

THE CEREMONY CARDS

*A Living Introduction
to the Traditional Teachings of the Far North
from Greenland*

Ningijog Jane English

with a welcome by Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq

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The Teachings of the Far North tell us that once we say something it no longer belongs to us alone, but to the world, where it can grow and come to life. Honoring the truth of this, and seeking to walk in a good way in relation to both the traditional teachings and the modern world of business, we ask that you understand that above statement of copyright applies only to the commercial use of the text in this booklet. In all other ways these words and ceremonies do indeed belong to all of us.

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A Welcome

Jane English, whose Spiritual name is Ningijooq - which means an Elder for Many People, has been walking with me for almost ten years. For many years Ningijooq has been wanting to develop *The Ceremony Cards* for IceWisdom, based upon the Teachings of the Far North.

How privileged I am to have Ningijooq on my side, walking with me and sharing her vast knowledge with wisdom. I am confident that *The Ceremony Cards* will bring depth to many peoples and a beginning to understanding and loving themselves. And most importantly to live their own beauty through the use of these *Ceremony Cards*.

Ningijooq - how much I love you. Qujanaq for always being there when I call upon you.

—*Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq*
the Man Who Looks Like His Uncle

Foreword

Near the end of the second round of the Aalaartivik (sweat lodge) I “saw” her in the total darkness—a Kalaallit (Greenlandic) woman with tied-back dark hair. She sat a bit to my left, between me and the pit full of hot rocks, her right side toward me.

I wondered, “Am I imagining her?” I glanced away, then looked back. She was still there. She looked at me and said, “Give me your voice.” It did not occur to me that it was strange that she spoke English. Only later did I wonder.

My first reaction was to reply, “No, I can’t give you my voice.” Instinctively, I did not want to give myself away like that. Then I continued, “But I can speak for you.”

The round ended shortly after that and I went out of the lodge. This happened at an Aalaartivik Ceremony that was held in July 2009, about 15 kilometers east of Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, on the tundra near the Big Ice.

It was the day after the Sacred Fire was relit in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) for the first time in many, many years. Indigenous Elders from around the world were also in attendance. The Grandmothers were to hold council in the Aalaartivik on this second day of the event, with the intention of agreeing on what needs to be done with regard to the melting of the Big Ice and the effects of climate change—to find ways to melt the ice in our hearts, so that we can change and begin to use our vast knowledge wisely.

Having agreed on what needed to be done, the Grandmothers were then to tell this to the men, and the men would go into a different Aalaartivik Ceremony to hold council about how to implement what the Grandmothers had asked them to do.

How did I, age 67 but neither a mother nor a grandmother, come to be in the Grandmothers Aalaartivik? Shortly after I met the Kalaallit (Greenlandic) shaman, Angaangaq, in 2007, he asked me to be a Grandmother to the Circle of people in North America who were walking with him, learning the traditional teachings of the Far North.

Before this Aalaartivik in Greenland I had been Angaangaq's firekeeper for several Aalaartivik Ceremonies he conducted for the Circle during the preceding couple of years. I asked Angaangaq on the morning of the Grandmothers Aalaartivik if he wanted me to go and light the fire that would heat the rocks for the Aalaartivik Ceremonies. He said yes, so I spent the morning working with others making and tending the fire. I had no expectation of being inside the lodge, but as I saw others doing a good job of tending the fire and heard a call for more Grandmothers to come to be inside, I asked if it was appropriate for me to join the Grandmothers inside the lodge. The answer was yes.

I peeled off my clothes, wrapped myself in one of the sheets made available for the Grandmothers to cover themselves before going into the lodge, and joined the line of Grandmothers who were entering the lodge. Angaangaq asked me to sit in the northwest, with a Kalaallit woman between me and where he sat in the north, next to the door.

As far as we know, this was the first Aalaartivik Ceremony conducted in Greenland in the old way for at least 200 years. What a privilege to be a part of it—by the fire and then inside.

The first round was the coldest I have ever experienced in a sweat lodge, as Angaangaq was careful to not have it too hot for the Kalaallit Elders, some being women in their 80's who had never before been in an Aalaartivik. Also, this Kalaallit-style sweat lodge was dug about a meter into the ground, so we were not far above the permafrost as we sat on the stones that lined the floor. I wrapped the sheet around myself to keep from shivering.

