

If you are considering enrolling, or have enrolled in The Young Adult Rite of Passage, we highly encourage you to reach out to me, Gretchen “Grae” Gerlach for a conversation. You can bring any questions that you might have, learn more about what the experience is like, meet me, and learn a little more about my co-guide, Nick!

An overview of the experience :

This 12 day program will take place in the eastern mountains of Payahuunadü (also known as the Inyo Mountains) outside of Big Pine, California. These are the ancestral and contemporary lands of the Nüümü and Newe people. The environment is high desert, a sandy land of Pinon and Juniper trees, with expansive views of the Sierra Mountains as well as Death Valley.

After we meet in the small town of Big Pine on the first day, we will be immersed in remote nature, camping, cooking and living together in wildlands, for the duration of our time together.

Our group can range between 6-12 people. There will be two guides, Grae and Nick as well as two assistant guides.

Our program is divided into three phases; Preparation, Threshold, and Incorporation. It is important to learn a little about each phase of the program before you arrive.

Preparation Phase

Preparation for your wilderness Rite of Passage begins long before we gather in person. Perhaps it even began months before you enrolled; with curiosity to seek an out-of-the-ordinary experience, to immerse in wildlands, to explore yourself, to claim your identity, and of course a ceremonial marking of initiation into *your* adulthood.

Upon enrollment, we will support your preparation by scheduling a 1:1 call between you and Grae to discuss any questions you may have. We will also send you important preparation information including logistics, equipment lists and foundations of safety. Additionally, we will ask each participant to write a Letter of Intention, explaining what calls them to participate in this program. We are also able to help you plan your travel to Big Pine, and how to acquire the appropriate equipment.

When our program begins, our first 4 days will be dedicated to preparation. As a group, we will engage in experiences that allow us to be truly seen in our wholeness, to witness each other and to share our unique intentions, perspectives and stories. Guides will support you to refine your individual intentions, while learning and engaging with self-designed ceremony. It will be a time to orient to the natural world and be instructed in how to create and maintain physical and psychological safety as individuals and as a group.

Threshold Phase

The threshold phase will be your 3 day and 3 night “Solo ceremony” to pursue and experience your unique intention and an initiation into adulthood.

During this time you will be immersed in nature with invitations to go out in solitude, empty of distractions. Each person will be supported in designing their solo ceremony in a way that ensures their safety while also supporting their unique intention.

Everyone will be equipped with the necessary gear for safety and simple shelter. This is an opportunity to leave any distractions and interactions with other people behind as well as an invitation to fast from food. That being said, there may be variations on how you design these elements of your ceremony.

“Solo” creates an unique opportunity to receive a “clear vision” of yourself, who you are in the empty moments, without distractions. You will likely face challenges, sometimes it's the weather, sometimes your boredom or your fear. You will also experience the raw majesty of a desert sunrise, the immense quiet of the mountains, the thrill of your own courage to do what few people in this modern world have ever done.

While you will be alone in nature, there is a system of ensuring your safety and wellbeing daily. Additionally, guides will be available at basecamp, in case of an emergency.

Incorporation Phase:

Our final phase will be Incorporation. During the days after your solo ceremony we will begin incorporation through council practices of sharing and holding each other's stories and group ceremonies.

In addition to your guides, we will invite two Elders within the School of Lost Borders to listen to your stories and in return offer their wisdom, insight, and love. Then, we will turn towards “how to bring your experience, gifts, and identity home”, how to close our time in Payahuunadü, and how to say goodbye to the community and culture that we have created together.

While these are the last days of our program, they are the first days of your year-long incorporation experience. During this time you will likely be challenged to integrate your Rite of Passage into your living and rewarded by your efforts. In order to support your year of incorporation, we will all commit to participating in one virtual group call a few months after our program ends. Then you will join the community of initiated Young Adults, around the world that completed this Rite of Passage.

We hope that this orientation and overview of The Young Adult Rite of Passage helps to provide you with some foundational information.

We also imagine that it has sparked many emotions and questions within you. Again, we encourage you to have a conversation with someone you trust in your life about your contemplations or to reach out to me, and schedule a call. Send me a message at: gretchen@lostborders.org

Grae & Nick,

