



Kunsi Keya Tamakoce (**Grandmother Turtle Land**)

Womxn's Sundance 2023

July 14-23, 2023

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Anpetu waste' wiwáŋyang wačíp tiyospaye! (Good day, Sundance family!)

You have received this letter because you have expressed an interest in the Women's Lakota Sundance.

Kunsi Keya Tamakoce welcomes you to the opportunity of participating and praying in a traditional Lakota Sundance. The Women's Lakota Sundance is a vision gifted to Unci Beverly Littlethunder, and guided by her youngest daughter Lushanya., in the matriarchal-tradition of our ancestors. We trust you arrive with the wisdom that you are choosing to participate in this very sacred ceremony that requires quiet attention, prayerful respect, and sacred participation.

Indigenous ceremonies are available around the world, and each spiritual community may have differing protocols. As this ceremony is guided by the Lakota ancestors, it is important that each participant be open to learning through observation, listening, and doing. It is important to not assume the ways of the ceremony, and we want to always be respectful of this ancestral tradition.

We are a women's ceremony guided by matriarchal-lineage, and we honor our Two Spirit, trans, and nonbinary community members. Community members who identify as such are invited to participate in this ceremony and share their prayers.

Thank you for taking the time to educate yourself in advance, so that your energy at Sundance is focused on our strong community prayers.

Hiya Mitakuyasin,

The Sundance Council

What is a Lakota Sundance?

The Sundance is one of the Seven Sacred Ceremonies given to the Lakota people. Sundance is a ceremony that represents life and rebirth. Sundance is a New Year ceremony celebrated in the summer, usually on a full moon. It is a powerful and sacred ceremony that has withstood severe oppression, many times, since it was given to the Lakota People. It was once exclusively Lakota, and has become a ceremony practiced by many other American Indian tribes. Each tribe/community/family has its own variation of Sundance. The focus of the Sundance Ceremony is one prayer: healing for Mother Earth and all those that live with her. We are giving thanks for all the good things that the Creator has given to us.

About the Kungsi Keya Women's Sundance Leaders



**Founder and Visionary
Unci (Grandmother) Beverly Littlethunder**



**Sundance Leader
Lushanya Echeverria**

The birth mother of the "Wimmin's Sundance", Unci Beverly began dancing 40 years ago. Until 1987, Beverly was a Lakota Sundance leader and recognized as a respected female in the traditional Sundance community. When Beverly came out as a "two-spirit" woman, she was asked to leave her traditional Sundance family. After a dream, Beverly was approached by two female elders and instructed to create a ceremony for her "own kind". The elder's wisdom led Beverly to envision a variation of the traditional Lakota Sundance: a ceremony of strength and empowerment generated by women.

The Wimmin's Sundance is a vision rooted within traditional Lakota culture; however, Beverly's vision imagined change in some traditional protocol. In traditional Lakota ceremonies, women are inferior to men. In addition, only participants able to prove their Native American heritage are allowed privileges such as facilitating Inipi Ceremonies, beating the Sacred Drum, entering the Arbor, and becoming a Sundancer.

The vision gifted to Beverly portrayed women, Native American and from other descents, fulfilling the roles of Sundance in a careful and nurturing way.

Presently, Beverly, her wife Pam and family are living on 101 acres of land in Vermont where the ceremony will be held. Beverly's vision is to build a community for women of Native descent to have space to honor the ceremonies of their ancestors. The land will be held in trust for future generations to care for, and continue the Wimmin's

Beverly's youngest daughter, Lushanya, has participated in Lakota ceremonies since she was 3 years old and has learned and led alongside Unci Beverly for more than four decades. Following the traditions of the ceremonies in which she was raised, Lushanya began dancing as a young child, and leads sweat lodges and pipe ceremonies for various communities. Lushanya commits her life to supporting, learning, and honoring the vision of the Women's Lakota Sundance. In addition, Lushanya is committed to expanding Kungsi Keya Tamakoce to be a spiritual retreat center that hosts multicultural events, Indigenous leaders, and their ceremonies from around the world.

Lushanya is a professional educator, storyteller, and author. She develops character education curriculum integrating Indigenous-based spiritual practice, values, and beliefs. Her children's book, *The Creation of Kungsi Keya*, is a Lakota creation story that portrays characters as gender non-binary and teaches social skills and community building from the teachings of her matriarchal lineage.

