



# NATIVE LAND CONSERVANCY



## Welcome Summer Solstice 2022

NLC Celebrations  
NLC News and Events

### THOUGHTS FROM A BOARD DIRECTOR

I walk the same path every day, two miles following the Santuit River, and every day I feel more alive. My thinking feels different. It's not so much about the lists and chores, but more about attention to whatever the moment calls for. Mindfulness. There's a reawakening of my inner child, that wonder and delight of experiencing the natural world. I did not surrender this joy to childhood. A sense that something is being made right in my world has created a wider path to my heart. The longer I do this daily walk the easier it becomes to maintain a peacefulness throughout the day. During the first week of my walking meditation I relaxed into the increasing familiarity of my surroundings, noting that I had favorite trees along the path and anticipated the sight of them before seeing them. When I place my hands on a tree I feel an exchange of energy, a back and forth greeting and response. It feels like we are comforting one another. Even as a child I had trouble keeping my hands off of my favorite trees and why should I?

Is it a surprise that we should have favorite trees, the same way we are drawn to a closeness and fondness for certain aunts, uncles, and grandparents? I climb a tree, different trees, every day. One day I was in the arms of a white pine. Silent, holding completely still. A blue heron lit on a branch, two trees down, about a yard from me. I waited and watched wondering when he would notice me. He did. We locked eyes for a good five minutes before he hopped off the branch with a six-foot wingspan and flew, maneuvered, through that dense thicket of pine branches with such grace. When you hold completely still, hidden in a tree, all life around you loses the tension that exists when you are seen. The birds, the two and four leggeds that you can't see when they are hiding from you come back out into the sun and air. I sometimes wonder if we become invisible when we are so still. I've had songbirds light on me as if I'm a branch or limb on the tree. I do know that if you sit long enough in stillness day after day, there will come a time when you

transform into a feeling of oneness with all life, your separateness disappears. You are just a part of the pulse of life, just one being in the web, no more or less important than other life. Everything, every life form has a presence. I am grateful for the presence of the blue heron who I often see during my walk. I found that it's possible to bring the presence of other beings, like the heron, into the silence with me during prayer and meditation. Just for the asking. The same way the Creator is always available just for the invitation.

When you realize you are never alone because of this interrelated web of life that you are only a small part of, this understanding is the beginning of right relationship with Nature.



Gail Melix, Board Director  
Native Land Conservancy

# CELEBRATIONS

## CRE Celebration with DCLT

On May 15th, members from the Dennis Conservation Land Trust (DCLT), the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts (Compact) and the Native Land Conservancy celebrated the cultural respect easement extension between the DCLT and the NLC, signed on Dec 9, 2021. The renewed easement expands cultural access in perpetuity to all 440 acres held by DCLT. The celebration began in a white cedar swamp where the Mashpee River Singers sang a song of gratitude. After a few words by NLC President, Ramona Peters, the group moved to DCLT member, Brad Boyd's home. There all enjoyed refreshments and speeches made by DCLT President, Joe Masse, Compact Executive Director, Mark Robinson, and NLC Director, Diana Ruiz. Gifts of a hand coiled pot, mounted stones from DCLT preserves, and woodcut artwork were exchanged symbolic of the power of the relationship and the shared values of land conservation and cultural respect. The day closed with a round dance to unite all in deepened partnership.



## Wampanoag Common Lands - celebration and planting

On June 5th, the NLC hosted its first community event on the Wampanoag Common Lands in Kingston. Members of Aquinnah, Herring Pond, and Mashpee Wampanoag Tribes, and their friends gathered in celebration of the return of the land to the Wampanoag Nation. Rabbit Clan Mother and NLC Board Member, Marlene Lopez, opened the day with a prayer around a fire lit by Herring Pond Medicine Man, Troy Currence. After this offering, NLC President, Ramona Peters, spoke to the significance of the land donation and the NLC's role as the caretaker of the land for all Wampanoag people. The remainder of the day was spent in conversation while guests engaged in native plant restoration. Altogether, 70 plants, including six species were planted. We thank the Muddy Pond Trust, and the Sheehan Family for donating the land. We also thank the Unitarian Universalists of Falmouth for donating white oaks, Tim Simmons, David Weeden, and Linda Coombs for planting guidance, NLC fellows and interns for preparations, and all who attended. Kutâputunumuw.



## NLC EVENTS

### Craig Simpson's Birthday Donation

On Sunday, May 10th, NLC board members and friends of Craig Simpson gathered at his house in Cotuit to celebrate his 76th birthday. The day was filled with song and dance by the Wampanoag Nation Singers and Dancers as Craig delivered to us the deed and keys to his home. Ramona Peters, NLC President gifted Craig with one of her 17 century-inspired Wampanoag pots. Craig has a lifelong dedication to social change, including working as a Head Start teacher, joining the Anishinaabe in protest of the Line 3 pipeline, and continues to volunteer for Save the Pine Barrens in MA. Craig generously decided to donate his home to a cause that was near and dear to his heart, the local indigenous land conservationists. Kutâputush, Craig!

### Race Amity

On June 12th, the NLC participated in the 2nd Annual Race Amity Day in Mashpee. The purpose of the celebration was to bring together diverse communities. The day featured an opening prayer by Tribal Chairman Brian Weeden, music, poetry, and speeches. Thank you to Justin Pikulski and Marlene Lopez for helping out!

