

Queer Wild Mind Intensive
September 29 - October 3, 2021
Steadhaven Retreat – Monroe, ME

Preparation Information



Greetings,

We are thrilled you will be joining us for the Queer Wild Mind Intensive. We very much look forward to our five days together at Steadhaven Retreat, as we follow the allurements that call to each one of us in this verdant landscape of Maine.

Wildly,

Doug & Sara

COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

We are gathering for this experiential immersion in the midst of a global pandemic. While this season of unrest may amplify the opportunity for healing, wholing, and soul initiation, it also presents a risk to the health of all of us in attendance together. Therefore, we urge you to follow social distancing guidelines, mask wearing, and sincere diligence in avoiding exposure to COVID-19 prior to your arrival and during our time together.

We are required to comply with all applicable Federal, State, and Local requirements. In addition, we are required to adhere to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, as well as all state and local requirements surrounding this pandemic. Failure to do so can result in revocation of our land-use permit. Above and beyond that, the health and safety of everyone in attendance is our top priority, and we are committed to providing a safe and cooperative setting for this program.

In order to comply with regulations and in an effort to maximize safety, we ask you to commit to keeping yourself safe in the weeks leading up to the program, and throughout its duration. It would be unfortunate to have someone fall ill during the program. To that end, we previously asked you for compliance with the following guidelines prior to finalizing your registration, and **we are trusting strict adherence to these protocols to provide the safest possible experience for everyone:**

1. We encourage you to drive a personal vehicle to the program - do not travel on airlines to the program or in the two weeks prior to the program, unless you have been fully vaccinated. If you are unvaccinated, we require a 7-day post-flight quarantine plus COVID-19 testing before and after air travel.
2. We encourage you to continue practicing COVID-19 safety protocols including social distancing, mask wearing, hand washing, not touching your face, using hand sanitizer, etc. in the two weeks leading up to the program. This is especially important if you have not been vaccinated.
3. Please let us know immediately if you have any underlying health conditions that put you in greater danger should you contract COVID-19, and do not plan on attending the program at this time.
4. Excuse yourself from the program (even very last minute) if you have come into contact with someone with COVID-19 in the two weeks leading up to the program, and/or you are experiencing possible symptoms of COVID-19 including fever or chills, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, cough, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, congestion, loss of sense of taste and smell, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.
5. Commit to keeping 3-6 feet of space between yourself and other participants and guides throughout the program. Avoid hugs, handshakes, and touching – especially if you have not been vaccinated.
6. Commit to wearing a mask if circumstances require participants and guides to be closer than 3-6 feet from one another (such as if a sudden rainstorm hits and we all need to huddle under the tarp).
7. Commit to practicing safe hygiene during the program by frequently washing hands, using hand sanitizer, and not sharing food, utensils, and other objects.
8. Diligently cover sneezes, coughs, robust laughter, etc., especially if you have not been vaccinated.
9. Agree to leave the program if you become ill.

On your drive to the program, please attempt to stay out of public places as much as possible. For example, aim to pee outside rather than using a public restroom (be very quick and hygienic if you do need to use a public space). Travel with food and groceries in your car so you do not need to go inside a restaurant. If we are each diligent, we can avoid the challenges of having anyone in our group contract the virus while we are gathered together.

We are relying on you to keep your agreement to follow the COVID-19 guidelines in the two weeks prior to the program. Not keeping this agreement could put yourself and our entire community at risk. Please take this agreement seriously and follow through. It is an incredibly important part of preparation for this program. Thank you!

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

PROGRAM BEGINS:

Wednesday, September 29th at 1:00 PM. We will start the first group meeting promptly at 1:00 pm. Please arrive between 11:00am and 12:00pm so you have time to settle in and begin promptly at 1:00pm. Please have your belly pleasantly filled before we begin.

PROGRAM ENDS:

Sunday, October 3rd at 1:00 PM. We will stay together as a group through lunch. Lunch is our final gathering for the intensive.

Please make your best effort to be on time and plan to stay for the full duration of the program.

Should unexpected circumstances arise prior to your arrival, please contact the Animas office at (970) 259-0585. While attending the intensive, should unexpected circumstances arise, please communicate with your guides.

If you have any questions prior to the start of the program, you are also welcome to email soulcraft@animas.org or call the Animas office at (970) 259-0585.

TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATIONS

We strongly recommend you do not purchase your airline tickets until you hear from the Animas office confirming the program will happen, as Animas is not responsible for any costs associated with travel. We must wait until there are enough participants registered to confirm. The latest we will do this is 30 days prior to program start date.

NOTE: This program is confirmed so you are free to make your travel arrangements!

