

# ManSpirit brings men together

by Mark Lockaby  
Q-Notes Staff

In today's world, individuality has become a priority for many people. The world appears to be saying "it's okay to be different," but if we read the "fine print," it would continue, "as long as you are like everyone else." We have been led to believe by those in power that the rest of us have a common goal to achieve in life and they are more than willing to show us "THE" only way we can reach that goal. If we were to be honest with ourselves, we would recognize that each individual must find his own path in life and we should encourage each other along that path.

ManSpirit is a group which both encourages and supports the individual on life's path. "ManSpirit provides an opportunity for men to discover and share the truth of who they are while walking their uniquely individual spiritual paths as gay men in the world today." After hearing this statement of purpose from Rocco Patt, "vocalizer" of the group, I immediately knew this group of men had developed a "spiritually sound" base upon which each individual can satisfy his personalized spiritual needs within a support network.

ManSpirit is a dynamic group comprised of gay men but open to anyone who shares a love of men regardless of how they may choose to express that love. Drawing on practices of numerous native traditions from many lands, ManSpirit utilizes ceremonies such as the Sweat Lodge, Sacred Pine Ceremony and various other events and rituals.

The Sweat Lodge Ceremony assists in reconnecting one to our Mother the Earth. During the ceremony, hot rocks are brought into the lodge where water is poured onto them to produce steam. Through sweating, chanting, drumming, singing and prayer, a purification of mind, body and emotions occurs. The ceremony may last as long as two hours or more. At the conclusion of the ceremony, everyone emerges from the lodge, considered to be like the Earth Mother's womb, purified and reborn like a newborn infant.

The Heart Circle ritual involves everyone, each sharing what is taking place in their lives. During this process, everyone is seated in a circle. A talking stick is passed around the circle; the talking stick is based upon tribal tradition. As one receives the stick, it is their opportunity to talk from their heart. One does not have to speak and may pass the stick to the next person. The sharing of the opportunity to talk allows each person to have the full attention of the group. Some members of the group may find it difficult to speak in front of others, but with such supportive listeners, who can pass up the opportunity to express their true feelings?

The Summer Solstice and Fall Equinox are special times of the year for the ManSpirit group. During these seasonal changes, there are celebrations which might include the Sweat Lodge and Sacred Pipe ceremonies. The position of the sun and other planetary-celestial bodies cause the Earth's energy field to be at the highest level during this period. This is an opportune time for drawing on the healing energy that flows from the earth.

ManSpirit is not about creating a new religion but blends elements of Shamanism, other tribal traditions, ecology, astrology and personal responsibility into a spirituality that everyone can participate in while celebrating their individuality.

The few ceremonies and ideas mentioned here do not even scratch the surface of all that ManSpirit is. What ManSpirit is, is what many like-minded men have made it; a harmony of mind, body and spirit within a loving group of men.

ManSpirit holds its gatherings the first Saturday of each month at 6:00pm at the home of Rocco Patt and Peter Kendrick in Mars Hill, NC. A potluck dinner is held every third month with the Heart Circle following. Attendance usually ranges from 20 to 30 people from the local and surrounding areas. For a more detailed schedule of their events and more information about ManSpirit, contact Rocco Patt at (704) 689-5515. ▼

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