end of a one year period of mourning by family and friends. Benn has attended many memorial services noting that, "It's just a way of saying a final good-bye to somebody. And after a year has gone by it's usually a little bit easier on people to say good-bye."

Benn's troubled, early childhood, his frequent negative encounters with authorities, as well as his problematic experiences in the military, may have affected Benn in ways that later caused him to seek an identity change. Wallace (1966) shows that personality changes occur when self evaluation begins, when self appraisal does not meet an individual's expectations;

As we have seen when the person's identity (or image of self) is unsatisfactory, religion is a source of ritual to which he may turn in order to achieve salvation. Most, if not all, cultures recognize at least some such identity problems in individual instances and provide culturally standardized ways for the unfortunate victim of identity conflict to achieve relief by way of possession, becoming a shaman, mystical withdrawal, or good works.

Benn's new identity was to become the spiritual leader of the sweat lodge. His transformation was achieved through mystical withdrawal and good works. He does not consider himself to be a shaman or medicine man. But Benn reflects on his earlier years, and though he feels that some of his troubled past may indirectly contribute to his transformation, he asserts firmly that,

All those things (his negative past) don't really matter though. I had this (spirituality) in me all the time anyway so no matter what I would have done back then I would still have ended up doing something spiritual just like I'm doing right now. I was born that way, to be a spiritual person. That's just the way things are for me. I could've gone all through those earlier times with no problems at all, and that wouldn't have changed things either. No, I don't think having those hard times made me what I am right now. I think I am who I am because that's just the way I was born. That's the same for everybody isn't it? What you become in life is what you were born to be in life. Some times it just takes a little while to

get to the point that you know who you are. That's what life is about, isn't it? finding out who you are?

So, it is significant to note that Benn believes in a rather strict natural determinism regarding his spirituality. He stresses that no matter what his early years would have been like, he would still have become a spiritual leader. These ideas are reflected in the works of William James (1902), and especially Maslow (1964). For them, the tendency toward spirituality is part of the nature of man and may manifest itself in many ways. Therefore, becoming a spiritual leader may have little or nothing to do with cultural mechanisms as suggested by Wallace (1961, 1966).

## CHAPTER 3

### PREPARING FOR THE CEREMONY

I have gone with Benn many times to gather wood for the sweat lodge. He has several favorite places to gather wood, just as he has some preferred areas to gather sage or other herbs. Occasionally I was sent alone to gather the herbs when Benn was otherwise occupied, but in those instances I was not allowed on certain reservation land unaccompanied. When we went together, we drove the old dirt roads, through fenced and gated areas, until we found ourselves angling up some low hills where the road nearly disappeared in the thick juniper (cedar). We located some felled, dried timber that is everywhere to be found. Benn always uses cedar for his ceremonial wood. It is a plentiful source for the sweat lodge ceremonies while the pleasing redolence of the cedar parallels that of the sage and other herbs he uses in the lodge. James Mooney (1965: 53), in his details of Wovoka's (Jack Wilson) celebrated Ghost Dance ceremony, spoke of the use of cedar wood,

The selection of the cedar in this connection (with the ceremony) is in agreement with the general Indian idea, which has always ascribed a mystic sacredness to that tree, from its never-dying green, which renders it so conspicuous a feature of the desert landscape; from the aromatic fragrance of its twigs, which are burned as incense in sacred ceremonies; from the durability and fine texture of its wood, which makes it peculiarly appropriate for tipi poles and lance shafts; and from the dark-red color of its heart, which seems as though dyed in blood.

Benn has spoken many times of his belief in the doctrine of the Ghost Dance. We sing Ghost Dance songs in the sweat lodge meetings, since they are a favorite of Benn's. His paternal uncle taught him the songs, which had previously been hidden inside of other songs, like the round dance songs, until religious oppression began to subside. Then the songs were brought to life again, and were sung in ceremonies. Like Wovoka taught his people (Kehoe 1989, Mooney 1965), Benn instructs participants that, "We must respect one another, and be honorable people. Then if we can do these things, life will be good for everyone."

Before Benn began cutting the wood, he made an offering of tobacco to Mother Earth and spoke a prayer. He took his tobacco pouch from the truck, then slowly walked to the place where he would gather the wood. He looked around, faced east, then opened the pouch, all in quiet contemplation. He removed a pinch of tobacco from the pouch, then prayed softly or silently in the Paiute language. He took the pinch of tobacco between his thumb and first two fingers, gently raised his hand to the sky, and then rolled the tobacco between his fingers and let it drop to the earth as an offering for the wood. He offered a pinch of tobacco to each of the four sacred cardinal points, to Father Sky, to Mother Earth, and to the place within our souls. It was a solemn, peaceful moment, unhurried and reverent. When the prayer was finished it was time to gather the *ceremonial wood*. The wood became *ceremonial wood* when Benn made an offering of tobacco in exchange for it and made a prayer for its spiritual values to imbue the sweat lodge ceremony.

On a few occasions I noticed that Benn had not made a tobacco offering, nor had he spoken a prayer. I asked him why.



Well, if you can look back you'll remember that those times when I didn't make an offering or say a prayer is when we were really rushed for time. When I know in advance that time is going to be a problem for us, I'll make an offering and say all my prayers early in the day, sometimes even before I go in to work. That way when we go out to gather wood or sage, or whatever, I'll already have done my spiritual work. That's why.

Benn usually chainsaws the wood, then uses an axe to chop the timbers into smaller pieces. He chain cut the large timbers into smaller pieces while I helped by trimming them with the axe. He frequently admonished me, in a humorous, sarcastic way, to "Put some beef into it!" While Benn is a very robust, strong man, well conditioned to wielding a chainsaw or an axe, I have had less practice. I do not attempt the task in quite as routine or forceful a fashion, hence his jokes and jibes. Normally I will simply excuse myself, explaining that I am only being careful not to chop off my leg or my foot. I remind him that in my past I have been known to be prone to accidents.

The task lasted for several hours until we filled the truck with wood for the sweat lodge. We also gathered some wood for his stove at home, then drove back to the house and off-loaded it. Later we would take the ceremonial wood to the sweat lodge and stack it neatly near the lodge for the upcoming ceremony. The amount of wood gathered is considerable, enough for four or five hours of continual burning. Benn gathers new ceremonial wood for each sweat lodge ceremony. It is not practical to stockpile a lot of wood, since a few family groups hold sweat lodge ceremonies too, and they would simply use Benn's wood but they never replenish it. We have tried several times to gather a reserve of the cedar wood, but it is usually gone by the next time we hold a sweat. The wood, though, is extremely plentiful in the hills just north of the reservation. Numerous cedar trees are fallen. The timbers are already dry and ready for burning. It is simply a matter of driving a truck to the hills, locating the trees, then chainsawing them into smaller pieces.

We drove the truck filled with cedar logs down to the sweat lodge and off-loaded them into a neat pile next to the lodge. While cedar is always used for Benn's sweats, I noticed there were many old pieces of two-by-fours next to the woodpile, as well as some burnt pieces where the fire is built. Benn explained that a Native American from Cedar City had come down to Pipe Spring and held a sweat, but he just used whatever wood he could get. Initially the man had asked Benn to get cedar wood for the sweat, but Benn told him, "If you're holding a sweat then you can get your own wood. I'm not gonna do your work for you." The man apparently just used anything he could find. There were many nails in the ashes where the fire had been, so Benn and I removed them. When we hold the sweat tomorrow all the folks will be barefoot. It is simply better to be safe rather than to have someone accidentally step on one of those large nails. It is enough that sometimes a person can unexpectedly step on a hot ember. I know, since I have done it many times while performing the fireman duty for the ceremony. We finished our work for the day. The following day we would pick fresh sage for the sweat, then remove the stones from the lodge in preparation for heating.

The next day Benn went to work and finished in the late evening. He drove home and we talked a little about work, about the upcoming sweat, and then discussed who we thought might attend the ceremony. He said, "There might be two Paiute brothers coming. One of them asked me, 'What time are you going in?' Maybe they'll show up. Who knows." I asked Benn if that was a common way of phrasing what time a sweat lodge ceremony will begin. He explained that the term *going in* is a commonly understood way to refer to the beginning of a sweat lodge ceremony. Benn was looking forward to the sweat and was especially happy that the Paiute brothers might be there.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CEREMONY

Benn and I drove out north of the house on an old dirt road, up through some low-lying hills to get the fresh sage for the sweat lodge ceremony. While it is not recommended to gather green cedar wood for the sweat lodge, since it does not burn evenly, it is nonetheless quite necessary for the sage to be fresh. Benn does not use sage for smudging or burning at the sweat lodge, but it is frequently used that way for other rituals. At the sweat ceremony, sprigs of sage are used by participants like a natural air filter while inside the lodge; therefore, it should be as fresh as possible. Benn also uses four or six long sprigs of sage to sop the water from the bucket onto the sacred stones. The fresh sage holds the water nicely, but if dry it would only fall apart or just break up inside the water bucket.

We could have gotten sage much closer to the house, but it would not have been as lush. The trip up the hill was preferred when there was enough time. Before either of us began gathering the sage, we each offered some tobacco to the seven sacred directions: the four cardinal points, Father Sky, Mother Earth, and the inner self. We gathered the sage after the prayer and tobacco offering. As usual Benn gathered some small pieces of sage while I picked four long, lush lengths of sage. All of the sage must be harvested from the east side of the bush, as must all other herbs that are procured. Benn explained that, "You should always take it (various herbs) from the east side

because that is the side that faces the sun. Those parts of the plant are the strongest and the sun will help the plant to recover faster when we pick it (various herbs) from the east side." We took our sage and tied a bundle of four long sprigs together with a length of red cotton cloth, while a handful of loose, smaller sprigs, was added on top. Finally, the entire bundle was wrapped tightly in a red cotton bandana. Benn tucked it firmly on the dashboard of his truck and said, "Let's roll."

We drove back down to the house and loaded the remaining items that would be needed for the sweat lodge ceremony: a shovel and a pitchfork for working the fire and carrying the heated stones, Benn's dried cedar boughs for smudging, tobacco offerings for the opening prayers and the water round, bear root for chewing before singing, and a length of braided sweetgrass, two deer antlers used for maneuvering the stones once they are taken inside the sweat lodge, chaparral (creosote), and Benn's sacred eagle feather. We also brought a hollowed out piece of antler that has a carved antler end-plug that holds his tiny pieces of copal. I thought it unusual that Benn used copal in his ceremonies. He explained that,

I like to use the copal because it is a kind of link for me to the Native Americans who live in South America. That's where the copal comes from, you know, and they use it for a lot of their ceremonies. And you know the Catholics use it in their censers too, so I feel like I somehow connect with them spiritually.

Finally, we put all the small items into a galvanized water bucket along with a cup made of a coconut shell for dipping water from the bucket. At one sweat lodge meeting, a participant gave Benn a gift after the ceremony. It was a shiny copper ladle and it was meant to replace Benn's coconut shell cup. Benn used the new copper ladle at one subsequent sweat lodge ceremony but he

never used it again. I asked him why he never used the copper ladle any more and he told me, "It just doesn't feel good in my hands like my coconut shell does. It's too hard to use that long handle. I keep spilling the water when I try to hand it to someone. I like my little coconut cup a lot better."

We drove down to the sweat lodge with all of Benn's things and then began to prepare for the ceremony that would start soon. The sky was clear. The temperature had started to cool. I began to think of the ceremony and working the fire for Benn. Since April of 1994 I have attended numerous sweats. Except for the first two, and a few subsequent sweats, Benn has allowed me to act as the fireman for the ceremonies. Benn explained that,

Long ago performing the fireman duty at a sweat lodge ceremony held great prestige for individuals, so people would compete for the privilege to participate in that way. But today my own people do not consider it in the same way. It is merely a job to them now. There is no particular interest in being the fireman anymore. It's too bad, really. They are missing out on a lot by not getting involved.

Before the ceremonies began, I made it a practice to ask Benn whether or not someone had already been chosen to be the fireman. If there was no other person to do it I tell Benn, "I would like to be the fireman, if it's okay with you." He would always look at me and smile, then say, with a little humor and sarcasm, "We'll see."

Benn blessed the entire sweat lodge area with a tobacco offering and a prayer to the spirits, all before any further preparations were begun. He asked me to start preparing the fire pit as he entered the sweat lodge to remove the stones that had been left from the previous sweat. I knew exactly how Benn wanted the fire pit laid out. I began to place the cedar logs in proper fashion. To the left and right of the fire pit I placed a very large cedar log which acted as a boundary and foundation for the fire pit. Between them I placed several

pitchforks full of tinder. Atop the tinder I placed medium sized cedar logs lengthwise, east-to-west, thereby filling in the space between the two larger end piece cedar logs which bounded the fire pit on the north and south. I placed another layer of smaller cedar logs lengthwise, north-to-south, atop the first set of east-to-west logs. I took the largest stones, having been removed from the sweat lodge by Benn, and placed them on the base of logs. The remaining stones were placed atop the largest stones, then all was covered over with more tinder and small cedar logs. We used fifty stones for the sweat that night. In each corner of the fire mound I placed a large cedar log in an upright position and leaned each one into a kind of tipi shape. Then the front and back (west and east) of the mound was filled in with more upright cedar logs. A final layer of smaller logs was placed atop the last layer of tinder until the mound was ready to be fired. It is essential that the stones are completely covered by wood as Benn reports that, "The sun is not supposed to shine on the stones while they are in the fire pit. It would be like they were competing for the same energy."

While the fire mound was being built, Benn had been inside the lodge softening the earth with a MacLeod, a firefighting tool that has a long handle, where the working end is a rake on one side, and a hoe on the other. (He was once a forest firefighter.) The ground inside the lodge is a red sand and when the lodge is not in use, the sand hardens like a red dirt pavement. Benn worked hard to loosen the sand, then he prepared the area in the center of the lodge where the stones would be placed. He shaped a circular pit with an earthen border and then formed an earthen mound for the water bucket. The mound for the water bucket lay immediately east of the central pit inside the lodge where the stones would be placed when sufficiently heated.

Just outside the entrance of the sweat lodge is a round earthen altar. The altar is approximately eighteen inches in diameter, made of raised red

earth. It is close to six inches high, bordered by small stones that have fragmented from larger stones that were used inside the sweat lodge. There is a slender wooden pole in the center of the altar, about four feet high. Benn emerged from the lodge and tied his sacred eagle feather near the top of the altar pole. Sweat lodge participants placed items that they wished to be blessed at the base of the pole. Gifts for Benn and the fireman were also placed at the altar for the spiritual blessing.

Benn walked over and stood facing the fire mound, then spoke a prayer, quietly, in the Paiute language. He offered tobacco, asking that the fire be strong, that it would contain itself to the ceremonial area and not be carried away by the wind to start a brush fire by accident. He lit the fire. Soon it was flashing yellows and reds, bursting with what Benn called a spiritual heat. The stones were heating, slowly and completely. The people began to arrive for the ceremony.

As each person approached the sweat lodge area, Benn greeted them, giving each of them a big hug. He enjoys personal contact with all the folks because he feels it shows his unconditional love for them. It is a doctrine he lives by and one that he teaches to sweat lodge participants. His actions are always reciprocated. Most people who participate in the sweats already know Benn or know of him. There are times, however, when folks will bring someone new. Benn will hold a little talk for the "first-timers," as he calls them. There were four or five first-timers at the sweat, so Benn had them draw near to him while he explained what was going to happen.

Benn began his orientation by describing the ceremonial area as becoming especially sacred once the fire has been started and the eagle feather has been tied to the altar pole. The fire pit is directly east of the sweat lodge and the entrance to the sweat lodge faces east. This east-to-west

orientation is in deference to the rising sun, to the power that is in the *life-giver sun*. The fire represents the power of the sun while the east-to-west spirit line from the fire pit to the sweat lodge entrance illustrates the path by which the sun's spiritual power will travel into the lodge. The stones derive their healing powers from the eternal fire and are symbols of the sun itself.

The sacred heated stones hold an ancient wisdom. Their spiritual powers radiate in the ceremonial area, cleansing everyone inside the sweat lodge. The sweat lodge itself is characterized as the *center of the spiritual universe*. Benn explained to me that "It is the womb of Mother Earth where all people are equal and all holy names are honored. The sweat lodge is the *center of the universe*. Wherever one is built, that is the *center of the universe*. Think what can happen if you are at the *center of the universe*. The possibilities are extensive."

Benn holds an *open sweat*. That is, he does not care whether someone is Native American or other, man or woman, child or adult. Everyone is enjoined to enter for the ritual cleansing except women who are in their menstrual cycle. They are strictly forbidden from participating in the ceremony. It was that prohibition that explained the noticeable absence of one woman who had been to many sweats that I attended. I asked Benn about her and he said, "She will not be coming. She is on her period."

The dedication of the sweat lodge specified that the lodge was for the purpose of conducting *open* ceremonies and so Benn has always held to that tenet though other Native Americans at the reservation do not feel that the ceremony should be held for non-Native Americans or, at the very least, that such ceremonies should be segregated, much like traditional behaviors segregated men from women who were, nonetheless, all Native Americans. This new direction for the sweat lodge, to offer an *open* ceremony, crosses



genders as well as cultures. Only one prohibition persists. Women who are experiencing a monthly menstrual cycle are still not allowed to attend the ceremonies and I have attended several ceremonies which were conspicuously absent women who would have normally attended but were unable to attend due to their monthly menstrual cycle.

I filled the water bucket at a nearby water pump, then took it to the sweat lodge area, placing it close to the fire to warm it. Benn continued his talk with the first-timers, explaining that once a person entered the ceremonial area, it was necessary to proceed around the area in a clockwise fashion once either of the east-to-west axes was passed. Between the points of the axis, it is acceptable to walk back and forth, but once you step beyond either the east or west axis you cannot walk back across the axis in a counterclockwise direction. You must then proceed in a clockwise direction only. The east-to-west directional protocol within the ceremonial area is due to the sacredness of the *spirit line*, which must be held in great reverence by all the people who participate in the ceremony.

The fire grew intensely hot while the stones, deep inside the flaming woodpile, became large red globes. They became luminous in the spiritual fire. I added more wood to the fire periodically so the stones were always covered with burning wood. It was now approaching the *time to go in* as people prepared for the ceremony to start.

The last two people who arrived were the two Native American brothers. I had noted on previous occasions when Native Americans were participating, that they were always the last ones to arrive. The brothers were quiet. They were ready for the ceremony to begin. While Benn is undoubtedly unique in his total acceptance of all people, some Native Americans are not so inclined. I have attended sweats with some of them where they have voiced their concerns

about attending a sweat with whites or with women. Whether Native or non-Native, though, there are some people who are always very quiet. Some choose to focus on the spiritual nature of the event while others are quite social, enjoying a visit with friends or meeting the new participants. Why were the brothers so quiet? Benn looked concerned.