Then in the second round, with quite a few more hot rocks having been brought in, it actually began to feel warm, almost a bit hot. Prayers were made, in Kalaallisut (the West Greenlandic language), German, English and other languages, as each woman talked to the Great One in her own way. It was near the end of this round that I saw and talked with the woman from the spirit world.

As the door was opened at the end of the round, the daylight lit up the steam that filled the lodge, and the Grandmothers laughed with delight. This was all new to many of them, yet at the same time, I thought it seemed deeply ancient for them.

I do not know what the oldest Grandmother then told the men. I was busy getting dressed and warm in the cold air outside.

Since then I have sometimes wondered if the woman I saw and spoke with in that Aalaartivik was something I had imagined or made up, but it did not feel that way. She felt real.

What was happening within me when I was moved to reply, "I will speak for you," what was my motivation? I remember the joy I felt when I first walked with Angaangaq and began to experience the traditional teachings of the Far North. At that time I formed an idealized image of Greenland and its people. Then I visited Greenland and witnessed how much the traditional ways and the sense of life as a ceremony have been lost. Knowing how much even a small taste of the teachings of the Far North had meant to me, I wanted to share that with the modern Greenlanders and with the world. My willingness to speak for the woman I saw emerged from this.

And how might I “speak for” her? My creating the 2011 and 2012 *IceWisdom Calendars*, that had Angaangaq’s words paired with photos of Greenland, was the beginning of my speaking for her. They reminded the world of the traditional wisdom. I felt so much joy on the day in 2011 when I went with the oldest Grandmother to the old people’s home in Maniitsoq and gave her friends there copies of the 2011 *IceWisdom Calendar*. I was privileged to bring to these people, who had suffered so much during colonization, a small sign that the wisdom of their ancestors was again being listened to and respected.

Now as I, with the help of friends from the Circle and from Greenland, create *The Ceremony Cards* and bring them out into the world, I continue to speak for the ancestor I saw that day in the Aalaartivik. May I do this in a good way.

After I had been “walking with” Angaangaq for about two years, he informed me during an Aalaartivik ceremony that he would no longer be calling me Grandmother. Instead I was to be called Ningijooq. It was the first time I had heard that term. In Kalaallisut, Ningijooq means “wise older woman.”

The next morning at breakfast a young Kalaallit man, Angaangaq’s guest at the Circle, told us with a laugh, “A Ningijooq is the kind of old lady you’d better listen to!” I liked that. It made being a Ningijooq seem a bit less solemn. It is both a great honor and a great responsibility to have been given that name. When Angaangaq speaks to me as Ningijooq in the presence of other Kalaallit people, it seems that they look at me differently. May I have the wisdom and the courage to live up to this name.

I honor all the Ningijoqs who have guided us along the way—some directly in dreams, Aalaartivik ceremonies, and vision quests, and some through Angaangaq, including his grandmother and teacher Aanakasaa, his mother Aanaa Aanaqqii, and the oldest Grandmother—Atsaarsuaq, Aanakasaa’s niece who is now, in 2014, still walking the Earth and whom I’ve had the privilege to meet.

While working on the decks of cards and on this book I have been grateful for the support of several other members of the Circle—those who, like myself, have been walking with Angaangaq for five or more years, learning the teachings of the Far North. Angaangaq encouraged us, after “graduating” from the Circle, to create practices of our own based on these teachings, *as we have come to understand them*. What is contained in these cards and book is just that, our understanding of the teachings. It is by no means a complete rendering of those teachings, and of course our own perspectives are also contained in these cards and book. This is a small introduction to an ancient tradition that sustained people for thousands of years in very harsh conditions in a land that has never known war, Kalaallit Nunaat—Greenland.

We share these teachings in the spirit of what Atsaarsuaq told us at the close of the Sacred Fire Ceremony in Greenland in 2009, “This is not just for Greenland. It is for the world.”

—*Ningijoq Jane English*

Life is a Ceremony
. . . in itself worth celebrating with a Ceremony.

Why do we say, “Life is a Ceremony . . .?”

All of life is worth paying attention to, being present in, honoring as being sacred—all of it. How easy it is to forget this and judge some parts as good and some as bad.

And what do we mean by “. . . in itself worth celebrating with a Ceremony?”

These small ceremonies we perform within the Great Ceremony of Life are times to practice that paying attention, that being present, that honoring life as being sacred.

In a musical metaphor, using these cards is like practicing scales. The concert happens in the rest of our living.

