

Birthing the Sacred Drum

By Debbie Gent

We were all born with a drum – our heartbeat. We hear the heartbeat of our mother in her womb, and the drum is the heartbeat of our Earth Mother. Making contact with a drum awakens our sacred, awakens our soul.

I use the term “birthing” in relation to creating a drum, because it is truly a process of creation. Like human procreation, the drum is the combination of two individual spirits - the tree spirit and the spirit of the animal that contributed the hide. Bring the two together in ceremony with intent and a new spirit is conceived.

Much like our human children, this new “drum child” has chosen you as a parent, to be your friend, teacher, mentor and healer. Each drum is unique and brings its own character to our lives.

After “conception”, the process begins by actually cutting the head of the drum from a full animal hide, which is the easy part.

The second stage involves punching sixteen holes evenly around the drum head. Next comes the lacing. There is approximately sixty feet of lace to be strung in a particular pattern across the drum – this is what I would call “third trimester” – slightly cumbersome and awkward.

Throughout this time you are connected to the spirit of the drum, feeling it developing and growing within the circle.

Then, with great anticipation and expectation, “labor” begins. People laugh when I tell them they will spend a considerable amount of time in labor. Later they fully understand. The lace needs to be tightened to pull the head of the drum taut. This is truly a labor of love as you pull and straighten the wet, slimy, lace across the drum, pulling and tugging, with sweat running down your face until you can pull no more. This usually takes several passes until you tie off the ends, cut the umbilical cord and thump this new spirit to hear its first cry. And then, like any proud parent, you sigh with relief.

As your “drum child” is welcomed into this world with ceremony, you shed a tear of joy, knowing that your journey has just begun. The drum takes your prayers to Spirit.

As you awaken to and honor your rhythm through your drum, you awaken to inner growth and healing which manifests outwardly to heal the planet. We are one voice.

Mitakuye Oyasin (A Lakota prayer as a reminder that we are all related).