Finally, all the people had arrived. The fire penetrated and contrasted with the darkening night sky. The stones were glowing, and red with the purifying heat. Benn had explained to me that "The stones will sing to you when they are ready." I told him the stones were ready for the ceremony. He took the shovel from me, using it to bring out a few hot embers from the fire. He sprinkled some dried cedar boughs on the embers. They produced an aromatic smoke which he used to smudge the spirit line, the lodge, the fire, and the altar in front of the entrance to the lodge. He took the shovel of burning cedar embers and walked around the entire ceremonial area, cleansing it for the ceremony. Finally he entered the sweat lodge with the shovelful of smoking cedar boughs. He placed the shovel in the central pit, then backed out of the lodge and closed the flap, sealing the Native cathedral. He allowed the lodge to purify with the cedar smoke for a few minutes before he opened the flap and removed the shovel. To *smudge* means to ritually cleanse people or things with the smoke produced from the burning cedar boughs. Other organic materials, such as sage, mugwort, chaparral (creosote), or sweetgrass, are also used to smudge people or things. Benn then asked all the participants to go to the south side of the ceremonial area in preparation for entering the sweat lodge.

The lodge is always entered from the south side of the spirit line and then into the easterly facing entranceway of the lodge itself. Benn gave the shovel to me saying, "We need some fresh embers from the fire." I went to the fire for

some fresh embers and returned to the entrance of the sweat lodge. I knelt on the south side of the lodge entranceway. Benn stood before me, directly in front of the entrance. He kneeled, sprinkled cedar on the embers, smudged himself, then entered the sweat lodge on his hands and knees, saying as he entered, "Ah ho. All my relations." This form of address affirms the spiritual state of the person who enters the lodge. Benn explains that, "It is a summons for the spirit that moves in all things to attend our sweat lodge and to bless us all in a good way." Wallace (1966: 53) notes that

In almost every culture in the world there are customary ways of addressing supernatural beings. Such address is generally conducted by speaking aloud while the body is held in a conventional posture and while standardized gestures intended to express fear, love, respect, threat, or other motive are made; the style of speech is also apt to be stereotyped. . . . Often such address is made in public, at a sacred location and with special apparatus, such as incense or smoke from a fire, to expedite the message.

The participants approached me, one by one. As each person prepared to enter the lodge, I dropped some dried cedar boughs on the embers. I smudged them down with the cedar smoke. Then, as each person crossed the threshold of the sweat lodge entrance on hands and knees, they spoke the obligatory phrase, "Ah ho. All my Relations." Each participant entered the lodge, then circled inside in a clockwise direction, as is the ceremonial custom.

The men entered the lodge first. Women entered after the men since they traditionally occupy the south part of the sweat lodge when in attendance. The fireman, however, is always the very last to enter after the stones have been delivered to Benn. He announced, in a definitive and strong voice, "I need seven stones."

The first seven stones represent the cardinal directions, Father Sky, Mother Earth, and the inner soul of each person. As the fireman I made my way

to the fire. I probed with the pitchfork for the red-hot stones, one-by-one and delivered each stone to Benn one at a time. When I crossed the sweat lodge threshold with the pitchfork and stone, we all spoke together, "Welcome grandfather." Each stone represents the sun, portrayed with the concept of age and reverence by the term *Grandfather*. The sun itself, then, is the *Grandfather spirit*, and his son is *Father Sky*. The *Grandmother spirit* is the moon and *Mother Earth* her daughter. I have often heard Benn speak of the *Grandfather spirit*, *Father Sky*, and *Mother Earth* yet I only heard him speak of the *Grandmother spirit* when I asked him if there was a counterpart for the *Grandfather spirit*.

I delivered the first seven stones to the sweat lodge, then Benn said "Bring me some more until I say stop." I carried more stones to him until he said "That's enough!" The ceremonial fire contained a total of fifty stones. We used thirteen stones for the first round of the sweat. During the intervals between each heated stone being delivered to Benn, he sprinkled dried cedar boughs on each one. The stones sparkled with each application of dried cedar. The cedar smoke filled the lodge with its pleasing aroma. Before I took the water into the lodge, I made certain that the ceremonial fire was fully stoked, assuring that all the stones in the ceremonial fire were well covered. The sacred stones must always be covered, continuing to heat while we were inside the sweat lodge during each round of the ceremony.

We held the traditional four sweat rounds (Powers 1982) and later Benn held a water round after the second sweat round. Once the fire had been tended, I picked up the water bucket with one hand and entered the lodge on my free hand and knees and said, "Ah ho. All my relations." The water bucket is not allowed to touch the earth until it first touches the last placed and top-most stone in the center of the lodge. By touching the water to the purified stone, the

water attains a level of purity. As I entered the lodge and said "Ah ho. All my Relations," Benn took the handle of the bucket with me. We both raised the bucket to the top-most stone as everyone said, "Ah ho." Benn had placed two sprigs of fresh sage on the earthen mound that is adjacent to and exactly east of the central pit where the stones were placed. Then together we gently placed the water bucket on the sage.

Benn informed everyone, "I am going to put some water on the stones. It will create some ashes that will make you sneeze and cough. Don't breathe in these ashes. Don't breathe in through your mouth. Use the sage as a filter and breathe in through your nose. It will help you to breathe easier." The steam and ashes floated around the lodge, then began to subside. There is a final application to the sacred stones before the flap is closed, and Benn reached for his piece of hollowed-out antler. He removed the carved antler end-plug. He extracted a small piece of copal from the hollowed-out section of antler and placed it delicately on the uppermost stone. Benn looked at me without turning his head. He gave me a very subtle nod which meant that I should prepare to close the flap on the lodge so that we could begin the first round. The aroma of the melting copal was my distinctive cue to close the flap. With Benn's help, we tucked in the loose ends of the flap, permitting no sunlight to enter the lodge. The *center of the universe* had been created, again.

It was dark and quiet inside the sweat lodge. Benn formally welcomed everyone to the first round. Those who had participated before, verbally proclaimed their thanks for the welcome saying, "Thank you White Buffalo." White Buffalo is Benn's spirit name. The White Buffalo is his spirit guide. While the stones were still glowing red, he sprinkled dried chaparral (creosote) on them. A moment later he took a length of braided sweetgrass and touched it to each of the stones, letting the smoke fill the lodge. He includes in each

ceremony a prayer to the seven directions, beginning with the east, then south, then west, then north, finally to Father Sky, to Mother Earth, then, according to Benn, to the most important direction, the inner self. Benn spoke,

Grandfather, spirit helpers of the East, hear my prayer! Grandfather, spirit helpers of the South, hear my prayer! Grandfather, spirit helpers of the West, hear my prayer! Grandfather, spirit helpers of the North, hear my prayer! Grandfather, spirit helpers of the Sky, hear my prayer. Grandfather, spirit helpers of the Earth, hear my prayer! Grandfather, spirit helpers of the place from within, hear my prayer!"

With the mention of each direction, Benn applied a liberal amount of water to the stones. The steam and heat filled the sweat lodge quickly. When he finished his entreatment for all the spirits from the directions to visit the ceremony, Benn announced, "I'll begin by singing a welcoming song. It is a song to all the good spirits to come to this lodge, so they will hear our prayers and help us in a good way." He took his drum and hit it hard (called a gunshot, and is used to startle participants). It was a demand for attention to the song.

Some participants have heard the songs many times yet do not know the Paiute language or other Native American languages. Some songs are sung in the Lakota language, some in Paiute, some in Cree. However, we chimed in, singing the songs as vocables, not really knowing the words themselves but nonetheless understanding the meaningfulness of the songs. Benn talked about the songs to explain briefly what kind of song it is: "a welcoming song to welcome the spirits; an honor song to honor all the warriors; or a ghost dance song to praise the spirit that moves in all things." When the song was finished, Benn began his personal prayer.

Benn spoke from his heart, without composing his thoughts before hand, so that what he said was what he felt at that moment. His prayers are simple but reverent. Sometimes he becomes emotionally moved. On that day his prayer

was especially heartfelt as he gave thanks that the two Native American brothers had come to participate in the sweat lodge ceremony. He began, "Grandfather, it is good to be here in this sweat lodge today. It is a good day for this purification ceremony. I am honored to hold this ceremony for these people. It makes me happy to see some of my people here today to share the spirit of this lodge." His voice quaked slightly as he referred to the Native American brothers. Benn hoped their presence was possibly the beginning of a renewed interest by his people to follow a spiritual path, that it was an affirmation of him as their spiritual leader.

When the lodge was built, the Assiniboiné man, who was Benn's mentor, issued him a prophecy of the lodge. According to Benn the man said,

At first you will be in the lodge with your own people. They will come to you for spiritual guidance and to sweat. It will be a good thing. But later your people will fall away from the lodge and you will sit in the lodge alone. It will be a difficult time for you and you will hold the ceremonies by yourself. You will make your own fire. You will carry your own stones. You will pray alone. It is a test for you. After that, the whites will be with you in the lodge. They will come to you for help. You will teach them about Native spirituality. It is your responsibility as a spiritual being to give this help to all the people who come to your lodge. They must all be taught. Finally, your own people will return to you and to the sweat lodge. When this happens, we will all be together in the lodge, as it should be, as it has always been meant to be.

Benn explained to me further that,

My people are turned away because they are filled with too much pride. They are not happy that I practice an open sweat. But there will come a time when my people will seek a new direction and they will come back to me and to this lodge. I have been told all these things and it is all happening just like I was told.

Benn views his peoples' attitudes as nativistic. Yet, in view of the Assiniboiné man's prophecy, the nativistic tendencies will eventually soften. In

review, the revelation that, ". . . we will all be together . . ." is very similar to the teachings of Wovoka (Jack Wilson), the northern Paiute man who influenced great numbers of Native Americans, and whites too, with his Ghost Dance religion. (Kehoe 1989, Mooney 1965) And, though the tenets of his Ghost Dance religion were significantly altered by some of the Plains cultures, as a means of fighting against years of Anglo persecution, the original message of Wovoka is very similar to the idea of the Assiniboiné man who revealed to Benn that it was always meant to be that we should all live together.

Benn's voice trembled as he talked about the two brothers, how he was so thankful that they had come to the sweat lodge. I have heard him pray many times but there are a few select topics that cause his voice to quaver: his own family; his Paiute people; all soldiers or "warriors," especially those who have been lost in battle or who have not returned to their homes. He regained his composure quickly and began to speak of many things, mostly giving thanks for the blessings that we had all received. He asked that the blessings continue. Included in his request for blessings were the "elderlies," as he terms them, the little ones, the homeless, the soldiers or "warriors" who are missing in action or stationed in combat areas, his own family, people who were present at the sweat lodge and their families, and the people he counsels.

Benn's prayer is generally a long one, lasting perhaps fifteen minutes. The steam, the heat, both accumulated as he occasionally administered more water to the stones while he prayed. The lodge was very hot but Benn never uses the word "hot." He says, "You shouldn't use the "H" word. It's better to just say that it's warm. Then you don't psyche yourself out the wrong way." When he finished his prayer he concluded by saying, "Ah ho," and then said, "Next person!"



The next person was me, the fireman. The second prayer always comes from the fireman since the prayer circle follows a clockwise direction. I sat to Benn's left, on the other side of the opening to the sweat lodge. There are many variations regarding how a prayer may be offered. We are allowed to pray silently or aloud, or we may sing a song or ask a song to be sung while we pray. I rendered my prayer aloud and tried to make it not too short since I remembered Benn joking with me after the first few times that I prayed. After the sweat he had said, "Your prayer was awfully short, wasn't it?" I laughed a little and said, "I must have been nervous." I was. Later I became more relaxed about praying, but I was still somewhat concerned about doing a good job as fireman, especially when Native Americans other than Benn were present. I always felt somewhat self-conscious about performing a duty that would traditionally belong to a Native American.

At a previous sweat lodge ceremony several Native Americans were present, and I was acting as the fireman. They spoke openly about their uneasiness of participating in a sweat lodge with non-Natives or women. Later, though, two of the Native Americans approached me after the final round. They reached out to shake my hand and said, quite unemotionally, quite softly, "Good job." Though there was an absence of any outward emotion, I knew they were sincere. Had they felt otherwise, they would have just ignored me completely. Since then I have become accustomed to performing as a fireman. Benn, too, is always very supportive saying, "If one of them (Native Americans) wants to be the fireman, then all they have to do is ask me, but none of them ask." I have known Benn for some time now so I sensed that he was somewhat disappointed that a Native American did not ask to assist him. He did not speak about it much. He keeps his disappointment from others.

Before the prayers began, Benn had counted how many people there were in the sweat lodge. He estimated the time each one of us would speak. This is usually not difficult since he knows most of the people in the lodge, but for the first-timers he has to make an intuitive estimate. By judging how much time will be used by each person praying, Benn can allocate a certain number of people to pray during each round so that the rounds will all last for approximately the same amount of time. He wants the rounds to be about the same length in time, especially the final round when everyone has already been exposed to the previous three rounds. That final round can be very difficult, especially for first-timers.

The last round is the round when participants sometimes *suck mud*. *Sucking mud* is exactly what happens to many people. I have had some difficult times in the sweat lodge. I found myself digging a hole in the sandy, red earth, then putting my face in it to get some cool air to breathe. That is referred to as *sucking mud*. I am usually not the only one reduced to becoming so intimate with Mother Earth. According to Benn, "Mother Earth will suckle you in the sweat lodge if you find the need." For me, working the fire is very hot, hard work. I find that I can become very depleted, especially during the last two rounds, but if I "go to the breast of mother earth" I can make it through. Sometimes even Benn needs to get close to the earth where the air is much cooler. He has asthma, so it is not difficult to imagine that the heat and steam make it a strain for him to breathe deeply at times. But Benn *sucks a little mud*, too, and he makes it through just fine.

There is another element, though, a spiritual element, that makes the sweat lodge ceremony even more difficult for Benn. He automatically accepts half of the first-timers' spiritual burdens during the ceremony. As the spiritual leader, he is consigned to absorb those burdens, so he is usually very drained

after each round, especially after the final round, but he recovers quickly. I have also discussed with him the different times when he has mentioned having difficulty in one round or another. Sometimes he cannot attribute his difficulties to a specific cause but he usually surmises that there may be some malevolent spirits present at the ceremony, or that a participant has been negatively affected by evil spirits.

I have questioned Benn about benevolent and malevolent spirits, wondering about their origin, about how they are transported to the sweat lodge ceremonies. Benn explains,

The spirits have always been there, the good ones and the bad ones. They have always existed out there. (Benn pointed out toward the sky, then waved his hands to encompass the mountains and hills.) When we have a sweat, I will offer tobacco to those good spirits so they can smoke it in their spirit world. Tobacco is a very precious gift for the spirits. That is why we use it all the time. They (the spirits) like to smoke the tobacco. The evil spirits get into the sweat lodge by attaching themselves to someone who is being negative, or they could get into the lodge by being asked by someone who wants to sabotage the sweat lodge ceremony to be bad. There are some people who would try to harm me by bringing in those evil spirits to my sweat lodge and try to challenge my powers. They might try to hurt the people in the sweat lodge that I am responsible for. It can happen all the time. That is why running a sweat lodge is not an easy thing. I have to be always thinking of positive things and to make sure that I do not have any negative feelings in myself. It is not easy sometimes.

When the first round prayers are completed, Benn sings another song of his choosing. Those who are familiar with the song will sing in vocables. Not all of the Native Americans at the ceremony speak the Paiute language. Many of them sing in vocables as well. With the singing completed, Benn told everyone, "Brush yourselves down and take a deep breath. Now let it all out." We all brushed the sand from ourselves, mostly in a ritualistic way since it is impossible to remove all the sand that accumulates during even just one round.

We all took a deep breath and then everyone let out a shout, something like "Yee haw!" or "Owww!" Then Benn said, "Repeat with me" and in unison we all said, "*Pistosi Ah Sin*. All My Relations." When that was finished, I opened the flap and crawled out. I took the empty bucket with me, saying, as I crossed the threshold, "Ah ho. All my relations."

The words *Pistosi Ah Sin* are actually words that Benn has misheard from his Assiniboiné mentor. The correct words are *Mitak oyasin* (all my relations) but Benn had suffered some hearing loss in the military so he has used the term *Pistosi Ah Sin* instead. The longer version of the Lakota phrase is *Mitakuye oyasin*, which means "We are all related."

Benn went out next, as each person followed behind him. I went to the water pump to refill the bucket for the next round. I placed the bucket near the fire to warm the water, then added more wood to the fire to make sure that the stones were all well covered. Many participants exit the sweat lodge between rounds, but if a person wants to remain in the lodge to meditate, it is certainly permitted. Benn asked participants to be aware if anyone had remained in the lodge to meditate, in order to not make too much noise.

Between rounds, those who have exited the lodge will generally visit or relax, take a drink of water, or go to the water pump to soak themselves. When people go to the water pump to douse themselves with water to cool off, Benn will usually advise them that cooling down too much will make it harder during subsequent rounds. He says, "It is best to just cool down gradually, to take a little water or Gatorade to replace the electrolytes that you lose during the sweat round." Benn is well educated and actually uses the term *electrolytes* as well as other technical terms connected with psychology or physiology.

Rounds two, three and four are generally repeats of round one. Benn began each new round with a different song, then said, "Let's pick it up (the

prayers) where we left off." Each person prayed in turn. Round two was very interesting since it was time for one of the Native American brothers to pray. He said he would pray silently, then sing a song. He asked that the drum be passed to him for the song. Benn passed it to him in a clockwise direction around the sacred circle. He began beating the drum first, then started to sing. His brother joined him and then Benn joined them both. I felt the impact of their singing and sensed it was positively affecting all the participants. Everyone listened as the brothers and Benn sang a song that obviously meant a great deal to all of them. It was a song unfamiliar to the rest of the group so we all listened to the spiritual magic that was being created. I was swept away with the beauty of their singing. The brothers are singers for the Wolf Spring drum and perform their songs at Pow Wows or ceremonial affairs. Benn was one of the persons who first began the singers for the Wolf Spring drum. He probably taught these young Paiutes some of the songs they were singing. They were well practiced, and the song was very moving. It was filled with spiritual emotion, with cultural strength.

The brothers had finished their song when someone outside suddenly opened the flap and said, "Hey what's all this singing? I need to sweat. Can I come in?" Benn leaned out to see who it was. It was an old man (I'll call him Joseph), a Paiute man who was drunk. Benn said calmly,

Hey Joseph, what are you doing? We're having a sweat here and you know you shouldn't just come right on in when the flap is closed. You should have some respect for the lodge and wait until we're finished with the round. But, come on in now anyway and let's close up that flap real quick. You can pray and teach me one of your songs.

Joseph moved slowly. He was still fully clothed but he got down on his hands and knees, then made his way around to a place in the sacred circle.

While the flap had been open, I was able to see everyone inside the lodge and their faces betrayed their feelings. I saw that many of the whites looked somewhat confused, a little surprised or puzzled at what was happening. Benn and the Native American brothers, though, seemed to just accept everything calmly. Benn, however, was concerned with Joseph being drunk and that he had interrupted the ceremony. Benn told him, "At least take off your shoes and socks and shirt. But leave on your pants. None of us wants to see you in your long drawers." Joseph struggled with his shoes a little, then passed them around the circle in the wrong direction. He looked around at everybody, smiled broadly, then stretched out on the ground to feign removing his jeans. He said, "Should I just take it all off?" Benn said, "Joseph, just leave on those jeans. We don't need a show today."

As soon as Benn and I closed the flap again, Joseph began to talk to the spirits. He spoke slowly, and his prayer did not sound like Benn's prayer at all, perhaps because he was drunk. It was almost as if we were listening to him thinking. He talked about himself, about his problem with drinking. But more than his problem he spoke about the lodge, about its sacredness, about its purifying heat and steam. He was thankful for the lodge. He said,

I am feeling better already. This heat is good for me. It has been too long since I was here in the lodge to get cleaned up. I know I'm drunk but I can handle it. I'm seventy something years old but I can still handle it okay. The spirits are here in this lodge with us today and if you can let yourself believe in them, then they can help you. It's all up to you, you know. You have to suffer a little bit but that is good for you. Look at me. I am suffering. We all are suffering. But it is good for us. The lodge is a sacred place where we can come and talk about everything, everything that is bothering you 'cause the spirits will hear you and help you if you let them.

