

Honouring My Ancestors

This is my Ceremony, written to honour my ancestors on my Mother's side of the family: mainly Mackenzies who came from Lochcarron in the North West Highlands.

Location: on top of 'The Island', Lochcarron, overlooking the loch, the village and the mountains beyond. There is a fire pit set, and a circle of stones. It is dusk, just before the sun will set.

('The Island' is a peninsula, which becomes an island at high tide. There is a path to the top of the hill which stands at around 200 feet).

Participants: Celebrant, myself, my husband, my daughter. A close friend who is a piper.

As we have walked along the beach and up the path to the top of the Island, we have each collected two stones to take with us.

I have brought with me: a piece of Ancient MacKenzie tartan, a MacKenzie crest, a sprig of rowan berries, a red rose and a kilt pin. The Celebrant has a quaich and a bottle of whisky.

Our friend, the piper has gone on ahead, and is waiting for us at the top of the Island. As we approach, he begins to play 'Cailin Mo Ruin-Sa'. We each lay our stones in a circle on the ground, and stand around them until the piper stops playing.



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Celebrant: Welcome. You are so welcome. Welcome to our Ceremony in Honour of the Ancestors. In honour of the Ancestors and in gratitude for their gifts. Gillian, this Ceremony is especially for you and your Ancestors, and I invite you to bring forward the symbols that you have brought, and lay them within the circle of stones, telling us what they each symbolise.

Gillian: I bring rowan berries to symbolise protection, beauty, strength and life.

I bring a red rose to represent all the women who have gone before me.

I bring a kilt pin to represent all the men who have gone before me.

I bring the Ancient MacKenzie tartan, worn by so many of my ancestors, and most recently, in my memory, worn by my dear Mum.

I bring the MacKenzie clan crest which bears the words: Luceo non Uro (I shine, not burn) which represents the MacKenzies, my Ancestors, who I remember and honour today.

Celebrant: Thank you, Gillian. I add this quaich and fill it with whisky to honour your family, present, past and future.

To honour the light, the love, the warmth and the life of family connection, I invite you to light the fire we have here.

Gillian lights the fire.

Celebrant: As we stand here together, our senses awakened by the sights that we share, the taste and the smell of the sea, the feel of the earth beneath our feet and the sounds of the pipes and nature all around us, we call in the elements to hold us in this Ceremony.

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We call on Earth in the North – ultimate in your femininity, stability, nurture and life. We ask to share in your strength and endurance.

We call on the Air to the West – the very breath of our lives. We ask that you carry away difficult thoughts and emotions, and surround us with positive energies.

We call on Fire in the South – masculine energy, strength of will. We ask that you symbolise the clearing away of difficult thoughts and emotions, making way for a new way of seeing.

We call on Water in the West – feminine energy, purifying, healing and cleansing. We hear your gentle waves, the rhythm of your tide, your ebb and flow. We connect with your feminine energy, your gentleness and your power.

And we call on the Sacred Mystery, the wisdom and grace of OneSpirit to hold us in prayer and in love.

We have listened to your chosen music, gathered together symbols of your ancestors and encircled them in stones. We have lit a fire of light and love, and called for the support and guidance of all that surround us, seen and unseen. Gillian, you have traced your ancestors from Lochcarron back to 1745. You have seen their names written on your family tree. You have learned a little about their lives, and you have brought your own words to bring them to mind, to speak of your own gratitude to them. While our piper plays ‘MacKenzie’, I invite you to share your words with us.

Gillian: ‘My family, who have gone before me, as I stand here, maybe where you once stood, seeing what you once may have seen, I call you all in. I welcome your presence in my memory, in my heart, in who I am, in who my daughter is, in who my grandchildren will be. I bring to mind your lives, as mothers

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and fathers, as sons and daughters, as crofters, fishermen and women, home makers and carers, foresters, weavers, builders, joiners, miners, stone masons, shepherds, warriors and soldiers. I bring to mind the harshness of your lives, the hunger, the cold, the journeys you travelled, the determination to overcome. I bring to mind the comforts of your lives, warm fires, solid houses, built with love and skill. I call in all of your qualities, your strengths and weaknesses, your loves, your fears, your music, your dancing, your songs, your tears, your anguish, your grief. All that you were, all who you were, and I thank you from my heart, for the gifts that you gave.

Music ends.

Celebrant: Today, in this place, in this moment, we see the loch, the islands, the mountains, unchanged and forever changing, always present. We take time in silence, to open our hearts to the agelessness of our surroundings, to the beauty of this place, to the people who have come before us, to the people who will come after us. And we open our hearts to the connection that binds this family, the connection, the love, the people.

We all stand in silence.

Celebrant: Gillian, I invite you now to speak the names of the people who you know, have brought you and your family, Dave and Eilidh, here today.

Gillian: First, Dave: my husband, father of our daughter, I honour the love we share, and I honour your family and ancestors.

My father, Barry, thank you for your love and your gifts, and all that your family and your ancestors brought to me, and now to my family.

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My mother, Sheila, your gentle love and guidance, your special connection with Lochcarron brings me here, with my family, you are forever in our hearts, forever in my life.

My Grandparents, Willie and Peggy, thank you for your love and your constant example of kindness, courtesy and care, and for your special connection with Lochcarron.

All of my Lochcarron relations, past and present, thank you for your love, for the strength of your family connection, your kindness, your hospitality, your warmth.

I say your names, now, in the knowledge that there are many I don't know, paying tribute to you all:

Roddy, Helen, William, Ann, Kate, Alex, Minnie, Bella, Angus, Hugh, Margaret, Johanne, Jessie, Ally, Evan

Celebrant: Honouring all who go before you, in gratitude for their lives and their gifts, we share this quaich and toast your family, present, past and future.

Celebrant passes a quaich of whisky to Gillian, Dave and Eilidh who each toast 'Family: present, past and future'.

Celebrant: As the sun sets, and the light of the fire fades, we share the final moments of Gillian's Ceremony in Honour of her Ancestors. As she gathers together the symbols of her Ancestors, we each gather the stones that we brought, and we place them in a small cairn in honour of our Ceremony today.

We hold Gillian and her family close in our hearts in deep reverence of the past and in great hope for the future.

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Standing in the Footprints of My Ancestors



*Did I stand where you once
stood?*

Did I see what you once saw?

*Did we pause exactly here,
Me, with my hi-tech gadget
Capturing a view I love,
And you, who go before me,
Part of me, known and unknown:*

*Did you stop here to rest from
weary labour?*

*Did you stop in fear, scanning
the horizon*

For threat and danger?

*Did you stop in privileged
relaxation,
To share this view with others?*

*Did you ever wonder, as I do
now,*

*Who will come after me,
Who will stand here, see what
we saw,*

*Unchanged, without time,
Bringing who they are to this
place,
To this moment.*

*I honour you who have gone
before me.*

*I thank you for the love and your
lives*

That make me who I am now.

*I honour you who will come after
me.*

*I ask you to listen deeply,
I ask you to remember that you
too, are*

*Created by the love and the lives
of your Ancestors.*

*Welcome their gifts,
Give generously of yours.*

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