



2020 NEWSLETTER

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STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS, CREATING HOPE

LEC – FINDING OUR PLACE

BY LAURA PETERSON

LIVING EARTH CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



I am often asked what the purpose of Living Earth Center is. My go to answer is usually to talk about our Community Garden that provides a place for people across all ages, races, spiritualities, and socio-economic backgrounds to grow food and relationships. While yes, this is undoubtedly true-people do come together to

share common ground in the Garden, there is something deeper to Living Earth Center than the Community Garden, or the workshops, Solstice Celebrations, and Earth Conference.

For me, the Living Earth Center represents a place that promotes the positive in a world that lately seems overwhelmed with chaos. It is a place that allows people to come together to talk about solutions when so much of the rhetoric seems to focus on problems. It is a place that encourages the uniqueness of us all and how that diversity plays a crucial role in our shared humanity and resilience. It is a place that uplifts the concept that there is something more that connects us all- something that we feel in love- not only for ourselves, but also for our neighbors whomever they are wherever they come from and for our Earth.

I may be partial, however, I have seen the power of this place with my own eyes. I have watched children jump in excitement at sight of the first ripe tomato, I have seen a woman with dementia smile in awe of the beauty of zinnias, I have watched people from all walks of life, from different parts of the world share a meal, I have seen tears in audience members eyes at a presenters story of sacred humanity, I have witnessed people with seemly different political beliefs come together around a table to talk about practical solutions for our community, and I have felt the sacred unity that comes when standing in silence around a fire. I believe that is places like Living Earth Center, that promote the positive and focus on our shared humanity that can help communities heal, grow and not only survive the challenges that we ultimately will face, but also thrive.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE

- Board Meetings are scheduled for the second Monday of every other month.
- Next Board Meeting is Monday, March 9th
- Board Retreat scheduled for April 3 – 4
- Welcome New Member – Briana Baker

Last spring, I asked the Board to ponder what the Community would be missing if Living Earth Center ceased to exist. The interesting thing is that when presented that same question, many people who are associated with Living Earth Center had completely different responses. To one of our Gardeners the answer was- I would miss a place to grow food that I need for my health, to another- I would miss a place that helps calm me down when I feel stressed and anxious. To a participant at one of our events, the answer was simple; I would miss one of the last places where respectful dialogue can take place. To one of the participants in our workshops- I would miss a place to take interesting classes that we can't find anywhere else.

You see, Living Earth Center's raison d'être depends on the person but at the heart of it is our commitment to working towards environmental and social sustainability that is grounded- in love, compassion, and respect.

We are grateful to you for your contribution and support to our mission and growth. We have a range of new programs and workshops that we're offering this year and invite you to join us in our efforts to build a more sustainable and compassionate community for all.

LIVING EARTH CENTER SNAPSHOT 2019

Total Funds Raised: \$9,071.56

Total Volunteer Hours Given: 417.5 !!

Total Pounds of Produce Donated: 853 lbs !!

We look forward to sharing common ground with you again in 2020! Please let us know, via the contact information below, if you have any ideas, suggestions, comments or feedback.

You are the Living Earth Center.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Laura Peterson

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Amy Hunt

www.livingearthcentermn.org livingearthcenter@ssndcp.org
507.389.4272

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ADVOCACY CALL: ENERGY EQUALITY

BY BRIANA BAKER

I've contributed many, many more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere than most people in the world. While the growing climate crisis threatens my world as I know it more and more every day, the threats are bigger and more imminent for so many people who have not benefited from an extravagant use of fossil fuels like I have. Both across the world and within the US, poor people and people of color are experiencing the consequences of climate change most directly. The injustices of climate change combine with existing class and race disparities and make them even worse.

The bit of hope in this story is that the transition to a cleaner energy economy can be a powerful mechanism for addressing those existing disparities. We can use this shift to create opportunities and implement a better, more equitable

system. But that won't just happen naturally. In fact, if we don't make justice and equity priorities as our systems move towards cleaner options, social disparities will get worse.

