Build Your Own Shamanic Toolkit

In this beautifully illustrated guide, artist and shamanic teacher Evelyn C. Rysdyk shows you how to create, decorate, consecrate, and use various sacred tools in ritual and healing.

Navajo traditional healers bring rattles, corn pollen, eagle feathers, and sage smoke together with songs and dances to affect healing. Ulchi shamans use drums, rattles, and larch tree wands called gimsacha to work healing magic. Manchu shamans will perfume the air with incense and tie on a heavy bustle of iron jingles as a part of their ceremonial costume. Modern shamanic practitioners likewise use sacred tools to facilitate our connection to helper spirits in the Upper, Middle, and Lower Worlds, as well as the spirits of nature. While you can purchase many of these tools, there’s nothing quite as powerful as making your own. You’ll find instructions for making rattles, drums, masks, mirrors, spirit figures, fans, bells, pouches, wands, prayer bundles, flutes, whistles, and more. Plus suggestions for responsible ways to obtain the materials you’ll need.

“Having an intimate connection to all the spirits that came together in my favorite rattle—knowing that the tiny pebbles came from the local riverbank, the wood handle from a lightning-struck maple in my yard, and the rawhide from a black bear that was hunted by a native friend for food—gives it a far deeper meaning and power.”—from the introduction

The author’s original artwork and photographs of shamans and their authentic tools appear throughout the book.
Praise for A Spirit Walker’s Guide to Shamanic Tools

“What I love about listening to Evelyn Rysdyk discuss shamanism is her ability to combine ancient lore with modern science so seamlessly that you would swear you can’t have one without the other. With the lyrical voice of an artist she taps into our memories of old, ‘forgotten’ ways and helps us understand them in terms of the latest findings in physics, psychology, and ecology. She is a wonderful guide for spirit walking between the worlds. Walk with her.”

—Tom Cowan, author of Fire in the Head and Yearning for the Wind

“An inspiring and critically important work, this book helps you use all of the spiritual tools and connections you were born with, but most likely forgot. Spirit Walking clearly explains what shamanism is and does, while teaching in a concise, step-by-step fashion how to bring this way of being into your everyday life. I loved that I could feel the profound wisdom of many years of experience flow through Evelyn’s writing in such a personal way. It feels like she is teaching you directly, with all her deeply rooted energy and spirit guided words. Whether you are new to shamanism, or are living this way of life already, you will find this book a valuable resource. At a time when life can seem so crazy, we need to become Spirit Walkers now, more than ever!”

—Coleen De sm a n , author of The Hollow Bone: A Field Guide to Shamanism and Seeing in the Dark: Claim Your Own Shamanic Power Now and in the Coming Age.
“In our ever-changing world many people have felt lost and isolated within their lives, this statement is growing faster than we can keep up. Through Evelyn’s Spirit Walking her grace and gifts are expressed to shift our connection to the earth, each other, and ourselves, building the foundation for life in a new and different world. She is an exceptional writer, artist, healer and human ‘being.’”

—Joann Emmons, publisher of Inner Tapestry

“Evelyn Rysdyk brings the reader face to face with the bones of reality—how it works in this Middle World—and how the practice of shamanism helps us to live in good relationship with All That Is. Embracing the venerable world-view of shamanism she compassionately guides readers on their own journey of discovery and empowerment within the reality of an ensouled Universe. Spirit Walking is comprehensive and inspiring—Evelyn’s outstanding artistry is evocatively expressed through her writings as well as images. A most worthy read!”

—Nan Moss and David Corbin, authors of Weather Shamanism: Harmonizing Our Connection with the Elements

“Evelyn Rysdyk has written an invaluable shamanic resource that is at once expansive and concise. She shares her deep wisdom with humility and great generosity of spirit.”

—Mama Donna Henes, urban shaman, author, and spirituality columnist for the Huffington Post, Beliefnet and UPI

“Life is a sacred work...how easy it is to forget that in the rush of daily life! And how wonderful it is when a book like [Spirit Walking] comes along, not only reminding us of our deepest sense of connection and purpose, but offering wise guidance to help us get back to it.”