Joseph spoke about so many things. He was coherent but he was not able to stay on one idea for very long. Finally he said, "Ah ho. Let's sing a song

and get out of here." It was the end of the round so Benn sang a closing song. I heard Joseph sing along with us, then we brushed ourselves down and repeated the closing words, "*Mitak oyasin*, (or Pistosi Ah Sin) All My Relations."

During the break between sweat rounds I spoke with several people who were obviously touched by the event. They felt that there was a very strong, good spirit in the lodge that day. We all agreed that the presence of the Native American brothers brought a very strong spiritual feeling to the sweat rounds. One of the Native American brothers remained in the lodge to meditate along with some other participants. The other brother came out to rest. A woman and her son participated only in the first round. She had a minor heart problem and felt that it would be best not to go back in. She remained in the ceremonial area, however, appearing to maintain a very solemn composure during the subsequent rounds. I also asked some of the participants what they thought about Joseph coming into the lodge when he was drunk. Some of them just smiled and said it was a little strange but the lodge was for everybody.

Later I spoke to Benn about Joseph. He told me,

Joseph is a different kind of guy. He drinks all the time, but he is strong. That's how come the sweat didn't bother him at all. It's like nothing for him to sit in there even with all his clothes still on. He came to our very first sweat when we built the lodge, and he was drunk then too. The guy who taught me the ceremony (the Assiniboine man), he and I talked about it and he told me that it was okay for Joseph to go to the sweat ceremonies when he was drunk. Even though he is drunk he will get something out of it and he is strong so it won't hurt him. It is just the way Joseph is. He can't really help it so we try to understand that sometimes he will come to the lodge even if he's been drinking too much. He is actually a very spiritual man but somewhere along the way he just let the booze become too much for him. He'll be okay though. He's really strong. You can tell that. Did you hear how long his prayer was. I thought he was going to talk all day in there.

Between the second and third round, Benn held a water round. During this round, which is not a sweat round, I brought only one stone to the lodge. I also brought a full bucket of water, along with Benn's tobacco pouch which had been sitting on the earthen altar. Benn prepared to make a special offering of tobacco to the spirits. He removed a palmful of the sacred substance from his pouch and held his hand reverently above the sacred stone. He prayed aloud. His prayer was all about how sacred water is, how necessary it is, and about the importance of its interaction with Mother Earth. He again mentioned the benefits that derive from water for all the people of the earth, that we must protect the water and the earth for the sake of everyone. As he completed his lengthy prayer, he gently placed the tobacco on the sacred stone. The tobacco burned, producing a thick smoke that labored to rise in the heavy, steamy air. It hovered over the heated stone while Benn gathered it in his cupped right hand, then brushed it to the sacred water, over and over. He added purity to the water in this manner. The tobacco, too, is an offering of thanks to Mother Earth. He instructed us to brush ourselves down with the sacred tobacco smoke after he had finished smudging the water bucket. We all smudged ourselves down with the smoke as a ritual cleansing. The tobacco offering also acted to induce the presence of benevolent spirits during the water round. (Powers 1975, 1982)

Benn gently dipped the coconut cup in the bucket, slowly filling it with water. Holding it with both hands, he allowed the bottom tip of the coconut shell cup to touch the rim of the bucket, making the water on the outside of the cup drain back into the bucket. Then he touched the bottom of the cup to the sacred stone and gave it to me. He informed the sweat lodge participants that "I am giving this water to the fireman. He is doing a good job today. (He always makes that particular remark.) He will take this sacred water and sprinkle the water around the altar, along the spirit line, then around the fire and the sweat



lodge. He will come back to the sweat lodge and give me the empty cup. This begins the sacred water round." When I completed this blessing and purification with the sacred water, I returned to the sweat lodge. I entered the sweat lodge on my hands and knees saying, "Ah ho. All my Relations" and gave the empty cup to Benn.

Benn filled the cup again. He gently drained any drops back into the bucket, then touched the bottom of the cup to the solitary sacred stone that had been brought into the lodge for the water round. He passed the cup to his left, to me. I made a prayer for the water as I offered some to Mother Earth, then spilled more of the water onto the ancient Grandfather stones, thanking them for giving us their wisdom. I was very thirsty and drank what was left in the cup. Using both hands, I passed the empty cup to my left, around the sacred circle until it reached Benn again. The cup is always passed using both hands to hold it. This is done in deference to the sacredness of the water and the ceremony. I have noticed, however, that some Native Americans pass the cup using only one hand. I have asked Benn about this. He explained,

There are a lot of people who don't know the right way to act at the ceremonies any more. They forgot some of the important things, like being reverent with the special parts of ceremonies like the water ceremony. That's one reason why they (the Paiute people) need to come back to the lodge, so they can revive some of those traditions that will help them, and to learn to do the ceremonies the right way.

Benn filled the cup again, then passed it clockwise to me. I passed it to the next person. She offered some of the water to Mother Earth and to the stones, then, at her discretion, drank some of the water for herself. Afterward she passed the cup to her left until it went all the way around to Benn. He emptied the remaining water onto the sacred stone, refilled the cup and passed it to me again. We continued until each person had received a full cup of water

and had made their prayer. Each participant offered some water to Mother Earth. Some people make additional offerings to the sacred stones or to other spirits, and some may drink from the cup. Benn made certain to include the two people who did not return to round two so they could make their water prayers and to drink the sacred water. They had remained in the ceremonial area and drew in closely to the entrance of the sweat lodge. I passed the water to them. Each made a silent prayer, offered some water to the earth, then drank. That was the end of the water round.

If any water is remaining in the bucket at the end of the water round, Benn will generally apply it to the stones or give it to me to take outside. Sometimes, though, he will fill the cup and toss the water on the people inside the lodge. Once he took the entire bucket and doused me with the remaining water. I thought it was odd that he had done such a thing with *sacred water* but he explained that "The water has done its sacred work, so I just decided to cool you off a little since you have been working so hard today. There is nothing wrong in doing what I did." He likes to have fun, even when he is holding a very sacred ritual regarding the water.

I have also attended sweat lodge ceremonies that included the prayer circle ritual. If someone has a special need, then they will request that a prayer circle be held. One evening a woman asked for a prayer circle, so Benn gave instructions to everyone inside the sweat lodge about the ceremony. He stressed the importance of a positive spiritual attitude, so that the prayer circle would generate the spiritual power necessary to help the woman who requested it. The person who requests the prayer circle then delivers the prayer for a person who is in need of spiritual help. In this case the woman wanted to pray for a Hopi medicine man who was in poor health. Benn knows the Hopi

man well since he had counseled with him in order to understand his own identity and to be spiritually renewed.

Everyone in the sweat lodge joined hands. We all focused on the prayer that was being offered. According to Benn, the energy begins with the person who is praying, then moves clockwise around the circle. The energy enters each person's right hand and exits through each person's left hand. On passing through each person's body, the energy goes through the heart. Our hearts bolster and magnify the spiritual energy before it is sent on to the next person. The result is that by the end of the prayer, the energy has traveled around and around the sacred circle so that with each person's heart-generated intensification, and with each full circle traveled, the energy is multiplied until it is strong enough to fulfill the wishes expressed in the prayer. I have been to several sweat lodge ceremonies when the prayer circle was conducted. The ceremony is held during a sweat round. Several of the prayer circles were lengthy events, and many songs were sung in order to send a special message to the *Great Spirit*.

It is not only Benn's sincerity or charisma that makes the ceremonies what they are. The lodge itself takes on the presence of a living thing, an entity that has a life born from its participant use, a *living lodge*, strong and vital because of its interactive nature. In return for the caretaking it receives, the lodge gives its participants *the* healing place, *the* growing place, *the* changing place, where participants are allowed to suspend the outside world during the ceremony, while the lodge harbors them throughout an identity change that they have envisioned. This personification is generally referred to as the *spirit of place*.

The lodge generated a specific atmosphere in deference, it seemed, to the needs of those who attended. Benn explained to me that the lodge heard

the prayers, the thoughts, and the songs that were sung, and it responded by creating a zone of interaction that led to limitless and positive possibilities. The lodge lent its *third eye* to those in need, in order that they see inside themselves, to search for a new self, or to learn how to heal an existing self. In a somewhat less personifying manner, but nonetheless in keeping with the positive effects that the sweat lodge ceremony can create, Michael Walkingstick Garrett and Larry Osborne (1995) spoke eloquently about the healing tradition of the sacred circle, the sweat lodge, and how the interaction among ceremonial participants mirrors the present-day techniques of psychologists. Traditional ceremonies, like the sweat lodge, contain an ancient wisdom with practical psychological applications.

William Powers (1984) made a study of the Oglala culture and I have found that my experiences with Benn at the reservation sweat lodge, and in more casual circumstances, appear to parallel some of Powers' central observations. The belief in Oglala culture that individuals can be protected by their own personal *sicun* is somewhat mirrored in Southern Paiute culture. Benn has explained that each person has the opportunity to acquire a *spirit helper*, though it is not symbolically represented with a stone as in the case of the Oglala. There are other comparisons as well. Oglala belief appears to hinge on a concept that approaches reincarnation of the soul. When a person dies, the soul can come to reside in a sacred stone by way of a ceremony, the *Inktomi lowanpi*. The living owner of the sacred stone profits spiritually and physically from the supernatural power vested in the stone spirit or *sicun*. Central to the Ghost Dance religion of the Northern Paiute, Wovoka, is the element of reanimation of departed souls. (Mooney 1965, Kehoe 1989) This aspect of the doctrine appears to reflect the somewhat similar belief in Oglala culture regarding reincarnation of souls to sacred stones.

The sweat lodge ceremony at Pipe Spring is a place where I have experienced Paiute beliefs in spiritual benevolence. Benn prays aloud, invoking the guidance and protection of the spirits of the lodge, and he especially requests the assistance of his own personal *spirit helper*. Essentially, according to Benn, there are two types of spirits, benevolent spirits and malevolent spirits, but more interesting is the fact that there are spirits who are for an individual's sole protection and guidance and there are spirits that benefit the entire group.

The Oglala have a saying, *Mitak oyasin* (all my relations), and that same phrase is used throughout the sweat lodge except that the pronunciation has changed to sound like *Pistosí ah sin* (all my relations). When Benn talks to the first-timers he always includes instructions about how to properly enter the sweat lodge. Upon entering on hands and knees, one is obliged to say, "Ah ho, All my relations." Sometimes Benn will explain to the first-timers what the phrase means but there are times when he has neglected to explain the very fundamental and important phrase. It does not pertain to one's biological relatives or just to those people who have passed away. Rather, speaking the phrase is a matter of paying respect to *the spirit that moves in all things*. Put simply, all things have a spirit inherently. For instance, Benn's Indian name is White Buffalo and his spirit helper is Grandfather Spirit Helper White Buffalo. It is his personal spirit helper and protective guide, but Benn also receives spiritual assistance from *the spirit that moves in all things*. The term *Grandfather* is a term of respect for elders and is applied to *spirits that move in all things*. Similarly, the Oglala believe "everything that walks on two legs, on four legs, everything that crawls or flies, everything that swims or burrows, everything that grows out of the earth, everything that resides in the heavens has a *sicun* (everlasting soul or spirit)." (Powers 1984: 14) Spirits then, are always revered

and they are referred to as *Grandfather*. The Oglala also use the term saying *Tunkasila* (Grandfather).

The Oglala acquire a *sicun* through the *Inktomi lowanpi*, or Spider Sing ceremony and Powers (1984) is clear in explaining the connection between acquiring a *sicun* and relating that action to the cosmological character of *Inktomi* (spider). *Inktomi* is the first offspring "of a union between Inyan the Rock, the oldest form of creation, and Wakinyan, the Thunder Being." (Powers 1984: 12) Benn has spoken many times of acquiring a *Grandfather Spirit Helper* by several means; one may pray for such a helper; one might have a vision, or a dream; or a spirit helper may be assigned by a spiritual leader; and still others may go on a vision quest in order to identify their own personal *Grandfather Spirit Helper*.

It was now the final round and almost everyone had prayed. I found myself up on my knees, leaning way out over the stones while I held on to the upper willows of the lodge. I caught the heat and thick steam coming up from the stones. They were still glowing with a regular, pulsing intensity. Benn began to smudge the stones with the sweetgrass and I inhaled deeply. The smoke was sweet and purifying. As bits of the sweetgrass stems fell onto the stones they glowed a bright red, or yellow, or orange. These small islands of color were randomly yet evenly dispersed over the large stones. They twinkled up at me. Their colors undulated with the heat waves that were emitting from the stones. As I peered down on the stones and the sweetgrass embers I felt like I was floating up in space, looking down on all the stars in the universe. Had I begun my journey to the *center of the universe*?

The heat became too much for me so I sat down. Benn had just begun drumming and we all prepared to sing. We sang for a long time and Benn pressed to sing louder by the way he was drumming. Finally he began to beat

the drum more softly and we prepared to end the song. I felt exhilarated yet numb somehow. It was time for the next person to pray. Benn said, "Let's pick it up where we left off. Who's next?" There was a long pause. While we waited for the prayer to begin, Benn was applying water to the stones and did not stop. I cannot remember it ever being that hot before. Why was Benn putting so much water on the stones? Finally he said, "I can't stop putting water on the stones until somebody starts to pray. Who's next! Let's begin." The next person began to pray and Benn stopped putting water on the stones. We all tried to get comfortable for the last few prayers. We would soon be singing the closing song and that would conclude the ceremony.

We all exited the sweat lodge. I filled the bucket with fresh water so that those who were thirsty could drink. At that time each person should drink from the bucket before drinking from the pump or before drinking any juices or Gatorade they may have brought. Folks generally visited or relaxed after the final round. Some went to the water pump to wash all the mud off, which is considerable by the fourth round. If anyone had brought a gift to Benn, as a sign of courtesy and thanks, they gave it to him at that time. Some people have given him money, some food, some have given artifacts they made, and some merely thanked him verbally. Slowly, we all gathered our belongings and prepared to depart. Benn and I were the last to leave. We put the unused and used sprigs of sage on the waning fire as Benn said, "They (the sprigs and firewood) have all done good work here today. They will rest now."

At the end of one sweat lodge ceremony four of us lingered for a while and talked about things we had been doing. One man asked Benn some questions about the sweat lodge. Benn told him that the sweat lodge had been operating for about six years, that it was dedicated especially for the purpose of conducting *open* sweats. The lodge was built with the help of an Assiniboine

Sioux, who also instructed Benn on how to run the sweat lodge. This cultural borrowing, or independent use, appears to be common with the Paiutes and other Native groups. (Bruchac 1993, Mooney 1965, Lewis 1960, Kroeber 1940, Fowler 1987) The Ghost Dance, for example, originated with the Northern Paiutes through Jack Wilson, or Wovoka (his Paiute name, meaning "Cutter"), and then migrated to the Plains Indians culture, where it was well-received but only practiced for a short time. (Kehoe 1989, Mooney 1965) Cultural borrowing is also evidenced in Paiute ceremonial dress used in traditional dancing, grass dancing, jingle dress dancing, and fancy shawl dancing. While some elements of the dancewear are of an older Paiute culture, much of the regalia is borrowed from Plains Indian culture, and some of the young dancers use wide varieties of colors or exotic fabrics that are entirely newly introduced. (personal communication Bennjamin S. Pikyavit 1995)

Benn spoke to me about the ceremonial area where the lodge is situated. He mentioned that in that immediate or nearby area a giant kiva had been found and excavated about twenty years earlier. It was subsequently backfilled for safekeeping. According to him, the presence of the giant kiva validated the sacredness of the area and assured the appropriateness of the sweat lodge to have been constructed there. Benn explained that there is a female spirit that lives in the sweat lodge. At times she is visible to him and to others who employ the use of their *third eye*. She *lives* in the sweat lodge because a tool that belongs to her is somewhere there in the sweat lodge. Benn would not say much more about this tool. Some time later, at another sweat, I was sitting in the sweat lodge and experienced something unlike anything I have ever known. The sweat round had just begun. I had been staring into the red glow of the sacred stones. Then, I closed my eyes. As I closed my eyes, I had a very strange sensation of *knowing* or *feeling* or *seeing* something. It was a tall,



slender figure, seemingly androgynous but upon reflection, I felt it was a woman. She was dressed in a long, undecorated buckskin dress. On her right side she held a long pole. I thought maybe it was a digging stick, the tool that Benn had mentioned to us that night. Was it all the power of suggestion or was I having a peak-experience (Maslow 1964)?

The way Benn talked about it, I felt that he was really saying that the tool had been found in or near the giant kiva, that it was buried beneath the center of the newly constructed sweat lodge to help with its dedication. The practice of purposely placing cultural objects at selected sites has been detected in some of the Hohokam and Mayan ballcourts that are found in the southwest and in Central America. Archaeologists have found interesting stones buried in the centers of ballcourts, and some have also been found at the ends of ballcourts. (Gladwin, Haury, Sayles, and Gladwin 1938) What these buried items actually symbolize, is not known. Perhaps their presence indicates a religious or spiritual importance for validating the ballcourt because of the rituals practiced there.

After the others had gone, Benn and I returned to his house and took his ceremonial items inside. Many times Benn has worked during the day and then presided over the sweat lodge later in the evening. He usually needs to rest afterward. He will shower, change clothes, and sometimes have something to eat, if I cook. Later we will sit in the kitchen or living room and talk about the sweat. He will ask, "What do you think?" I sometimes feel awkward about being asked what my feelings are because I do not want to color his opinion in any way. I instead prefer to ask him what his impressions are. Most times we both know many, if not all, of the people who attended the sweat. We discuss our observations of specific individuals. Sometimes Benn will talk at length about a person if he has been counseling them or if he feels that the person is having

some particular problems. Most of the time he uses an intuitive perspective to develop his understanding about people's problems and then tries to figure out how he can help them. On this particular day, though, Benn wanted to talk about music.

Benn and I have often discussed the effects of drumming and singing on sweat lodge participants. Anthropologists (Wallace 1966: 54) point out the ritual importance of ". . . dancing, singing, poesy, and the playing of musical instruments . . ." in religious situations. I have also had similar discussions with many participants in order to understand the individual effects of sweat lodge drumming and singing on those who participate. He explained that music is an important part of the sweat lodge ceremony and that is why he wants people to join in the singing as well as the praying. It is another way to reach your spirit helpers. One woman told me that when certain songs are sung, the female spirit of the lodge will begin singing. She explained,

One night (at the sweat lodge) I was singing and then I heard this woman's voice. It was coming just to the left of me or a little bit behind me to the left. But I was the only woman there that night so it surprised me when I heard her voice. She did not sing real loud but I could hear her just the same. She was the woman who lives in the lodge, the one Benn told us about.

As a youngster Benn was taught that the drumming and singing were powerful tools used to invoke the spirits of the sweat lodge. Additionally, the sweat lodge participants can become deeply affected by the same powerful tools. The drumming is steady, the songs are repetitive, and the combination becomes a sensory-based invitation that participants find easy to accept.

