

# The Illuman Initiator Program

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**By Jim Taylor, Illuman Weaver for Men's Rites of Passage and the Initiator Program**

## **Nestled at the Foot of Brandenburg Mountain**

Four months ago, I joined 18 *initiated* men at Aravaipa Canyon for the Arizona Men's Rites of Passage (MROP). We came, not as initiates, but as "Initiators." We entered Sacred Space. We drummed. We experienced ritual. We listened to the stories of the Weaver and the Teaching Elders. We entered the desert to be alone and reflect on all that we had seen and heard. We came together in Council. Each new day, spiraling downward with the men who were there for the first time, experiencing their own initiation, we went along with them like *paracletes*. Like Elders from all indigenous cultures, we held the container. We prayed for them, urging them on in what we knew awaited them—solidarity from start to finish. It was deep and compelling! Some of us found new names in our day out in the desert, like one man who was named "Spirit Horse" after the Wild Mustang in Native American lore. I can't help hoping that every initiated man will come back to the MROP for this experience. I know you won't regret it!

## **What Is the Initiator Program?**

If you've ever wanted to return to an MROP, here is your chance with the Initiator Program. This program is not a repetition of your MROP initiation, but it is designed to give an initiated man the opportunity to deepen his understanding of his own initiation while supporting the initiation of other men.

## **About the Program**

Initiated men continue to ask how they can participate in and support the initiation process. By design, the MROP is run by a small team of about ten men. This helps keep the edges hot, but it unfortunately limits the number of elders that can participate. By offering this new program, we hope to provide an opportunity for more initiated men to return to the MROP and engage in further personal soul work while forming a prayerful container of support for the men who are being initiated.

The Initiator Program runs parallel to the actual week of initiation rites. It follows the tradition of the elders taking the young men out into the wild to

be initiated and holding the container. We are inviting you to join us for the full five days as we "keep the edges hot" in our role of supporting the entire MROP process. This will deepen your experience of what happened at your own MROP as we are present in each Sacred Space gathering for all rituals and teachings. You will also be led through a series of reflections, silence, and time in nature as we form the Sacred Circle of Prayer and Presence for the initiates. Through it all, we will stand shoulder to shoulder, giving our good energy and support to the MROP team and the men being initiated. Come join us for a meaningful week of men transforming men through soul work!

### **This Program Is for You If:**

- You have been through the MROP and are an initiated man.
- You desire to deepen your spiritual journey by revisiting the messages of your own initiation.
- You want to be an active Initiator, inviting and supporting other men into the JOI.
- You understand that you are not being initiated again.
- You understand that you are not a member of the MROP leadership team.
- You can be present and help hold the container for the entire MROP event.
- You understand that this is a separate program from the Returning Initiated Men (RIM).

### **What Are You Waiting For?**

One initiated man told me, after participating in the Initiator Program, that *"in some ways, it was even more meaningful than my own MROP."* He explained that he was able to experience all the rituals and hear all the teachings again from a vantage point that he didn't have at his own MROP.

As an Illuman Weaver, I am deeply grateful for this new opportunity for men to participate in the MROP as Initiators. I have witnessed the impact on our brothers that this second immersion into the MROP affords, the value of their presence to the initiates, and, finally, the strength and gravitas that they add to the MROP Team. It's a deep opportunity. Take it!

### **Still Time to Sign Up for the Initiator Program in 2016:**

[Northeast U.S MROP in New York \(September 21 – 25, 2016\)](#)  
[Texas MROP \(September 28 – October 2, 2016\)](#)

In the following offering, Paul Horcher gives a first-person account of the program and how it felt to return to the Men's Rites of Passage.

## A Reflection on Being an Initiator at the 2016 Illinois Men's Rites of Passage

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**By Paul Horcher**

On August 3, 2016, I arrived at Pilgrim Park in Princeton, IL, as an Initiator. It had been two years since I had made my MROP at the same location. I certainly didn't know what to expect. I had no idea what kind of opportunities we might have to do more of our own inner work, nor did I have any idea of what role we Initiators would play in somehow supporting the men who were making their own MROP. I just knew that inner personal growth happened for me, at my MROP and afterward from the grace that followed. And I knew that, being around men who were actively on the journey and willing to do the deep work to heal, let go, descend, and expand their own ability to receive, I was bound to grow by embracing whatever might come from this new journey.

Most of my first MROP was a blur. I recall little of the rituals and the talks. I do recall the specific inner issues I had to deal with, and both the difficulty and grace that had to be embraced. As an Initiator, I heard the talks and saw the rituals from a different perspective. I was not deeply immersed in the tumultuous personal journey in which I was engaged on my first MROP. Rather, I was aware of the demanding journey in which the men on this MROP were engaged. I could see, hear, and feel the anxiousness, the questioning, the fear, and the willingness of the men going through the Rites. I had been there and I could relate to what they were experiencing. I could feel the intensity within them. I discovered I could, in fact, support them in a very real way. I could encourage, if only in silent prayer, when doubt or resistance was near. I could cheer for them inside when they said "yes" to the next difficult thing. And I could rejoice with them when they embraced their own goodness and freedom in a new way.

How beautiful it is to be able to be truly present to another man on his journey to discovering more of his own true masculinity. How wonderful to embrace someone on that road, to metaphorically offer them a place to rest, a drink of water, a pat on the back, a tear, a laugh, or just your own being with them, in presence.

It seems to me that this is only possible when you are aware that you are, of course, on your own journey of deeper self-discovery: When you know that there is always more hard work to do; that you are more than ok, you are loved entirely and completely, just as you are. I will spend the rest of my life letting that sink in.

As Initiators, we did have the opportunity to spend some time in nature and one of the personal graces I was given by creation while sitting in the woods was that "I belonged," I was welcome there, I was home. How life-giving it is to belong, to be welcome, to be home. I trust, in some way, that we Initiators helped make the men on the MROP and the leadership team feel that they belonged, that they were welcome, that they were home. All of creation is welcoming us. Will we sit down and breathe with her?