If a clean energy technology is cheaper than the conventional option, but only certain people can access it, (ex. folks who meet a credit requirement or who can make a big down payment) then the gap gets bigger instead of smaller. Clean energy can help us improve racial and economic justice, but we have to make it a priority and guide it in the most equitable direction.

Both across the world and within the US, poor people and people of color are experiencing the consequences of climate change most directly.

Minnesota is well-positioned to be a leader in this work. **The Minnesota Governor's office has proposed a plan called One Minnesota Path to Clean Energy that lays out a detailed path to a more equitable clean energy economy.** Last year, key parts of this plan passed in the Minnesota House of Representatives but did not even receive a hearing in the MN Senate. **Keep an eye out for One Minnesota Path to Clean Energy in the next legislative session and encourage your elected leaders to move us in this direction.**

UPCOMING NEW PROGRAMMING



We are excited to announce a new approach to community engagement! Beginning this May and running through September 2020, Living Earth Center will be putting on a monthly series called Community Common Ground in collaboration with other Greater Mankato non-profits, artists, educators, makers, businesses, and community leaders that bring together community members from diverse backgrounds for a cultural event to share common ground, have some fun, and learn something new!

Using the Living Earth Community Garden/ Barn as a gathering and performance space, the Common Ground series will be held once a month, is free and opened to the public and involves two twenty minute "Ted Talk" like presentations and/or demonstrations on topics that are seemingly completely unrelated. After a short Q and A, the audience is then tasked with finding the commonalities between the topics.

The series is an attempt to not only to highlight the cultural richness that exists within the Greater Mankato Area but also delve into the interconnection between seemingly different unrelated circles and communities.

Some confirmed topics for the 2020 Season are: Bike Polo, Speechless Films, Lakota Story Telling, Nature Writing, Indigo Dyeing, Hip Hop, Pollinators, and Punk Rock.

Check out www.livingearthcentermn.org for more details. We hope to see you there!

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Corporate Donor of the Year: Pub 500

For 2019 we would like to highlight the generosity and spirit of community collaboration we experienced when collaborating with Pub 500 to host our First Annual Meatless Meat Raffle last September.

When we approached them with the wacky idea of hosting a meatless meat raffle they were all in; allowing us to use their space free of charge and donating a portion of all Pub Bowls sold during the event back to Living Earth Center.

A huge thank you to both Tom Frederick and Jay Reasner, as well as the entire staff at Pub 500. Your dedication to the Mankato Community, kindness, and generosity make us proud to partner with you. We look forward to a future of shared collaborations.



SAVE THE DATE



Summer Youth Garden Programming

We are trying something new with our Kid's Garden this summer! Instead of three month-long class sessions our programming will be offered as individual classes à la carte style. We look forward to seeing you and your little ones in the garden this summer!

- May 16th – Family Gardening 101
- May 21st – The Magic of Seeds
- June 8th – Nesting in the Garden
- July 16th – The Magic of Seeds
- July 22nd – Art in the Garden
- August 12th – Make your own Garden Pickles

Register through Community Ed at: www.mankatocer.com

Please check our website at livingearthcentermn.org for more details and registration information for these and other upcoming workshops and events

February 10th – Traditional Plant Medicine Workshop, with Megan Schnitker of Lakota Made

February 21st – Renting it Out Right, a look at sustainable uses for rented farmlands with Robin Moore of LSP

February 24th – Traditional Beading Class with Megan Schnitker of Lakota Made

March 3rd – Maple Tapping Workshop with Scott Kuldelka, DNR Naturalist

April 25th – Garden Opening – Annual Community Day of Service and Friendship in the Garden

May 15th – Wine and Cheese Paring Fundraising Event

June 17th – Nature Photography Class with Scott Kuldelka, DNR Naturalist

June 20th – Annual Summer Solstice Celebration

July 22nd – Nature Scavenger Hunt in the Garden with Scott Kuldelka, DNR Naturalist

July, Date TBD – Dinner in the Garden Fundraising Event

August 22nd – Garden to Table Community Meal, a new twist on our Annual Picnic! Stay tuned for more details

August 29th – Monarch Tagging Workshop with Scott Kuldelka, DNR Naturalist

September, Date TBD – Second Annual Meatless Meat Raffle

HELP US CREATE COMMON GROUND

Through outreach and educational programs, Living Earth Center touches the lives of hundreds of people in the greater Mankato area. Your donations help ensure these programs continue to be affordable and accessible to all, regardless of income level.