Participants become enveloped by the rhythm and rote of the music, approaching a soothing, trance-like experience. The steady breathing and

singing are capable of creating a predictable effect for participants, an effect that becomes expected by many. The singing is vigorous. The heat is close to unbearable. Participants are exhausted by the singing and the heat yet, oddly, those same two elements can cause the participants to continue. The heat has a naturally relaxing effect while the singing and drumming are calculated to approximate the rhythm of the human heart beat. The coordination of heat and musical rhythm brings about a means for participants to withstand an extremely debilitating experience. Many times I have heard participants remark that, "The singing and drumming always help me get through the rounds. It's almost like a trance or something, but when I sing and listen to that drum beating, I just kind of roll along and I stop thinking about the heat."

The repetitive nature of the songs and the reverberating drum beat lead to a kind of audio hypnosis and little or no cognitive effort is required to perform the songs. This *mental freedom* allows the mind a degree of *free time* according to Benn, and allows the unconscious mind to awaken.

A heightening of audio awareness seems to be apparent due to the absence of visual input while inside the sweat lodge. Visual input is supplanted by audio acuity and the only visual stimulation may be manifest as a spiritual element of ceremonial vision. Benn explains that the effects of music are so powerful that in order to break the trance-like effects that can accrue, it was customary to douse oneself with cold water after the ceremony. Like the snap of a finger from a hypnotist, used to bring a subject out of a hypnotic state, the cold water brings the sweat lodge participant back to reality. Benn explains that, "The songs and the drumming just keep going around in your head and it can really get to you. If you don't do something about it, it can make you crazy."

Benn tells all the participants that when it is getting difficult to go through the sweat rounds then that is the time to put your heart into the singing and

praying. Sing loudly and pray for the *other participants* to have an easy time through the ceremony. It is a time to think not of yourself but to think of others, to pray for others so that they will have the strength to get through the rounds. I've heard him say many times,

The lodge is a place where you go to suffer. Remember, the only thing you really own in this world is your body so when you enter the lodge to become purified, you must expose yourself to suffering and purification. You have to give your body to the spirit, then you can heal. So when you think you just can't take any more heat, that's when you have to sing the loudest, when you have to pray the hardest and take your mind off of your own self and think about others. That is how you begin to grow spiritually. That is what the lodge is all about.

## CHAPTER 5

### THEORY

Concepts from Anthony F. C. Wallace (1961, 1966), Abraham Maslow (1964) and William James (1902) all contribute to understanding Benn as a Native American spiritual leader. And while there are many examples of viewing religion from Freudian or Jungian points of view (Williams 1984, Wallace 1966, 1961, James 1902, Jung 1938, Fingarette 1963, Fromm 1950), I have chosen to view religion and personal transformations based primarily on Maslow's work regarding "peak-experiences" and Wallace's model of "mazeway reformulation." To begin, however, I provide a general review of various writers.

Wallace (1966) noted that some psychologists find that the chief value of religion is that it acts to protect individuals and groups from *elementary* (inherent) destructive tendencies which are brought about by inner conflicts that are not easily resolved. Religion becomes a fundamental element of an individual's identity, linked to the personality of an individual as a protective apparatus. Wallace (1966: 13) points out the anthropological interest in studying the "relationship between religion and personality dynamics," while numerous psychological perspectives show similar interest in religion.

Lee Irwin (1994: 229-230) talks about the historical impact made by Freud regarding dream interpretation, and current thoughts,

The Freudian model of dream analysis gained an early foothold among a number of American anthropologists and retained its theoretical dominance in dream interpretation into the late 1960s. . . . In the Freudian model, the dream is regarded as a manifestation of a repressed, displaced and instinctually determined content, the dream itself being regarded as a "sign" of the hypothetically constructed constituents of Freudian theory. . . . [however] it is a mark of modern consciousness that dreaming is strongly identified with the "prerational" mind and with a substratum of "primitive" instinct and emotion beneath the threshold of rational conceptualization. . . . The unbound depths of dreaming touches not only the immediate, lived world of everyday existence and perception, but it also enters into both our individual and our collective history. . . . To understand the visionary world of Native American religions, it is necessary to overcome a rational bias that would reduce dreaming to an expression of the "irrational" or "epiphenomenal" mind.

Briefly, the relationship between personality and religion, or culture and religion, has been explained by Freud as a kind of balance of psychological elements. Mankind is left to deal with individual conflicts based on Oedipal wishes, so religion is developed in order to balance those unfulfilled, socially conflictive wishes. In a more critical perspective, religion can be viewed as causing the very individual conflicts that it was established to combat. The situation becomes an inescapable circle of inner conflicts repressed by an institution (religion) that professes to relieve the same conflicts that it causes. It is easy to understand a critical view of a Freudian explanation of the relationship between religion and personality when religion can be described as a cause of personality conflict, but at the same time is shown to be the result of personality conflict. It is a tautology that has no resolution.

Carl G. Jung (1938) also contributes to understanding the relationship between religion and personality. Similar to Freud, Jung's view incorporates religion with personality dynamics, but Jung illustrates religious integration as a means of resolving inner conflicts in order to become and maintain oneself as a viable member of the group. Wallace (1966: 25) noted later that the primary functional thesis of religion is that "the religious institutions of a society

represent, and elicit acceptance of, certain central values whose internalization by members of the society is necessary for the adequate integration of that society's various parts." This approach views religion as a construct developed from a personality dynamic which seeks maturation and integration with the group, all from the perspective that the religious institution, and not the individual, becomes a formal and controlling entity. While the Freudian approach is primarily symptomatic regarding religion and the individual, the Jungian approach not only accepts Freud's individual oriented and symptomatic interpretation of religion, but also presents religion as an integrative, individual and group dynamic, that is capable of resolving emotional conflicts.

From Wallace's (1966: 38-39) point of view, religion is necessarily a part of the human condition because of our *inherent need to organize the world into understandable parts*, and he points out that,

This dialectic, the struggle (to use an easy metaphor) between entropy [negative] and organization [positive], is what religion is all about. [and further that] Religion maximizes it [organization], perhaps, beyond what rational use of the data of this experience [religious experience] would justify, but in so doing it satisfies a primary drive. We must, I think, postulate an organization instinct--an instinct to increase the organization of cognition and perception. Religion and science, from this point of view, would seem to be direct expressions of this organizational instinct.

Wallace uses the phrase "primary drive" in the preceding passage and it says much of the author's intent. We are shown that religion, rather than being a construct born of culturally created inner conflicts, is a construct born of inherent need. It is by our very nature that we construct religion, and so the relationship between religion and personality can be understood as necessary in order to satisfy inherent or emerging needs in individuals or groups.

Wallace (1966) discussed the problem of individuals who exist in a world where religion no longer offers them the necessary utility, where an individual's religious culture has been disrupted or destroyed by a successful, subsuming culture. What can such individuals expect to accomplish religiously when they exist in situations that are absent the necessary ingredients that previously infused cultural and personal values, that allowed individual and group growth? Wallace proposed that when an individual is confronted with too much stress, with a situation that is untenable, the result is that the individual will begin a process of restructuring their world in a cognitive sense. He called it "mazeway reformulation" and linked that cognitive action to revitalization movements.

Had Benn reformulated his mazeway because of too much personal stress and does intolerable stress motivate other individuals to participate in the sweat lodge ceremony as a revitalization movement? Wallace (1961: 144) stated that "The mazeway of a culturally disillusioned person, accordingly, is an image of a world that is unpredictable, or barren in its simplicity, or both. His mood (depending on the precise nature of the disorganization) will be one of panic-stricken anxiety, shame, guilt, depression, or apathy." So, is Benn's motivation somehow linked to a feeling of disillusionment? Is he motivated in the role of spiritual leader to bring structure to a previously structureless image of his world? It is very likely that the absence of another, effective organization, like the sweat lodge, compels Benn to search for a remedy. His remedy takes the form of revitalization of a spiritual ceremony, but it is not the same to say that it is a revitalization movement.

The interesting element of Benn's seeming revivalist bent is that it has become, accordingly, because of fate (per Benn's own account), a ceremony whose participants currently derive from outside his own native culture. Also, the acquisition of the sweat lodge ceremony is a result of cultural acceptance of



a foreign ceremony. Benn's sweat lodge was built by an Assiniboin Sioux and Benn was instructed on how to administer a Lakota style ceremony. So, we have a Paiute man who was taught a Lakota style sweat lodge ceremony by an Assiniboin man, that is attended, primarily at this time, by participants who are not from Benn's own culture group.

Benn's concept of his world, compared to that of Handsome Lake (Wallace 1961: 146) is similarly derived in some regards; (1) the traditional style of Seneca life, like that of the Paiutes, had been significantly changed or lost due to contact, or a reservation-based existence, (but years of acculturation have not seemed to cause intolerable stress in the Paiutes), (2) in an attempt to bring order to a culture group's world, or to his personal world, Benn has adopted and offered a spiritually oriented ritual even though the ritual originates outside his culture; (3) Benn had been sober for nearly fifteen years and he advocates sobriety to others; (4) he criticizes the Native American Church stating, though he was a long-time member of the church himself, that "Some people who participate in the peyote ceremony use their plant-induced spiritual powers to hurt people and to elevate themselves socially instead of trying to heal themselves or others."

Native Americans have attempted to deal with issues of religious acculturation for many years. One such attempt is found in the establishment of the Native American Church. Wallace would likely view the establishment of the church as a revitalization movement and it may be a simple matter to illustrate mazeway reformulations as being caused by intolerable cultural stress. Benn was a member of the church from age six until he was about fifteen years old. He attended meetings each week with his uncle, who was a roadman for the church. Benn received a prophetic message from his uncle and recalls

My uncle told me that there would finally come a time in the church (Native American Church) that the people would begin to change. They would start to use the peyote for selfish reasons and to hurt other people. They would try to make themselves bigger (socially powerful) by causing problems for other people. This is not how peyote should be used though. It should be used to heal people. The sacred plant should only be used by people who want to see visions that will help other people, not to hurt people. When my uncle got older he got diabetes and then he lost his leg. After that he couldn't get around much and he kind of just gave up on things. Then he finally gave up on the church too. That's when he told me about how the church was changing from helping people to hurting people. I don't think the church is being run the right way anymore and I don't go to any of their meetings either. My uncle was right. There are people who use the peyote for the wrong reasons so I don't go any more.

Paul Steinmetz (in Vecsey 1990: 107-108) offers several fine examples of the proper religious attitude when using peyote, and one especially extreme example that talks about a woman who became unconscious during a meeting but was healed during the second meeting. The following account is offered by Bernard Ice, a Native American who attended the service:

The staff made one complete round and then her brother came in and sang. She moved when he was singing. Emerson Spider put cedar on the fire and fanned her with an eagle feather. Her hand went up over her head. She got up and tried to grab something like she was sleeping and just got up. Later she told me (Bernard Ice) her vision. She saw an eagle. She wanted help but the eagle didn't look at her. He looked the other way. When her brother was singing, a boy about ten to twelve years old, the eagle looked at him and then at her and she started moving at that time. When Emerson fanned her with the eagle feather, the eagle started flying towards her and she tried to grab the eagle's legs. That is what she was grabbing for. If she could grab the eagle's legs, she could get up. **The reason she got that way was that she was trying to pray for everybody in the meeting. They were all sinful. She prayed that she would take all the sins on her even if she would have to die. When she prayed like that, it did happen.** It was like a big sack, real heavy. So that weight was on her and she couldn't move. She tried to find a way out. She was in darkness too. She saw a small hole that she could go through but she could not find her way towards it. When her brother was singing, there was a little feather that showed her the way out. Her brother was singing and he was a little boy and he was sinless. His voice represented that

little feather that showed her the way out. So she was able to grab the eagle's legs and he took her out through the hole. When Emerson put cedar on the fire, the big sack of sins was thrown into the fire and burned up. [My bold above.]

By the time Benn was fifteen years old he ended up in reform school. With his uncle no longer acting as roadman in the Native American Church, and with the Native American Church being seen by him as degenerating to the level of selfish interests, Benn was left more alone than ever. His world was absent parents, his uncle had become inactive, the Native American Church had lost its appeal, until finally Benn felt like he was losing himself too. Was he reaching the point that Wallace called "intolerable stress?"

Benn returned to regular high school after reform school. He regained some of his self assurance during the time he was in high school, and explained that,

If it hadn't been for sports I probably wouldn't have even gone back to school at all. But I liked sports and just sort of did the least amount of school work that I could do to just get by. What I was really doing was redirecting all of my frustrations to the playing field. My opponents really got their ass kicked when I got worked up. Sports became all I was interested in. It took the place of the church (Native American Church) and home and all that other stuff that kind of got lost along the way. But then I graduated.

When Benn graduated from high school he again felt abandoned. Now his sports were gone too. His occasional drinking soon turned into habitual drinking, and he began to use other drugs as well. He partied most of the time, waking up out in the desert or in the parking lot where a fight had been, or other times in a wrecked car that he had passed out in. There were plenty of drinking parties, 49ers, or just hanging around in the local taverns. I asked Benn what a 49er was. He explained,

You don't know what a 49er is? 49ers are just parties where groups of (Native American) kids go out in the hills to a favorite spot and we sing Native American songs and tell jokes. There's a lot of drinking and partying going on. Some of those Indian girls will bring their snaggin' blankets along and catch a guy, maybe. It's just like parties that everybody has. People get loose and have some fun, that's all.

Benn has been to many 49ers and so had many other Native American young people. And while it is not imprudent to join in the fun and go to the 49ers, Benn carried his indiscretions to a dangerous limit. He gained a reputation as a drinker and fighter. He had numerous encounters with local authorities and admits he needed something good to happen in his life. He was just waiting. Then it happened! He became involved with the sweat lodge, learned how to conduct the ceremony and actualized his own spirituality.

The sweat lodge ceremony is found in many Native American cultures and Joseph Bruchac (1993: 2) suggests that "One variety or another of the sweat lodge is found virtually everywhere in North America." He also states that, "The most widespread sweat lodge tradition today is that of the Lakota Sioux, who call it *inipi*." I have mentioned earlier that the sweat lodge ceremony held at Pipe Spring was given to Benn by an Assiniboiné man. The Assiniboiné are part of the Siouan culture group by way of language and material culture, so it may be no surprise that the diffusion of an Assiniboiné sweat lodge has reached the Paiutes at Pipe Spring.

Why has Benn become a spiritual leader who employs the use of a diffused cultural ceremony, a Lakota style sweat lodge? Are we able to answer that question by analyzing Benn's earlier years, his problem years? Benn and I have spoken many times about his childhood, about the troubles he experienced with alcohol and drugs, about his problems in the military. During

his childhood he felt abandoned, almost alone in the world. His father left by the time he was five years old and his mother was never home long enough to act in the role of a mother. Benn lived with his grandmother and his younger sister. His grandmother spent most of her time caring for Benn's younger sister while he recalls that,

I was pretty much on my own even then. It was hard on me but I knew everything would turn out okay. I knew something would happen to me some day that would be good. Even when I was that young, I knew I had this spiritual side to me that would always be there, and that it would always help me. I was born with it. The spirit was with me then, just like it's with me now.

As I have gotten to know Benn, it has become apparent that one of the reasons he has such understanding of many things, namely how to help people deal with their problems, is partly due to the fact that when he was younger, he had to deal with many of those same problems himself. He knows what it is to be addicted to alcohol, to be addicted to drugs, to end up in jail, to wake up with a hangover and beat up. He has learned from the most critical teacher of all, *experience*.

I asked Benn what it was that got him to stop drinking. He said,

I have a friend who is a doctor and he was talking to me all the time about my drinking. One day he just flat out told me that if I didn't stop drinking right now, it was going to kill me. He had probably told me the same thing a million times before, but for some reason it was time for me to finally hear what he was telling me. So, I quit. I just quit. I knew it was time. I had to make some changes in myself. I had to change my life. It was finally time for me to become the person I really was inside.

Benn was talking about an inherent quality, of a spirituality that lay hidden within him, waiting for the right time to emerge. His awakening to an innate spirituality was what William James (1985: 163) spoke of when he said

Neither an outside observer nor the Subject who undergoes the process [of awakening] can explain fully how particular experiences are able to change one's centre of energy so decisively, **or why they so often have to bide their hour to do so.** We have a thought, or we perform an act, repeatedly, but on a certain day the real meaning of the thought peels through us for the first time, or the act has suddenly turned into a moral impossibility. All we know is that there are dead feelings, dead ideas, and cold beliefs, and there are hot and live ones; and when one grows hot and alive within us, everything has to re-crystallize about it. [My bold above]

Wallace's (1961, 1966) mazeway reformulation model is exactly what James wrote about much earlier, and, even then, anticipated Wallace's "intolerable stress" as a possible causal element for the *growing of hot and alive feelings, ideas, and beliefs in us*. Both writers seem to have captured precisely the personality transformation that occurred with Benn. While James was inclined to view such transformations as ecstatic occurrences, sometimes due to pathological tendencies (this, however, is largely, if not entirely discounted, nowadays), Wallace viewed such transformations as the result of intolerable stress. Maslow (1964: xiv) introduces his work regarding peak-experiences and notes that, "

One more lesson that we have learned from the peak-experiences makes a difference between the psychologist of 1902 and the psychologist of today. William James assumed, with his time, that many of the religious experiences he discussed were abnormal and pathological. We know now this is true far less often than James thought. If anything, peak-experiences are more characteristic of health than of neurosis or psychosis. They may be pathological, but more often they are not. They are more often to be valued than to be feared.

For Benn, his reality was no longer acceptable, so a personal transformation appears to have been inevitable. But was it Benn's troubled past that caused him to embrace a new direction, or was his transformation the result

of his own inherent, emerging spiritual nature? Hastrup's (in Ardener 1989: 226-227) view of cultural prophets gives as much impetus to the prophet as to the culture in which the prophet exists. The explanation is a convincing blend of Wallace's and James's views and proposes that

The individuals and their actions are defined by the social space, but they are also definers of the space. . . . The individuals are defined by the world of which they are a part, but they are simultaneously the definers of the space. . . . While individuals generally experience and express only what their world singles out for registration, some of them may also step out of it and experiment with either action or expression. Thus the two-faced continuity between individuals and their world is the fundamental precondition for history, containing both continuities and changes; it is also the fundamental precondition for prophecy.

Wallace's theory of mazeway reformulation accounts for personal transformations of prophet figures such as Handsome Lake, but is it true that all such prophets develop from a mazeway reformulation? What other mechanism(s) may account for such personal transformations? I explored this topic with Benn, asking whether he felt that his past problems necessarily accounted for his present spiritual involvement with the sweat lodge. He stated clearly that his present role as a spiritual leader was not simply the result of his troubled past but, rather, that *his life had become what it would have become regardless of his past*. He maintained the view that his spirituality would have emerged no matter what his past had been, that his spirituality was an inextricable facet of his life, that he was *born to be what he would necessarily become*.

Benn supported the idea that his spirituality is innate, that it is impossible to account for his spirituality any other way. But, interestingly, Benn also feels that "Nature, life, gives everybody a spiritual side. It's just that a lot of people

never look inside themselves to find it. They keep their spiritual side hidden away." To take Benn's point of view, he had simply uncovered the spirituality that he had been hiding from himself. Maslow (1964) uses a secularized term, "peak-experiences" to talk of spirituality, and believes that all individuals possess the potential to have peak-experiences.

