



NATIVE LAND CONSERVANCY



Welcome Spring 2023

Maskoke Partnership
Land Protection Progress
Join Our Team

THE GREAT APPEAL OF DENIAL

Jeff Schwartz

The great appeal of denial is that it requires nothing of us. Change is hard, especially for a people who have grown accustomed to having everything we want, with no awareness of or responsibility for the consequences.

Our human economic equations are arbitrary and keep externalized costs, such as pollution and labor abuse, hidden from view. But the earth's ecological systems are screaming quite loudly to take off our blinders. Ultimately the only economy that matters, is the economy of the earth. The idea that we can, with technology, avoid the peril of our current unsustainable way of life without giving anything up, is pure fantasy. If we say we are committed to halting human-induced climate change and environmental degradation, yet continue to get on airplanes, blast our air-conditioners and leaf blowers, and unconsciously invest in companies most responsible for greenhouse gases and other forms of pollution, we are not walking our talk. A culture of "more" is

simply incompatible with a finite, living planet. As the Chinese proverb says, "unless we change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed."

Technology can play a part in a sustainable future, but it will not save us. Even as we develop renewable resources and improve efficiencies, our demand for more and more cancels these gains. Our current social structure encourages us to do so as if the economy can grow forever. To make a course correction, we don't need to be more clever, we need to be more humble. We don't need a technological revolution, but a revolution in cultural values.

Fortunately, what most people say makes them happy is meaningful relationships and meaningful lives, not more stuff. Hans Hoffman said, "The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak." What is necessary is to accept the reality that we belong to the earth and not visa versa.

If we are going to not only survive, but thrive, we need to step off the hamster wheel and return to an indigenous worldview.

It seems hard to imagine this sort of monumental transition, it is because the modern world into which we are socialized is entirely constructed from an exploitative and acquisitional worldview. Said Albert Einstein, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." Everything we have created was first an idea. To change our world, we must first change our minds. I believe this could happen in a single generation. A cultural value shift to right relationship and reciprocity with the earth and one another, will shift how we think and thus what we create, because ultimately what we envision is what we become.

Jeff Schwartz recently bequeathed his primary residence to the NLC. Read the story on page 3.

MASKOKE PARTNERSHIP

NLC is celebrating a new relationship with a small but growing village of Maskoke people who are a model for decolonization, language and cultural revitalization, and sustainable living.

Ekvn-Yefolecv (pronounced ee-gun yee-full-lee-juh) located in central Alabama, is home to a community of Maskoke who are restoring tribal traditional culture and lifeways in everything from immersion into the endangered Maskoke language, to growing heirloom crops, to matriarchal governance. They have also returned buffalo to roam the land and sturgeon thrive in their waterways. The eco-village where residents speak only Maskoke to each other is defined by its natural structures, sources of renewable energy and farm lands all designed to be ultimately be off the grid.

“The like mindedness at Ekvn-Yefolecv is something that was refreshing to us,” said NLC President Ramona Peters. “Their vision is exactly what I envision for NLC to do. To create a safe and comfortable land space for our people to enjoy.”

Forced relocation in 1836 removed the Maskoke from Alabama and Georgia to Florida and Oklahoma. In 2018 Ekvn-Yefolecv was established to return the people and reestablish them in their traditional ways on their ancestral homelands.

According to the website, the eco-village, “Ekvn-Yefolecv exemplifies a departure from an extractive economy and engages a collective effort to bring healing to a long-abused Earth, as well as to an Indigenous People long inflicted by intergenerational trauma.”

Ekvn-Yefolecv founding member Marcus Briggs Cloud wrote of the need for the eco-village “It became spiritually evident that we needed to assemble an intentional community of like-minded Maskoke folks who are products of forced removal to return to our homelands for the purpose of committing to both biophysical and ceremonial stewardship of the land our ancestors cared for since time immemorial.”

When an opportunity arose to take title and protect a 776-acre parcel of land, home to an endangered old growth longleaf pine ecosystem, they were eager to do so. It was land that required a conservation easement which could have been achieved with any number of land conservation groups but the Maskoke preferred to work with an organization with an aligned mission. Ekvn-Yefolecv was looking for a collaborator that would value indigenous culture and landscapes as they did. They found the Native Land Conservancy to be a perfect partner.

