

## **A Guide for Grandmothers' Beacons**

This guide is meant to be a sort of “fishing pond” that you can dip into. It contains some ideas for activity for your group and inspiration for when you feel lost or discouraged.

This guide, which I hope will be further supplemented by other Grandmothers' Beacons (hint hint), sandwiches practical support between some words meant to clarify, inspire and encourage.

### **The Story of One Grandmothers' Beacon**

I started my group without any advertising and without even talking about it very much, because I was curious to see what would happen if I did things the yin way. That wasn't my habit at all, especially when doing something like teaching a class (I'm a Feldenkrais practitioner and have even written a book about how to market a private practice). I thought I knew something about how to attract people to a “class” and “alternative experiences”. I did, but only from ego and yang-energy. This time, I wanted to try it the Grandmother's way and see if THEY would send people to my group. So I rented a cheap room and just showed up on the third Sunday of every month. By myself. I set up an altar, smudged the space, arranged some chairs in a circle, and when no one came (of course), I sat down and journeyed to the Grandmothers. It was very peaceful and powerful to create this kind of ceremony around a “regular” meditation, which I usually only squeeze in between daily activities.

I enjoyed my ceremony and meditations with the Grandmothers so much, I was actually slightly disappointed when two or three friends wanted to join me! But that was the intention after all, so I set up the room with lots of extra chairs to hold the energy for the people who would come and fill those chairs later. The group continues to grow, slowly, like fruit on a tree. A year and a half later, all of those chairs are now filled and I'm considering expanding the circle. I take no responsibility whatsoever for how the participants find out about my group, who shows up, why they come, or whether they even like it. I just keep holding the group because I enjoy it.

Being in front of the group felt pretty strange in the beginning but I have gotten used to it now. I just make this Beacon experience an exercise in yin, yielding, surrendering, and letting the Grandmothers be the ones in charge (for a change!). Sharon said “how typical – the Grandmothers care much more about personal transformation than about large numbers of participants.”

I'm starting to understand that in terms of love/beauty/power, what matters most is the quality of the energy in the group and not the number of butts in the chairs. My yin-quality as the Beacon is an example to the members of the group of what yin-power looks like. Most of us have no idea what it looks or feels like to be a woman in her power. Stepping into the role of Beacon helps to support my practice, as I tend to lose track of these ideas unless I have a good reason to meditate and study.

The Grandmothers encourage us, implore us, to stand up and stand out as leaders. If you have been called at some point to be a Beacon, then please do keep holding the space for others to find you. Perhaps just holding the space is what you need to be doing right now! That seemingly useless activity holds at least as much richness as standing up in front of 200 people, LOOKING as if you have your shit together but in fact it's just a big ego trip. (I should know.) I would much rather BE together in front of 3 people than LOOK GOOD in front of a crowd. That feels so much better!

Big Grandmothers' hugs to you. I hold you and your group members (be they attending now or on their way in the future) in the Net of Light.

Blessings from Miriam Levenson, Ghent, Belgium

## A Beacon of Yin Energy

What attracted you to the Grandmothers' work in the first place? For me, it was the promise of true rest, peace, and communion with the Divine. The Grandmothers finally gave me permission to just stop the world and get off, and they even gave me a very simple way to do it. At the same time, they offered the possibility of effortless action, a lifelong pursuit of mine. *That* appealed to my penchant for "doing". Everywhere I look, I see opportunities to work – work at work, work at home, work on myself, volunteer work, service work. Even entertainment feels like work a lot of the time. But *rest* was hard to come by until I found the Grandmothers.

The Grandmothers offer a true alternative for those who are tired of riding the yangy-go-round. And miraculously, their way also offers an effortless and peaceful way to be of service...to the WHOLE WORLD! This is what I have been looking for all of my life.

The Grandmothers use any situation as a way of helping us to learn what *we* want to learn: how to be in our yin power. The Grandmothers told Sharon, "We don't need you to help us, but if you'd like to join us, it will give you joy." Holding a Grandmothers' group is not a must or something you "should" do. It does, however, have important benefits: it amplifies the healing energy of the Net of Light, it brings the Empowerment and Cloak of Comfort to people around you, and it is also a powerful way to deepen your practice of the Grandmothers' teachings. Being in front of a group is very similar to the daily challenge of being "yin" in a "yang" world. The only difference is that when we declare our intention to "Lead A Group", our ego sits up and says "Hey, everyone's going to be looking at Me!" Then the ego turns on the yang energy and starts setting goals and making plans and wondering how it's going to look, what it's going to wear, and what it's going to say. This is the only reason that group leadership may appear to be more challenging than normal life. In fact, the ego challenges are identical – we just gloss over them easier in everyday life.