Ceremony is an act you do that never stops growing. If it stops growing, it becomes a dead ritual. Ceremony comes from within, from who you really are. Ceremony is not a show to please others; it is a Ceremony from the heart.

The Ceremony Cards are words and images. The wisdom they point to can again be “made living” through we who use them.

An Invitation—

What will happen when you use *The Ceremony Cards*? You might begin by letting them introduce themselves to you through a simple card ceremony.

Hold the word cards face down, and, with the intention that they greet you, choose one card and place it face down.

Repeat this with the image cards.

Then turn them both over. Observe the cards, and pay attention to what is happening within you. Give notice to:

—how you react physically

—the emotions that are evoked in you

—the images that arise in your mind's eye

—your thoughts - the words that come to you

After honoring your own response, turn to the text in this book that goes with your word card and to the brief description of your image card. You might follow this by writing in your journal what you experienced in this introduction to the cards.

This process will be repeated many times as you work and play with these cards while doing other card ceremonies. Paying attention to what is happening within you keeps the ceremonies changing and alive. Learning how to pay attention to your initial responses to the cards is a process, one that is not necessarily easy at the start.

About The Ceremony Cards

Intention for creating The Ceremony Cards

- Introducing The Traditional Teachings of the Far North—Kalaallit Nunaat—Greenland, a land that has never known war. This wisdom is much needed in the world.
- Creating new ceremonies that facilitate coming home to ourselves so that we can be at peace with ourselves, our community, and the world.
- Providing a simple vehicle for the indigenous people of Greenland—the Kalaallit—to use in reconnecting with their traditional wisdom that has almost been lost.
- Giving people in IceWisdom Circles and people who have attended events with Angaangaq a way to touch again and make living what they experienced in the Circles.

Making the cards, book and pouch

The idea came to me in 2008 while in a bookshop with Angaangaq and other Circle members. Then it incubated for a few years. In 2012 I chose words for the word cards and went through all of them twice, picking one card each day and writing whatever came to me. Then I edited these writings. The photos were chosen from among the many images I had collected while creating the 2011 and 2012 *IceWisdom Calendars*.

While a big printing press printed the cards, I hand-collated them into decks, and rounded the corners. I spent many hours making the 645 pouches for this limited first edition of the cards, often wondering who it would be that would own each pouch.

Why card decks, not just a book?

A book is linear and is read in the order the author chooses. When the same teachings are in a deck of cards, what emerges in a card ceremony is what one is most receptive to right then. Using the cards, we are more engaged than when reading a book. It is interactive, and the teachings have a better chance of becoming living in our lives

There are 72 word cards based on aspects of the traditional teachings and 72 photographs of Greenland in the image card deck. The photographs allow this ancient land that has never known war to speak for itself, wordlessly. During a card ceremony, the image cards are placed on the word cards below the words.

Much depth and richness are introduced into the card ceremonies by allowing the combination of word and image to be different each time the cards are used, rather than having one image permanently fixed on each word card.

A starting point

All that is, is One—The Great One

Separateness is a delightful illusion, one that creates our world as we know it. Living as we do most of the time in this sense of being separate, it is good sometimes to dip back into the One as a reminder of who we really are . . . or are not! Using a card deck as a divination tool is a way to touch this oneness of the inner and the outer worlds. While the whole world can be a mirror, it is easier to see the mirroring in simple context of the cards.

About Card Ceremonies

The Ceremony Cards are a kind of intermediate help for those of us who have not spent our lives trusting our intuition—a kind of knowing where the boundaries of self and other melt, and where awareness goes beyond the ordinary five senses.

So often I find that the cards mirror to me something I already know but have not quite been able to acknowledge consciously.

The cards are like “training wheels,” useful as we learn to trust and stay balanced with our intuition, our inner knowing.

While the cards are an accurate mirror and they show us possibilities, they are not a substitute for our own decision-making. This is not so different from when we look in a physical mirror while deciding what to wear for the day. While the mirror gives a reflection, we still have to choose which outfit to wear.

In addition to being mirrors, these cards can be gates, openings to things we have never before experienced, and to the depths of our own being.

When we are really at home in ourselves and trust our inner wisdom we do not need the cards. However it seems to be part of being human to lose our way sometimes—often—most of the time! We need all the help we can get to live our lives in a balanced way. The cards are one kind of help.