—Hillary S. Webb, author of Traveling between the Worlds: Conversations with Contemporary Shamans
Disclaimer

This book does not replace formal instruction in shamanic spirituality. It is necessary for you to know how to journey and have a strong connection to a power animal or teacher before you work with this book.

To learn more about shamanic journeying and developing relationships with the helpful, healing spirits, please read *Spirit Walking: A Course in Shamanic Power*.

The suggestions, processes, and shamanic techniques described in this book are in no way meant to replace professional medical or mental health assistance. This book is intended to be an informational guide and not to treat, diagnose, or prescribe. Always consult with a qualified health care professional regarding any medical or mental health condition or symptoms. Neither the author nor the publisher accepts any responsibility for your health or how you choose to use the information contained in this book.
Introduction

This volume was specifically designed to support those of you who have learned how to access the spirit realms through the shaman’s journey and desire to add the right spiritual implements to your shamanic toolkit. If you picked up this book and don’t yet know how to journey, you may learn what you need via several methods. There are several excellent books available that can guide you through the practice. Two outstanding resources for learning the shamanic journey process are my own book, Spirit Walking: A Course in Shamanic Power, and Sandra Ingerman’s Shamanic Journeying: A Beginner’s Guide. In addition, there are many teachers available to support you in person. The website www.shamanicteachers.com has a list of authorities across North America, Europe, and Australia. Information on my own initiatory shamanic training programs is available at www.spiritpassages.com. Spirit Passages is the organization I founded with my partner, Allie Knowlton, MSW, LCSW, DCSW to support individuals increase their personal power, feel their intrinsic sacredness, and expand their connections to All That Is. However you learn, take the time to strengthen your connections to the spirits prior to attempting the spiritual exercises in this book.

Learning to journey and having strong relationships with a teacher in the spirit world and with a protector spirit in the form of a power animal make up the basic framework for
any effective shamanic practice. People who have gained this knowledge through their culture’s tribal traditions are typically referred to as shamans. I will mention several of these tribal healers with whom I’ve been fortunate to study in this book. Their full biographies are available in an appendix. However, it is also possible for anyone without a tribal affiliation to become an effective shamanic practitioner or spirit walker by entering into deep relationships with the spirits. The foundation of any powerful shamanic work is dependent upon the relationships forged with the helpful spirits in the Upper, Middle, and Lower Worlds. Journeying to meet with the helpful spirits and following through with the guidance they offer sustains these relationships. Engaging with the spirits of nature is another essential aspect of becoming a powerful spirit walker. This aspect of practice is supported through journeying to meet the spirits of the trees, animal, birds, and landscape features around your home to find out who they are and what they might like to share. Just as with human connections, initial meetings blossom into reciprocal relationships that nurture the spirit walker and support the health of the natural world. My book Spirit Walking: A Course in Shamanic Power takes you through this process and provides the basics for becoming a truly powerful shamanic practitioner.

Whether you are looking at your connections to helping spirits or spirits of nature, you will find that certain objects facilitate those connections and support you to accomplish your work more easily. For instance, the sacred sounds of drums, rattles, and other implements accompany your spirit journeys. Power objects such as staffs, crystals, and masks amplify your intention, concretize that which is “invisible,” or provide a stronger connection to power in your relationship with your helpful and healing spirits.

Navajo traditional healers bring rattles, corn pollen, eagle feathers, and sage smoke together with songs and dances to
effect healing. An Ulchi shaman would need a drum, rattle, and larch wands called *gimsacha* to work healing magic. A Manchu shaman would need to perfume the air with incense and tie on a heavy bustle of iron jingles as a part of a ceremonial costume. Western-trained, core shamanic practitioners may utilize many different forms of ritual objects. Often contemporary practitioners have also been trained in one or more indigenous traditions which they incorporate as a part of their healing practice. The implements used are extensions of the shaman’s intention and power. They support and/or magnify the connection with the helpful, healing spirits that guide the shaman’s actions.

