

The Coal Bundle

The coal bundle you carry has been carefully collected and contains a piece of coal from The Sacred Fire at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. These bundles have been shared around the world for the last 23 years.

Our belief is this bundle represents not only a physical, but also a spiritual connection to the sacred Fires that have burned for thousands and thousands of years. We believe these bundles represent the collective consciousness of all the participants who have ever gathered. It is our hope you will carry this Fire coal bundle with a sense of purpose, and an understanding that our thoughts, intentions, and actions, at this moment, do influence the next seven generations. These coal bundles have been shared around the world for the last twenty-three years.



NOWATEN DALE THOMAS – “*The one who listens*” was a member of the Kansas Potawatomi Prairie Band. At 39 years of age he was made an *Ogichidaa* – *spiritual leader* by his people. Nowaten was the keeper of the Misho Skodanse, the eternal sacred Fire of the Three Fires people. In November 1995, he allowed the sacred Fire for the first time to be carried outside the village by Fire keepers Muk-ta-thē Bruce Hardwick and Mukwa-O-Day Duane Kinnart to an international gathering. On February 16, 1996, the Fire was carried to Northeastern Illinois University and lit for the first time at the 7th annual T.E.A.M. Conference. It has burned here ever since.

At first I recall Dale saying was how the Fire was only for his people. A few years later he shifted his feelings and shared how he believed this Fire will be able to help the world, and it was time to be shared with all humanity. I also recall him discussing the prophecies and that we are currently in the time of the 7th Fire which will lead to a time of the 8th Fire, a time of peace and prosperity for all of mankind. I heard him say how Fire is the one element that has been used by all cultures from the beginning of time.

NOWATEN is the featured elder in a documentary film entitled “Down to Earth” (DOWNTOEARTHFILM.COM) of elders speaking about and sharing their views on life. The film makers Rolf and Renata Winters, who traveled the world and filmed elders from many cultures said, “Nowaten was the most profound person we met in all our travels.”

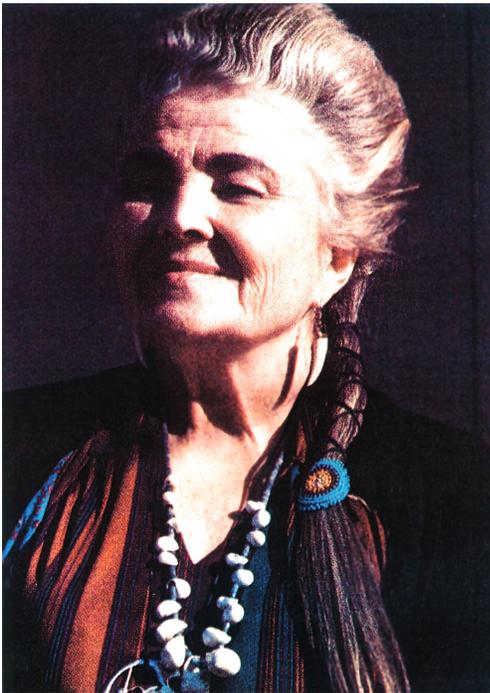
Northeastern Illinois University is a very unique and special school. Our students are a microcosm of the world. It is no mistake we have the most ethnically diverse student body in the Midwest and the Fire is located on our campus. Peace Fire and Talking Circle Ceremonies have been conducted with hundreds of students in our pre-service CASEP freshman teacher’s cohort for the last fifteen years. Each cohort was asked if they would be of service and tie the nearly 700+ coal bundles that are shared and distributed each year. They have put their energy, dreams, and hopes into the Fire coal bundles you carry. Our students represent eighty-eight (88) different cultures and are listed below:

Afghan	Burmese	French	Lakota	Polish
African	Canadian	German	Latvian	Puerto Rican
African American	Cherokee	Greek	Lithuanian	Romanian
Albanian	Chinese	Guatemalan	Macedonian	Russian
Arabic	Colombian	Honduran	Mexican	Scandinavian
Argentinean	Creole	Hungarian	Montenegrin	Scottish
Armenian	Croatian	Indian	Native American	Serbian
Assyrian	Cuban	Irish	New Zealander	Syrian
Australian	Czechoslovakian	Israeli	Nicaraguan	Spanish
Austrian	Danish	Italian	Norwegian	Swedish
Azerbaijani	Dominican	Jamaican	Pakistani	Swiss
Belgian	Dutch	Japanese	Palestinian	Trinidadian
Belizean	Ecuadorian	Jewish	Panamanian	Turkish
Bohemian	Egyptian	Jordanian	Persian	Ukrainian
Bosnian	English	Kazakhstanian	Peruvian	Venezuelan
Brazilian	Filipino	Korean	Pilipino	Welsh

In the last twenty-three years we have conducted Peace Fire and Talking Circles for thousands of people. Our primary work is with students, staff, and administrators at Northeastern. We model at the Fire how the circles can be used by any one in education, business, or social settings. The circles are about listening, respect, and speaking from the heart. One of the strongest relationships we have had is with the MSTQE Cohort Program for the Math and Science Students. We acknowledge and thank them for printing the *Journey of the Sacred Fire* stories that go out to the world.

Jane Goodall, in her 1999 book, *Reason for Hope*, states “I do have hope for the future. My reasons for hope are four fold: 1) the human brain; 2) the resilience of nature; 3) the energy and enthusiasm that are found or can be kindled among young people worldwide; and 4) the indomitable human spirit.” As I watched the coal bundles being tied by students that culturally and symbolically represented the entire world, I kept hearing the words of Jane Goodall “reason for hope, reason for hope,” over and over. The hope carried by these young educators from eighty-eight (88) different cultures represents a belief that collectively we can make the world a better place.

This statement by Cinque, in the 1997 film *Amistad*, captures the essence of what we feel about the Fire coal bundles. “At this moment I am calling back to all my ancestors, to the beginning of time. I am asking them to join me, because they are the whole reason I have existed at all.” It felt as if the students’ ancestors, from the beginning of time, were in the room watching, approving, and helping them tie the coal bundles. These Fire coal bundles may be a small gesture, but they are a good first step to help us reconnect and bring us back to our ancestral roots where Fire was at the heart of each village and people listened respectfully to each other.



Grandmother Keewaydinoquay, an elder and wisdom keeper of the Miniss Kitigan Band (MKD) of the Ojibwa, was from a small Island in the middle of Lake Michigan. When she returned after a 50-year absence she awakened the traditions, ceremonies, and plant medicines for the people she was taught as a young girl. For over 30 years people traveled from all over the world to learn through experiences with Kee during the summers. She initiated the Saturday routine on the island where all the people would gather at the rocky beach near the edge of camp to help with the exchange of boats, equipment, and visitors. For all those years as the boat would slowly motor out of the shallow bay, Grandmother Kee would send them a blessing by extending her arms over her head, palms facing the people who were leaving, and sing the going away song for their safe passage. The last words people would hear her say in a very deliberate and loud voice were, “Travel with conscious care, for you carry the seeds of the future.” Perhaps in some way these Fire coal bundles are the *seeds of the future*. Carry them with honor and travel with conscious care.

We offer you the opportunity to carry your Fire coal bundle until you feel it is the right moment to share it. Whether you leave it in a special place where “you know” it belongs, hand it to someone, add it to a ceremony, or place it in another Fire. Each coal bundle

is like a pebble being dropped in a still pond. We believe the ripples for peace and understanding will go on forever through the Fire. Over 16,000 coal bundles have been shared around the world since Muk-ta-thē Bruce Hardwick and Mukwa-O-Day Duane Kinnart ignited the sacred Fire on February 16, 1996 at Northeastern Illinois University.

You can read about the history and details of the Fire Story at:

www.neiupeacefire.org

Let us know your story of the Peace Fire Coal Bundle.

Send information or contact us at d-creely@neiu.edu