An educational leader, Lushanya studies trauma theory, early childhood onset trauma, and trauma stewardship. She works with BIPOC teachers to address the psychological effects of working with students from trauma. Lushanya is committed to the healing of intergenerational trauma among her family, and all Indigenous of America people suffering from Indian Military Boarding Schools. She is committed to sharing traditions of her Indigenous Lakota spiritual practices to further empower all Indigenous women in their traditional ceremonial spaces.

Sundance Ceremony.

About Kungsi Keya Land

We acknowledge that this land is part of the Traditional homelands of the Abenaki Nation (Nulhegan, Koesak, Elnu). We work to ensure that the presence of Kungsi Keya Tamakoce supports the Abenaki people, their Traditions, and their culture.

Kungsi Keya is nestled in the foothills of Camel's Hump in the Green Mountains of Vermont. Surrounding us are mountain vistas, Sugar Maple and Birch trees, flowing streams, and an abundance of wildlife [deer, bear, moose, elk, and songbirds].

Being in ceremony at Kungsi Keya

Our Sundance is a ten day ceremony that begins on Friday evening as we gather to share an orientation about Sundance and land acknowledgment. The next four days are spent in purification; cleansing our emotional, physical, and spiritual selves, and preparing for Creator's help and blessing. Following purification, we gather from sunrise to sunset in the sacred Sundance arbor for four days in support of the Sundancers' prayers and sacrifice. The closing ceremony day is used for packing up personal camps and working collectively to leave the land better than we found it. Please plan to leave the land no earlier than 5pm on Sunday.

Participants are welcome and encouraged to arrive before Friday to help prepare for ceremony, and/or stay after Sunday for clean up.

What does it mean to support Kungsi Keya Sundance?

Supporters are participants who co-create the ceremonial space while building community. There is much physical and spiritual work involved in Ceremony. This includes drumming, fire keeping, preparing meals, woodcutting, preparing the arbor, singing, and being receptive to Lakota teachings.

Each supporter will be expected to participate in all aspects of the Ceremony, to the extent she is able.

Supporters will refrain from all mind-altering recreational substances, including marijuana and alcohol, for four days prior to arriving on Sundance Land. Supporters must remain drug and alcohol-free until after your **final** departure. Drug or alcohol use of any kind is prohibited while attending Sundance. Any person suspected of using these substances will be asked to leave immediately.

The **Sundancer's** role is to sacrifice their needs for the good of the People. During the Ceremony, Sundancers are isolated from the community of supporters, fast from food and water, and speak only to the Creator, through prayer. At this time, Sundancers are women of native descent who dedicate their year to prayer and preparation to dance for the People and for Mother Earth, and have attended the Sundance Ceremony for at least four years.

During purification, a Sundancer's role is to work alongside the supporters: preparing the Arbor, Sweat Lodges, and assembling the tipi and kitchen areas. During the dancing ceremony, Sundancers become selfless beings and are isolated from the community. They pray for everyone on the Earth, except themselves. During purification, Sundancers are preparing to enter the world of the spirits. Sundancers may choose to limit their conversation and energetic interaction with supporters during purification in preparation for the Ceremony.

What support will I receive as a supporter?

A schedule is provided upon arrival. Supporters attending for the first time will be assigned a mentor who will support them by answering questions that arise and helping them get acquainted with the land and the ceremony. Mentors are guided in their work by the Supporters Council.

The **Supporters Council** is a group of women who have attended the Women's Sundance for many years and have made Sundance a part of their lives. They sit on the Council because they possess extensive knowledge about Women's Sundance protocol. They are elders within our spiritual community who are entrusted to uphold the protocol set by the Sundance Council. The Council works to maintain peace in the energy that surrounds Sundance. The Council will be a resource for you and your mentor and will be introduced at the opening ceremony.

Our Shared Agreements for Participation In Sundance Ceremony

- No alcohol, smoking tobacco, or mind-altering **recreational substances**, is allowed. Tobacco is permitted in specific ways as medicine in ceremony. Camp policy is no-smoking, except in designated areas.
- No sexual activity/energy is welcome during Sundance, please. It is important for everyone to do their part in holding the ceremonial energetic container. We are coming together to pray and connect with the spiritual world, it's important to keep our energy to ourselves in this process.
- Keep your phone away during the ceremony. Any type of recording, including sound is forbidden. Please respect the sacred space.
- Healing energy will be very strong, emotional processes may come up for people. Please be responsible and utilize the teachings provided. Be understanding, and give people space.
- If a conflict should arise, please check in with a Supporters Council member to help mediate.