Maslow (1964: xii) defined peak-experiences as "the raw materials out of which not only religions can be built but also philosophies of any kind: educational, political, aesthetic, etc." The sweat lodge is a place where individuals seek peak-experiences, where they attempt to resolve inner conflicts, to attain a personal peace within themselves. James (1985: 146) spoke of the process of inner resolution and explained that,

It [inner unity and peace] may come gradually, or it may occur abruptly; it may come through altered feelings, or through altered powers of action; or it may come through new intellectual insights, or through experiences which we shall later have to designate as 'mystical.' However it come, it brings a characteristic sort of relief; and never such extreme relief as when it is cast into the religious mould. Happiness! happiness! religion is only one of the ways in which men gain this gift. Easily, permanently, and successfully, it often transforms the most intolerable misery into the profoundest and most enduring happiness.

In the above passage James again anticipated Wallace's "intolerable stress" with his use of several phrases; "extreme relief" and "intolerable misery." In my attempt to understand Benn's spirituality, however, I find especially that Maslow's model of peak-experience, and James' interpretation of ecstatic or mystic awakenings, both have some application to what I observed in my research. To a lesser degree, Wallace's theory of mazeway reformulation only has nominal application. I also have some reservations regarding Wallace's revitalization movement model, and wonder whether it reflects what I noted or learned through interviews and participation, about the sweat lodge ceremony.



During interviews with Benn and other sweat lodge participants, it was never suggested that the sweat lodge was a place of refuge from intolerable stress, nor did anyone propose that their interest in spirituality somehow constituted a revitalization movement. Instead, I was told repeatedly that participating in the sweat lodge was a *personal matter* and that participants felt enabled to make whatever *personal adjustments* were necessary in order to correct or improve their lives. Individuals were moved to personal change because it was natural for them to seek improvement, but the desire to change was not the result of intolerable social stress.

While I agree that each individual does possess a "cognitive map" (Garbarino 1977: 83) or personal mazeway, to use Wallace's term, of his or her behavioral roles, I have found no evidence in my study to indicate that any individuals who attended the sweat lodge ceremonies experienced such overwhelming culture changes or intolerable stresses, that would necessitate a reformulation of their mazeway. Instead, I have noted consistently that individuals incorporated within *existing mazeways*, their natural desires to develop spiritually. Maslow argues that essentially there are two groups of people; peakers and non-peakers. Individuals who attend the sweat lodge ceremonies are seeking peak-experiences. Others may actually have peak-experiences but because of their inability or unwillingness to incorporate the experience, Maslow categorizes them as non-peakers stating,

Any person whose character structure (or Weltanschauung, or way of life) forces him to try to be extremely or completely rational or "materialistic" or mechanistic tends to become a non-peaker. That is, such a view of life tends to make the person regard his peak- and transcendent experiences as a kind of insanity, a complete loss of control, a sense of being overwhelmed by irrational emotions, etc. The person who is afraid of going insane and who is, therefore, desperately hanging on to stability, control, reality, etc., seems to be frightened by peak-experiences and tends to fight them off.

The following is a review of Wallace's (1966) revitalization movement model, which I have paraphrased. His cultural paradigm of a revitalization movement is a general model.

Initially there is a *steady state* that is characterized as "a period of moving equilibrium" (Wallace 1966: 158) wherein change occurs at a slow and probably predictable rate, a rate that is manageable. While this stage may contain some levels of unpredictable stress, the symptomatic disorganization is nonetheless somewhat self-correcting within the overall state. While some individuals may not survive the effects of "occasional events of intolerable stress" (Wallace 1966: 158) they are considered to be socially expendable.

The next stage of Wallace's model is characterized by an *increase in individual stress*. More and more individuals find themselves unable to cope with the existing system, yet according to Wallace (1966) this stage is still within the tolerance range of a steady state. Some of the elements which are the causes of the increases in stress are "climatic and biotic change, epidemic disease, war and conquest, social subordination, or acculturation." (Wallace 1966: 159) I have reviewed this stage and I am concerned with the assertion that in spite of such overwhelming change such as war, conquest and acculturation, the period of increasing individual stress still falls within the parameters of a steady state. It occurs to me that if "increasingly large numbers of individuals" (Wallace 1966: 159) are faced with a cultural system that is unable or unwilling to accommodate their needs, then it is unlikely that a steady state could be said to still exist. My primary concern is whether such stages of the model can be applied to the situation I observed in my research. I address this, and other concerns, at the conclusion of the Wallace review.

The next stage depicts society as falling into a *period of cultural distortion* where individuals resort to behaviors that were previously alien to cultural norms. Most importantly though, the trend to non-normative behaviors becomes group oriented where "interest groups . . . may resort to violence in order to coerce others into unilaterally advantageous behavior." (Wallace 1966: 159) Here we see, for the first time in Wallace's analysis, the formation of a group as agency against the prevailing yet declining social system. Prior to this stage it was the individual who was faced with an unacceptable situation, but with a sharp increase of disillusioned individuals in the making, a group-oriented trend in opposition to the steady state exists. The efforts of such impaired groups are, however, unsuccessful in reestablishing a steady state and, instead, probably contribute to organizational decline.

The final stage is the *period of revitalization* which can occur only when the following elements are accounted for: (1) reformulation of a code, where a new cultural image is formed by an individual or a group. A new goal culture is compared to the failed, existing culture and a transformation culture is presented as a pathway to the utopian culture. The formulation of a new code tends to be either religious or political but both types of code reformulation can account for a change in the identity of the formulator(s); (2) communication of the code, where those who formulated the new code communicate its tenets to others. The code promises spiritual and cultural salvation for converts while indicating that a failure to embrace the new order will place individuals and groups in spiritual and cultural danger; (3) organization of the developer(s) and followers of the code, where conversions occur for various types of people, such as mazeway resyntheses of prophets, fanatical true believers, and pragmatic opportunists. Within this organization element, differentiation is made between the formulator(s) of the code, the disciples of the code, and the mass followers

of the code. The disciples of the new code insulate the code formulator(s) and administer to the masses, while the masses support the code movement; (4) adaptation of groups to the code where groups must ultimately comply with the new code or be cut off from the movement. This stage advances the mentality of *us against them* while the movement becomes intolerant of its own non-participating individuals who are termed traitors and of outsiders seen as enemies; (5) cultural transformation based on the code where the movement is able to control people and technology, and establish a transfer culture or goal culture. With this stage, the movement must advance to become a non-coercive body that establishes cultural conformity and establishes a viable economic system; (6) routinization of the code, where the movement becomes standardized, based on religious or political tenets. This stage of the movement can essentially be characterized as a shift from innovation and formulation to a planned maintenance of the new code.

My task is to determine whether Wallace's revitalization movement model can be applied to what may be called a renewed interest in a Native American ceremony. Some difficulty exists in this task. I must confess that Wallace's model appears to be much too prescriptive and mechanistic to be properly paralleled with what I observed while researching the sweat lodge ceremony. It may be true that the sweat lodge ceremony is a religious element, and that the leadership of the lodge seeks to positively affect participants, but it is not clear that the motivation behind such a religious revitalization falls within the framework of stages illustrated by Wallace.

Most of the participants attend the ceremonies in order to attain higher spiritual levels, to enhance themselves, to become the person they envision themselves to be, to have the peak-experiences that Maslow (1964) described. Their motivations are individually based and do not occur because of

"intolerable stress" necessarily. Rather, the sweat lodge ceremony represents a methodology for attaining personal expectations that arise from spiritual needs that apparently can be satisfied *within an existing cultural framework*.

Ceremonial participants considered the sweat lodge to be a part of what Wallace called a "steady state," therefore, individuals viewed the sweat lodge as an existing institution in their lives, a place where they gain spiritual fulfillment. Rather than seeking to escape the world in which they live, ostensibly because of "intolerable stress," participants explained that they are really "trying to find themselves in the world," and that "The sweat lodge is a good place to go if you are trying to find yourself." If we consider the absence of spiritual fulfillment to be the cause of "intolerable stress" then we may be able view the sweat lodge ceremony as a revitalization movement. However, it is not my view.

Wallace (1966) also states in his model that "increasingly large numbers of individuals" become disillusioned with an existing system. This is another element of the model that offers some incompatibility with my study. The Paiute sweat lodge ceremony attracts only a small group of individuals at each meeting. The largest number of ceremonial participants that I can recollect would be twenty three, and many ceremonies are held with as few as eight or ten participants. While it is difficult, therefore, to reconcile the sweat lodge ceremony as an element of revitalization in light of its small participant base, other elements from Wallace's (1966) model may be interpreted as existing within the makeup of the sweat lodge. In consideration, however, that the ceremony does not attract large numbers of followers, it may be concluded that a true period of revitalization, in Wallace's definition, will not be achieved.

What I have observed during my field research may indeed be the precursor stages of a revitalization movement, but because of the infancy of the

movement, it is not possible to analyze the latter elements pointed out by Wallace as being the building blocks of such a movement. The sweat lodge ceremony has been established for at least six years and is generally accepted as a routine element of the culture, for both Native Americans and non-Native Americans in the area. Any in-depth analysis of the sweat lodge ceremony as a revitalization movement is automatically disabled since I have found no evidence that there is an increase in individual stress. Therefore, according to Wallace's own cause-and-effect agenda, no period of cultural distortion would be probable, and no period of revitalization would become necessary.

My conclusion regarding the sweat lodge ceremony, and why it attracts the people who attend, relates to Maslow's (1964) "peak-experiences" and in a lesser regard to James' (1902) comments on ecstatic or mystic experiences, notwithstanding his tendency to consider such experiences as pathological. Sweat lodge participants are attempting to develop themselves on a spiritual level so that they are able to have "peak-experiences" and to enjoy the ecstasy of Native spirituality. Individuals determine that they need to *find* spirituality in their lives or to gain a different religious perspective. They are hoping to be awakened to new possibilities by journeying to the *center of the universe*, the sweat lodge. Again, Maslow (1964: 29) points out that,

. . . the two religions of mankind tend to be the peakers and the non-peakers, that is to say, those who have private, personal, transcendent, core-religious experiences easily and often and who accept them and make use of them, and, on the other hand, those who have never had them or who repress or suppress them and who, therefore, cannot make use of them for their personal therapy, personal growth, or personal fulfillment.

There is also a danger in developing a revitalization to the point that it becomes a movement. Wallace describes the structuring of a revitalization

movement into three parts; (1) the prophet, (2) the disciples, and (3) the masses.

He states that,

The disciples increasingly become the executive organization, responsible for administering the evangelistic program, protecting the formulator, combating heresy, and so on. As the executive part of the movement, the disciples also increasingly become full-time specialists in the work of the movement. In this they are economically supported by the mass followers, who continue to play their roles in the existing culture, devoting part of their time and money to the movement. (Wallace 1966: 161)

Maslow (1964: 33) talks about disciples too, but calls them "legalists," and warns that,

Apparently it is one danger of the legalistic and organizational versions of religion that they may tend to suppress naturalistic peak-, transcendent, mystical, or other core-religious experiences and to make them less likely to occur, i.e., the degree of religious organization may correlate negatively with the frequency of "religious" experiences.

Benn has never spoken of his spiritual work as a movement. While he does employ the use of some taboos regarding the ceremonial area, there is no inflexible code (per Wallace 1966) that participants must follow regarding how they must worship. Rather than affecting large numbers of people, Benn prefers to work with people one-on-one. His most effective means of counseling people occurs during visits away from the ceremonial area. His entire focus is to work with a limited number of people in order to show individuals that he is personally concerned and that each person's situation is unique.

## CHAPTER 6

### COMPARING BENN'S SWEAT LODGE TO A LAKOTA SWEAT LODGE

It became a matter of curiosity for me to compare Benn's sweat lodge to other sweat lodges, in particular those described by Powers (1975,1982), in light of the fact that the Pipe Spring lodge was initiated by an Assiniboine man. The ceremonies that Powers described were recorded at the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota in conjunction with two other rituals: the vision quest and the yuwipi, a healing ceremony. I will compare the Pipe Spring ceremony with those at Pine Ridge in order to determine whether there is significant concurrence between what theoretically ought to be similar ceremonies. The ceremonies are from Siouan origin but one is now practiced by a Kaibab Paiute, Benn Pikyavit, and the others by Oglala Sioux.

One central element of each culture is the presence or use of sacred stones. The importance of stones is evident in each ceremony, yet the Oglala tradition of the primacy of sacred stones appears to be based in a long-standing belief in their *tunkan wasicun*, or, stone spirits. A *sicun* is a spirit or soul that lives forever. Many *sicuns* inhabit the world, but the number is finite. A small, personal-sized stone, is imbued with a *sicun* by way of a ceremony called the *Inktomi lowanpi* or, Spider Sing. The *tunkan wasicun* provide personal protection for individuals who possess them.



While the Paiute ceremony exhibits ritual deference for its sacred sweat lodge stones, I have observed no indications that Benn has a belief in a concept similar to the *tunkan wasicun*. The Paiute ceremony, as a borrowed cultural event, appears to have no antecedent belief in the sacredness of stones other than that which was transferred to, and adapted by them, through the ritual of the sweat lodge. The interest in sacred stones, in the Paiute tradition then, exists solely with the sacred sweat lodge stones and does not appear to involve a possibly more fundamental belief that spirits or souls are, or can be, imbued to personal sacred stones, the *tunkan wasicun*. Benn does explain, however, that "The sweat lodge stones are the spiritual Grandfathers of us all."

The Paiute sweat lodge stones are communal property, while the *tunkan wasicun* of the Oglala are an individual's personal property. I view this distinction as significant, showing different ways that cultures can exhibit personal and communal protection beliefs. The diffusing culture fastens itself to a belief system that allows individuals to acquire a personal sacred stone, a *tunkan wasicun*, yet the recipient culture has no personally-based parallel. Instead, it has adopted a belief that is group-based, where sacred sweat lodge stones, the *Grandfathers*, are invoked to help everyone at the sweat lodge and everyone who is prayed for by sweat lodge participants.

Powers (1982) describes the Oglala sweat lodges as "rather pitiful" and "profane" structures when not in use. Though they may be used as a playground for children, a refuge for dogs or cattle, the lodges are nonetheless Native American "cathedrals." Similarly, the Paiute lodge could easily be described as austere or "rather pitiful," and it too is subjected to many elements. Were it not far removed from children, cattle and dogs, the Paiute lodge would also be susceptible to the same conditions as the Oglala lodge.

The Oglala lodge, when not in use, is uncovered, the willows left standing like a hump-shaped skeleton. The Paiute lodge, however, is always left covered. According to Benn, unless repairs are being made, in which case the willows are uncovered while the necessary improvements are made, the sweat lodge is always left covered. When the lodge has been refurbished, it is once again covered with blankets, tarpaulins, old sleeping bags, and sometimes a black plastic covering which helps to block out the daylight. When the lodge is not in use, Benn keeps the door flap closed and held in place with large pieces of sandstone to deter entry by small animals and to keep the wind from blowing the front flap loose from the lodge. He explained to me that keeping the lodge covered is just more convenient than having to cover it each time a sweat is held. Considering the fact that he holds sweats so frequently, he simply does not want to complicate the preparations any more than is necessary. Since it is not ceremonially required to uncover the lodge when not in use, Benn finds it expedient to simply leave it covered and to occasionally make repairs when needed.

There are several other elements of these different ceremonies that cannot be dismissed as unimportant ceremonially. The Oglala fire pit is located north of the sweat lodge, apparently when held in conjunction with the vision quest. The author (Powers, 1982) recorded no significance about the location of the fire pit in relation to the sweat lodge. When describing a sweat lodge ceremony being held in isolation from other ceremonies, Powers (1975) notes that the fire pit is located east of the sweat lodge entrance. The ritual as practiced by the Paiute, specifically calls for the fire pit to be located directly east of the sweat lodge entrance in all instances. There is a ceremonial imperative behind this prescriptive location; the fire which is used to heat the sacred stones is a symbol of the *eternal fire*, the Sun, which lives in the east. In order for the

sweat lodge to be spiritually infused by the *eternal fire*, it is necessary for the lodge to be directly in line with the easterly fire pit. The importance of the placement of the fire pit in the Paiute ceremony is a cultural continuation of a borrowed ceremony. The continuation of this spiritual ceremony illustrates both the importance of the fire as a symbolic reference and of the purifying sweat lodge as a healing ritual.

The ceremonial area of the Paiute sweat lodge also includes two other central elements which are illustrated differently in Powers' (1982) record of the Oglala ritual: 1) the sacred *spirit line*; 2) an earthen altar. The Paiute spirit line extends east-to-west from the fire pit to the earthen altar. It consists of small pieces of stones used in previous sweat lodge ceremonies. The stones are arranged in two parallel rows leading from the fire pit to the altar. The parallel rows of stones are approximately four inches apart. Benn explains that this *spirit line* is a pathway by which the spiritual power from the *eternal fire* travels to the altar, to the lodge, reaching the sweat lodge participants. With further examination I learned from Benn that the use of parallel rows of stones to designate the *spirit line* is Benn's own invention. It was not a part of the original design from the Assiniboine man. He said, "I decided that I needed to have a real good visual device so people would not accidentally forget about the provision of not breaking the *spirit line*. Having the double row of stones was a good way of reminding people that they shouldn't just walk across the line."

The earthen altar is located just in front of the sweat lodge entrance, which, as mentioned above, faces east. Small stones border the altar, keeping the sandy red earth in place. An undecorated, natural wooden pole is upright in the center of the earthen altar, which is no more than two feet in diameter. The pole is possibly four feet high. During ceremonies, the altar is used as a repository for personal items that participants would like to be blessed. The

spiritual force of the *eternal fire* passes along the *spirit line*, finally reaching the altar, then enters the lodge. As the spiritual force reaches the altar, the personal belongings receive the benefit of the purifying and blessing spirits.

The Oglala ritual calls for a central pit in the sweat lodge and the earth that is removed from the pit is used to form an east-to-west sacred path leading to the fire pit. The remaining earth is used to form a mound called the *unci* (grandmother) at the eastern end of the sacred path near the fire pit or *fire without end*. While earthen altars appear in both ceremonies, they are located at opposite ends of the sacred path or spirit line; the Paiute altar is located just outside of the entrance of the lodge while the Oglala *unci* is located at the eastern end of the sacred path or spirit line.

Benn and I discussed some of the differences between the two lodges and he reminded me that

There are as many different versions of how to run a sweat lodge as there are people who run them. Even among Paiutes, there are many differences. I remember going to a sweat at another (Paiute) reservation one time. The lodge was real big and inside the ground had been covered over with some large pieces of carpeting. I thought it was real strange because I had always been taught that an important part of the ceremony is to get close to Mother Earth but with all that carpet on the ground, how could I? But I found a place to sit where the edge of a piece of carpet was showing. During the ceremony I pulled the carpet up a little so I could at least touch the earth below. It helped me. But, when you attend another lodge you should always conduct yourself in line with the way they run their ceremony, because you are the guest. It is up to you to respect the ceremony the way they run it. And they should respect your (his) lodge the same way. (Refer to the Appendix for People's Sweat Lodge Guidelines for one example of how a lodge is structured. Benn does not subscribe to all of the provisions indicated in that guideline.)