As with any really good helper the cards if over-used will seem to back off and become less relevant. That may be a sign that it is time to take more responsibility, to not depend on the cards, and to trust what comes from within.

Tips on Doing Card Ceremonies

Before doing a card ceremony take some time to relax and focus your intention. Refine your question or intention until it is really clear. Though do not be surprised if during the ceremony you realize your question changes and deepens and that your initial question was just a point from which to begin.

For each pair of word and image cards you choose, spend some time contemplating the image and word separately, and then look at the relationship between the word and the image.

Allow plenty of time to just “be” with each card before you read about it or discuss it.

As you close your card ceremony and pick up the cards, do as you might with any helper—give thanks to whatever you sense to be the source of the wisdom that has been brought to you.

Create Your Own Card Ceremonies

We encourage you to create your own ceremonies with *The Ceremony Cards*. Let your intuition and your dreams be your guides in this. Work with the form of a ceremony and refine it. Remember that for a ceremony to be a living ceremony, not a dead ritual, it needs space to change and grow.

When you have created a card ceremony that serves you and others well, please share it with us at: info@theceremonycards.com

Talk to Your Heart Card Ceremony

Heart

When we really pay attention to what is in our hearts and truly speak to our hearts, then our hearts will always speak back to us—perhaps not in words, but in a deeper kind of knowing.

This ceremony is a way of letting your heart speak to you, to show you what is true in your heart. It can be used when you find your mind moving too fast or going round and round with the same thoughts. It can also help you in the process of melting the ice in your heart.

While you shuffle the word and image card decks, let your intention be to bring your awareness into your heart. Take as long as you need to accomplish this.

Then when the moment feels right choose one card from each deck and place them face down.

As you turn each card over, pay particular attention to your immediate physical sensations, emotions, images, and thoughts at the moment you first see each card.

Make notes in your journal if you wish.

Then you might read in this book the text for the word card, and integrate what is written there with your own notes.

Sweetgrass Card Ceremony

Body

Mind

Spirit

Seen as just physical things, our bodies are as fragile as a single strand of dry sweetgrass. Our minds are also as brittle as a strand of sweetgrass and can break when not in balance with body and spirit. Likewise our spirits can be broken when not grounded in body and mind. Only when body, mind and spirit are braided together like the sweetgrass braid do they become strong, flexible and unbreakable.

Doing the Sweetgrass Card Ceremony is a good way to see where your body, mind, and spirit are in balance and where they need to be brought back into balance so that you can walk as tall and powerful as you are meant to be.

This ceremony can be done daily, like looking in the mirror as you begin your day or end your day. Or it can be done with a specific intention or issue in mind.

Keeping a record of the cards you choose will give you an overview of your progress in braiding together your body, mind and spirit.

1. For Body shuffle the cards while considering the current state of your physical being—your body, your finances, your home, etc. Choose one word card and one image card and place them face down in the Body position.
2. For Mind shuffle the cards while considering the current state of your mind, your psyche. Choose one word card and one image card and place them face down in the Mind position.

3. For Spirit shuffle the cards while considering the current state of your spirit, of your heart. Choose one word card and one image card and place them face down in the Spirit position.
4. After choosing all the cards, turn over the cards one at a time. Pay particular attention to your immediate physical sensations, emotions, images, and thoughts at the moment you first see each card. Make notes for each card if you wish.
5. Notice where body, mind and spirit are in harmony with each other and where they are out of balance, where they still need to be braided together.

Make your own notes then consider them with the word card text.

In-depth Sweetgrass Card Ceremony — Repeat this ceremony three times, with the intention of going deeper each time. Between rounds write in your journal and take a break, perhaps going for a silent walk outside. After all nine pairs of cards have been chosen, look at how things changed (or did not change) for you as you went deeper in body, mind, and spirit.

Journey through Past, Present, and Future — Repeat the Sweetgrass Card Ceremony three times. The first time focus on the state of Body, Mind, and Spirit in your past. The second time focus on the present, your current situation. The third time focus on your future, opening to what may be coming for you.

When you have all nine pairs of word and image cards in front of you, look at the balance of body, mind and spirit in each row. Look also at the vertical columns to see how things change over time for your physical world, your psyche, and your spiritual life.

Soar Like an Eagle Card Ceremony

Choice A

Choice B

... more
choices
if needed

The Eagle flies high, giving it a big perspective on all that is happening down in the world.