Each of us is different. We each require different lessons about how to embody yin energy and work with it. It is therefore only natural that the ups and downs of each group (and its leader) also look different. The Grandmothers give each of us the situation that is correct at any given time – including giving some groups lots of participants when the leaders are new and insecure, then allowing the leaders to go a level deeper by reducing the numbers so they will have to confront their ego in the face of "failure".

The Grandmothers call us to be a beacon, a lighthouse. Our job as group leaders is to keep strengthening our own light and to *just show up* time after time, beaming steadily, regardless of who comes or doesn't come, so that anyone looking for this particular quality of Light can find it. The Grandmothers do the work of bringing people to our doorstep; our task is to just be there and hold the space, deepening our experience of yin regardless of circumstance. When our intention to be a beacon is clear, our light will be seen and felt from miles around. We may never know the energetic consequences of creating ceremony again and again, journeying to the Grandmothers, and working with the Net of Light, even if our group seems tiny and insignificant. It's not our job to know those things – our only jobs are to listen to the Grandmothers, to practice the acts of receiving and embracing, and to connect with the Grandmothers and with those around us.

## Doing It! The Nuts and Bolts

This part of the “fishing pond” contains practical information about the actual “doing” part of leading a group. This section answers the questions “What do other group leaders do?” and “Where should we meet?” and “How to begin?” and “Help – I don’t know where to start!”

### *Getting Started*

To begin, you’ll need to answer the four “W’s” – who, what, when, where – and “how much”.

- The “who” can be either you leading the group alone, co-leading with another “Grandmother”, or rotating the “beaconship” role. The number and composition of the participants is up to the Grandmothers.
- The “what” is up to you – it’s probably going to be either a “classic” meeting with some meditations and experiences with the Grandmothers (see below for ideas) or a study group, but there are many variations on these themes.
- “When” is often once monthly, but there is no reason it can’t be every week or every two weeks or even twice a week!
- “Where” is also up to you. Many groups happen in group leaders’ homes, but I prefer to hold my group in an inexpensive rented room nearby. This formula also frees up my home to be used for child care (done either by my wonderful husband for free or by a babysitter – users of the child care service share the cost for the babysitter). Another aspect of “where” is the decoration; I set up an altar with fresh flowers, some of my ceremonial objects, a cloth I use for empowerments, and the Grandmothers’ books.
- The “how much” question comes up frequently. I ask for a small contribution, enough to offset the cost of renting the room. If the group ever grows large enough to have money left over, I will ask a member to keep track of it and then we will buy Grandmothers’ books or resources using the surplus. I do not charge any money for empowerments or messages from the Grandmothers but I have heard that others do. I prefer not to have any financial gain from this work for two reasons: 1) the Grandmothers have already blessed me so generously with two jobs I totally love, a generous husband, and more money than I need to survive; and 2) not having any financial gain from my group helps to tame my ego, fears, and yang tendency, all of which would be aroused if I had the potential of earning money based on the number of participants in my group.

### *Ways to structure the meeting*

Every meeting between people has a beginning, middle and an end. Ceremony helps to anchor the yin energy and makes it more accessible for you and the participants. Beginning the same way each time helps you and the others come to rest.

**Possible beginnings** are: smudging (the room, your body and your drum, and the participants’ bodies and drums) with sage or *palo santo*, greeting the four directions, singing a song, saying the same words of welcome, sitting in the same place, starting with a moment of silence, starting with a meditation on the Net of Light, etc. I start by sitting quietly in the circle of chairs while people enter, smudging myself and meditating until it is time to start. I encourage others to cleanse themselves this way as well while I say a few words of explanation and expectation (“Welcome; first we’ll do this, then that, now smudge yourself, this is how to do that...”) When it seems like everyone has arrived, we stand up and greet the four directions (see below) with the help of my (shamanic) drum. We then all sit down in a circle. I say a brief word of welcome then we sing the “Our Love is Our Power” song with the intention of increasing our power.

**What to do in the middle?** I like to choose a theme for each meeting, taken from one of the Grandmothers' books. When preparing, I usually just open the book at random and let one of the sentences jump out at me. I do try to avoid choosing a theme based on my idea of its relevance for the participants, because I tend to be terribly controlling and give far too much advice. That sort of thinking is a one-way ticket to yang-land. Not what I want anymore.