Benn also reminded me that some sweat lodge ceremonies are held in different ways depending on what each particular ceremony is being held for. (see Powers 1975, 1982) Some ceremonies are not four rounds long, and

some are longer than four rounds. It becomes a matter of function, whether only a few stones are to be used, or many stones will be used, whether there will be a water round or not, whether the pipe will be smoked, and what types of songs will be sung.

In all of the ceremonies that I have attended at Pipe Spring, Benn has only used the sacred pipe twice. He has mentioned that he is still trying to learn how to use it properly. He knows how the ceremony is conducted but he is still learning about the spiritual properties of the sacred pipe and is concerned that the pipe is such a powerful sacrament that he must take great care in its use. The Oglala ceremony (Powers 1975, 1982) uses the sacred pipe in the sweat lodge when held in conjunction with the vision quest and when held by itself. The spiritual leader of the lodge uses the pipe in a prescriptive ritual that marks the beginning of the sweat lodge ceremony. The ceremony cannot begin unless the pipe has first been taken into the lodge and filled with tobacco in ritual fashion. After filling it with tobacco, the spiritual leader takes the pipe out of the sweat lodge and walks along the sacred path, then places the pipe so that the mouthpiece faces east. This difference in the two ceremonies is quite significant. The Oglala will not begin a lodge meeting unless the pipe is present and properly filled. For Benn, the lodge meeting still holds the same spiritual and physical healing qualities with or without the sacred pipe.

Powers (1982) noted that the Oglala started their sacred sweat lodge fire, associated with the vision quest, with a gallon of kerosene. Since I had never observed the practice of using liquid flammables at the Pipe Spring sweat lodge, I asked Benn whether it was permitted to do so. He said,

Maybe other people will do it that way, but never at my lodge. Everything should be done as traditional as possible and using kerosene would not be a good thing. Wouldn't it smell up the lodge and the stones and

everything? I remember once when we used some cedar wood that had been soaked in creosote. The creosote from the wood got into the sacred stones while they were heating up. When we started bringing in the sacred stones, we could all smell that awful creosote in the stones. It made us all sick. It's not good for you to breathe in that creosote smoke. Using kerosene sounds like the same thing to me so I wouldn't ever do it. But that's just me.

It is interesting to note that the Oglala ceremony provides that all the stones are taken into the lodge during the first round. During subsequent rounds, the participants simply reenter the lodge with no new stones to reheat the lodge. The Paiute ceremony parcels out the stones for each individual round so that within each round there is a beginning time that is relatively cooler, followed by a very hot period when the stones are brought in, then a gradual decrease in temperature near the end of the round. Whether or not the lodge is covered or uncovered, and whether all of the ceremonial stones are taken into the lodge during the first round or throughout the four sweat rounds, appear to be differences that have no ritual importance. On the other hand, the symbolic placement of the fire in the Paiute ceremony, and the fact that the stones are treated as sacred objects, indicates that these are indeed important features.

## CHAPTER 7

### CEREMONIAL LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Dell Hymes (1974: 4) explains that, ". . . it is not linguistics, but ethnography, not language, but communication, which must provide the frame of reference within which the place of language in culture and society is to be assessed." I have prepared this paper with Hymes' explanation in mind.

In order to maintain the context of this chapter, and allow it to stand alone, I have revisited certain information presented in earlier chapters.

The Paiute sweat lodge ceremony provides an effective venue for identity formulation. My research indicates that the Paiute sweat lodge ceremony, with its evocative style of communicating, stimulates personal introspections and reevaluations that lead to identity changes. Inside the lodge, and especially in response to prayers, each of the participants experiences a sense of existing in a cleansed and separate new world: the world of the sweat lodge. The lodge is spoken of as a place of absolute equality where, as the spiritual leader notes, "all holy names are honored." Participants are enjoined to search within themselves and to make constructive identity changes in response to new visions of the self.

This paper explores the verbal exchanges between sweat lodge participants and supernatural beings generally referred to as spirit guides. Discourse at the sweat lodge ceremonies facilitates positive individual changes, in part by establishing social equality among the participants. The sweat lodge

spiritual leader is an important element in the scenario of identity reformulation. He invokes the sacred spirits of the sweat lodge, and participants pray to or otherwise address their specific spirit guides in order to establish a basis for identity construction. The resulting discourse between participants and their spirit guides enables each participant to redefine an imperfect self or reconstruct an injured self. The old identity surrenders to the will of the newly constructed identity by virtue of the power of the guiding spirits. Therefore, the benefits of the sweat lodge experience appear to be partially grounded in the ceremonial discourse as well as discourse that is peripherally connected to the ceremony.

Before I begin describing the sweat lodge events and the ceremonial discourse, I will define several ideas that are central to my overall presentation. By ceremonial language, I mean participants' prayers, whatever else is spoken inside the sweat lodge, and ceremonial songs. Peripheral to the ceremonial language, participants speak with Benn outside of the sweat lodge area about their ceremonial experiences. Thus, certain non-ceremonial language contributes to the overall effectiveness of the ceremonial language itself. Ceremonial language is contingent on non-ceremonial language in establishing bases for participating in the sweat lodge experience. Non-ceremonial language is contingent on ceremonial language in evaluating the sweat lodge experience.

It is necessary for the reader to understand what I mean by "identity construction" or "identity formulation." It is difficult to imagine a single ceremony whereby an individual is infused with all of his or her elements of identity. To be sure, the identity of a single individual is made up of many elements, and these identification markers are accumulated through time and experience. For instance, males may consider themselves to be men, husbands, fathers, or



architects, but they do not acquire all of those identity markers at one single time. An individual's identity elements are gathered throughout a lifetime and are, therefore, changeable through time. They can grow or shrink and are considerably modified through experiences. Therefore, when I speak of identity construction, it is the same as saying "identity reconstruction" or "identity reformulation." Identities are subject to change. People who attend the sweat lodge ceremony are people who are seeking identity changes. They seek spiritual identities.

The focus here is to show that individual and group expectations of the sweat lodge experience form scenarios which are then linked by "communicative situations and events" (Hymes 1974: 51-52), pointing out, as Carol Eastman (1975: 115) has, that "Sociolinguistics is concerned with the interaction of language and setting."

My study shows that there are six separate communicative situations or events where participants or prospective participants are apt to be influenced by discourse with Benn or with other sweat lodge participants: (1) prior to and away from the sweat lodge; (2) the orientation for first-timers; (3) inside the sweat lodge during rounds; (4) inside and outside the sweat lodge between rounds; (5) after the sweat lodge and within the ceremonial area, and; (6) after the ceremony, away from the lodge. Most of these times and places contain distinctive types of discourse which Benn, and others, employ in consideration of time, place and cast of interacting participants. I will provide some examples here to illustrate those distinctions.

### **Away from the Sweat Lodge and Before the Ceremony**

Some sweat lodge participants attend the ceremony after meeting Benn quite by accident. Others have heard about the sweat lodge ceremony and

seek him out to learn more about it. In this way Benn is able to employ a bit of selectivity of sweat lodge participants. He will talk to these people in a very casual way, and his soft voice is warm and non-intimidating. His voice always invites openness and trust.

Benn has a heightened intuitive sense that he attributes to his spirit guide, and this is what he uses to *see inside of people*. He *looks inside* of them to determine if they have a spiritual need of some kind and to be certain that they are sincere. Benn does his *looking inside of people* by talking to them. The discourse is the pathway by which Benn discovers many things about people. After the dialogue has reached a point where Benn feels comfortable with the person's motivations, he will begin to ask more personal questions in an attempt to pinpoint why the person is interested in participating in the sweat lodge ceremony. He will sometimes say to the person, "If you don't feel comfortable talking about certain things then I will understand, but if you want to talk to me about anything at all, then I am a good listener."

This communicative situation/event does two things: (1) it gives Benn a preview of the person's spiritual needs and expectations, and (2) it allows the prospective participant to understand and believe in Benn's deep and sincere concern for his spiritual well-being. Sometimes Benn will talk with a person on several different occasions before letting him or her know when a sweat will be held. He can determine their level of interest, their types of expectations, by having them wait, and he can find out a little more about them with each subsequent conversation. Individual scenarios begin to develop based on the initial conversations between Benn and prospective sweat lodge participants. Some linguists (Hymes 1974, Eastman 1975, Saville-Troike 1982) have developed typologies or descriptions for various communications depending on the intent of the speaker(s) or the context of the event. In this particular

communication situation/event, the intent is to secure information from a prospective participant and to instill in the participant a sense of trust in the spiritual leader as well as the effectiveness of the ceremony. It is a means, essentially, of developing expectancy for the spiritual leader and the prospective participant. This scenario can be characterized as a communicative situation or event ( see Hymes 1974: 51-52 for details of differences and similarities of speech situations and speech events) which is, by way of Muriel Saville-Troike's (1982: 14) definitions ". . . expressive (conveying feelings or emotions), directive (requesting or demanding), . . . [and] phatic (empathy and solidarity)."

### **Orientation for First-Timers**

The second type of discourse occurs at the ceremonial area where Benn talks with the "first-timers" to the sweat lodge and can be characterized as a speech situation/event that is instructional or directive. (Hymes 1974, Saville-Troike 1982) Even if a person has previously attended a different sweat lodge, Benn will ordinarily enjoy talking to them as if they were "first-timers" as well. During these talks Benn explains some of the ceremonial protocol, why it is important, and the purpose of the ceremony. As always, he speaks in a soft, friendly voice, quietly explaining many of the symbolic concepts about the sweat lodge and the ceremonial area. He will say, "This is the sweat lodge. It is Mother Earth's womb. It is a complete sphere with half of the sphere above ground and the other half is below ground. It is the *center of the universe* and a place for physical and spiritual purification." Benn also talks about the ceremonial area adjacent to the sweat lodge, saying, for example, "The fire represents the eternal flame of life and the stones inside of the fire are the

Grandfather stones and they represent the wisdom and strength of age since the stones are the oldest elements."

The fire is approximately ten to twelve feet east of the entrance to the sweat lodge. Just in front of the sweat lodge opening is an earthen altar built up about four inches from the ground. The perimeter of the earthen altar is held in place with small pieces of stones that had come from larger stones which burst during previous sweats. A double row of stones extends east to west between the fire and the earthen altar. The rows of stones are about four inches apart. Benn points to the fire, the altar, and then to the rows of stones and explains that "This row of stones represents or symbolizes the spirit line. It is the path where the spiritual energy from the fire travels to the altar and then goes into the sweat lodge. Do not walk over the stones and do not pass anything over them either to break the spiritual energy that goes through it." The east-to-west spirit line is a spiritual conduit that is essential to the success of the sweat lodge ceremonies. Benn gently stresses the importance of the spirit line, the sacredness of the fire, the age and wisdom of the Grandfather stones, and the tough benevolence of the bosom of the sweat lodge.

Since the sweat lodge temperature can be quite high, Benn always asks whether or not anyone is ill or is taking medication that might cause them problems if they become overheated. Since he is a graduate of a nursing school, Benn is always concerned about potential health problems that can be brought on by the heat. He tells the *first-timers* that "The sweat lodge ceremony is a place where all holy names are honored. When we are in the lodge, we are all equal." He points to the ceremonial area and shows them the altar, the spirit line and the fire, then says "Once you enter the ceremonial area you have to avoid crossing the east-to-west axis of the spirit line in a counterclockwise

direction. As long as you have not crossed the east-to-west axis then you are allowed to walk clockwise or counterclockwise between the axis points."

When Benn has finished the instructive portion of his talk, he will ask if there are any questions. Generally people understand what he has told them but sometimes a person will ask him to repeat a part of the information. It is an interesting thing to watch as Benn gives his "first-timer" talk. He can be very charismatic and I have seen people become so enveloped by his personal charm that they forget to listen to what he is saying and later they have to be reminded of something or ask someone for help. Again, this speech situation/event can be characterized as instructional and directive with some questions and answers. Individual scenarios develop here to an action or fulfillment stage where expectations are partially realized. These scenarios are contingent on effective initial conversations with Benn where he determines whether or not the individual had a spiritual need.

### **Ceremonial Language in the Lodge**

Participants crawl inside the sweat lodge slowly and Benn instructs the fireman to bring him his ceremonial herbs and drum. As participants situate themselves in the lodge, Benn organizes his herbs so that when the flap is closed and everything is dark, he will be able to find what he needs. First-timers ordinarily sit next to Benn on his right side so that he can "watch over them during the sweat." If someone is a bit apprehensive or nervous, Benn will sense it and he will maybe say something funny or he will make a joke about the fireman so that everyone will feel comfortable and at ease. Benn often reminds participants that "Humor is honored at the sweat lodge. The spirits like to play jokes on us. They do it all the time."

The speech situations/events that prevail inside the sweat lodge are performed by participants who pray to spiritual helpers and can be " . . . expressive (conveying feelings or emotions), directive (requesting or demanding), . . . [or] phatic (empathy and solidarity)." (Saville-Troike 1982) Benn points out that there are several ways that a person can pray: "You can pray out loud, you can pray silently, you can pray by singing, or you can have someone else sing while you pray out loud or in silence." Benn adds herbs to the stones to purify them, and then adds water. The steam accumulates and the heat increases, convecting up and around inside the lodge. Benn is the first person to speak. He explains, "My name is White Buffalo and I am the bringer of the seventh sacred direction, the direction that is inside all of us. I am honored that you have come to the lodge and allow me to conduct this ceremony for you." Some vocal affirmations are made to Benn regarding his opening comments.

At this point individual scenarios become spiritually interactive as prayers are spoken and, it is pertinent to note that a group scenario begins to build within this speech situation/act more than with any other speech situations/acts. A group identity with group expectations is formed due to the context of the situation.

Garrett and Osborne (1995: 36) describe the effects of praying.

This is a time for talking about the influences and possible causes of the difficulties being experienced. Thus, 'seeking' is a central component of these times of gathering in which members must be willing to work through conflicts and deal with their own reactions and those of other participants (Corey 1990). Here, the direct experience of transition unfolds as members begin to make connections and 'see things in a different light' or simply see things for what they are.

Benn draws the participants deep into the ritual scenario with his prayer. He begins,

Grandfather, thank you for the blessings that you have given me. I am honored that these people have asked me to hold this sweat. Please bless them all in a good way. Please bless me that I may do the work that is needed and help me to be strong spiritually. Bless my family and my friends wherever they are in the world. Please bless the elderlies and the little ones. I ask for special blessings for all of the warriors who have served. Bless all those people who have died so their spirits may rest peacefully. Please help all those people who are having a hard time in here today, or who are having a hard time out there in society. Bless all those people who are in hospitals or mental institutions or who are in jail. Help us all to honor this land so that we can begin to live in harmony with nature and not pollute our world. Please bless my people (the Paiutes) so that one day they will come back to the lodge so that we can all be here in the lodge together. Help us to lose our pride so that we can all be equal together in this lodge. Grandfather, for all the things you give us, I thank you, and for all those things that I have in my heart but have forgotten to mention, you know what is in my heart. Please take care of all those things in a good way. Ah ho!"

Benn's prayer is usually the longest prayer. Other participants also address the "Grandfather spirit" or the "Creator" or the "Great Mystery" depending on each person's beliefs. Most people say their prayers aloud but a few may prefer to pray silently. The prayers I have heard indicate to me that the people have been effectively influenced by the things Benn has explained to them, by Benn's prayer, and by the overall atmosphere surrounding the ceremony. The atmosphere of the ceremony is created by two factors; (1) expectations of the participants and (2) the verbal exchanges among all participants, including Benn.

Participants pray for many reasons. Some come to pray for personal help to heal themselves or others through the spirit of the lodge. A group consciousness develops so that the words, the phrases, and the thoughts of participants are in large part very similar. Generally, a participant speaks first of

giving thanks for the blessings they have received, and then they pray for those blessings to continue. If a person is experiencing a particular problem, then he or she will pray for a good resolution for that problem. A woman prayed for her father to pass on without pain.. He was suffering from prostate cancer and she did not want him to endure a lengthy and painful illness so she prayed for his gentle passing. A man prayed for his baby to recover fully. The baby had become ill, but doctors were unable to diagnose the problem so the father had taken his baby home and was pleased when the baby's condition began to improve. His prayer requested the spirit for help in curing the baby and thanked the spirit for helping to ameliorate the baby's illness. Another man asked the spirit to help him resolve his inner feelings about a relative that he and his wife had lost. The death was unexpected and medically unexplainable. His memory of the person, and of the unexplained death, were very troublesome for this man. He prayed for help in finalizing his deep emotion about that traumatic event.

I recall the ceremony when a man was participating for the first time. When it was his time to pray he announced that he would pray silently. In a moment or two, however, he began to pray aloud, and he continued until he was finished. I talked with him later and asked him why he had said he would pray silently but then prayed out loud instead. He said,

I was trying to pray silently but something was wrong and I couldn't get my thoughts together the way I wanted to so I just started praying out loud. It seemed like I could just put things together in my head better when I was saying them out loud so I started to pray out loud and it was a lot easier for me. When I was trying to pray in silence it felt like I was trying too hard to be sure to say the right things and then I couldn't say what I wanted to. But when I started praying out loud I could just think better and say what I needed to say. It just felt more natural.



Speaking the prayer aloud is a means of fostering a group identity. While Benn leaves the matter of praying entirely up to the individual, he realizes that joining the group and speaking the prayer aloud tends to bring the individual into a more receptive state. Garrett and Osborne (1995: 35) point out the importance of becoming an active, vocal participant and explain that,

The importance of the group and group processes should never be underestimated. Group counseling per se has been around for a very long time as a traditional way of bringing people back into harmony, balance, and wellness. The Native American Sweat Lodge Ceremony, serving as an excellent example and metaphor for group work, centers around helping people to work toward changes in and with the group.

I interviewed many of the ceremonial participants hoping to learn more about their motivations, their expectations, and their impressions about the event. In particular I was interested in learning if participants were significantly affected by other participants' prayers. Individuals reported that they would listen carefully while another person was praying. I was told by one participant that,

When I listen to somebody praying and they say something that touches me, I will say 'Ah ho' to acknowledge that I feel the same way. As the other person is praying I am praying silently at the same time. It's as if I can feel the same thing they are feeling when they pray. When they say something that is important to me, or something that I wish I had said, I will just use it in my silent prayer right then.

I questioned Benn about these vicarious-like prayers. He said,

Well, for me when someone is praying I really don't even listen. I'm somewhere else. I'm talking to the spirits. Besides, why should I have to listen to those prayers? They aren't praying to me. I already know what they will be saying anyway. That is part of the way I take care of those

people, by knowing what their needs are. But you know, if anybody wants to get something out of another person's prayer, that's okay. It's just not something that I need to do. I already know who I am. But for those people who are still trying to find themselves, they sometimes can find out who they are by listening to other people. That's okay, I think.

Benn has the opportunity, as mentioned I earlier, to engage participants conversationally away from the ceremonial area. I have accompanied him during some of those visits with participants. During one lengthy visit Benn explained to a man that "Sometimes you have to just break down when you are praying, and then you can start to heal and feel better." Later, at a subsequent sweat, the man said his prayer and was so moved by the experience that he cried, he screamed, and he "broke down," as Benn had said was necessary. This is the influential power of Benn's presentations and explanations to many different people. Some of the participants deal with cognitive dissonance and seek resolution where,

. . . by changing the real world in some respect, so as to modify the data coming in, [they] may also achieve the same effect by modifying [their] perceptions of self and of the real world in such a way that one horn of the dilemma is no longer recognized. (Wallace 1966: 29)

Therefore, to modify perceptions, in my definition, is the same as constructing a new identity, one that is able to reconcile personal dissonance.