We work locally to educate about the Earth issues you care about. We reconnect people to the natural world and their desire to do better. We reach kids, elders, and everyone in between. We provide a perspective on Earth care, climate issues, and community resilience that is unique and much needed. We work at the grassroots level for systemic change.

We invite you to help sponsor our work by donating today! Choose your level, and know whatever the amount, large or small, you will be aiding Living Earth Center and making a difference in our community.

If you are interested in becoming a legacy sponsor, by putting LEC in your estate plan, please contact our Executive Director Laura Peterson at lpeterson@ssndcp.org.



Donations go to Living Earth Center's general budget fund to help support:

- Community Garden Scholarships
- Programming for Underserved Youth
- Compost/Woodchips for Garden
- Educational Supplies/Seeds for Sprouts Classes
- Special Tools for Dementia-Friendly Garden
- Instructor Fees for Classes/Workshops
- Meals and Entertainment for Community Gatherings and Solstice Celebrations
- Advocacy Supporting Regenerative Environmental Practices

HELP SUSTAIN SUSTAINABILITY!
Become a sustaining monthly donor: a convenient, budgeting-friendly way to make a lasting commitment to LEC's mission.



DONATION PLEDGE CARD RETURN TODAY!

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

LIVING EARTH CENTER
170 GOOD COUNSEL DRIVE
MANKATO, MN 56001

DONATIONS MAY ALSO BE MADE ONLINE:

www.livingearthcentermn.org

YES! I WANT TO BE A LIVING EARTH CENTER SPONSOR!

- \$1000 \$500 \$250
- \$100 \$50 \$25
- other \$ _____

Make this a monthly donation



Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____

COMMUNITY CONNECTION — MAHKATO REVITALIZATION PROJECT

BY ANN ROSENQUIST FEE

Mahkato Revitalization Project is a new nonprofit born out of one woman's vision for a community that embraces and celebrates our local indigenous culture. That woman is Megan Bull Bear (a.k.a. Megan Schnitker). Megan is as embedded in the Mankato community as she is in her Lakota lineage — she serves as vice president of the Mahkato Wacipi Committee, president of the Indigenous Peoples Day Committee at MSU, and a board member of the YWCA. She is a frequent instructor and guest lecturer on indigenous art and culture, through programs at the Blue Earth County Historical Society, St. Peter's alternative school, the Living Earth Center, Mankato Public Schools, and Minnesota State University, Mankato. And, as a wife and mother of six girls, Megan is constantly seeking ways to bridge the gap between her family's traditional teachings and the mainstream world in which her daughters live and learn.

"Every time I teach a traditional medicine class or beading or storytelling or anything about Lakota people's connection to the land, people ask for more opportunities to learn," Bull Bear says. "There's a hunger out there to make these traditions part of our daily life, right now. It's my duty and my honor to make that a reality."

One piece of Lakota history that often comes as a surprise to learners, Bull Bear says, is that upon first contact with settlers, Lakota women insisted on helping and healing the sick and wounded. "The thought was, if we heal them, they won't hurt us," Bull Bear explains. "We can't go back in time, but we can re-introduce that way of thinking. The more people who learn indigenous art and healing practices, the more we heal as a community. We can't go back in time and un-do war or conflict. But we can do this, now."