Once I have a theme, I sometimes plan a few possible activities. At other times, all I have is a vague notion of the theme and I let the Grandmothers guide me during the meeting itself. When I don't know what to do next, I just sit quietly in front of the group and wait for inspiration about the next thing to say, sing, or do. Whichever way, 1 ½ hours is always too short!

**Possible activities include:**

- *Greeting the four directions.* Every native (shamanistic) practice has a method of greeting the four directions and calling on their respective energies. The four directions form the basis of the "medicine wheel" or "sacred hoop". I like starting by greeting the four directions because it grounds the ceremony in the physical reality of Mother Earth. I also include the directions "up" and "down" (Spirit is up and Mother Earth/the "underworld" of the animal spirits is down). To close, I say that we are located in the center of the four directions, connected to our Higher Selves and to Mother Earth with every step we take. When calling the directions, one can also assign symbols, energies and each of the four elements (fire, water, earth, air) to one of the directions. Interestingly, little agreement exists on which element or which animal belongs in which direction. My teacher of "Core Shamanism" was taught the following: East holds the energy of fire, new beginnings, birth, and the protector animal Fire Dragon; South holds the energy of water, emotion, and the protector animal Salmon; West holds Earth energy, with rocks and metal and our physical bodies, with the protector animal Wolf; and North holds the energy of air, the mental body, connection to Spirit, and Eagle or birds in general. I have also been taught to follow the movement of the Sun around the directions, where East is the dawn/Spring/newborn baby; South is Summer/youth/yang energy; West is sunset/Autumn/harvest/abundance/celebrating after hard work; and North is darkness/Winter/fallow time/rest/death/preparation for new life/yin energy. Many other examples exist online and in your own meditations – let the Grandmothers and Mother Earth guide you in your experience of the directions.
- *Meditation* (Sharon's books are full of inspiration, and the Grandmothers give me many ideas too). There are two general possibilities for meditation: one where the participants journey to the Grandmothers in the way Sharon describes in *The Grandmothers Speak*, and one where the participants are guided through a journey/experience. When the participants journey alone, I first explain the meditation and give the ground rules (have a clear intention that you remember and repeat when lost or confused, pay attention to the way you follow, and retrace your steps to get back), then drum quickly and softly during 15-20 minutes while the participants go on their journey. At the end, I change the drum pattern to signal them to return. I sometimes also guide their journey, usually following a meditation in the Grandmothers' books. If the group's size allows, people can share their meditation experience with the group. I like this because I like to talk about experiences and we can also learn from each other this way. I sometimes respond to the sharing, sometimes just say "thank you". Meditation is my main way to connect with the Grandmothers so I do this a lot with the group. I also like the yin aspect of just sitting quietly and meditating.
- *Singing or humming* (Grandmothersspeak.com has resources for this, and the Dutch website also has some song texts in English). Or you can just hum; one time, we hummed together (improvised) and I saw the most amazing things happening with the Net of Light as we made sound together. Beautiful.

- *Reading from the Grandmothers' books.* Many participants have either not read her books or like to be reminded of her words. This often goes together with my saying a few words of explanation or sharing about how these passages relate to my (and/or the participants') life.
- *Moving.* One group leader uses dance as the main form of her connection with the Grandmothers. The Grandmothers often dance with Sharon in her meditations; the descriptions in the books can serve as the basis for simple dances to be done with the group. In one meeting with the theme of "control", we opened the windows on a blustery day, grew "wings" and flapped around the room, pretending we were birds gliding on the wind. In a Grandmothers' Group, anything goes! I had moments of feeling like a total fool but I also had moments of feeling like an eagle riding the air currents. I liked that part very much, and the participants liked it too. Another option is to do a walking meditation – taking a step, letting the other foot come to meet it, and claiming that space as holy space. With each step, we claim a vertical connection and state "this space is holy because I am here."
- *Messages for participants.* Sometimes, I ask the Grandmothers to give me a message for each participant (this is another advantage of having a small group). I meditate, connect with the Grandmothers, ask them to give me a message for the participant, and report what I see. This is always a beautiful and loving experience. It helps each woman discover her own beauty/power. They all look different but they are all equally beautiful to the Grandmothers. Men also appreciate being "seen in a different light" – our Higher Selves, our energetic selves, are all so beautiful when seen through the Grandmothers' eyes.
- *Work with the Net of Light.* The Grandmothers' books describe various ways of working with the Net of Light so I won't repeat that all here. I generally let the Grandmothers guide me. In my group, we send the Net of Light (at least) to the four directions, to all beings, all aspects of Mother Earth, and all people located in that direction, including the ancestors of each participant present and the people coming before and after us in our family line. We sometimes also include particular groups or individuals as I (or the participants) feel inspired to do so. I like to start with establishing the Net of Light between the people in the room, then expanding to their families, and working out from there.