What is an "Inipi"?

The Inipi, or Sweat Lodge, is how we pray to the Creator. The Sweat Lodge is the purification/spiritual cleansing process. The lodge represents the womb of our Mother Earth, and when we crawl out at the end of the Inipi Ceremony, it is compared to experiencing a rebirth.

The Inipi is a traditional beginning and ending within Lakota ceremonies. Traditionally, all Sundance participants are asked to sweat once a day. However, in consideration of Covid-19, participants may elect to sit outside the lodge in prayer while the Inipi is underway.

Sweatlodges will be offered each day. The sweat lodges provided at Sundance are gentle and cleansing and last one hour. Women on their menstrual cycle are welcome to participate in sweat lodge.

Sundance Arbor

The arbor is sacred space—please be aware and respectful. During purification, we will prepare the arbor for dancing. As you enter the arbor, smudge yourself, and offer tobacco to the tree. During dancing, our physical presence in the arbor supporting our Dancers is the priority. The protocol for being in the arbor during dancing will be taught during purification.

Community Contribution

Each participant will have the opportunity to contribute to the community and to ceremony in one or more of the

following areas:

- Sweatlodge Firekeeping
- Kitchen/Cooking/Cleaning
- Caring for the Land [garbage, recycling, bathroom upkeep]
- Arbor Preparation and Maintenance
- Dancer Caretaking [acupuncture, Reiki, reflexology, massage]

Financial Contribution

There is never a “charge” for the ceremony. Your contribution of \$600.00 covers the cost of providing 3 meals per day and snacks, propane, wood, port-o-janes, sanitary measures, paper products, and many other camp supplies and services. Your donation also supports the ongoing work of Kungsi Keya. We request all donations be made via PayPal: www.kungsikeya.org prior to your arrival, or in cash when you arrive. If you are unable to meet the suggested minimum contribution, please contact [Lushanya](#) before you register.

There are limited funds available to assist with travel expenses for Native women wishing to attend for the first time. Please contact [Lushanya](#) for more information or provide the following link for women who are interested: [Womxn of Color Scholarship Request](#)

Work Exchange Opportunity: There are a limited number of work exchange opportunities to reduce your registration donation. These would involve coming to the land before the ceremony or staying after the ceremony to assist with set-up and clean up. Please contact [Lushanya](#) to inquire about these opportunities.

Being at Kungsi Keya Tamakoce Let’s take care of Mother Earth together!

- **Camping:** The land has a combination of meadows and woods with many places to camp. When camping, please bring your own tent/sleeping bag/pillow/blanket, and anything you need to keep yourself warm and comfortable at night. Bringing a plastic tarp and storage bin is encouraged, as there are many rainy days/nights when thunderstorms may occur. Please be prepared with proper gear for varied weather and temperatures: nights can be chilly (50 degrees Fahrenheit) and days can range up to 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Be prepared for cold nights with the proper bedding and layers for sleeping. **Personal campfires are prohibited.**
- **Cabin:** There is a 6-person cabin. We request an additional fee of \$150, per person, to reserve a bed in the cabin. Cabin beds do not include sheets, pillows, or blankets. **Please bring your own.** The cabin is not heated. **Fire of any type is not permitted inside the cabin (including candles, propane heaters, and smudge bowls).**
- **Bathing:** We are blessed to have two outdoor hot-water showers. Please bring biodegradable soap/shampoo/conditioner. You may want to bring plastic flip-flops to wear in the shower. You will need to bring your own towels[we suggest bringing two].
- **Toilets:** We use both outdoor composting toilets and port-a-potties. There are handwashing stations outside of both. If you bring baby wipes to clean your bottom, be sure they are compostable. **DO NOT PUT THESE ITEMS IN THE TOILETS.**
- **Water:** We are also blessed to have beautiful, pristine, and delicious-tasting water. Bring a reusable water bottle to fill from our faucets. Please don’t bring single-use plastics onto the site.

- **Caring for the Land:** Picking up after ourselves, putting all ceremonial supplies to rest, and leaving the land cleaner than how we found it is an important Lakota virtue. On Sunday, following the dancing part of the ceremony, we devote the entire day to working together to clean and organize our ceremonial space. This is a required and very important part of the ceremony—all participants will be working with their crew to cleanse a particular ceremonial area..

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