Through the Mahkato Revitalization Project, Bull Bear hopes to give greater visibility and name-recognition to the classes and lectures she's been delivering for more than a decade, and to make indigenous art and culture more accessible to broader audiences. The Project is currently funded through modest fees for classes and

workshops. By shifting from independent contractor to nonprofit organization status, Bull Bear sees new opportunities to expand her roster of instructors, and to seek public and private funding for the organization to grow.

"A central location for indigenous art and cultural education is definitely a dream," Bull Bear says. "But right now, the immediate needs are to invite the community to learn indigenous practices for art and healing and weave them into their daily lives."

A complete listing of classes and other learning opportunities offered through the Mahkato Revitalization Project can be found at www.mahkatorevitalizationproject.org.



Megan Bull Bear speaking at LEC's 14th Annual Earth Conference, Women and the Land: Rooted in Connection. She shared stories from her Lakota heritage and spoke to how that connection can continue to be fostered today.

ONE SMALL STEP: A JOURNEY TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING



We are excited to announce our new Social Media Initiative, One Small Step. As the name implies it will be focusing on the seemingly small things we can change in our personal lives to live more sustainably.

Our first area of focus will be reducing personal plastic usage. The idea is to choose one way each month to reduce plastics in your life and then to share it on social media. By posting online we can share our progress, be inspired and encouraged by each other, and help hold each other accountable. (Kind of like having a "workout buddy" except we will be each other's "sustainability buddy.")

There will be no hardcore rules – if you need to skip a month or for any reason backtrack there will be no judgment, no one is perfect, the understanding will be that we're all doing our best. This will be a place to lift each other up.

Keep an eye out during February for the launch of our Facebook group, One Small Step. Anyone is welcome to join at any time and post the way they are eliminating plastics that month.

If other social media platforms are more your style feel free to post there as well using #leconestep. LEC has both Instagram and Twitter accounts and we will be posting there also.

We are looking forward to the creation of this virtual common ground, and hope that you will join us, one small step at a time, on this journey towards sustainable living.

Overwhelmed with what you
"should" be doing?
Start with one small step.
Then another.
There is no one path; it is your
own intentional journey.

GARDENER SPOTLIGHT



Every Tuesday afternoon from May through August members of the Boys and Girls Club of Mankato's (now called MY Place) Gardening Club could be found up on Good Counsel Hill tending their plot in the Living Earth Community Garden.

Participants ranged in age from 6 to 13 years old, and on any given week 5 - 15 of them could be found working in the garden with LEC Executive Director Laura Peterson. The kids learned the basics of gardening by growing, among other things, a salsa garden (peppers, tomatoes, and onions), planting potatoes, watering and weeding their plants, and picking fresh veggies such as beans and cucumbers.

They also took part in other activities like painting dried gourds to make bird houses, making pickles (in the photo above the group is shown proudly displaying the jars of pickles they made themselves), learning about the importance of pollinators, and

going on a nature scavenger hunt through the gardens.

When asked what made this collaboration so special, Peterson said it was seeing how the kids, for some this was their first time in a garden, quickly found their sense of place in the gardens. "It was their own space to have freedom and ownership, it was *their* garden," she said.

She also noted how amazing it was to watch the kids eating the vegetables they had grown straight off the vine – how much they loved them, would eat their fill, and then ask to take some home to their families. "I remember one boy who came up to me with a cucumber," she said, "and he asked, 'I can eat this?!? *Right Now?!?*' And then ate the whole cucumber and went back for a second one!"

The MY Place Gardening Club is already making plans for this coming summer. MY Place and LEC have applied for a No Child Left Inside Grant to develop a "Growing Stewards" curriculum program. It would focus on helping the participants learn Self Stewardship, Community Stewardship, and Earth Stewardship.

And definitely the kids themselves have plans to grow and eat more cucumbers!

2019: A LOOK BACK



Our beautiful Tree Woman statue by local artist Eva Hendrickson was installed in her permanent home in the Children's' Peace Garden last May.



In May we hosted our first Annual Wine and Cheese Pairing in the Big Red Barn. Wine was from Morgan Creek and cheese from St. Peter Co-Op via Jim Vonderhaar, emeritus cheese monger.