### *Ending the meeting.*

A ritual for ending helps to mentally and energetically close the meeting. I always close the meeting with a meditation on the Net of Light. Sometimes this is more elaborate, where we face the four directions and send our blessing to each direction through the Net of Light, and sometimes we just stand in a circle holding hands, and I lead the meditation that way. Then I thank the Grandmothers for our time together and ask their blessing for all of us until we meet again.

When I give empowerments, I often do so after ending the meeting so people who need to leave on time have an opportunity to do so without disrupting the ceremony. I'm also considering doing the Empowerment at the beginning sometime, as it considerably heightens the energy in the room.

Providing drinks and/or food after the meeting encourages people to stay and socialize outside of the formality of ceremony.

### **Some Final Words of Encouragement**

No matter what your Grandmothers group looks like from the outside, what matters most is holding the energy of yin. You'll know that your yin power is strong when you can remain calm and quiet regardless of circumstance. Yin power is peaceful power.

Yang energy can be recognized by feeling anxious, impatient, goal-oriented, excited, controlling, or moving too fast for your comfort. When you identify those yang feelings, STOP and *don't do anything* until you restore your vertical connection to the Divine and to your Root.

We already know how to measure our success using the yang yardstick of quantity and speed. How fast can we attract large numbers of participants (more and more during each meeting, of course)? How fast can we lead them to reach the goal of attaining yin power? (This really is hilarious, and yet each one of us does it!) The success of a yin-centered meeting needs a different form of evaluation. Yin energy can best be measured by *changes in quality*. Powerful yin energy creates connections, fosters deep transformation, opens the heart, and creates organic, non-linear growth. Yin power is slow, deep and wise, but it can also move quickly with immense power. Water is a perfect example of this. Water takes many forms: it can be a drip every few days in a cave that builds a stalagmite over a span of centuries, or it can be a little birdbath, an immense ocean teeming with life, or a raging flood that cuts through rock and sweeps away houses and trees. Yin energy, in all its forms, empowers our vertical connection. It helps us reach higher to Spirit and simultaneously sinks us deep down into the heart of Mother Earth. This organic, vertical growth takes time to develop.

One good model for growing your group organically is the way fruit grows. As an experiment/experience, you could even buy a tomato plant or a strawberry plant and watch it grow. A plant transforms slowly from a seedling to a mature plant that produces a blossom, which in turn transforms into a small green fruit which grows and ripens. Some plants bear fruit in a matter of weeks and some take years before they mature enough to produce fruit. Are the slower-growing plants any less worthy of a place in God's garden? Are they any less miraculous?

The Grandmothers love our diversity. Each of us has a different vibration, a different "color". This is as it should be! Look at nature – diversity is a mark of a healthy ecosystem. None of us encompasses all possible colors; only the Divine does. The Grandmothers take each expression of their message, each "color", and they weave our colors into a strong and pure white light. Our only job is to ask the Grandmothers to reveal what our true color is, then to shine that color as purely and strongly as we can. Comparing our color to someone else's doesn't make any sense; why should a beautiful deep purple wish to be a vibrant green or a rich orange, and vice versa? Trying to imitate someone else just confuses us and muddies the expression of who we are. The most attractive people – the "irresistible" ones, as the Grandmothers say – are the ones who are who they are, genuinely and without apology or confusion.

If you are not sure what your "color" is, hold a Grandmothers group by yourself. You may think you are alone, but you are not; there are at least 13 of you present, and in fact many more. You are there with the 12 Grandmothers, plus all of your ancestors, your spirit guides, and other spirits that most of us never become aware of. My most powerful Grandmothers experience, an Indian naming ceremony, took place when I was holding the space for a Grandmothers group and no one came. I had created a ceremonial space through the ritual I imagined performing for others, then I sat down to meet with the Grandmothers on my own. No other people were there to be "led" by me, but wow, the Grandmothers sure showed up at that meeting! I highly recommend meeting with them in this way whenever you feel confused or discouraged about your Grandmothers leadership.

Most importantly, know that it is simply not possible to do anything wrong, ever. There are only actions that bring you closer to experiencing the Divine and actions that take you farther away.

The Grandmothers bless you and *your* way of expressing their message.

THE END...THE BEGINNING...THE END...THE BEGINNING...THE END...THE CIRCLE CONTINUES