Welcome Winter Solstice 2020
Rivero Family 10 acre Yarmouth land donation
The Muddy Pond Pine Barrens Kingston

SOLSTICE THOUGHTS
FROM THE VICE-CHAIR

This time of year is typically filled with gratitude by many, and for we NLCers, we are always grateful. We Indigenous, are grateful for the land, language, and for ancient knowledge, the wisdom that is passed down to us through oral tradition, ancient stories told by the ancestors. Storytelling is one of the powerful ways the history of tradition is kept alive. Winter Solstice marks the end of the Fall harvest, the final growing season where we foraged for early winter foods like September beach plums, and elderberries…. and October cranberries. We dried strawberries, blueberries and blackberries for the next season. We gathered root vegetables like carrots, and leeks, and we continued to enjoy our “3 sisters”: corn, beans and squash. It’s the time of year where we light more fires in gratitude of the land, water, and the natural gifts which abound us. We are grateful for community and one another, as keepers, the stewards of the land. Some refer to this day as the shortest day of the year when the sun takes its lowest path across the sky, but we Indigenous view it as a sacred time representing the completion of many life cycles when the sun has signaled the earth to rest, to take slumber. We make offerings of tobacco to the 4 directions in gratitude of earth mother’s blessings from the past year. We thank her and pray for balance, both physically and spiritually in the coming year. These ceremonies and prayers were created by the ancestors and they are our cultural traditions, our ceremonial rituals. We always faced our wetus, our homes made of cedar saplings and bark, east toward the rising neepawus (sun). It was a time to make the most of the light during the darkest days of winter, and to appreciate the sun’s warmth. We also cherished the time for the earth mother’s much needed rest. We too, would rest when the sun set, the warm light descending into darkness. And when we rose to the first light of sunrise, we were in gratitude for another day. Today, we share in this gratitude for health, wellness strength, peace and love to you all in 2021.

Leslie Jonas,
NLC Vice-Chairwoman
nativelandconservancy.org
10.8 acres

The NLC is over the moon grateful for the beautiful and generous land donation made to us by Jacqueline Rivero of Yarmouth, with the Yarmouth Conservation Trust holding the Conservation Restriction. Jacki inherited the Simpkins Bog from her uncle Emmanuel DiTiberio (1921-1995). It serves as most of the headwaters of Whites Brook, the major freshwater tributary to Chase Garden Creek in Yarmouth/Dennis.

In the 1960s, some engineers dreamed of making a new Cape Cod canal to connect Cape Cod Bay to Nantucket Sound by connecting Whites Brook and Bass River. The bog production probably began at the height of Cape Cod “Cranberry Fever” in the 1870s and ended soon after the 1959 “Cranberry Scare,” when many small bogs went out of production. The USGS surficial geology map of 1962 still in production shows the Simpkins Bog as being in production.

The former owner, Jacki Rivero, wanted to ensure that the land was given back to its original inhabitants, and not developed. This was made clear as we walked the land and spent time getting to know this magical place. Paths and trails pushed us further and further into the pristine woods where we found a natural stream of water, a creek, that flowed freely, making it the watering hole for many 2 and 4-legged friends as witnessed by the many tracks.

Throughout the 10+ acres, we encountered this botanical marvel called moss, padding the walls of the creek and providing a carpet of emerald green ecosystem engineering as one of the oldest living organisms on earth. Moss is one of the most adaptive, self reliant plants and it grows without roots, flowers, or stems. Considered perfection in nature, its versatility and self reliance make it a natural phenomenon.

We thoroughly enjoy the beauty of this healthy eco-wonder and liken it to a natural emerald sculpture perfectly placed throughout the forests.
MUDDY POND

Kingston, MA.

On July 13, 2020, members of NLC’s board ventured over to Muddy Pond’s former Camp Mishannock in Kingston for our first in-person meeting with Conservation Works, LLC., Simmons Stewardship and Conservation Ecology, the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, and representatives from the Muddy Pond Trust, Inc. who plan to gift the Wampanoag Tribal communities with this camp site in 2021. The Native Land Conservancy will steward the land on behalf of tribal communities.

We met with an agenda on this hot summer day to begin developing the land management plan and share the proposed vision for the future of the 32-acre Camp site.

The Camp site is abutted on three sides by the Muddy Pond Northeast Wilderness Preserve, “forever wild” 322 acres of the most beautiful land imaginable. From the moment you leave the tarred road and enter the dirt road leading to Muddy Pond, you are captivated by the beauty of the natural world. The land offers wild refuge for nature, wildlife, and people. The 322 acres includes a 48-acre glacial pond and 273 acres of forestland. There are trails for hiking; many views of the pond, and 25 verified vernal pools that give life to turtles, frogs, salamanders, toads and insects.

The Camp site is also recognized as having historic, and cultural significance, and is subject to regulation under the MA Endangered Species Act. It’s dominated by mostly white and black pine, many white and red oaks and several species listed as critically endangered, like the rare Plymouth Gentian highlighted by Mass Wildlife’s Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program as their Species Spotlight pick in August. 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of the MA Endangered Species Act (MESA), and to celebrate, MassWildlife highlighted one rare species each month as a Species Spotlight. The NLC will make sure that this rare beauty is not only protected, but flourishes again in its home environment.

During our meeting, entertainment was provided by several large fish (from the weight of the splashes), butterflies, dragonflies and the croaking of exuberant frogs. It was evident that the passion to protect and preserve the land in perpetuity was felt by everyone at this meeting.

A walk around the land after lunch proffered views of ponds, fields, forest, vegetation of all kinds and heights and enough of the color green to soothe the modern mind. There are buildings that will be taken down; remnants of a summer camp for children, and plans for the construction of a modest education center in the making.

Throughout the day a feeling of reverence, connection, and our ancestors’ memories were present, reminding us that this is Wampanoag homeland and it’s time to recover what is being offered to our people.

With effective stewardship, we have the opportunity to approach this land as a source of knowledge, as a place to deepen kinship with all our relations, and as a place to connect with our Creator in a natural setting of unsurpassed beauty.
Manomet Wampanoag elder, and NLC Board Director, Gail Melix, loves the notion of land conservation for Indigenous people. In her efforts to honor her parents, she celebrates her Dad by her involvement with Indigenous culture and land conservation, and celebrates her Mom by being an active member of the Faith Community Environmental Network (FCEN). She is also the Quaker Earthcare Ministry Co-clerk of the New England Yearly Meeting. Gail believes that addressing local environmental concerns and global warming are imperative for the survival of all living things. Science has proven what Indigenous peoples have known all along; that humans and all forms of life on earth share common DNA, are related, interconnected and interdependent upon one another for existence and well-being. She asks that you learn which actions you can take to save and sustain our earth wherever your feet touch the ground. This helps us stay in right relationship with nature for the benefit of all. She believes that embracing a native approach to the land and water is the only way these natural resources will be protected. Additionally, Gail is the Co-founder of the Quaker inspired Native Land Reparation; Acting Out of Conscience Initiative. Gail asserts "In recognition of the fact that the land we live on is ancestral tribal territory, we have decided as a matter of principle and as an act of conscience that we would embrace native reparation by donating 1% of our home sales to the local Indigenous tribe". The warm kindness that emanates from Gail's generous soul is a gift to the NLC, and we celebrate her in our 3rd edition Winter Solstice Newsletter.