This is an all-camping offering. Please bring a tent/shelter and other camping gear you might need for the duration of our time together. Also please be prepared for all weather conditions: cold temps, rain, sleet and sometimes heat.

STEADHAVEN RETREAT:

The Teaching Grove at Steadhaven is located at 559 Dickey Hill Road, Monroe, ME 04951.

Directions from Bangor and points north (navigation will get you close):

Take **I-95 S to exit 180** (Citgo Hampden Travel Stop). Keep left at the fork following signs for US-1A. Turn left onto Coldbrook Rd, pass Dysart Convenience store on left. After 1/7 miles turn right onto **202 West**, pass Anglers Restaurant and Tradewinds Variety. Follow 202/Western Ave (turn right at Walgreens). Go **left onto Mayo Rd** for 1 mile, turn **right onto Kennebec Rd** for 1.7 miles, then **turn left onto Monroe Rd/139 W** for 10 miles. Continue on 139 by turning right onto E Main Street and pass by Monroe Country Store. Turn left onto **141 S/Swan Lake Ave**. After 2 miles **turn right onto Back Brooks Road** which becomes Dickey Hill Rd after 1.5 miles.

Once you are on Dickey Hill Road, look for a white sign with a red heart by a stone wall. Enter the driveway and turn right immediately into the parking area. Please park perpendicular to the road. Someone will greet you with instructions on where to set up camp. There is limited cell service in Monroe, so make sure to load directions soon after exiting 95 or before leaving the Bangor, Waterville, or Belfast areas. If you are arriving to the area prior to Wednesday, Belfast is about 15 minutes away and has many Airbnb options. Text or call 781-710-2578 if you are having difficulty finding us.

We recommend using navigation or purchasing a Maine Atlas at a gas station. Many backroads do not have signage and the route from the highway can be confusing if you are not familiar with the area. Navigation is a reliable source for directions, most cell carriers have service on the highway (Interstate 95). Wi-Fi is widely available in Augusta, Waterville, and Belfast.

From Bangor International Airport, an Uber or Lyft is approximately \$45 - \$55. There are multiple rental car companies at Portland and Boston International Airports.

MEALS

All meals will be provided by Steadhaven. Please let the Animas office know if you have any food allergies or severe sensitivities that you did not note on your registration form, so we can pass them along to the retreat center. Meals are primarily vegetarian, made from locally sourced and wild foods, so if you need a large amount of animal protein (meat), we suggest you bring supplemental food that does not need to be prepared/cooked. We strive to provide gluten and dairy-free options.

PAYMENT

Thank you for your deposit. **The final payment for your balance is due 30 days prior to the start date of the Program** unless other plans have been made. Please use one of the following methods to pay your balance:

- Utilize the "Make a Payment" link under "Participants" on our homepage
- Via PayPal, sending payment to animasoperations@gmail.com

As a non-profit with a small staff, we appreciate your promptness in paying your balance.

PAPERWORK, ETC.

1. **Health Questionnaire:** **Your registration is NOT complete until you fill out your health questionnaire;** here is the link: <http://www.animas.org/forms/questionnaire/>
2. **Once you have made your travel plans, please communicate them to us by e-mail if possible (soulcraft@animas.org),** so we know how and when to expect you. If you are flying in, please let us know the airline, flight number, date, time, and cities of departure and arrival. If you are driving, please let us know where and when you are beginning your journey, and the date and time you expect to arrive.
3. **Liability Release Waiver:** You will be asked to sign a liability release waiver for Covid-19 at the start of the program.
4. **A participant contact list** that includes phone numbers, email addresses and the city and state where participants live will be sent out when the program is confirmed. If the program is already confirmed, it will be included in this email. Please utilize this list to connect with one another after the program.

PROGRAM CANCELLATIONS BY ANIMAS VALLEY INSTITUTE or YOU

Please reference <http://www.animas.org/policy/policies-procedures/> for our complete **Cancellation Policy**. To enroll in an Animas program is to invite your soul on something like a date; it is to say "yes" to a potentially life-changing journey, a journey of initiation or of deepening into a soul-infused life. It's not unusual for fear, resistance, or an apparent scheduling conflict to surface as the time of your program nears. We believe that whatever arises is a part of your journey and is ripe with opportunity and meaning. Our cancellation policy is designed to support you in keeping your date and to support our staff and guides as they prepare for your program.

A few notes of particular importance:

- 1) Once a program has confirmed, deposits cannot be credited or transferred
- 2) Cancellations 30 days or less prior to program start incur a forfeiture of deposit
- 3) Cancellation 7 days or less before the start date incurs a forfeiture of all payments

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the unique circumstances and risks of Covid-19, our policies have softened. If you withdraw from the program prior to the start due to possible exposure or symptoms of Covid-19, we will hold your payment as a credit for a future Animas offering. Once the Program begins, no credits will be offered if you develop symptoms and are required to leave the Program, as we have guaranteed payment to the guides for your participation.

