



La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

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E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

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Monthly reflections are archived in the Blog on the web site.

November and Indigenous Land Acknowledgement



Conveners of Zoom meetings I have recently attended began by recognizing the Indigenous Peoples who were the original inhabitants of the land where the gathering was occurring. Called *Land Acknowledgements*, these are attempts to express genuine respect and support of Native Tribes as well as raise the awareness of those gathered. What an important and poignant way to educate and wake us up to a people so often ignored!

This is the way we began La Vista's delayed Autumn Equinox Celebration in October. Participants were asked to introduce themselves and name a tribe that was among the original inhabitants of this land on the bluffs. As it turned out, much more was shared. We were only sixteen people, but the resulting conversation was a real eye-opener!

Two in particular stand out for me. A striking young man with a long black pony tail shared that his mother is Cherokee, and as a child she was taken from her tribe to be educated in a government boarding school. Originally from South Dakota, he commented that neither she nor her family ever returned there. Another participant told us his great grandmother was also of the Cherokee tribe. She married a European, and together they fled to the mountains to escape the Trail of Tears March, the U.S. government-forced relocation of Eastern Woodland tribes to areas West of the Mississippi. Thousands of native people died on the trail. He expressed gratitude that we were talking about this significant and often ignored part of US history. "It is soooooo important," he commented.

I have known both of these men for years, but did not know their native ancestry. This experience called to mind Thomas Berry's words where he noted that when Europeans came to this land they couldn't even see native peoples and their inherent dignity but looked right through them. He goes on to say how Europeans could have acted: ... *they might have established an intimacy with this continent and all its manifestations. They might have learned from the peoples here how to establish a viable relationship with the forests and with the forest inhabitants...they might have seen this continent as a land to be revered and dwelt on with a light and gracious presence. Instead it was to the colonists a land to be exploited...*(*The Great Work*, p. 41) What a difference it would have made if treasuring intimacy and relationship predominated over exploitation and consumerism.

As we continued introductions, our enlightenment broadened even more when three OMI novices introduced themselves. Royd and Chileshe are from Zambia, a country that is still the home of over 200 tribes. Both proudly introduced themselves as from the Bemba tribe. Etienne, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, shared a similar reality; the Congo is also home to hundreds of tribes! We all felt enriched by the way they so graciously shared themselves during our time together.

I admit I felt a little envious of all those who belonged to a tribe, so when I introduced myself I said that I was of the same tribe as Sister Rose, who was also present, the School Sisters of Notre Dame tribe. I became grateful for my membership in a whole new way. The experience of Land Acknowledgement led me to the deeper truth that we are

here on Earth to be part of a living community, the sacred web of life. The Earth Community is the tribe we all share, one that carries responsibility for the pain and suffering of all the other members, human and other-than-human.

Those gathered were amazed that a simple introductory activity would reveal so much, raising our awareness and helping us ponder our place in this ongoing reality. May our growing awareness lead all of us to action in support of Indigenous communities as well as to all members of our Earthy tribe.

(Pictured above, from left to right: Novices Royd Miyomba, Etienne Kabemba, and Chileshe Mulenga.)

November 9 Work Day in the Oblates Preserve

9:30 am – Noon

In addition to a lot of work, the volunteers who gather monthly have a lot of fun. If you would like to join us in November, please call 618-466-5004. We'd love to have more help and more enjoyment!

November 13 Discussion of *The Leak* by Kate Petty

6:30 - 8:00 pm In person and Online



Please join us and if you can, bring a young environmentalist with you to discuss the graphic novel *The Leak* by Kate Reed Petty who will be with us online! *The Leak* is intended for middle schoolers, but its theme of community activism and citizen science is appealing to all ages. Local young environmentalists will also be on hand to share their own efforts to curb pollution in our area. We'll be live and on Zoom at the Center for Spirituality and Sustainability (Fuller Dome) on SIUE's campus. Email me for the link if you would like to participate online - info@lavistaelc.org OR if you need directions to the Dome.

November 25 Suggestion for your Thanksgiving

Maybe you would like to begin your Thanksgiving gathering with a land acknowledgement. You will find directions here:

<https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>

To see a map of the tribal lands so you can discover the original inhabitants of your place:

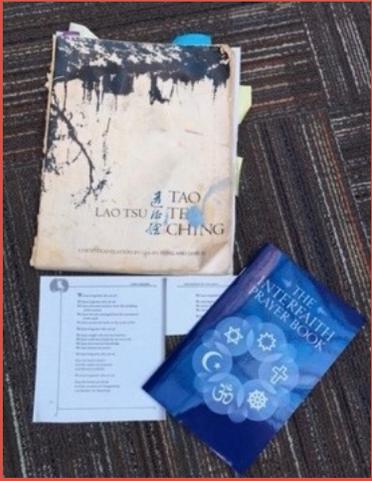
<https://native-land.ca/>

November 26 Buy Nothing Day

I am writing this as COP 26 meets in Glasgow to address the climate crisis. It has become clear that consumerism with all its ramifications is a big driver of climate change; so, it is hopeful that what began as one Buy Nothing Day has become the Buy Nothing Project for every day of the year. Look on Facebook for a *Buy Nothing* project locally. Joining a group provides a way to freely share what you no longer want and acquire what you need without payment. Also, since the project is composed of local groups, it is not only a way to step out of the throw-away culture, but also a way to meet your neighbors and deepen community. *Buy Nothing* is now in over 50 nations - an idea whose time has come!

November 28 Soul Sunday, an Interfaith Circle

10:30 – 11:30 AM



This spiritual gathering is promoted as *the sharing of prayers, inspirational readings, and passages from the scriptures of many faiths. Beyond that, there is no set form.* Participants bring prayerful resources that mean much to them like those pictured here. They are welcome to share them or to simply sit, meditate and enjoy the spiritual atmosphere. On the fourth Sunday of the month, the theme is spiritual ecology.

The building's architecture is most conducive to this gathering. It is held in the Buckminster Fuller Dome on the campus of Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, IL. The dome is a miniature Earth, so looking up you see exactly where you are located on the face of Earth! The building is described as *a beacon for global unity, and its*

purpose is to provide a place for connecting the world's cultural and spiritual traditions through their common concern for the planet. If you live in the area, please join us for this special gathering. No registration necessary. Just park in Visitor Lot B on the campus and come in.