Ekvn-Yefolecv's goal is to preserve that land, resources and wildlife for traditional hunting, foraging, and ceremonial uses for future generations. For the NLC, that meant expanding the geographical boundaries defined in its articles of incorporation that had previously limited the organization to acquire and protect lands in Massachusetts. “We were happy to do that,” Ramona said, and also added that now the NLC has expanded to have a national reach, she looks forward to helping other like-minded tribal groups throughout Indian country.



LAND PROTECTION PROGRESS

A Generous Bequest

Jeff Schwartz believes in three Rs of land conservation, reciprocity, reparation, and restoration.

The Harwich man recently established a will that leaves his land and home to the Native Land Conservancy upon his passing. This thoughtful renewable energy analyst doesn't plan on going anytime soon, but he won't be taking anything with him and feels the best legacy of his life would be to assure his small Cape on just under a half-acre of property is restored to the original caretakers of the land.

"The land I live on is stolen wealth of a nation built on the backs of slaves," said Jeff who is confident his reciprocity comes in knowing that the NLC will ultimately make the best use of the land. He believes it is but a small reparation to the Wampanoag people through the NLC and supports the ongoing work to restore tribal ancestral homelands. "[NLC] can do what ever is best with it when I'm gone, even sell it to buy back other land."

Jeff is hoping that what he has done will become a trend, "I have this privilege to do this and now it's all about finding people who want to engage in this conversation. Reparations will look different for every person, but there is something we all can do."

NLC forges CR with Mashpee

NLC is excited to have entered into a new collaboration with the town of Mashpee, a Conservation Restriction (CR) recorded in mid January. The CR protects just over 14.5 acres including nearly 8 acres of wetlands abutting Santuit Pond. The preserve encompasses Chop Chaque Bogs, which had been used to farm cranberries for many years before the land was purchased by the town in September of 2020. The bogs, surrounded by wooded walking trails, are scheduled to undergo an extensive restoration to natural wetlands. This spring work will begin with the removal of sand and invasive plantings to reestablish freely flowing water. The CR includes Indigenous cultural practice that allows for Wampanoag access to the preserve for ceremony and, once the restoration has been completed and the land has rested, foraging. It is hoped that the restored wetlands will help clean up the sorely degraded Santuit Pond which has been the subject of annual public health advisories due to toxic algae growth and cyanobacteria blooms that are dangerous to people and animals.



NLC EVENTS

"Earth" and "Water" Premier

NLC will host a premier screening of "Earth" a deeply moving homily delivered by Aquinnah Wampanoag founder of Sassafra's Earth Education, David Vanderhoop, and "Water", as defined with the passion of Wampanoag traditionalists.

The screenings will be held at the NLC headquarters at 2B Center Street, Mashpee, on Friday, March 31st, from 7pm to 8:15pm.

These two mini-documentaries, produced and directed by Leslie Jonas, are the first in a series of four that will later feature "Fire" and "Air", and are designed to enhance one's connection to the world including practices that connect people on a deeper level with the natural world and provide guidance to living closer to the earth. Funding for the videos was made through competitive grants written to the Island foundation, and awarded to the NLC.

Light refreshments will be served. Seating is limited. Please RSVP to paula@nativelandconservancy.org

10th Annual Herring Festival

NLC will return to the Annual Herring Run Festival on Saturday, April 15 in Middleboro at the Oliver Mill Park on the Nemasket River. We are very excited to be setting up a vendor table at Discover Middleboro's 10th Annual event to celebrate the Herring and welcome Spring. Stop by and check out our new swag!

Events of the day will also include a five-mile Wampanoag mishoon paddle, reestablishing the tradition of using the river for transportation and for fishing that is thousands of years old. This will be the second year the Mashpee Wampanoag Education Department will sponsor the event featuring a dozen paddlers in six canoes. They will finish their trip at the Herring Festival with brief remarks between noon and 1pm.

NLC holds the Conservation Restriction on the 20-acre Nemasket River Village site purchased by the town of Middleboro where ancient remains of a Wampanoag tribal settlement have been identified. The NLC also holds a Cultural Respect Easement allowing for ceremony, gathering, and camping by indigenous people.