World
Within

Soar Like
an Eagle

External
World

There are times we need to be like the Eagle, flying high in order to see clearly the choices before us and the paths we might follow.

Then when we choose a path, we need to follow it all the way to its end without looking back. Because when we hesitate and look back, or turn and tell others what a wonderful path we have chosen, we can stumble and fall and then have to go back and start out all over again.

For more on “Soar Like an Eagle” see the text for that word card.

The Soar Like an Eagle Card Ceremony is useful at times when we have choices and decisions to make. It creates a framework within which we can look at and make our choices. The top row of the cards in the diagram above will be pair of word and image cards for each of the possibilities you are considering—this may be two, three or more.

If you have the time and desire, write down your thoughts about each of the card positions, both those in the top row and the other three cards, before you choose the card for that position.

1. Open yourself to all possibilities, then divide both decks into as many piles as there are choices. You will have two piles for each choice—words and images.
2. With first one then the other of the word and image card piles for one of the possible choices, step out of the state of indecision, and shuffle this pile while putting yourself into the state of having *already chosen* this option. Experience this choice as deeply as you can, then choose one card from this pile and place it face down in position “A.” Do this for both word and image cards.
3. Repeat 2. for choices B, C, etc. You will end up with word and image cards for each of your possibilities.
4. For both word and image cards, shuffle together the remaining cards from all the smaller piles.
5. Ask to be shown something you need to know about your inner world, and choose word and image cards for “World Within.” Place them face down in that position.
6. Ask to be shown something you need to know about the world around you, and choose word and image cards for “External World.” Place them face down in that position.
7. Go to the highest point you can attain within yourself, Soar Like an Eagle, and ask for perspective that will assist your decision-making. Choose word and image cards and place them face down in the center.
8. Turn over the cards one at a time in the order chosen. Pay particular attention to your immediate physical sensations,

emotions, images and thoughts at the moment you first see each card. Make notes for each card

Then you read in this book the text for the word card, and integrate what is written there with your own notes.

As you Soar Like an Eagle with the last card make your choice of which path to follow—all the way to its end, where you will Come Home to Yourself.

A variation of this card ceremony: Instead of A, B, etc. being mutually exclusive choices, they can be different aspects of a situation for which you choose cards. Then while Soaring Like an Eagle you can see how these aspects work together—in harmony or contrast, and which of these aspects has priority—needs to be attended to first. There also may be some aspects of which you can let go.

Altar Card Ceremony

Part I

We think of Altars as being in churches. For the traditional Kalaallit people the physical Altar was a part of every household. Yet the most important Altar is the one in our heart.

The physical things on the Altar in your home or that you carry with you represent what has meaning for you in your personal relationship with The Great One.

But remember, however beautiful the things on the physical Altar, the most beautiful Altar is the one you make in your heart. Your heart is your connection to the Great One.

The Altar Card Ceremony is done in a group. Sit in a circle or around a table then fan out both word and image card decks in the middle of the circle.

Bring your awareness into your heart and to your relation to the Creator, however you speak of the Great One, the Great Oneness. Take as long as you need to accomplish this.

Then when the moment feels right to them each person chooses one card from each deck and places these word and image cards face down in front of them.

When all have made their choices, remove the leftover cards from the center of the circle.

Then everyone turns over their own cards. For now, focus only on your own cards. Pay particular attention to your immediate physical sensations, emotions, images and thoughts at the moment you first see each card.

In what way is this word and image an opening or connection between you and the Great One?

Write notes on this if you wish.

Part II

So many wonderful and unique things come to the Altar from the people. When you touch and hold the items on the Altar with good intention you become connected with them and with the person who placed them there.

As you see and touch without judgement the objects on the Altar you will experience their beauty and the beauty within the person who placed them there. Then your own beauty will grow, like a flower opening.

When everyone has had some time with their own cards, move the cards closer to the center of the circle, forming an Altar.

Spend some time looking at and touching the cards each person has chosen, giving them your energy and recognizing that person's unique way of being with the Great One.

If you wish, you might go around your circle giving each person a turn to speak about what their cards evoke for them.

You may leave this Altar in the center for a while if that fits with what your Circle is doing.

When the time is right, close the ceremony with each person picking up their own cards. Release the physical Altar with a breath as you pick up your cards, giving thanks and acknowledging that the most beautiful Altar is within your own heart.