Archaeological evidence shows that we human beings have been making tools for at least 2.6 million years. Early in our development, we discovered that certain objects could help us accomplish tasks more easily. Our stone implements allowed us to hammer, drill, cut, and shape the details of our physical world.

By 40,000 years ago, we were using our tools to craft sophisticated musical instruments, as well as in drawing, painting, and carving figurines that assisted us in expressing complex ideas and our intangible feelings. Shamanic implements are an outgrowth of this progression as they support us to go deeper into the intangible worlds through journeys to the numinous realms of spirit. There, we navigate the complex interrelationships that are continually creating our physical existence.

My own early years were filled with an incredible array of tools, as my family elders were very creative. My mother and my great uncle expressed their talents in traditional paintings and drawings, but most of the others built structures, made household goods, and created what they needed to make their lives work. For them, tools were a part of solving the challenges of everyday life.

As the eldest child, I was often the designated helper for my father. Like others in my ancestral line, he was a creative man
gifted with his hands. Along with being an amazing automobile mechanic who designed and built cars from the ground up, he was very talented at welding, carpentry, and numerous other forms of craftsmanship. His tool chests were filled with a variety of wrenches, pliers, saws, calipers, and other highly unique implements designed for very specific tasks. Through observing him at work, I quickly learned that these tools functioned like extensions of his hands. They assisted him in getting a job done.

On the other hand, while in art school I met highly skilled artists who could use a common ballpoint pen to create a masterpiece. Learning this lesson was equally important as I realized that while the right tool makes a task easier, it is critical to develop the skills to use each one first. Without the knowledge to wield them, tools are no more than fancy paperweights.

I have found the same to be true of shamanic implements. Finding the right drum will not make you a shaman. However, any drum in the hands of a skilled shamanic practitioner can be an object of power. It becomes inspired—alive—and capable of assisting in the spirit walker’s work. It provides the heartbeat of your journey, a way to accompany your spirit songs, a portal through which you can travel, and is capable of many other roles in your practice. The same may be said for all the other objects used by a true spirit walker. Each of them has a purpose and has been enlivened to become active partners in the shaman’s work.

It is my belief that an extra dimension of power opens up when you craft your own tools. Working with the separate elements that will become the implement and the spirits in those elements deepens the spirit walker’s connections to the final product. I also like knowing exactly what separate elements went into my tools. For instance, I know that the tiny pebbles in my favorite rattle came from the local riverbank, the handle is wood harvested from a lightning-struck maple in my yard,
and the rawhide was once part of a Maine black bear hunted by a native friend for food. My having an intimate connection to all the spirits that came together in my rattle gives it a deeper meaning and power.

Of course, this is not to say that you *have* to make everything that you use in your shamanic practice! I use several shamanic tools that were either purchased or given to me by one of my indigenous teachers. If any project in this book seems too difficult, you may choose to purchase the implement discussed and then use the empowerment instructions to enliven your new power object. Once empowered, any tool will become a living partner in your work.

This book is designed to support those of you who are actively journeying to gather what you require to effectively and powerfully engage with the spirits. I believe that those of us following the shamanic path are the best hope for returning our human culture into wholeness. Spirit walkers know that everything is alive and sentient. We understand that all beings are precious and that we must consider their needs by staying in mutually beneficial relationships with them to maintain harmony. Through our journeys and with guidance from our loving tutelary spirits, we are helping to shape a more positive and healthy world.

Evelyn C. Rysdyk
CHAPTER 1

The Rattle

Since shamans receive much of their training and guidance from their tutelary spirits, the implements any particular shaman uses for healing are unique and usually vary widely from one shaman to the next. Native shamans may be bound by their tribal traditions to use particular rituals and bring certain objects into a healing ceremony, but even within those specific traditions many variations exist. Rattles are an important part of the shaman’s tool kit and widely used around the globe. In this chapter you will find out how shamans work with rattles, and you will learn to create and empower your own rawhide rattle.