JOIN THE NLC TEAM!

Administrative Assistant

The Administrative Assistant is a new position that will support NLC staff and programs. This position is well-suited for someone who communicates effectively, is detail-oriented, enjoys managing both short- and long-term projects, and has a desire to meaningfully contribute towards improving Indigenous-led conservation locally and beyond.

The Administrative Assistant will be based in the NLC office in Mashpee and supervised by the Executive Director. Full-time (35 hours) candidates preferred, with part-time (20 hours) considered. \$22-\$27/hour. Competitive benefits offered for full-time employees. Learn more at bit.ly/NLCAdmin

Interested candidates should send a cover letter and resume to Diana Ruiz at diana@nativelandconservancy.org

Land of the First Light Fellowship

Come explore a career in land protection with the NLC this summer! NLC will host three Native American Fellows between the ages of 18 to 25. The fellowship intends to open up pathways to diverse careers in conservation for rising Native Americans. Whether you're a student of ecology or considering a career switch, you're in the right place! We believe that it is in all of our best interests when the next generation of Indigenous conservationists are encouraged to bring their whole selves to their training in conservation, including their culture.

Fellows will spend 10 weeks in the ancestral homelands of the Wampanoag, designing projects related to ecological research, wetland restoration, or land protection. Fellows will be paired with an expert mentor from Mass Audubon to advise on their projects. Activities will include wide-ranging excursions, including guided preserve walks, community events, hands-on restoration, discussions with tribal elders, nonprofit board meetings, and weekly check-ins with peer fellows. With deep gratitude to the NorthLight Foundation for sponsorship, each Fellow will receive a \$6000 stipend with additional support for housing, travel and tech available. Apply by **April 14th**: bit.ly/firstlightapp






LAND OF THE FIRST LIGHT FELLOWSHIP

Blending culture, land protection, and career development



The Program

-  Spend 10 weeks in Mashpee on Cape Cod, ancestral homelands of the Wampanoag
-  Develop your own project based in ecological research, wetland restoration, or land protection and be paired with an expert mentor from Mass Audubon
-  Enjoy wide-ranging excursions, including guided preserve walks, community events, hands-on restoration, discussions with tribal elders, nonprofit board meetings, weekly check-ins with your peer fellows



NLC SPOTLIGHT PAMELA ELLIS



PAMELA ELLIS, NIPMUC NLC BOARD DIRECTOR



Nipmuc NLC Board Director, Pamela Ellis, is an enrolled member of the Nipmuc Tribe, and has been on the NLC Board since 2014. A graduate of Dartmouth College, she holds a JD and Certificate in Federal Indian Law from the Arizona State University College of Law where she was designated a Yates Fellow. She has since retired from the practice of law in Massachusetts and was previously admitted to practice before the Mohegan Indian Nation. As an active member in her tribe, Pam has served as a tribal council member to the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Indian Council, the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council, and the Natick Nipmuc Indian Council where she also served as Tribal Historian and Genealogist. One of our favorite roles of Pam's has been her important leadership as principal organizer for the first 25 years of the Deer Island Memorial and Sacred Paddle, an annual event which commemorates the removal and internment of Nipmuc and other Native peoples from South Natick in October 1675 during the resistance known as



King Philip's War. Currently, Pam serves in more of a support and advisory capacity to the next generation of organizers. A traditional singer and dancer, she is a co-founder of, and performer with, the Nettukkuskq Singers, a group of southern New England Native women dedicated to the repatriation and reclamation of women's drumming and singing traditions. Pam also sits on the Board of the Clearing Brook, LLC, an intertribal land repatriation, food sovereignty, and Indigenous agriculture project. It's no doubt that these remarkable gifts she carries keep her incredibly busy, but her day to day focus is as the Principal/Owner of Chágwas Cultural Resource Consulting, LLC. Pam is an amazing scholar and is the 2022-2023 Distinguished Artists and Scholar in Residence at Bunker Hill Community College in sponsorship with the Mary L. Fifield Art Gallery. As a well-respected, active, Nipmuc tribal member and long-term NLC Board Director, we celebrate the wonder of Pam in our 10th edition, 2023 Vernal Equinox e-newsletter.