### **Between Sweat Rounds**

Another distinct type of speech situation/event occurs between sweat rounds, either inside or outside of the sweat lodge. This scenario is linked to preceding ones in that participants are enabled to identify with one another on a spiritual level based on the preceding ceremonial event. The prayers spoken

inside the sweat lodge contain strong, intrinsic emotional values that participants identify with.

When the sweat round ends, the participants have the opportunity to remain inside the lodge or to exit. The flap is thrown back and the inside of the lodge will gradually cool. Some people remain inside because they feel it is more traditional to do so. Others remain inside the lodge because it may be cold outside. Many people exit the lodge between rounds to take a little water or Gatorade or to douse themselves with water from the pump. In either case, people will generally begin some conversations, but more discourse occurs outside the lodge than inside during sweat breaks. Inside, people are generally exhausted and only talk if something is very much on their minds. Outside, people ask one another how they are doing regarding the heat of the sweat rounds and how they are feeling spiritually. A great deal of friendship building occurs during this time, even if very little discourse occurs. The conversations are often very casual yet there are occasions when people speak of their prayers or of some religious or spiritual concerns. If someone has given a prayer that spoke of certain problematic events or conditions that are known to other participants, it is very likely that a conversation will develop regarding that person's prayer.

People share experiences that may be similar to the event or condition about which that person has prayed. In my experiences at the sweat lodge I have seen many instances when people have begun speaking casually yet eventually concluded by discussing a personal issue or problem. These sympathetic exchanges cause a closeness to develop among participants.

The discourse that evolves among participants between the sweat rounds, to make distance from those that Benn initiates or negotiates, are not governed by rules but are regulated by norms that exist in relationship to the

atmosphere that is developed within the sweat lodge. Like all other speech situations/events, this one is contextually oriented. The time between sweat rounds is a time when participants solidify their understanding of one another's spiritual concerns and various points of view. It is a time when each person has the opportunity to approach anyone among the participants, knowing that they share common spiritual experiences and that entering into personal discourse will strengthen individual perspectives of one another. The between-rounds scenario is important in linking people to people, rather than people to people's prayers. It is a scenario of mutuality that is contingent on the success of previous scenarios that developed before and during the ceremony.

### **After the Ceremony**

After the final round all the participants crawl out of the sweat lodge, physically exhausted yet spiritually invigorated. Each of them experiences something different, yet in some sense, something similar as well. Now all formalities, if the sweat lodge rounds can be characterized as formal, are waived. Participants congratulate one another and ask whether everyone is doing alright physically and spiritually. If participants have brought a gift to honor Benn or the fireman, then this is the time when they present those gifts. Many participants also bring food for everyone to enjoy, nothing fancy, usually fresh fruit, perhaps some cheese and crackers. While the conversations are casual, many participants continue to feel the effects of the spiritual event and are rather elated. The elation is shared with all other participants through casual discourse. Individuals speak of someone's prayer as having been "just what I was wanting to say" or "that's just what I was thinking about but I forgot to say something about it." The casual conversations among participants, as much as the discourse that evolves regarding the sweat lodge ritual and its

spirituality, act to reinforce a social atmosphere that allows participants to become their envisioned selves. Each type of discourse reinforces the act of becoming purified and, therefore, reconstructed.

### **After the Ceremony, Away From the Lodge**

An integral part of the linked scenarios of the sweat lodge experience is the follow-up speech situation/event that is usually initiated by Benn, although some participants approach him for additional counseling. A central part of the expectation schema of many participants calls for personal contact with Benn in order to discuss their feelings about the sweat lodge experience, feelings about their dreams, or to otherwise affirm identity reconstructions that they perceive to have occurred in themselves. The follow-up speech situations/events, whether initiated by Benn or a sweat lodge participant, act to add a more definite form to a participant's ritual scenario.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The information presented here illustrates that ceremonial language, as well as certain non-ceremonial language, are together responsible for allowing social scenarios based on spiritual expectations to be fulfilled. The sweat lodge leader and ceremonial participants act in response to individual and group expectations that are linked to the ceremony. Benn evaluates and counsels participants as a part of the expectation schema that participants acquire through speech situations/events. Similarly, participants perform religious acts to satisfy their own spiritual needs and as prescribed by the sweat lodge leader. The scenarios are separate but are nonetheless integrated with one another as complementary schemas. Each is contingent upon the other to the degree that if the link between complements is ineffective then the desired results of identity

construction may not be achieved. Each speech situation/event illustrated above can be considered a discrete scenario which exist as a complement to the others. The expectations of participants create linked scenarios that are acted out through speech situations and speech events.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

The sweat lodge ritual is an important spiritual ceremony of North America that had previously been the cultural property of Native Americans. Today, however, many non-Natives are being exposed to various incarnations of this ancient path to spiritual growth. (Bruchac 1993, Garrett and Osborne 1995) Many of the sweat lodge ceremonies have become syncretic in nature. At Pipe Spring, a Paiute spiritual leader conducts a Lakota style sweat lodge that was given to him by an Assiniboine man with the intent that the sweat lodge be an *open sweat lodge*. My observations and participation at Pipe Spring have shown me that the ceremony can be an effective method for generating positive individual and group growth.

I have given my readers a composite of an actual sweat lodge ceremony based on my numerous visits to the reservation. While each ceremony is somewhat unique, the composite I have developed is an accurate description of what I, and many other sweat lodge participants, have experienced. More than simply a description, though, my account of Benn, as well as the sweat lodge experience, gives a personalized insight to the spirituality of an important man, and allows the reader to develop an understanding of a Native American's spirituality and belief in a traditional ceremony. Using William Powers' **Yuwipi** and Leo Simmons' **Sun Chief** as fine examples of developing a presentation

based on a central character, I have attempted to give a similar example of Benn and the importance of the sweat lodge ceremony.

My presentation is primarily descriptive, with the aim of giving the reader a front row seat at the sweat lodge ceremony. Participants find new identities by attending the sweat lodge meetings. Benn offers his guidance and personal counseling for those who are in need. I also introduce relevant questions regarding Benn's motivation to become a spiritual leader. Benn's perspective is based on a belief in his inherited spiritual potential that cannot be ignored. Linguistic and cognitive considerations include illustrating the way that cognitive and social scenarios are developed by Benn and participants based on general expectations that become defined more precisely through individual or group interaction.

Many of the things that I have learned from Benn are not easily put into words, yet I hope I have portrayed him as a sincere and honorable man. I have grown to respect and love him, and I hope to continue to learn from him as our relationship continues through the years. I have learned from him the value of being patient, the importance of being honest, positive minded, and goal-oriented. I look back and recall, oddly now that I finally think of it, that I have never seen Benn become angry, or show any meanness (sarcasm yes, but never meanness). He told me, "When he (the Assiniboine man) gave the ceremony to me, he said that I wasn't allowed to be mad (angry) any more because it was time for me to help others. So, I have learned to do as I was asked. I just don't get mad (angry) any more, but sometimes it's hard on me."

When I reviewed Alice Kehoe's (1989) and James Mooney's (1965) accounts of Wovoka, "The Cutter" (Jack Wilson), and his revitalizing Ghost Dance religion, I feel as if I am reading about Benn. Not because I feel that the sweat lodge experience is becoming a revitalization movement like the Ghost



Dance, but because they, as individuals, have similar doctrines. They seem so much alike to me. I feel they must be related spiritually. Their hopes for understanding between cultures makes brothers of them. What Wovoka hoped to accomplish with all his Paiute people, and the many other Native American tribes that sought him out as a prophet, Benn hopes to accomplish one person at a time, or one lodge full at a time. But if a movement develops from Benn's sweat lodge ceremony, it will probably not be the result of "intolerable stress" but, more likely, will be the result of the expectations of many individuals who seek "peak-experiences."

Benn's world is one filled with dreams, visions, and intuitive feelings. These elements help him to understand the world around him and to help the people who seek him out. Irwin (1994: 238) noted that

In Native American contexts, dreaming is a form of knowledge. It reveals the activities of the mysterious powers--their engagement with or relationship to the dreamer. The dream is a medium of knowing, a way of experiencing the reality of the lived-world, a faculty of perception; the religious vision might be regarded as an intensification and heightening of this knowing.

Benn's world, the world of the sweat lodge, is indeed a real world, a sensory world that includes visions and dreams. Though it is pitch black inside the lodge, many people begin to *see* as they have never seen before. It is also a tactile world where you can feel Mother Earth beneath you. And as the heat and steam surround you, the perspiration streams from your body and you taste the saltiness of your own sweat as it searches out the corners of your open mouth. You feel your heart beating, keeping rhythm with the moment. You can smell the herbs and the earth all around you, while the songs, the drum, and the prayers, take you deeper and deeper, to the *center of the universe*.

## APPENDIX I

### INTERVIEWS

All names used in the interviews are pseudonyms.

#### Interview with Maria

Maria attended a sweat lodge ceremony in February, 1995, after learning of my work there from a mutual friend who is a professor of English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She had recently lost her husband, and she was preparing to move to San Francisco to learn more about computer graphics and its application to art. She is an accomplished artist and, since her husband's passing, she has formulated a plan to learn computer technology in order to produce some commercial works.

When I spoke with Maria I asked her why she wanted to attend the sweat lodge ceremony, since Benn is always interested in knowing what motivates people to attend. She explained to me that with all of the changes she had recently experienced, she wanted to participate in the sweat lodge in order to attain a sense of rebirth and identity reformulation. She seemed to have some knowledge of sweat lodge ceremonies derived from literature she had read, and I explained some of the intricacies of the ceremony to her so that she would feel as comfortable as possible when she participated. I also explained to her that Benn would give a short talk to all of the first-timers so she would be able to ask Benn questions if she had any.

I telephoned Maria on the Tuesday before the upcoming sweat lodge ceremony that would be held on Saturday. From that Tuesday until the following Saturday morning, Maria explained that she had experienced a sensation of "time-splitting" as she termed it. By "time-splitting" she said that she "sensed time as moving fast outside of her mind and body but inside she sensed time moving very slowly." She says that it is the same sensation that she experiences briefly at times when she meditates. Recently, however, and during the several days leading up to the sweat lodge experience, the time-splitting phenomenon had been much more intense and pervasive. Maria supposes that she had internalized her emotions about the trip to Pipe Spring and this had caused the time-splitting phenomenon to develop and intensify.

Maria also experienced some dreams that she had attributed to her upcoming trip to Pipe Spring. In one of the dreams she saw a figure, slanted in space. She explained that "It was a man, and his body was twisting from the solar plexus upward; he was twisting and turning in space. It was a barrel-chested man with a thick neck that was close to the shoulders. The man was crying out to someone or something but I couldn't see what it was he was crying out to." She could not altogether understand the word that was being spoken but she explained that it sounded like "we" and "then the cry went on some more but I couldn't make it out at all. The man's cry came from deep within his diaphragm but it was somehow blocked at his throat. The tone of his voice was very low."

Maria had not met Benn when she experienced that dream, and I was quite surprised when she told me about it. Benn is barrel-chested, has a thick neck that is close to his shoulders. He has a powerful, low-toned voice, but he also suffers from asthma, allergies, and bronchitis. Later she told me that, "I

sense some kind of an inward struggle that Benn is going through but I don't know what it is."

The sweat lodge experience was very positive for Maria. She listened intently as Benn gave instructions to all of the first-timers. Most of the time I am unable to listen to the instructions that Benn gives because I am busy with the fireman duties, but Benn usually explains that the stones will be brought in and they will be glowing with the heat of the fire and the participant may see things in the glow of the stones. She saw an image in the fourth stone of the first round. The glow in the center of the stone was shaped like a fetus at about six weeks, and she identified herself as the woman being born from the stone. Benn's explanation (here is an example of words as a linguistic tool that sets in motion an expectation of the participant) set up the possibility for the phenomenon to occur. Maria connected her hopes for a personal rebirth to Benn's explanations of the spiritual properties of the sweat lodge experience.

During the first-timer talk Benn also discusses the use of one's third eye. The third eye can see the spiritual world and is especially intuitively active during sweat lodge ceremonies. Maria's sweat lodge prayer was performed silently, and she asked that a song be sung for her while she prayed. One of the Paiute brothers asked for the drum, and he sang a song as she prayed silently. She prayed in the form of images and soon began to experience a vision as she prayed. She saw a river that was rushing away from her. The river was big, strong, yet not malevolent as it rushed away. She was deeply impressed that the river symbolized her husband who was now rushing away from her; he was big and strong again, and he was moving to his spiritual place in peaceful haste. In a moment the river was gone and she visualized her sister, twisting in space with her hands to her side and her legs together and straight, with an expressionless face. Maria's sister has suffered for a long time

with multiple sclerosis, and even though her sister can be difficult to be around, due to the illness, Maria loves her very much and tries to support her emotionally. The vision of Maria's sister persisted while she prayed. After the prayer, Maria experienced a brief insight, not a vision, of her own symbol of rebirth, and it made her feel more courageous and less apprehensive about her upcoming move to San Francisco. She had listened closely to Benn's words. What he said, and how he said it, became an integral part of Maria's experience during the sweat lodge ceremony. She explained that when she had finished and was listening to the prayers of others, her own feelings of rebirth and self confidence were validated. Benn frequently instructs participants that each person will experience different forms of personal validation and reaffirmation.

I continued with the interview and asked Maria if she experienced any other sensations. She said that while she had been aware of the east to west spirit line, there was no discernible sensation regarding it spiritually. Instead, once inside the sweat lodge, she had a definite feeling of being pulled toward the center of the stones and down inside the earth. I reviewed this with Benn, and he explained that the center of the sweat lodge symbolizes the center of the universe and that the sweat lodge turns on the symbolic axis that extends down through the center of the stones. Benn further noted that the sweat lodge, or buffalo's hump, also extended beneath the earth, therefore the exposed upper dome was but half of the entire lodge. Below the earth the other half of the sweat lodge existed on a level that inextricably connected it to mother earth. This information had not been imparted to Maria during Benn's talk to the first-timers, but it is altogether possible that she had heard of the symbolism elsewhere and that would necessarily account for her experiencing the sensation of being drawn to the center and down, inside the earth. She also experienced the sensation that the entire sweat lodge was floating in space and

was tilting back and forth on its central axis as it floated freely. And, in spite of the fact that she had not heard that information from Benn, Maria could easily have read or heard about it elsewhere and she ultimately used that unconscious knowledge to assist in her reconstruction of self.

Maria traveled back to Las Vegas on Saturday afternoon after the sweat lodge ceremony concluded. Her sister, and her sister's husband, were in Las Vegas visiting, and she wanted to return as soon as possible before they had to leave Las Vegas. When Maria saw her sister she was impressed that her sister's attitude had changed significantly. Her sister was not bitter or mean. Instead, she was noticeably reconciled about many things that had previously been bothersome; she felt better about her relationship with the rest of her family, and Maria attributes the change to a spiritual rebirth. Again, Maria, once exposed to this particular Paiute sweat lodge ceremony, began to internalize her new self, a reformulated or newly constructed self, that could easily have had an indirect and beneficial effect on her sister, who had long suffered from the ill effects of anger and bitterness due to a very difficult childhood and devastating illness. I would also like to point out that Maria's own reconstruction may have simply allowed her to see her own sister differently even if her sister had not changed at all. The newly formulated self in Maria's sister is a very interesting phenomenon, however, in that such a change might possibly take place in such an indirect manner, all having begun, ostensibly, due to the initial verbal interaction between Benn and the sweat lodge participants.

I questioned Maria as to whether she remembered any of Benn's words or phrases that might have been especially significant to her. She remembered several: "loved ones" - "people coming together" - "rainbow people" - "third eye" - "rainbow warriors" and "spiritual healing." She also hastened to explain to me that beyond Benn's words, his manner of speaking, his tone, his posture, his

"ability to open many spiritual doors," and his apparent sincerity, all conspired to thrust her into a personal scenario of spirituality and self renewal so that the desired results were almost inevitable. Maria explained that, "I see Benn as an ancient healing person who can communicate without words, and he has an energy that goes beyond just speaking. People he is in contact with automatically connect with him on his own spiritual level and will probably feel a sense of spiritual rebirth through him."

## Interview with Tony

I asked Tony why he went to the sweats. He explained that, "I had always wanted to go but I can't exactly say why." He met Benn in Cedar City, and Benn invited him to attend the sweat lodge. That was about four years ago and Tony has been going to the sweats since then but not always on a regular basis.

Tony is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS or Mormon), and he equates some of the ritual in the sweat lodge ceremony with the LDS church. He feels that a lot of church people don't see the Book of Mormon the way it is meant anymore. Also, Tony relates to me that Jesus is the creator of many worlds, specifying that it is not God who creates, it is Jesus.

Tony explains that he is spiritually drawn to the sweat lodge and that he has had visions at least two times which were manifested by his animal spirit helper. He would not tell me of his animal helper because he says it would diminish the spiritual quality of his relationship with the animal spirit helper. The visions were telling him that he has their spiritual support. They were reaffirmations of the "helper" role.

I asked Tony what he did when he had problems in his life. He said that if they were big problems he would go to the LDS temple to pray and that the sweat lodge is not the same thing as the temple. Tony talks about the sweat lodge experience as if it were an opponent that he had to conquer. He speaks of the adversarial qualities of the heat and that he must overcome the heat.

Tony explained that the words and phrases used at the sweat lodge ceremony are all positive and that he can assume a stronger posture against



the adversarial heat because of the positive strength of the words and prayers that are spoken in the sweat lodge. He says that when he goes to the sweat lodge he has no expectations but that he is open for whatever happens.

## Interview with Ned

Ned has been attending the sweat lodge ceremonies at Kaibab for eight months or so, and we have both served as the fireman for many ceremonies. Because of that common experience we feel close to one another. He previously resided in Idaho and was raised in the Mormon church. He is white but nonetheless feels drawn, even compelled, to understand and incorporate Native American spiritual values into his life. He feels that it may be that this particular bent is somehow contingent on his development of rather extensive knowledge of Mormonism and how it relates to Native American culture.

We recently had occasion to visit for a few hours, and we discussed a variety of topics that touched on spiritualism, the sweat lodge experience, Mormonism, polygamy, and an affinity for understanding the phenomena of intuition, premonition, dreams and visions. I explained to Ned that when it came to spiritualism I felt that I was not "well connected" and that it appeared to me that other sweat lodge participants were definitely more advanced in that way. I went on to say that perhaps my lack of visions or powerful spiritual feelings stemmed from my foundations of objectivity in field research. We talked for a while and Ned explained that he had had the same concerns about himself and that to him, other participants definitely comported themselves in such a manner that their spiritualism was undeniably evident. I was very surprised to hear him say this since I had felt that he was one of the participants who fell into the category of being "well connected." We concluded that possibly each of us felt that other participants possess a greater spirituality than we, and so we both felt better knowing that our mutual concern might well be explained as ignorance,

or envy, or simply not recognizing that we indeed have just what everyone else has.

