

ACKNOWLEDGING THE WINTER SOLSTICE IS A DECOLONIAL ACT FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
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The winter solstice is an opportunity for Indigenous people to reconnect to the natural world, sharpen our senses, and access our most powerful selves.

THE WINTER SOLSTICE IS A SPECIAL TIME FOR THOSE WHO HONOR AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE PATTERNS OF OUR NATURAL WORLD.

On this day, the sun is at its lowest point in the sky, traveling across the sky world above us in a short stride, resulting in the shortest day and the longest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. For Indigenous people across the globe, the natural world is a source of teachings about natural and universal laws. In understanding the interconnectedness of all things, we recognize that the cosmos— the sun, moon, stars, and other planets— affect us and connect us in undeniable ways.

The winter solstice is an event that has been observed for millenia by many of our Indigenous ancestors. While some Tribal Nations have traditionally held special ceremonies during celestial events like the winter and summer solstices, others may have simpler ways of observing these moments. Some Tribal Nations have maintained teachings around solstice time, while others may be seeking to revive the teachings, practices and ceremonies that were forcibly taken from us.

In its period of darkness, the winter solstice is an opportunity to go inward with deep intention, to care for our spiritual selves, our bodies and minds, our loved ones and families, and to prepare for the longer days ahead.

THE WINTER SOLSTICE FALLS ON DECEMBER 21 THIS YEAR.

In the spirit of self care, community care, accessing our ancestral memory and our most powerful selves, here are 14 different ways that you and your loved ones can spend the winter solstice in observance of a natural phenomena that comes only once a year. Take what works for you from this list, and if possible, consult with elders and your own traditional teachings for guidance on the best ways to acknowledge this event and deepen your spiritual connection during this time.

ON SOLSTICE DAY...

1. TAKE THE DAY OFF OF WORK OR JUST SLOW DOWN AND REST

Whether you have to pull a full or double shift on winter solstice day, or if you have the day off already, set aside time to just, be. No guilt. No intrusive thoughts about what needs to get done. Set down your electronic devices and smart phones, and be present in the moment. And if you have kids, housemates, friends or loved ones, spend that quality time together and totally unplugged from technology.

2. COOK AND SHARE A HEALTHY, COMFORTING MEAL WITH LOVED ONES

As Indigenous people of the Earth, kinship is what has always held us together. Sharing space and time to cook, eat, and nourish our bodies and our loved ones' bodies through the preparation of healthy meals is both physical, communal and spiritual. Seek out traditional and clean foods to prepare, or cook your favorite recipe from a loved one!

3. REFLECT ON THE PAST YEAR

Take time to reflect on the highs and even lows of the past year. Acknowledge and celebrate your growth, your resilience, your strength and the blessings you may have overlooked. And last but not least, let go of what doesn't serve you in order to create space for the positive ahead of you in the coming year. Make amends with others if you need to and set yourself up for new possibilities, new friendships and deepened connections.

4. GIVE THANKS FOR ALL OF YOUR BLESSINGS

It's so easy to get wrapped up in what isn't working for us, what didn't happen for us in the past year or loss we may have endured. But the fact that we are all still here, breathing and living right now, is evidence of SO many blessings. Start with the small things, like, clean air, a warm space to be in, your physical abilities, the gift of your intelligence and creativity. Recount these things in your mind, in a prayer or meditation, or even write them down on a piece of paper. There is no limit to how long this gratitude list can be! And in fact, the longer the list the better.

5. CLEAN AND HONOR YOUR LIVING SPACE BY DECLUTTERING

Our homes are the sacred spaces where so many important things happen. We rest in our homes, we eat in our homes. We gather, commune, and even raise children in our homes. Creating a sacred space in your home sets you and your family up for success each day. Create an atmosphere on solstice day that allows you to just be present in your home and to focus on the things that nourish and inspire you. This might mean getting a lot of the heavy lifting-type cleaning done in the days leading up to solstice day.

6. SHOW THE PEOPLE WHO YOU CARE FOR THAT YOU APPRECIATE THEM

This could be as simple as a written card, a text message, a phone call or a home visit. You can show up for them with a favor, a simple gift, or just with your presence. Not only express your gratitude for them and the ways they have brought value and nourishment to your life, but ask genuine questions about how they are doing, and be an attentive and compassionate listener.

7. CHANNEL YOUR CREATIVE ENERGY THROUGH ARTS, CRAFTS AND EXERCISING YOUR IMAGINATION

One of the most powerful gifts that we all have, is the gift of our creative thoughts. We are born with creativity, and we exercise this daily with our thoughts and actions, actively co-creating the world around us. We are ALL creatives in some way! Channel your creativity by dreaming up something new, by making something with your hands and your mind, and savor the process. Sew, bead, paint, write, cook, design, change the layout of your bedroom or living room, and even strategize movements. The possibilities are endless!

8. DRINK NATURAL AND MEDICINAL TEAS

Our natural world is rich with medicines, for both body, mind and spirit, and our ancestors knew the power of drinking medicinal teas. If possible, prepare and drink teas from your or other Indigenous homelands. Drink tea with loved ones. Pray over your tea, pray to the root and plant nations, to ancestors, and to the water, and know that you are activating medicine on a cellular and even generational level.



9. PRACTICE SPECIAL SELF-CARE RITUALS FOR SELF AND OTHERS

Care for your physical and spiritual self with a warm shower or bath, with rich lotions, essential oils, etc. Put on a luxurious face mask if that's your thing. Give yourself a manicure or pedicure. Get a massage or give a massage. Braid someone else's hair for them, or ask them to braid your hair. Name your practice, and make time for that.

10. GO TO A CEREMONY OR HOLD A PERSONAL MOMENT OF PRAYER IN YOUR HOME

If you have access to a ceremonial space, go to that space. Show up with something to give while you receive. This looks different for everyone, depending on tribe, nation, and regional and clan teachings.

11. PAY ATTENTION TO THE MOVEMENT OF THE SUN

The sun is revered by Indigenous nations for a reason. It literally gives us life! It's so valuable to observe the natural patterns of the sun and to consider the teachings we have related to the sun. By sitting in deep observation on solstice day, and in fact, on any day, we sharpen our senses and our intuitive relationship to the natural world.

12. LIGHT A FIRE

Winter solstice and winter in general is a time of fires, and fire is an old soul. Fire is also comforting, beautiful and mesmerizing to look at. You can put medicines on the fire, like sage or cedar. You can sit around a fire and feel its warmth. You can cook over a fire, put offerings into a fire, even pray, sing and tell stories next to a fire.



13. MAKE OFFERINGS

While we ask for good things for the upcoming year and give thanks for our blessings, it's so important to also give back and make offerings. Reciprocity, even to the spiritual world, matters. Set out food, make prayer ties, or whichever offering is prescribed by your own teachings.

14. SET INTENTIONS FOR THE LONGER DAYS AHEAD

In the same way we co-create each moment of our day, we have the power to co-create the future that is ahead of us simply with the power of our thoughts. So set and declare your best intentions for the coming days, for the winter season, and upcoming year. Write your intentions down. Journal your intentions. Pray about them and ask for support. Believe that you can achieve those things, whether they are personal, physical, spiritual, relational or professional.