

Animas Valley Institute
ANIMAS QUEST APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Animas Valley Institute has been offering vision fasts since 1980 and conducting training programs for guides since 1988. We offer two distinct programs for apprenticing to the vision fast. One is our comprehensive, multi-year Soulcraft Apprenticeship and Initiation Program (SAIP). This includes the option of a track in Soulcentric Vision Quest Guiding and provides thorough training in all of the soulcraft core areas, each of which is incorporated into the Animas Quest.

The other is our Animas Quest Apprenticeship Program, which is a one-program-at-a-time approach to apprenticing to the Animas Quest. The trainee joins a regularly scheduled Animas Quest, each with two guides/trainers, and learns the structure, components, and dynamics of the quest from direct experience. **All candidates for training should have previously enacted at least one vision fast of their own with either Animas or other experienced guides.** Apprentices assist in base camp activities while the questers are out on their solo fast. During this time, there is opportunity for individualized training and consultation between guides and apprentices. There are up to 4 apprentices and 12 fasters on each quest.

More than half of our apprentices are in training to guide quests of their own or already have some experience in guiding. Some, however, come to determine whether or not guiding is truly their calling. Others seek to develop skills and sensitivities that will facilitate their work with other related wilderness, ceremonial, or educational programs.

Areas of training focus include:

Wilderness skills: basic and advanced survival knowledge and skills, orienteering, search and rescue abilities, the choosing of appropriate wilderness sites for vision fasts, minimal-impact camping, safety procedures, buddy systems, group logistics, water and food. For those without previous training in wilderness skills, additional study is recommended with organizations that specialize in this area (e.g., NOLS, OLTS, Outward Bound, BOSS).

Conceptual foundations: understanding of the vision fast as a modern rite of passage, rite of renewal, and/or rite of soul initiation, the stages and dynamics of human development and soul encounter, self-designed ceremony, confirmatory vs. transformational rites, heroic archetypes, soul vs. spirit, the three worlds (upper, middle, and lower), and the concepts and images of the underworld descent to soul.

Symbolic and ritual foundations of the vision fast: allegorical models, symbols and archetypes of the dreamtime journey, the power spot, the stonepile, fasting, dreaming, symbolic awareness, the soul name, the calling song, the power dance, the sacrificial fire, crying for a vision, the purpose circle, the vigil, soul tasks.

Symbol skills: understanding of and facility with dreams, symbols, deep imagery, personal myth, visions, and dialogues with nature.

The preparation of the contemporary vision faster: screening participants, guidance in the creation of self-designed ceremony, pre-solo group meetings, form and dynamics of the talking staff council, journal work, dreamwork, personal mythologies, symbolic artwork, deep imagery work, group severance ceremonies, the death lodge, the day walk, the eco-soulcentric developmental wheel, preparation of body and gear.

Ceremonial and ritual skills: guiding people of different religious and spiritual backgrounds in the creation of ceremonies that are in keeping with their traditions, values, and personal needs; creating and enacting group ceremony; drumming, chanting, shaker rhythms, sacred sweat ceremonies, trance dancing, talking across the species boundaries.

Guiding skills: understanding the dynamics of life crisis, transition, soul encounter, and soul initiation; severance counseling, mirroring, dream interpretation, the trickster role, and group dynamics; working with special populations.

Reincorporation of the vision faster: problems inherent in the Return; the Council of Elders, reincorporation ceremonies, the letter from the deep self, reincorporation guidance techniques, mirroring of visions and other underworld experiences, the give-away ceremony.

Understanding transpersonal states of consciousness: how to respond to, interpret, and help integrate them.

Emergency first-aid: we can offer only the most rudimentary review of first-aid techniques. For adequate training, we recommend study with the American Red Cross or other specialized training groups (e.g., SOLO).

There are two levels of apprenticeships:

Initial Apprenticeship: Following a period of preparatory activities at home, the apprentice participates in all phases of a regularly scheduled Animas Quest (except for the 3-day-solo time) including group preparation meetings, base camp activities while the questers are fasting, and reincorporation. Several hours of individual training time, primarily during the 3 days that the fasters are alone, are devoted to developing the trainee's skills and knowledge. The areas of concentration for each trainee are individually developed based on pre-existing strengths and needs. In addition to the development of guiding skills, trainees are assisted in exploring and cultivating their own soul and growth experiences. Special assignments may be given concerning: (a) the preparation or reincorporation of the fasters, (b) orienteering, wilderness survival, and search and rescue exercises, and (c) soul tasks: symbolic interactions with nature designed to advance one's own soul knowledge and soul embodiment. Apprentices are encouraged to undertake a 24-hour solo with assigned soul tasks to complete.

Advanced Apprenticeships: Typically, apprenticeships are undertaken three or more times before the trainee is ready to guide his or her own soul-oriented wilderness quests. The tuition *decreases* significantly on each subsequent Animas apprenticeship in order to support your growing commitment and to honor your developing ability to be

of assistance. Advanced apprenticeships are individually arranged in accordance with the trainee's developing needs.

Application Procedures: If you any have questions, please contact the Animas office by phone or e-mail (970-259-0585 or soulcraft@animas.org) or download an application from www.animas.org.