

Spring 2019

## Healing Hut ~ Weaving Earth Circles Along the River Whose Waters Are Never Still

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# Healing Hut ~ Weaving Earth Circles Along the River Whose Waters Are Never Still

Sophia Martina Lopez  
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Footer Logo

Welcome to a woven circle of earth. The land that you walk on has birthed this hearth through my hands as an offering of earth healing connection for all who enter. We give gratitude to the Mohican people whose homeland we walk on and who call this great river Mohicanituk or “the river who flows both ways.” We acknowledge all beings who call this land home - the animals, the plants, the stones, the winds, the waters, the humans, the spirits, and all others throughout time. May this woven earth circle be an offering of healing to those whose wounds the land will always remember.

It’s hard to mark the origin of this endeavor because it really began when I was born on to this Earth. It took root when I started to crave the understanding of where I came from and what made up my being. Last summer, I dreamt of learning how to build the ancient traditional homes of my mixed ancestry as a way to connect with the culture and practices of my origins. I would bring these traditions to this land and imagine how my ancestors would have adopted their practices based on the unique ecology here. Different plants would thatch the roof and different clay would cake the walls giving an old tradition a new essence, imbued with the spirit of this place and time. I planned to pay homage to my Mother’s lineage of Scottish, English, and Choctaw origin, to my Father’s mestizo Mexican lineage, and to the native Mohican people of this particular land as a prayer for healing traumas of human migration across time. I was to embark on the creation of a small village of three huts surrounding a common hearth - Celtic roundhouse Chukka fusion, adobe hut, and wigwam. Through this art making, my intention was to give gratitude to this land through a culminating journey of intimacy with the many beings of this place that have fed and taught me all that I cannot name. I have been living on this land, drinking the local sweet water, befriending the wild medicinal and edible plants, dreaming through the seasons, and learning everything about what it means to be a human on this Earth through the soft echoes the spirits of this place sing, yet my people are not from here. They come from far off epicenters yet this is the land that has brought me of age. These Tivoli Bays have adopted me as their own daughter and from girl to herbalist, community leader, and woman they have taught me. They have told me to share the magic and wisdom that is beholden in these woodlands with others because many humans have lost the ears to listen to Earth’s whisperings. So during my time here, I have been creating earth circles and spaces for people to commune with each other and the natural world in hopes of filling belonging voids that modern society has been so good at inflicting on us. My offering of this healing hut, loving reishi tincture, and the community earth circles and rituals I am holding in and around my earth work are the culmination of this prayerful journey.

When I speak of healing the traumas of displacement, I can only do the part that one human can do by holding space for healing in my community and hoping that the echoes will ripple through others to do their part in theirs. The healing water of Earth connection can only flow if we as humans learn to become intimate with place again, light and shadow wherever we live on Earth. All rivers are one river, and may the sweetness you feel when the water beholds you carry you to a sense of belonging.

The first task of mine was to orient this woven earth circle on the land. The place that chose my hands to work was on the ridge of an open field that slopes down to thick boggy meadow where goldenrod dances with purple and pink asters through late September before tumbling down into speckled woodlands where the tricklings of a creek are heard. Yarrow the great healer of healers, and a mother of mine was growing with wild fervor which I took as a message that I had found my ground to weave upon. So I set out marking the cardinal directions and noting the solar streak across the sky into the night where the moon abounds from. With a shovel in hand I dug a ring out of Earth filling it with rocks I collected with a dear friend of mine by the train tracks where the crossroads lie. The remainder came from buildings and grounds. I then began to remove the top sod within the circle cleansing the space for new growth. I set the front entrance to welcome us from the East where the sun rises from. I originally had wanted to make three different huts but a vision led me to singularly channel this energy. One night, I had a dream that I went out into the woods with my younger brother, papa, and grandpa surrounded by the felt presence of many others, to ask for the life of a tree so I could build a temple for all beings. There in the darkness of the midnight forest, a magnificent pine arose. The kin who had accompanied me outside left me there with an axe to cut the tree down by my lonesome guided only by the light of the moon and the blood pumping through my heart that was no different from the tree sap leaking as I cut deeper. The following night in waking life, I bundled up for the winter midnight winds with saw in hand. I set out as the dream led me to find the tree that called me close. It was a sugar maple sapling that bowed their branch low in the wind, flexible yet strong and said may I be your first noble tree? Blood for sap and so the journey with sugar maple began. I told each tree sapling about my plans and asked if they would like to take part in weaving their trunks to secure a safe space for all beings who would enter my hut. Many said yes but some said no because their spirits were called to other ends, and so I would respectfully ask the next tree.

Half of my time was spent with the trees building a sturdy bone structure for my hut and the other half was spent with the wool of Mary Godesky's Shetland and Icelandic sheep. Early on in this journey I had somehow heard about the Hudson Valley Sheep and Wool Company which is a farm and mill in Red Hook. Upon telling them of my project and my interest in learning how to weave and spin, Mary who is an endless fountain sprouting ideas suggested I cover my structure in felt like a yurt. Mickey and Jamie who help out around the mill ensured me that they had lots of fiber they could outright give me because the hairs were too short to spin into yarn. If I hadn't come in then much of this fiber would have gotten thrown away. Learning this new craft and community seemed very intriguing and I began to felt panels to cover the structure I was building out of maple saplings. Wet felting is a tedious, dirty, and time consuming process especially when your working with raw unwashed fiber straight off the sheep. Luckily I got to use their wet felting table which consists of two rubber panels that lock down against each other and when activated, shift back and forth to matt the fibers together. Soap and hot water makes the gliding smoother and aids in the process of enmeshing locks into

the 3 by 4 foot panels of felt that the table allows for. Down the road, they encouraged me to reach out to Turkana farms in Germantown which raises Karakul sheep, one of the original varieties used to make the felted coverings of yurts in Mongolia! Although my hut is of my own experimental design, it in many ways resembles and pulls inspiration from the rounded yurts of Mongolia and it is interesting to have this historical connection. So the covering of my healing hut is made of wool from these three varieties of sheep, and if you feel the textures and notice the patterns of colors you can see the variations between. Each element of my hut tells a different perspective of this time and place on the land from native maples to sheep brought over from Europe and Central Asia, to the zinc nuts and bolts that were made in China. It's an earth work to mirror what surrounds.

After I leave this place, the hut I have built will remain behind as a container of memories and a gift to the community I have loved so dearly. The space will change as the beings who inhabit this place ebb and flow with the tides and the seasons weather it how they like. I am leaving this circle in the hands and care of Wild Roots, a community group here that has beheld my heart and watched me bloom. I hug and kiss you all farewell and thank you deeply from the soles of my feet to the wild flame in my heart. The bloodroot has bloomed and so my time has come to fly away with the wind - my beloved felted flock of sheep accompanying me on the long journey home to build sand castles on new shorelines.