Some shamans use rattles much in the way drums would be, that is, to accompany the shamanic journey and keep shamans in the expanded state of consciousness required to perform their duties. Lighter and more portable than a drum, rattles can be used in situations when a drum may not be the best choice. For instance, a rattle is quieter and so may be the right implement when working indoors or when a softer sound would be beneficial. Rattles are also a great choice for working out in nature as they can be easily stashed in a backpack or coat pocket until they are needed. I find that I reach for my
rattle as much as my drum to accompany my journeys. I often use it when I am doing shamanic work outdoors around my home so that I don't disturb my neighbors. The rattle is also my preferred shamanic instrument when I am engaging in healing work as I can be continuously rattling to keep myself in the shamanic state of consciousness at the same time I am using my other hand to work on my client.

A rawhide shaman’s rattle is the first implement I have my students make in my initiatory shamanic training programs. It is a relatively easy object to create for people of all levels of crafting experience. This is the kind of rattle you will be guided through constructing in this chapter. However, there are as many variations among rattles as there are among drums. I have personally seen rattles constructed from gourds, buffalo or steer horn, turtle shells, rawhide, birch bark, animal hooves, bones, wood, seashells, and seedpods, among other materials. Some shamans even use objects such as tin cans or bottle caps as part of their rattles!

In North America, native tribal peoples use rattles extensively. In some cases the rattle replaces the drum as the primary shamanic instrument. Depending on the region, these may be made out of several different materials. Some rattles are fashioned from dried gourds that have been hollowed out, filled with a few small stones or seeds, and secured on a stick. Variations on this type of rattle are seen among the Northern and Eastern Woodlands, Plains, Southwestern, Californian, and Southern tribes of Native Americans. Especially large examples of these gourd rattles are made by the Hopi and other Pueblo peoples of the American Southwest. Some of the finest Hopi ceremonial rattles have been crafted from gourds with a round and slightly flattened shape like a fat disk. Usually very colorfully painted in combinations of white, black, yellow, red, turquoise, and green, these rattles have a feather secured by a string to the very top which flies around as the rattle is shaken.
Among the native people of the Great Plains of the United States, the gourds used are smaller and placed on a longer stick. Although these peoples traditionally leave the gourd head of the rattle undecorated, the handles are usually covered in designs of very beautiful and intricate beadwork.¹ Like the pueblo-style rattles, they too end in a feather at the top and often have a horsehair tail at the base of the handle. These elements add extra movement to the shaman’s rattling gestures. The southern Pacific Coast and southwestern tribal peoples of the United States use gourd-shell rattles that are decorated by boring tiny holes across the surface of the head which have the effect of slightly amplifying the rattle’s sound.²

Gourd rattles of the Cherokee utilize the neck of the gourd to create a handle. The gourd is carefully sliced at the base of the neck, the insides of the gourd are removed, pebbles are inserted, and then the neck is replaced with a small plug of wood providing a support to the joint. These rattles can be quite eccentrically shaped, based on the form in which the gourd originally grew.

Among the Guarani people of the Amazon forest, the rattle or ubarakha mri, is the tool the shaman uses to “communicate with god.” The round gourd part of the rattle is seen as a womb and the handle as a penis. As such, the structure of the rattle helps to maintain the overall balance between masculine and feminine energies. Like the Hopi examples, these rattles also have feathers attached at the top that flutter as the rattle is shaken.³

I have held examples of African rattles that had heads made from a gourd with a forked stick for a handle. Wire was strung between the forked ends of the handle, and flattened bottle caps had been pierced and strung along the entire wire’s length. This design makes a very effective rattle with a wonderfully loud, clashing sound when shaken, thanks to the combined nature of the sounds of the gourd and bottle caps. Indeed, as is the case

The Rattle 3
with many Siberian and central Asian shamanic drumbeaters, the extra jingles produce a fine rhythmic rattling sound to accompany the shaman’s work.