We will adhere to all Federal and State Health advisories regarding Covid-19, which could cause us to cancel the program up to the last minute. Also, if we have multiple cancellations that reduce our cohort substantially, we will need to cancel the program.

WHAT TO BRING

- **REQUIRED:** emergency whistle (the very loud, usually orange kind found in army-navy surplus or camping stores)
- **REQUIRED:** watch or other timepiece that is NOT your cell phone (so you will know when it's time to return to group after solo tasks on the land)
- **REQUIRED:** camp chair – bring your Therma-lounger, Crazy Creek or other easily transportable low chair - we will be sitting on the ground during much of the program so be sure it is comfortable for you
- Benadryl for anyone with life-compromising allergies (this is in addition to your Epi Pen)
- Tent with rainfly and ground cloth or hammock
- sleeping pad - or whatever set up will allow you to sleep comfortably on the ground
- sleeping bag
- emergency blanket (the very lightweight foil kind)
- clothing for cold/cool/warm/hot ~ hiking/sitting/sleeping (bring layers!)
- light hiking shoes
- rain gear (jacket with hood plus rain pants, or a rain poncho)
- umbrella (optional, for sun or rain)
- day pack to carry all you will need for wanders
- flashlight or headlamp (with extra batteries)
- lap blanket (optional — for extra warmth while sitting in circle on possibly cool days)
- insect repellent – fragrance-free and non-toxic, please
- sunglasses
- sunhat/hat for cold weather
- sunscreen - fragrance-free, please (for lips, too)
- personal toiletries
- camping-style solar shower (optional)
- towel
- water bottle
- personal eating utensils including a durable bowl and spoon
- durable coffee/tea mug or insulated water bottle/thermos
- supplemental food, if needed
- a Yoga mat or towel for gentle stretches (optional)
- towel for pond swimming (optional)
- personal hand sanitizer/wipes/soap (COVID-19 protocol)
- cloth or N-95 face masks (COVID-19 protocol)
- personal journal and writing utensils
- special or sacred items that assist you in soul work (see below)
- drums, rattles, and other small percussion instruments (see below)
- dreams
- curiosity & imagination

**** Please leave all consciousness altering substances at home – thank you!**

We invite you to bring a subject with you from your home place that embodies, represents, anchors or symbolizes your Queerness as it is enlivened in your wholeness. That is to say, not as an expression of wounding, but rather, of what is right and good and whole about your Queerness. You might be asking

yourself, what do they mean by a subject? We honor all life as animate, filled with agency and spirit and therefore refer to what might be commonly called objects - stones, pinecones, plants, trees, foxes, raccoons, berries etc. - as either subjects or peoples. In this view, we invite you to walk on the land and be invited by such a person or subject to be in relationship with them about your own Queer Wholeness. Tell them why you want them to come with you, or maybe why you are coming to the Intensive, what it is you hope to learn or long to experience in the container of intentional Queer community for these five days. Or you might tell them about your experience of Queerness in your life, about the beauty of you and your unique way of loving and living in the world- both human and more than human. You might listen for stories of Queerness in the wildish world around you and watch for stories, shapes and ways more than human peoples of Earth Community love in this way. You might ask them if they would be willing to accompany you on this journey to the Queer Wild Mind Intensive. And if they acquiesce, give thanks in word or song or movement. If they say no, keep being led deeper into the wildish world until you find one who will accompany you as a friend, an anchor, a beloved, a mirror, a guide.

Rhythm instruments: Together we will create rhythm to help us ease out of our ordinary modes of being and perceiving, and into the timeless, symbolic presence of the underworld. It will help if you bring with you some rhythm instruments. Most relevant are the percussion instruments: drums, shakers (rattles, gourds, maracas, tambourines, tin cans with pebbles or seeds inside, etc.). Bells, conches, whistles, flutes, recorders, etc., are also welcome if played in a rhythmic manner.

Sacred Objects: Like most people, you probably live with (not necessarily "possess") certain small objects that are of special significance to you -- that help you access soul, archetype, mystery, myth, courage, intuition, imagination, love, or truth. These objects might be stones, seeds, jewels, figurines, bones, teeth, claws, photographs, feathers, powders, crystals, carvings, etc. You are encouraged to bring with you any small objects that might help you access important personal or transpersonal qualities and that might aid you during moments of fear or confusion or opportunity. Some people bring pouches or satchels in which to carry these objects. Please note! – It is illegal in the U.S. to possess certain animal parts (feathers of birds of prey or migratory birds, for example). If you are traveling by air, be aware that these items could be confiscated if your personal items are searched. Rocks and sharp objects should be placed in your checked luggage for security purposes.

