

Despacho Ceremony at the River

Mount Shasta, California

Guided by Michael Chudzik

Dear Journeyers,

Welcome to Mount Shasta, where the Earth speaks in stillness and water carries ancient memory.

It is my honor to offer this Despacho Ceremony—a sacred act of prayer and offering I have been entrusted to carry since 2007, through the guidance of medicine teachers from both the Peruvian Andes and North American traditions.

This is not a re-creation of traditional rites, but a heartfelt offering rooted in respect and sincere connection to Spirit. It is a weaving of what has been given with what is arising now—in this place, with this group, in this moment.

Honoring the Mountain and Her People

For years, the Winnemem Wintu and Shasta peoples have asked that even well-intentioned ceremonies from other traditions not be held on the upper mountain. Because I carry medicine rooted in indigenous ways, I honor this request deeply. It's an act of respect—for the mountain, for her original stewards, and for the integrity of the prayers we offer.

Mount Shasta is more than a summit. She is a presence, a great and rooted ally of transformation. Her power flows through the land, through the rivers that fall from her body like silver threads. As one Native elder reminded me, *"Our people didn't climb the mountain to pray. We prayed by the waters that came from her."*

And so we will too.

This ceremony will be held beside the Sacramento River, a sacred current born from the mountain's own veins. Whether you come with clear prayers or something unnamed stirring in your chest, know that the Despacho is a space where all of you is welcome.



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What Is a Despacho?

A Despacho is a traditional prayer ceremony from the high Andes, especially among the Q'ero people of Peru. It is an offering—a living altar created from natural and symbolic elements that carry our intentions to the unseen world.



Despachos are offered for healing, for transition, for gratitude, for forgiveness, for relationships, for new beginnings, and for the Earth herself.

It is a way of aligning ourselves with the sacred order of life—of remembering our place in the great web and giving thanks for what sustains us.

We will create this altar together, beginning with an invocation of the directions and then moving through four rounds of offering, each aligned with a direction and its medicine. You'll be invited to place small gifts on the altar—items that carry your prayers, your longings, your gratitude, your truth.

At the end, the bundle will be wrapped and released—respectfully buried in sacred soil.

How to Prepare

1. Reflect and Listen Within

Before the ceremony, especially in the days or weeks leading up to it, take time to reflect on what you are offering:

- What are you ready to release or complete?
- What are you calling in?
- Who or what do you want to bless?
- How might this ceremony serve not only you, but your community or the Earth?

You may wish to write these thoughts down. Some come with a clear intention, others discover it in the moment. Either way, bring your full self. That is all that is asked.

2. Bring Symbolic Gifts

You are invited to bring small, meaningful items to offer in each of the four rounds of the ceremony. These should be no larger than 2–3 inches—as they will be bundled together into one sacred package.

There will be 4 prayer rounds, plus a 5th for the honor and healing of Mount Shasta, and you want to think about what you want to add for each round.

Your gifts for each round of prayer can include:

- Symbolic objects: charms, written words, photos, threads, art, crystals
- Something handmade
- Something personal—a keepsake you're ready to release
- A logo of your business, a symbol of your relationship
- Something that shows the value you put behind your prayers as showing the Great Spirit and guardians holding the cosmic doorway open for you your sincerity. For many who participate in Despachos in the Andean tradition, this can include currency, semi-precious stones, silver or gold.

It's not the value of the item, but the energy you place into it.
Even a pebble, if offered with a true heart, carries power.

In addition, I will bring a collection of traditional materials—herbs, grains, petals, sweets, and more—to help you shape your prayer.

The Four Directions

As we move around the altar, each round will correspond to a direction and its sacred teachings, drawn from the Lakota medicine wheel. Each direction invites us into a deeper layer of our human journey.

East – The Rising Light

Season: Spring • Element: Fire

Birth. Vision. Innocence. New beginnings.

This is the place of emergence—the first light, the child within, and the fire of becoming.

We place our prayers here for what is being born in our lives.

South – The Path of Growth

Season: Summer • Element: Earth

Vitality. Relationship. Action. Creativity.

This is where the heart beats and the body moves. We honor our passions, dreams, sexuality, friendships, and the fertile ground of becoming.

West – The Place of Letting Go

Season: Autumn • Element: Water

Release. Reflection. Forgiveness. Death.

Here we surrender what no longer serves us—past wounds, regrets, stories, identities. The water teaches us how to flow, to grieve, and to cleanse.

North – The Stillness of Spirit

Season: Winter • Element: Air

Wisdom. Silence. Mystery. The Great Unknown.

This is the place of the elders, of integration and insight. It asks us to be patient, to listen, to trust the dark womb of winter where seeds gestate unseen.

The Final Rounds: Above, Below, and Within

After the four cardinal rounds, we will enter a fifth round, offering prayers to the directions of Above and Below—to the Sky and the Earth, to the unseen forces that hold us, and to the sacred body of Mount Shasta herself.

During this round, you'll be invited to place a personal gift into the bundle specifically for Mount Shasta—a token of care and devotion to her healing, guarding, and restoration in the face of human contact, both physical and spiritual.

And then, we will close with a final moment of stillness—a sixth round held in silence, where we offer the totality of our prayers to Spirit. Nothing more to say. Just presence, breath, and trust.

After the Ceremony

Once complete, the Despacho bundle will be respectfully buried—never opened again.

If conditions prevent us from completing this step as a group, I will carry the bundle to a sacred place on the mountain and bury it there in a hidden resting place. When conditions require a delay, I will bring the bundle to my own five acres on the lower slope of Mount Shasta and place it on an altar until the way is clear to carry it to its permanent home.

I always share photos of the bundle's final placement with the participants, so you'll know exactly where your prayers now live.



About Your Guide

Michael Chudzik is a teacher, ceremonialist, NLP master life coach and guide living in Mount Shasta, California. He has been facilitating rites of passage and sacred ceremonies for nearly 15 years.

He brings a grounded and respectful blend of experience—drawing from years working on the Navajo Nation, studying with Andean teachers, and walking the medicine wheel under the guidance of North American elders.

Michael is also a certified NLP Master Practitioner, hypnotherapist, and men's group leader. His work bridges the seen and unseen, the sacred and the simple, the ancient and the present.

It is an honor to offer this prayer with you. Thank you for walking this path with reverence and truth.



Michael Chudzik
Ceremonial Teacher, Rite-of-Passage Facilitator
Permitted Wilderness Guide, USFS Shasta-Trinity National Forest