In places where gourds were not as common and the weather is damp, the native peoples turned other local materials to create their ceremonial rattles. The Woodland tribes famous for utilizing the magnificently beautiful bark of birch trees for food containers, storage vessels, and even their canoes also reached for this material in making their rattles. Using the bark from fallen trees, a cylinder is sewn together with the white or outside of the bark turned to the inside. A circular top and bottom were then fashioned and sewn to the ends of the tube after pebbles or dried corn kernels were placed inside. This made a shape somewhat like a tin can. A hole was then bored through the top and bottom ends so that a stick could be passed through the rattle and secured. Horn rattles are made in this same manner by simply replacing the birch bark tube with a section of buffalo or steer horn. The Eastern Woodlands people are known for their rattles made of turtle shells. Beautiful examples of these may be found at powwows across New England and into eastern Canada. Using the empty turtle shell as the container for pebbles or seeds, these rattles sometimes incorporate an actual turtle head as a part of the rattle.

Among the people of North America’s Pacific Coast, wood has also been the primary resource for making a shaman’s rattle. Surrounded by the enormous trees of the temperate rain forest, these peoples are known for utilizing wood in both everyday and sacred objects as well as for their extraordinarily fine carvings. Originally the shaman’s rattles were round in overall shape and carved over their surface with images of the shaman’s spiritual helpers.4

Sometimes the figures that form the rattle are quite fierce-faced. These effigy-like carvings may be empowered by the
shaman so that they become extensions of the shaman’s power or function as partners during healing work. Other Northwest Coast rattles are quite elaborately carved into the shape of the animals they represent and often also carefully painted. Particularly fine examples of these figure rattles are found among the Tlingit people. Rattles have been carved to resemble oystercatchers, ravens, bears, and other totemic animals. A dear friend who is a shamanic practitioner in Quebec uses a particularly fine example of this type of rattle in her healing practice. She works with Raven, and the rattle is carved in a wonderfully stylized image of this spirit’s head.

Figure 1. Tsimshian shaman’s rattle. (Pen and ink © 2013 Evelyn C. Rysdyk)
Animal rawhide is another common material for rattle making. Rawhide becomes very flexible when soaked in water and can be easily shaped while in that pliable state. Once dry, the rawhide becomes quite hard again and provides a nice sound. The most commonly seen rawhide rattle is created by sewing wet rawhide into a sack or container-like shape, which is filled with sand to hold its form until dry. Once the head of the rattle is hard again, the resulting hollow is emptied of sand, filled with seeds, beads, crystals, or pebbles, and secured to a handle. This basic formula can be used to make rattles of many different shapes. The Sioux of the Great Plains and Ojibwa of the northern central woodlands of the United States and southern Canada often make rattles in a shape similar to maracas. The latter people sometimes pierce their rattle heads in the manner of the Papago tribe of the Sonoran Desert.

In truth, rattles have been made from just about anything that produces noise, even pieces of antler, deer hooves, puffin beaks, and bones. Shamans have ingeniously exploited every available resource to provide the sounds necessary to support their journeys into the spirit realms.

Exercise: Making a Rawhide Rattle

To become an effective shamanic practitioner or spirit walker, it is important to take opportunities to concretize the lessons you receive from spirit. When a spiritual lesson is manifested in this reality, it allows you to more fully internalize what you have learned. You will feel the work more deeply and strengthen the connections with your helping spirits.

Indeed, performing a ceremony such as making a gratitude offering or honoring the spirits of the natural world supports you in becoming more powerful. Another method for making the spiritual experience more physical is to create some of the objects you will be using as a spirit walker. This is one of the
reasons I have always included making objects in Spirit Passages training programs.

While you may have many other shamanic implements over the course of your life, the simple rattle you will create in this exercise can become a powerful part of your practice. I have many rattles that I have purchased—most of which are more elegantly made than my own. However, the one that I crafted myself has become so empowered through my constructing and using it that its efficacy for me far exceeds the others.