Threads: For the Trance Dance you may want to consider the symbolic significance and ceremonial potential of your garments: You may want to pay attention to the colors of what you bring to wear, as well as to personal meaning and significance—meanings of which only you may be aware. It may be a favorite t-shirt, a piece of clothing that you wore during an important life transition (formal or otherwise), or an article of clothing that helps you feel more deeply for any of a variety of reasons. Your ceremonial clothing may include hats, cloaks, sarongs, ribbons, jewelry, face/body paints, and so on. You might come prepared to dress as the Inner Magician of yourself: the one who can access and manifest any and all of your sub-personalities! If you have any doubts about any piece of clothing, bring it with you...

PREPARATION

We believe that enrolling in this intensive is a significant step toward experiencing yourself and your place in the world from a soul-oriented perspective. In the coming months or weeks, you might practice offering your deep and reverent attention to the wildish world – which might be as close as what you encounter in a backyard garden or neighborhood park – and, while doing so, notice what stirs in you

emotionally or in bodily sensation. Offer your attention, also, to what rises on the edge of your awareness, or in memory or imagination.

Offer your attention more regularly and with care to nature. When something draws your attention -- a chattering bird, a wildflower, the evening light on a tree, a coyote howl in the night -- take time to allow your awareness to surround it.

We encourage you to keep journal notes during this practice of your wild attention. Here are some further possibilities: Write about the stage of life you're in or about what stage is ending and/or beginning. Record what transition(s), if any, you are going through and how you feel about that. Wonder about what in you is getting ready to be born, or to die.

We also encourage you to record your dreams in a journal, every morning if you can, between now and when we gather. If you're having trouble remembering your dreams, be sure to have your pen and journal ready at your bedside. Before you turn off the light, write the next morning's date and the words *Dream Report* at the top of a fresh journal page. After turning out the light, start a long conversation with yourself about the precise reasons why you're interested in recalling your dreams. Review and explore as many of your genuine reasons as you can, "store" each reason in a different body part so you can remember them all, and keep up this review until you fall asleep. As soon as you wake up, don't move an inch until after you've replayed your dream in your imagination. Perhaps give your dream a title before you move. Then reach for your journal. Transcribe your dream in the present tense as if you're recording actions and experiences that are occurring *as you write them*. Include all emotions that occur in the dream and your sense, in the dream, of the atmosphere of the dreamworld. It's best not to ask anyone, including yourself, what your dream "means." Better is to spend as much of the day as you can "living within" the dream, submitting yourself to its images and feelings, so that the dream can do its work on you rather than you doing your work on the dream.

If you'd like to do some preparatory reading, please consider these:

- Bill Plotkin, *Wild Mind: A Field Guide to the Human Psyche*
- Bill Plotkin, *Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche*

We look forward to gathering with you in Maine!

Wildly, Doug & Sara

doug@dougvanhouten.com

sara@wholenessinwilderness.com

ABOUT OUR GUIDES

Doug Van Houten



Doug draws on the wisdom of the natural world, depth-psychology, eco-psychology, dreams, somatic knowing, poetry, and many pan-cultural, soul furthering practices that includes: The Way of Council, vision fasting, shadow work, symbolic artwork, trance dancing and conversations with the more than human world. Doug's true calling in life is to support others as they uncover their own unique gifts and in so doing, transform their lives in service to what Thomas Berry called "The Great Work" of our times. Doug is also an ardent beekeeper, a visual artist, a wily wanderer, a dream tracker, an emergent ceremonialist, a heart-centered activist, and a yoga instructor interested in new forms of somatic practice.

Sara McFarland



Born in the watershed of the Connecticut River, along the shores of Long Island Sound, Sara McFarland is firstly a member of the Earth Community. She bridges the distance between the ancient practices of being embedded in the conversation of the wild Earth and the creation of a future paradigm of human culture, which embodies the Dream of the Earth for us all. She is a Wilderness Guide, Deep Time Ceremonialist and Earth Witch, who helps especially women and Highly Sensitive individuals heal the trauma of civilization on the path of Wholeness and Soul Initiation by Mystery. Sara works with individuals who long to take their place in the Golden Web of Life, bringing all of their gifts, powers and abilities to the people, in service to Earth. In her practice, she utilizes elements of energy medicine and shamanic techniques, sound and voice healing, dream work, herbal spirit medicine, and her vision of the 4 feminine Archetypes of the Labyrinth Path. In semi-wild and wild places, she guides Programs and Vision

Quests to assist humans to re-member themselves into the body of the Earth Community.