

Proposed Agenda for NOMC Zoom Retreat, October 23-24

0) Pre-registration

It can be difficult to participate in a Zoom call with more than 9-12 people. For that reason, we propose to limit the participants to 12. If more men are interested, we propose to split them into two groups, to be held at separate times or on separate calls (with the former probably the better idea, allowing men to choose between different date/times). Therefore, we will request that men indicate their intention to attend, so that we can plan accordingly. There will be no fee for this retreat. Any expenses or facilitator honorariums would be taken out of the NOMC surplus in its bank account.

In an earlier e-mail, men who have expressed an interest in attending will be asked to prepare for the retreat by reading the flyer, gathering certain supplies, and watching a video which we will prepare in advance to start the story and/or the theme. That e-mail will also have the details of how to access the zoom call (using Dan O'Neill's line, as in previous NOMC Zoom calls).

1) Gathering time before the opening. Probably 6-6:30 PM, October 23 (Saturday)

When we have live retreats, it is often enjoyable for men to meet and hug when they first arrive at King's Arrow Ranch. Correspondingly, we will open the Zoom call at 6 PM Central time, when many men may be eating dinner, to allow men who might not have spoken to each other in a while to chat with other men who join the session early. This would be a good time to chat about recent events in their lives, checking in to a degree, but they should be encouraged to keep it light, not a deep sharing from the heart until the retreat has been formally opened.

2) Opening Ceremony. Probably 6:30-7:30 PM, October 23 (Saturday)

Members of the Tribal Council who are on the call will ask the facilitators (Dan O'Neill and Richard Vallon) to accept their roles. The facilitators will then begin the Opening Ceremony by calling in the seven directions. An elder will be asked to invite the (deceased) fathers to join us. Men will be invited to light a candle and any incense/sage, and to view it as a way to cleanse themselves of any negativity as they begin the retreat. A recording of some drumming will be played by the Zoom conference leader (Dan O'Neill). During this time, men will be invited to stand and dance, drum on their own (but perhaps muting themselves, because Zoom does not do well with multiple audio threads at once, although we can try in advance to see if some form of unsynchronized group vocalization could work), and chant or vocalize as they feel. When the recorded drumming stops, the facilitators will welcome the men to this retreat.

3) Naming and brief check-in. (7:30-8 PM?)

Although it is likely that everyone on the call will know each other already, men will be invited to speak up, one at a time, and say who they are. As a form of brief check-in, they will also be invited to say what they are feeling at the moment in a single word or two, like happy, sad, fear, anger, shame, etc., or like "fearful but hopeful". Men will be told that they will have time to elaborate on their feelings a little later in the retreat, with speaking from the heart. After each man has checked in, the facilitator will mention some of the NOMC men who have died since our last meeting, and will invite men to mention anyone else whose spiritual/emotional presence they want to invoke at this time. It is not envisioned

that this will try to mention every man who has ever attended a previous NOMC retreat, just those whose presence is especially felt at this time.

4) Brief talk about the theme, followed by beginning of the story (8-9 PM, including bio break)

The theme is “Falling Apart and Putting the Pieces Back Together”, as was announced for the Spring (April) 2020 NOMC Retreat that had to be cancelled 18 months ago. The story is the myth of how the Egyptian king Osiris and his queen/sister, Isis, brought ma’at (harmony and peace), while their brother, Set, brought chaos and violence. Richard Vallon will read/recite an imagined dialog between the characters. The basic outline of the myth will have been sent out in advance.

A brief bio break will be offered

5) Speaking from the heart (9-10:30 PM?) and poetry

During this time men will be invited to speak, one at a time, from their hearts about how they are feeling, either in relation to the story or to other events in their lives. Before beginning, the facilitators will remind men that this is a time for speaking from the heart, not philosophizing, discussing politics or the like; and that ‘We’ statements should be avoided in favor of “I” statements. Also during this time, men will be invited to read poetry or other expressive readings that they wish to share, one at a time.

6) Instructions for suggested activity for later (10:30-10:45PM?)

During regular NOMC retreats, there is time for an activity for self-expression, such as an artistic creation. Appropriate materials are usually provided for this activity. As an alternative for this retreat, the facilitators will describe an activity called Kintsugi, an ancient Japanese practice for honoring things that are broken and put back together. [This brief segment might be moved until the next day]

7) Saturday night ending (10:45-11:00PM?)

Men will be encouraged to ‘do their work’ overnight and in the morning. We will close the evening by asking each man to bring his face close to the camera for a good closeup and we will allow a minute or two of silent looking into each other’s faces before the facilitators announce the end of the evening’s formal program.

8) Chatting around the fire Saturday night (11:00PM until all are done)

The Zoom coordinator (Dan O’Neill) will leave the Zoom call open for all to entertain each other informally, as if we were gathered around the campfire (except that it will not be possible for one-on-one conversations, because all who choose to stay on will hear and be able to speak in turn).

9) Dream Group (Sunday morning, 8AM-9AM)

For those who choose to participate, the Zoom call will be open and men can share their dreams.

10) Sunday morning sharing (Sunday, 9AM-10:30AM)

The facilitators will once again play pre-recorded drumming for a few minutes. Men will be invited to once again enter into the spirit, as much as possible in this electronic format, of a Sunday morning retreat, sharing things that may have bubbled up overnight or that they did not get a chance to speak of on Saturday night.

11) Closing Ceremony (Sunday, 10:30-11AM?)

The facilitators will indicate the beginning of the closing ceremony. The fathers and the facilitators will be released from their roles. Candles will be extinguished. Men will be cautioned to leave some time and space for re-entry into the day-to-day world. A slow drum beat will be played by the Zoom leader (Dan O'Neill), who will then call out each man's name one at a time, inviting all the participants to look at the face of that man for a few seconds (and that man should bring his face close to his camera to get a good closeup), and then, at the next drum beat, the name of another man will be called, until all have been 'seen', at which point the facilitators will announce the end of the formal session

12) Chatting afterwards. (Sunday 11AM-Noon)

The Zoom administrator will allow the conference application to remain open for another hour or so for informal chatting and saying goodbye. At some point we might try to have a business meeting.