**Materials and Tools**

- A piece of rawhide about twelve inches square and an eighth of an inch thick
- A stick for a handle
- Sandpaper
- A PDF file of the full-sized, full-color rattle pattern and instructions found here may be downloaded at [www.myspiritwalk.com](http://www.myspiritwalk.com) (Print out two copies of your pattern and set one aside. This second copy will be a useful reference for the project in chapter 2.)
- A soft pencil
- A good, sharp pair of scissors
- A push awl or sharp nail the same thickness as your needle
- A hammer
- A rectangular piece of scrap plywood or other flat board such as a secondhand cutting board about ten to twelves inches or so across (You will be putting holes in this piece.)
- A spool of artificial sinew
- A needle that is big enough to thread the sinew
- Two large skeins of natural, undyed, thick wool knitting yarn or wool roving (unspun wool that has been cleaned and combed)

- An embroidery hook to remove wool when the rattle is dry

- One teaspoon or two of very tiny pebbles (one-sixteenth to one-eighth of an inch in diameter)

- White glue

- Drill and one-eighth-inch drill bit

- Small scrap of deerskin or other soft leather

- Paint, beads, feathers, and other things you may want to use to decorate your finished rattle

- A shamanic journey drumming recording with callback signal to facilitate your journeys to the spirits of the hide and handle as well as for empowering the rattle once it is completed

Rawhide is the scraped and dried hide of an animal. It is typically used for drumheads and may be found through companies that supply drum-making supplies. Commercial rawhide is usually from a steer, but it is possible to find deer, elk, goat, and even black bear rawhide through online sources. In a pinch, the larger ten-inch rawhide dog chews with the knot at each end may be used for a rattle. Choose only the unflavored variety to make your rattle!

Take time to pick out a handle stick with meaning for you and prepare it by sanding it smooth. If you are close to the ocean you may wish to use driftwood. Perhaps a beaver stick from a pond or river may appeal to you. You may ask your favorite tree for a small branch. Maybe you have a treasured piece of wood from building a house or piece of furniture. Even a dowel from the hardware store can be decorated to feel “just right!”
Make the Rattle

1. Begin by gathering all of your tools and ingredients. Take time to make thoughtful choices. In planning a time to actually construct your rattle, remember that your piece of rawhide will have to be soaked in water overnight for it to be pliable.
2. While your rawhide soaks, you have the opportunity to sand and decorate your handle. Before you begin, perform an offering to thank all the spirits who are participating in the project with you. These include the animal whose hide you will be using, the tree from which the stick has come, and so on. Your offering can be as simple as burning incense while holding these spirits in your mind or placing a bit of cornmeal outside while saying your thanks aloud. Or you can reference the more extensive instructions in Spirit Walking: A Course in Shamanic Power. By entering into a prayerful state, you are inviting the spirits to participate with you. You may then wish to journey to find out what imagery or colors would be best for the handle. I like to use a wood-burning tool to decorate my rattle handles, as the designs hold up well over time. A combination of paint and incised lines produced through wood-burning can create wonderful handle designs. Whatever you decide is best for you will be just perfect!

3. On the day you will be assembling your rattle, gather your tools and again perform an offering to thank all the spirits.

4. You will notice that the pattern tells you to measure your handle’s circumference. You can use the ruler that is on the pattern for this purpose. Adjust the pattern’s neck according to the directions and then start tracing the pattern onto the rawhide’s rough side (wrong side) with your soft pencil.

5. Carefully cut the pattern out of the rawhide.

6. Once your rawhide has been cut out, fold it along the line (red in the downloadable pattern) where the heads of the two bulbs meet and begin to punch the holes with your scrap plywood underneath your rawhide. A nail and hammer work equally well as a traditional leather punch for this purpose. Punch the holes about three-sixteenths of an inch
from the edge of the rawhide, starting at one side of the neck. Only punch four or five at a time, then begin sewing. If you try to punch more all at once, it may be difficult to align the holes when stitching.

7. Start sewing at one side of the neck leaving a tail of artificial sinew at the beginning of your stitches. I have found that using a stitch that goes over the edge seems to make the best looking finished rattle.