As we revisit 2019 we are proud of all LEC has accomplished; but also to have been involved in so many collaborative events with groups and individuals in this vibrant, energetic, powerful community we all share.

- Partnered with Minnesota State University College of Allied Health and Nursing and Singing Hills Choir to host an Eng-AGE-ment Garden for people with dementia and their caregivers
- Partnered with the Boys and Girls Club to host a weekly Garden Club focused on helping at risk and under-represented youth
- Partnered with Makahto Revitalization Project to host programming focused on promoting traditional plant medicine and Lakota tradition
- Partnered with DNR Naturalist Scott Kudelka to offer workshops including: Wild Edibles, Monarch Tagging, and Native Bees
- Attended the UN Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City focused on building sustainable communities
- Participated in the Global Climate Strike, hosting a garden tour and discussion
- First Outdoor Worship was held in July in the Gardens by First Presbyterian Church



We held our Second Annual Community Picnic in August with live music by Good Night Gold Dust and belly dancing by Satori Violet.

- Hosted employees from FUN.com, H&M, and Hubbard Feeds for Workplace Days in the Gardens
- Hosted Annual Summer and Winter Solstice Celebrations and our 14th Annual Earth Conference
- Raised record donation amounts during our #GivingTuesday and Give to the Max Day campaigns - *Thank you!*
- Donated over 800 lbs of produce to Theresa House and Welcome Inn
- Collaborated with these and other groups on events and programming: Moody Bees Farm, Blue Earth Project, Transition Mankato, Cedar Crate Farms, Greater MN Resiliency Network

TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE: THANK YOU'S

Living Earth Center could not operate without the donations of time, talent, and treasure from such a vibrant and generous community of supporters.

We extend our sincerest thanks to each and every one of you.

Financial Contributions

Jim and Kay Ackil
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BOOK REVIEW: THE RIGHT TO BE COLD

BY MELISSA MARTENSEN

Last fall at the Nobel Conference at Gustavus I had the opportunity to hear Sheila Watt-Cloutier speak. Before her talk was even over I had pulled out my phone and ordered myself a copy of her book *The Right to be Cold*:



One Woman's Fight to Protect the Arctic and Save the Planet from Climate Change.

Watt-Cloutier's story is as inspiring as it is compelling. She was born in 1953 in an Inuit community in Northern Quebec whose way of life had not changed for centuries, but would change dramatically over the next few decades.

One of Watt-Cloutier's main themes in her book is that climate change is an issue of human rights and she skillfully illustrates this, weaving her personal journey, as well as that of her people, alongside documented evidence of climate change in the Arctic. She demonstrates that not only did these changes considerably alter the landscape of her homeland, but also dramatically impeded her people's ability to live and thrive as they had for generations.

Watt-Cloutier grew up in a small Inuit community and at age 10 she was sent away to the South for schooling. She spent her early adulthood back North trying to help her people, first as a medical assistant and then as a school counselor. From there her quest to change the systems oppressing her people took her on quite the journey. What started as a seat on an Inuit Education Task Force led to her being president of the Canadian Branch of the Inuit Circumpolar Counsel.

It was then that her work fighting climate change truly began. Her first focus was getting an international agreement drafted and ratified to reduce the amount of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) that were travelling from the industrialized South and settling in the cold North poisoning the Inuit food chain. Her second herculean task was to draft a petition to the United Nations declaring protection from climate change was a human right.