We spoke a little about a dream that Ned had experienced before he began to attend the sweat ceremonies. In the dream he saw a cave and for some reason this cave became a focal point for the dream. He dreamed of the cave many times and finally concluded that he must ask some questions about whether or not a cave was nearby where he lived. He inquired about the existence of a cave and found that there were several. He visited the caves but did not feel that they were the same caves that he had seen in his dreams. Later Ned began attending the sweat lodge ceremonies, and when he found himself inside the lodge, with the flap closed, he realized that the sweat lodge was the "cave" that he had seen in his dreams. This was a profound realization for Ned, and when I listen to him pray at the sweat lodge ceremonies I am always impressed with his deep sense of reverence for the spirit that moves in all things.

## Interview with Gary

Gary has gone to sweat lodge ceremonies before. In fact, he lived with a Yavapai Apache medicine man and attended sweats that he held. He explained that before he had gone to his first sweat, "I had been very analytical and did a lot of reading but doing a sweat made it come alive." He explained that he participated in one or two sweats per month for two years. He moved to the Kaibab area for work and began asking about whether or not a sweat lodge was in the area. He was told that Benn ran a sweat, and he tried to locate Benn but did not have much luck.

Benn was told that Gary had asked about a sweat lodge and so Benn decided to find Gary and talk to him. Benn could see that Gary had missed the sweat lodge and that he needed to come back. He asked about Gary's dreams right off. Gary would not discuss the dreams with me, but he told me that Benn was able to understand the dreams and felt that Gary should return to the sweat lodge in order to work out some of his personal problems. Benn found out that Gary had been in a failed relationship while in Oregon and had lost touch with his own spirituality. Benn told Gary that he must return to the sweat lodge to "find himself again." Since then Gary has become much more relaxed about his spirituality and decided that he would need to go on a vision quest to solidify in his mind what his future would be. As I write this account, Gary and Benn are in Arizona, and Gary is on his vision quest as Benn supports him spiritually.

I asked Gary if the communication at the sweat lodge provided him any notable impressions. He explained that "When Benn talks to the 'first-timers' it just sounds like he's talking about the nuts and bolts of the ceremony and

doesn't talk too much about the symbolism. Benn sets an informal, casual tone, that makes everybody pretty relaxed. And I think that is a good thing."

I wanted to know whether other people's prayers had any noticeable effect on Gary and he said, "Some people say just what I need to hear. Some people move me so much it's like the spirit to me, and it moves me through what somebody says. But some people don't move me at all. I go to the sweat lodge meetings so I can become a better person, so I can change myself. The prayers, the singing and talking with Benn, all help me to accomplish the changes that I want."

## Interview with Dena

Dena told me that she attended the sweat lodge ceremony because she had an interest in Native American culture since she was a little girl. Her continued interest in sweats developed because of the spiritual content associated with the ceremony. She said, "I was going to some seminars on how to control my own life and I thought that going to the sweats was a spiritual complement to the work I was trying to do on myself. The spirituality helped me to support my wanting to achieve change in my self."

Obviously Dena has some expectations since she went to the sweat ceremonies for a specific reason. However, when asked, she said, "Well I wouldn't really call them expectations. I would call them hopes. Yes, that's it, hopes. I wanted to be awakened, to finally be able to see with my third eye. I was interested in finding out who I am. Not necessarily in relation to other things, but just who I am. But when I think about it having hopes is sometimes not good, especially when it (hope) can slip away."

Dena mentioned that she was not a "churchgoer" and that she thought that Christianity did not work for her. "More than anything else I see myself as a person who was asleep but I am now waking up. I achieve the state of being awake when I say my prayers in the sweat lodge. I can bring things up from my unconscious self to my conscious self when I am in the lodge praying. I can set my own goals and achieve them myself that way. It's like the sweats seemed to help me act on things that I was not doing in my life earlier."

More than anything else Dena appeared to be a person who was interested in learning about herself, using the sweat lodge as an effective venue

for that purpose. She stated that, "The tenets of Native American culture fit with who I see myself as being. I keep learning about myself and others and Native American culture. You know, it's funny. I never prayed before. Now I pray a lot. I hike out to a favorite place, a spring, where I pray. It is really an awakening for me, an awareness that there is a spirit. I've been blessed all my life but now I'm only just realizing it, that my blessings come from the spirits, the creator of all things. I am evolving as a person. It is a positive thing."

#### GENERAL INTERVIEWS

I talked to people who go to their churches or places of worship and I asked them what the words of the priest or minister or religious leaders mean to them. For some the words are delivered without emotion, deliberately so, because that is the way their religion works, and others tell me how the words are filled with emotion because that is the way their religion works. In nearly all cases the people go to a service with a certain expectation of what is going to happen and their expectancy, when rewarded, allows each of them to develop a sense of accomplishment in having attended the service. Expectations develop from a designated protocol, and the results of receiving a religious service based on the protocol propagates the expectancy in each participant. If a significant difference between expectation and reception occurs, the spiritual meal is perceived as a *mighty thin stew*.



DATE: November 21, 1995

TO: James McCarty (ANT)  
M/S 5003

FROM: *for* Dr. William E. Schulze, Director  
Office of Sponsored Programs (X1357)

RE: Status of Human Subject Protocol Entitled:  
"The Center of the Universe; A Ceremony at  
Pipe Spring Sweat Lodge"

OSP #101s1195-091e

---

The protocol for the project referenced above has been reviewed by the Office of Sponsored Programs, and it has been determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from full review by the UNLV human subjects Institutional Review Board. Except for any required conditions or modifications noted below, this protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of this notification, and work on the project may proceed.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond a year from the date of this notification, it will be necessary to request an extension.

cc: John Swetnam (ANT-5003)  
OSP File



## APPENDIX II

### Guidelines and Preparation for the **PURIFICATION CEREMONY** **(SWEAT-LODGE)**

#### A. THIS LODGE IS CALLED **THE PEOPLES' LODGE**.

1. It is an inter-tribal lodge and people with good hearts from all tribes, nations, religions and races may be invited to attend.
2. Most of the Ceremonies are open to both men and women, but occasionally one is held just for men, one just for women or one just for children.
3. Occasionally there are closed Ceremonies, held by special arrangement.
4. At The Peoples' Lodge, there are no nude sweats.

#### B. THE PURIFICATION CEREMONY/SWEAT-LODGE IS A PLACE & TIME FOR:

1. Learning to live/be in harmony and balance with all things.
2. Spiritual growth/learning/cleansing.
3. Physical cleansing.
4. Positive reinforcement.
5. Seeking humility, meekness, reverence, & greater inner strength.

#### C. YOU PREPARE FOR THE PURIFICATION CEREMONY BY:

1. Having a desire to learn and be taught.
2. Desiring and being ready to make a commitment for appropriate changes in one's life.
3. Fasting and prayer.
4. Meditating.
5. Seeking the sweet and wholesome thoughts and things of life.
6. Note: There is no set time limit on the Purification Ceremony. Plan for as much time as is needed. (It could last anywhere from 3 to 6 hours.) If you are in a hurry to catch another appointment, do not come to the Ceremony. Come to the Ceremony when your time, thoughts and feelings are totally on and about the Ceremony.
7. Those coming for rehabilitation from addictions (such as drugs, alcohol, Tobacco) should discuss their situation with the conductor privately.

**D. WHAT YOU SHOULD BRING TO THE PURIFICATION CEREMONY:**

1. Towel(s).
2. Clothing: remember that cotton clothing is the most comfortable during a sweat and that it is usually very dark inside a Sweat-Lodge so fancy clothes are unnecessary and even undesirable.  
The purpose of the Purification Ceremony is to cleanse and purify us from the corruption of the world! You are asked to leave behind you anything that will remind you of the world. That will include clothing printed with logos of beer companies, rock musical groups, universities, athletic teams, etc.
  - a) Men: comfortable and modest shorts, T-shirt, tank top, etc.
  - b) Women: similar to the men but remember that everyone will become soaking wet with sweat so choose clothes that will be modest rather than see-through when wet.
  - c) Shoes or sandals you can remove easily before entering the lodge.
  - d) A CHANGE OF DRY CLOTHES.
  - e) A jacket is nice to have, after a sweat, if the weather is cold or windy or wet.
3. Special medications: If you have a special health problem such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heat exhaustion, etc. PLEASE COME PREPARED and be sure to let the Conductor of the Ceremony know if you have any special problems!
4. Something to drink: water or juice or special drinks for health problems.
5. After the Ceremony it is optional to have a potluck for those who desire and are able to participate. Examples: a) Drink b) Fresh fruit c) Veggie tray d) Bread e) Chips f) Cookies g) Etc. (keep it simple!).

**E. WE DO NOT PROVIDE ACCOMMODATIONS SO IT IS WISE TO REMEMBER:**

1. Arrange where you will stay in advance. Usually there is room to pitch a tent.
2. Arrange where you will clean up or shower in advance. (Note: A hose, with cold water, will usually be provided to rinse off after the ceremony).
3. Do NOT bring pets to the ceremony.
4. Arrange for child care in advance, NOT at the ceremony.
5. Children who wish to participate in the purification ceremony must have advance approval from the conductor.

**F. THE PURIFICATION CEREMONY/SWEAT-LODGE IS SACRED. SHOW YOUR RESPECT BY KEEPING THE LODGE AND SURROUNDING AREA FREE OF:**

1. Antagonistic or vulgar comments, jokes, stories, songs.
2. Sexual comments and advances.
3. Drugs, smoking, chew, alcohol.
4. Swearing/profanity.
5. Fault finding.
6. Silliness. (Good humor is appreciated, but not silliness.)

#### G. SHOWING HONOR/APPRECIATION

1. Honor the Purification Ceremony. Example: Bring firewood. If you must travel a long distance in a small vehicle, a few pieces could suffice to show the appropriate honor/appreciation.
2. Honor the Conductor of the Ceremony. Examples: a) Red cloth b) Herbs c) Book d) Beads e) A special poem f) Food, such as:
  1. potatoes 2. apples 3. watermelon 4. loaf of bread
  5. a sincere thank-you. 6. Etc. (keep it simple!)
3. Honor the Fire Carrier: similar to the Conductor.
4. When you show honor, you do so by reverence and by remembering the needs of others. When you bring a gift, it must be something you have selected after deep thought, prayer, meditation. This must be done by the Spirit. You must get in tune with the spirit and feel in your heart what you are to do. Some examples are listed here but you must go by the feelings in your own heart. (If you rush to the store at the last minute and buy something to give honor, you may drive the Spirit away and there is no honor to give.)
5. REMEMBER:
  - a) Someone who takes and takes and does not give (or is not giving) is not in harmony and balance. Reaching out and actually helping others, in turn benefits you. You bring harmony and balance into your own life.

#### H. THE PURIFICATION CEREMONY IS VERY SACRED. IT IS NOT LIKE GOING TO THE MOVIES, THE BEACH, BOATING OR TO A BALL GAME.

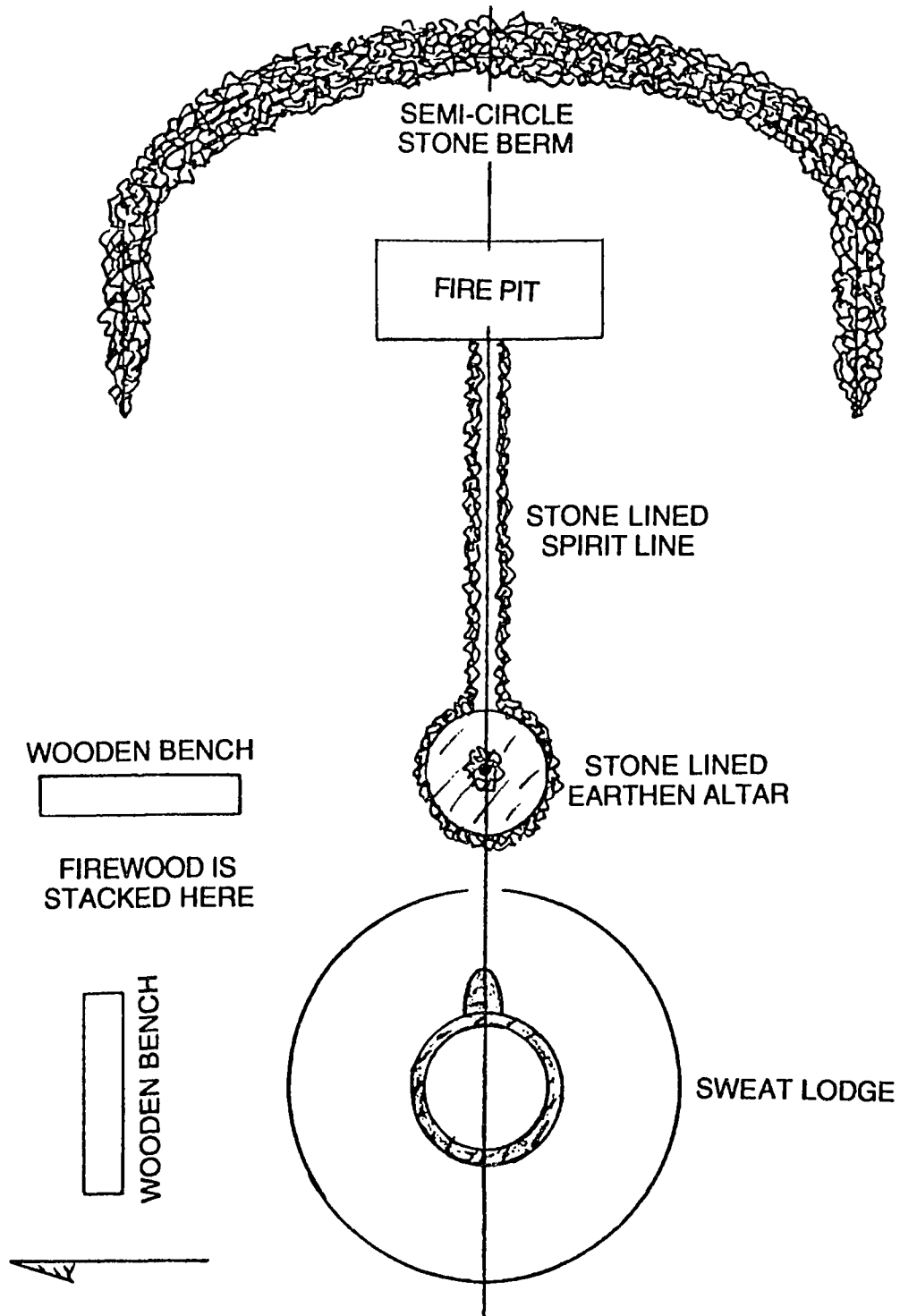
1. More dedication to reverence and learning at the Purification Ceremony is required.
2. Many Native Americans would not let a person return to the Purification Ceremony, or even return themselves, when the guidelines listed above are not followed. This would be a disgrace to the person, those around him and most of all to the Ceremony and the area surrounding it.
3. Therefore, we must pay attention to every part of this outlined material in explaining to people what the Purification Ceremony or Sweat-Lodge is about **before** they are invited to join us in a Ceremony.
4. At The Peoples' Lodge, Chief White Eagle likes to meet people and feel their spirit **before** they are **invited** to a Ceremony.

NOTE: These guidelines are intended only for raising the quality of the Ceremonies held at The Peoples' Lodge. They are not intended to dictate how others conduct their Purification Ceremonies. However, anyone wishing to copy and use part or all of these guidelines may do so with our blessings.

This guideline was copied from a handout that I received from White Eagle through Bennjamin Pikyavit.

APPENDIX III

PLAN VIEW OF CEREMONIAL AREA



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ardener, Edwin  
1989 The Voice of Prophecy. Basil Blackwell Inc. New York, New York.
- Bruchac, Joseph  
1993 The Native American Sweat Lodge: History and Legends. The Crossing Press. Freedom, California.
- Corey, G.  
1990 Theory and Practice of Group Counseling. Brooks/Cole. Pacific Grove, California.
- Eastman, Carol M.  
1975 Aspects of Language and Culture. Chandler and Sharp Publishers, Inc. San Francisco, California.
- Fingarette, Herbert  
1963 The Self In Transformation: Psychoanalysis, Philosophy, and The Life of The Spirit. Harper and Row, Publishers. New York, New York.
- Fowler, Loretta  
1987 Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings: Gros Ventre Culture and History 1778-1984. Cornell University Press. Ithaca, New York.
- Fromm, Erich  
1950 Psychoanalysis and Religion. Yale University Press. New Haven, Connecticut.
- Garbarino, Merwyn S.  
1977 Sociocultural Theory in Anthropology. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Reissued 1983 by Waveland Press, Inc., Illinois.
- Garrett, Michael Walkingstick and Osborne, W. Larry  
1995 The Journal for Specialists in Work Group. The Native American Sweat Lodge as Metaphor for Group Work. Volume 20, Number 1, 1995, 33-39.
- Geertz, Clifford  
1973 The Interpretation of Cultures. Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. Basic Books, Inc., Publishers. New York, New York. 3-30.
- Gladwin, Harold S., Emil W. Haury, E. B. Sayles, and Nora Gladwin  
1965 1938 Excavations at Snaketown; Material Culture. University of Arizona Press, Tucson, Arizona.

Hill, Jane H. and Irvine, Judith T., Editors

1992 Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse.  
Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Hymes, Dell

1974 Foundations in Sociolinguistics. University of Pennsylvania Press.  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Hymes, Dell and Bittle, William E.

1967 Studies In Southwestern Ethnolinguistics: Meaning and History In  
The Language of The American Southwest.  
Mouton & Co., Publishers. The Hague, The Netherlands.

Irwin, Lee

1994 The American Indian Quarterly, Vol. 18., Number 2.  
Dreams, Theory, and Culture: The Plains Vision Quest Paradigm.

James, William

1985 The Varieties of Religious Experience.  
Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Jung, C. G.

1938 Psychology and Religion. Yale University Press.  
New Haven, Connecticut.

Kehoe, Alice Beck

1989 The Ghost Dance. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.  
Orlando, Florida.

Kroeber, A. L.

1963 Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America.  
University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California.

Laird, Carobeth

1976 The Chemehuevis. Malki Museum, Inc. Morongo Indian  
Reservation, Banning, California. Rubidoux Printing Company.  
Riverside, California.

Lewis, Oscar

1960 Tepoztlan; Village in Mexico. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.  
San Francisco, California.

Maslow, Abraham H.

1964 Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences.  
Ohio State University Press. Columbus, Ohio.

Miller, Peter

1994 John Wesley Powell; Vision For The West. In National Geographic. Vol. 185, No. 4, April 1994. Published by National Geographic Society.

Mooney, James

1965 The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago, Illinois.

Powers, William K.

1975 Oglala Religion. University of Nebraska Press.

Powers, William K.

1982 Yuwipi, Vision and Experience in Oglala Ritual. University of Nebraska Press.

Redfield, Robert

1952 Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol 96. The Primitive World View. 30-36.

Saville-Troike, Muriel

1982 The Ethnography of Communication. Blackwell Publishers. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Simmons, Leo W., editor

1942 Sun Chief; The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian. Yale University Press.

Stewart, Omer C.

1942 Culture Element Distributions: XVIII. Ute-Southern Paiute. University of California Press. Berkeley, California.

Vecsey, Christopher

1990 Religion in Native North America. University of Idaho Press. Moscow, Idaho.

Wallace, Anthony F. C.

1961 Culture and Personality. Random House, Inc. New York, New York.

Wallace, Anthony F. C.

1966 Religion: An Anthropological View. Random House, Inc. New York, New York.

Williams, Straphon Kaplan

1984 The Practice of Personal Transformation: A Jungian Approach. Journey Press. Berkeley, California.