8. Complete the way around the rattle and again leave a long tail.

9. Start another length of sinew and sew again through the same holes from the other direction, remembering to leave tails at both ends. The result will be that the stitches cross over the outside seam. This will produce a nice finished outer edge on the rattle head.

Figure 3. Leave tails at the beginning and end of your sewing. (Steps 7–9)
10. Start stuffing the damp rawhide with wool. Keep feeding in the wool to make the rattle head round. You can use a smooth stick to force more of the wool into the rattle’s opening. It will take more wool to stuff the rattle than you might believe is possible!

11. Temporarily place your stick in the neck of the rattle and leave it to dry in a sunny spot or put it in a very low oven (the lowest setting) for an hour or two to speed up the process.

12. Once the rawhide is hard and dry, remove the stick and take out all the wool. An embroidery hook is the perfect tool for coaxing the wool back out of the head of the rattle.

13. Put your stones inside the hollow and again temporarily replace the handle to test the sound. Experiment with more or fewer stones until it sounds best. (Remember, the sound will sharpen and become a bit louder as the rawhide dries even more thoroughly.)

14. Once you are happy with your sound, place a little bit of white glue in the neck and fit the stick in whatever you decide is to be its final orientation.

15. Let the glue dry.

16. Once the glue is completely dry, drill a hole through the neck of the rattle and the part of the stick that is inside.

17. Take the tails of your stitching sinew and thread them through the hole and tie them tightly. This further secures the rattle head to the stick.

18. Trim away any remaining tails of sinew.

19. Cut a length of soft leather. Wind and glue it around the neck to cover the knots you have just made.
20. At this point, you may decorate your finished rattle with beads, paint, or feathers.

![Figure 4](image)

*Figure 4.* The tails of the stitching sinew go through the hole you drilled in the neck and are tied to secure the head of the rattle to the handle. Also visible here are the crossed stitches created by sewing in both directions as is explained in step 9.

Exercise: Journey to Empower Your New Rattle

At this point, your rattle needs to be enlivened and empowered for its sacred purpose. This is accomplished through a shamanic journey to your power animal, the protective spirit that provides guidance, healing, and many other benefits. If you haven’t yet connected with a power animal, do a shamanic journey to the Lower World to meet yours prior to taking this empowerment journey.
When you are ready to dedicate your new rattle to your spirit walker practice, make a gratitude offering to the spirits. Honor that which you have been given and your connections to the world of spiritual power. Call with your heart to bring your power animal to you. When you feel ready, merge with the animal and begin to sing your power song while holding the rattle in your dominant hand. Shake the rattle with the rhythm of your song. Sing until you feel your song and your spiritual power extending into the rattle. When the process feels complete, shake your rattle to the rhythm of the journey callback signal, unmerge from your power animal, and return yourself to ordinary reality.

Upon your return to ordinary consciousness, take ample time to sit with the experience prior to recording it in your notebook. Remember to go outside and make an offering of thanks. Let your heart fill with gratitude for the gifts you have received in this experience and place your offering on the Earth with reverence.

**Caring for Your Rattle**

At this point you have a sacred object that has become an inspirted and therefore living being. Do a journey to your teacher or power animal and ask for suggestions for how you can care for the spirit of your rattle. For instance, the spirit of your rattle may require “feeding” with cornmeal, scented water, essential oil, or even tobacco.

As to ordinary reality care, keep your rattle dry and store it in a secure place. Always put it away after working with it. Never leave it lying on the floor, especially if you have a dog. Your rattle began its life as a piece of rawhide and a stick, and your dog will continue to view it that way! You may also want to find or make a bag to carry it safely when you are working outdoors.
Journey Explorations

- Journey to a teacher or power animal to ask: “What are the ways I am to use this rattle in my shamanic practice?” Record the content of your journey and your perceptions about what you receive.

- Journey to a teacher or power animal to ask: “What is the best way to care for my rattle’s spirit?”

After each journey, remember to make an offering to the spirits.

Process Questions

- Write down in your journal what it was like to create a rattle.

- How does it feel to have this special tool support your process? Record your impressions.