Both Projects took years and involved international cooperation. The POPs Agreement was ultimately a success, being ratified in 2001. And while the Human Rights Petition did not initially garner the reception they had hoped, it did play an important role in moving the climate change discussion forward and has been referenced in many future accords and agreements. The importance

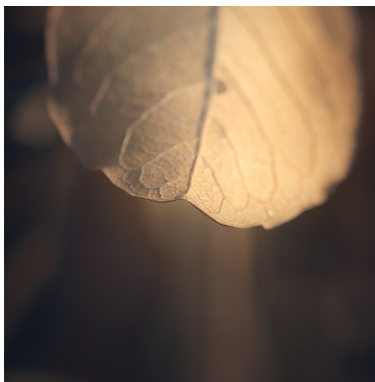
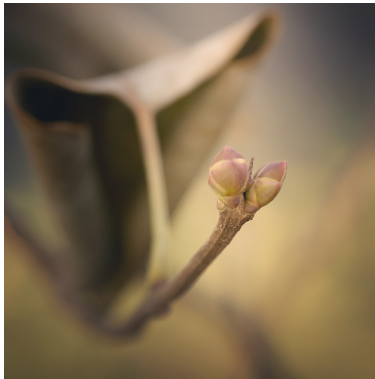
of her work was recognized with her 2007 Nobel Peace Prize nomination.

Throughout both processes Watt-Cloutier stressed two key themes – the idea that all voices must be represented in the implementation to have a successful outcome and that bringing the human element into the debate is necessary. Moving beyond dry facts and data and putting a human face on the issue she was able to move adversaries towards understanding and compromise.

While Watt-Cloutier doesn't shy away from the myriad struggles she faced in her life, her message ultimately is one of positivity and hope. The chapters on her international work can at times get bogged down with names and acronyms of the groups with which she was working, but the message she is sending remains clear. Climate change is a human rights issue, these issues are best solved when everyone has a voice at the table, and when issues are given a human face those voices are best heard.

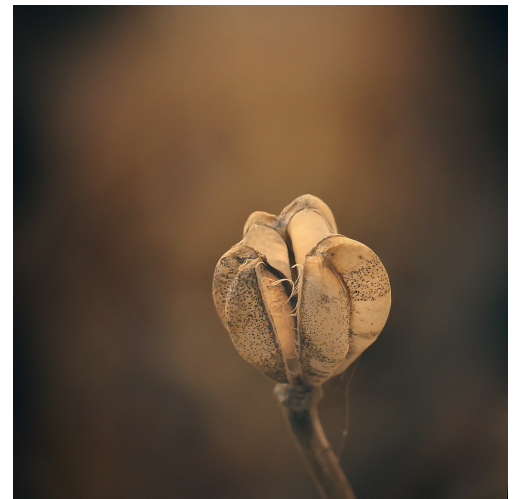
There are no single issues with simple solutions, everything is interconnected, "The world needs to realize that our environments, our communities all around the world are not separate, and that our shared atmosphere and oceans, not to mention our human spirit, connects us all."

LOCAL ARTIST SPOTLIGHT





Hello! I'm Carla Mills - I've lived in Mankato since I was eight. My husband Steve and I will be married 20 years in April and have 3 boys. I've been doing photography for about 5 years and recently started exploring macro photography. I love taking portraits, and making composite photos. I've had photos in US Travel magazine, RC Flyer magazine and Mankato Magazine's Photo Issue. My website is dearcarla.com and I am [@_dearcarla_](https://www.instagram.com/_dearcarla_) on Instagram.



REAL FOOD FOR REAL PEOPLE

The three things I most remember my grandmother doing are reading crime novels, doing crossword puzzles, and baking. And my most favorite things she baked were these ginger snap cookies. Even though "snap" is in the name they are soft and chewy... and I have to brag up my grandma here...delicious! -Melissa Martensen

Grandma Miller's Ginger Snaps

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| ¾ c oil and ¾ c Crisco | 1 t ginger |
| 1 c brown sugar | 1 t baking soda |
| 1 c granulated sugar | 1 t cloves |
| 2 eggs | 1 t cinnamon |
| ½ c dark molasses | 4 c flour |

Combine flour and spices and set aside. Cream together oil, Crisco, and both sugars. Add eggs and molasses. Mix dry and wet ingredients together. Refrigerate overnight.

Make walnut-sized balls and roll in sugar. Bake on an ungreased cookie sheet at 375° for 10 min – until flat and crinkly. Don't over bake.