### Herring Run and Nemasket River Village Celebrations

On April 9th, the NLC joined the Town of Middleborough in honoring the crucial herring migration. Nearby, the NLC additionally commemorated the installation of a collaborative interpretive kiosk at an ancient Wampanoag village site. The NLC has partnered with the Town and the Archaeological Conservancy to protect this powerful place. Thank you to the Wampanoag Nation Singers and Dancers for performing twice in one day, to Ramona Peters, Patricia Cassidy and Kelley Berliner for your remarks, and to Darius Coombs, Hazel and Sam Currence, Leslie Jonas, Olivia Kurz, Marlene Lopez, Gail Melix, and Asa Peters for your help in making the day a success!

### Upcoming Events

We hope to see you at the Mashpee Wampanoag Powwow on July 1, 2, and 3!



## NLC NEWS

### New NLC Office Space in Mashpee

We are happy to announce that we have opened our new office at 2B Center Street, in Mashpee. We hope you will stop by to say hello!

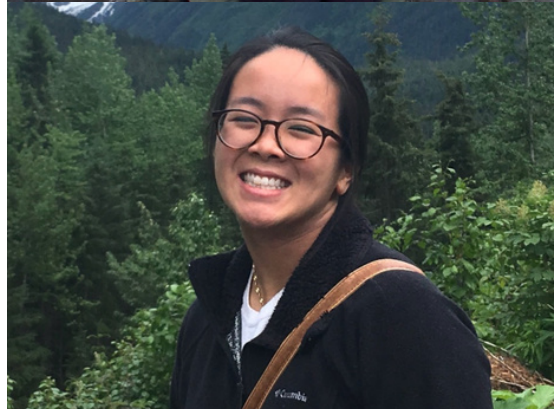
### Welcome Summer Intern and Fellows!

**Justin Pikulski** is a member of the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe and his internship is co-hosted by the NLC and Northeast Wilderness Trust. This summer Justin will build upon his extensive knowledge of wildlife by designing a trail camera study of the Wampanoag Common Lands and the Muddy Pond Wilderness Preserve. We can't wait to see what he discovers!



**Olivia Kurz** is a PhD student in the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and supported by the Edna Bailey Sussman Fund. Raised in Falmouth, Olivia has a deep commitment to aiding our work. Olivia brings experience in environmental education, botanical skills, and research interests in restoring aquatic systems. This summer, Olivia and Jessica will develop a biocultural restoration plan for the Wampanoag Common Lands in Kingston.

**Jessica Tran** is a PhD student in the University of Minnesota Natural Resource Science and Management department and comes to us through the Yale Environmental Fellows Program. Being first-generation Asian American has driven Jessica to find equitable solutions to climate change. Jessica has published several articles and her current research centers Tribal perspectives in the conservation of Manoomin/Psiq (wild rice).





## NLC SPOTLIGHT

# GERTRUDE "KITTY" HENDRICKS

### GERTRUDE "KITTY" HENDRICKS, MASHPEE WAMPANOAG ELDER EDUCATOR AND CULTURE KEEPER NLC BOARD DIRECTOR

Mashpee Wampanoag tribal elder, and NLC Board Director, Kitty Hendricks, was born and raised in Mashpee, MA. It's not surprising that she grew up surrounded by a family of Wampanoag educators going back many decades including her Mother, Ernestine Gray, who was a prominent Wampanoag educator volunteer in the Mashpee public schools in the 80s. In following her Mom's path, Kitty received a degree in Early Childhood Education from Cape Cod Community College(4Cs) in 1995 and immediately became a Pre-K teacher building a cultural base with the Friendship Garden preschool in East Falmouth. She was also a substitute teacher in the Falmouth public school system and later joined the Aquinnah Wampanoag as an Education Planner in their Indian Education program. She was heavily involved in the planning of after school and camp programs focusing on Wampanoag culture. After 7 years with the Aquinnah Wampanoag, Kitty came home to the mainland to work as an Educator at Plimouth Plantation. Soon after, she was hired by the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe to work with the Childcare and Development Fund and then under Ramona Peters in Tribal Historic Preservation as the Tribe's Indian Museum coordinator where she was very happy working with native and non-native children. She then moved into the Tribe's Education Department to



work with tribal students under the DOE's Office of Indian Education program, Indian Education, where she currently works closely with tribal youth ensuring their educational future and promise. As one of the Tribe's traditionalist culture keepers, we commend Kitty on her years of dedication and commitment to teaching Wampanoag culture to her people, and others. And, on any given day, one can find her with a water drum, singing and dancing as a lead singer and dancer with the Wampanoag Nation Singers and Dancers at various public events from academia, to the fine arts, or cooking a striper over a fire inside our wetu at the Indian Museum in Mashpee. Occasionally, she's out and about with a group of native youth whether it's teaching them traditional Wampanoag songs or foraging native plants for medicine and crafts, but it's her cool, calm and kind personality that makes it so wonderful to work with her. While working with her in land conservation, there's always a beauty to her passion and a willingness to give it her all. Humbly, she can be seen digging holes for a white oak sapling and blueberry bush, or cutting invasives away from native plants trying to survive. Kitty is a well-respected NLC Board Director and Mashpee Wampanoag tribal elder, culture keeper, and educator, and we celebrate her in our 8th edition 2022 Summer Solstice NLC Newsletter.