

Third International Gathering of the Wilderness Guides Council

BY JOHN HENDEE and MARILYN HENDEE

The Wilderness Guides Council, the international organization of wilderness vision quest and rites of passage guides, met October 9 through 14, 2006, at Gaunts House and Estate in Dorset County, England, 100 miles southeast of London (see figure 1). The conference theme was Rites of Passage in the Wilderness: Integrating Nature and Humanity.

This third international gathering of the council was hosted by the wilderness guides of England, and attended by 80 guides from 12 countries. Attendees participated in workshops, ceremony, council discussions, and exhibited their guided programs from throughout the world. A field trip to Avebury in Wiltshire to view burial and sacred sites



Figure 1—The 3rd international gathering of the Wilderness Guides Council was held at Gaunts House, built in 1750 on a site occupied since at least the mid 1300s, in Dorset County about 100 miles SE of London, England.



Figure 2—The international gathering was attended by 80 wilderness vision quest and rites of passage guides from 12 countries, and featured the theme Rites of Passage in the Wilderness: Integrating Nature and Humanity.

up to 8,000 years old reminded participants of the ancient roots of ceremony in nature.

Participants came from the United States, England, Germany, Austria, Ireland, South Africa, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Ukraine, and Scotland (see figure 2). The United States had the largest delegation of guides with 16. EDUCO of South Africa, who run wilderness rite of passage programs for “at risk” youth, had the most delegates from any one program.

Activities, discussion, and workshops were diverse, including topics such as Elderhood, and the Second Half of Life, Learning to Die in Order to Live—where nature instructs the participant—Listening to the Earth, and The Wisdom of Plants and Animals in the Mirror of Nature. Informal discussions documented a need in many countries

for more protected areas where wilderness programs for reflection and personal growth can be conducted.

The next international gathering of the Wilderness Guides Council will be hosted by the U.S. Wilderness Guides Council in April

2009. For more information, contact www.wildernessguidescouncil.org.

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