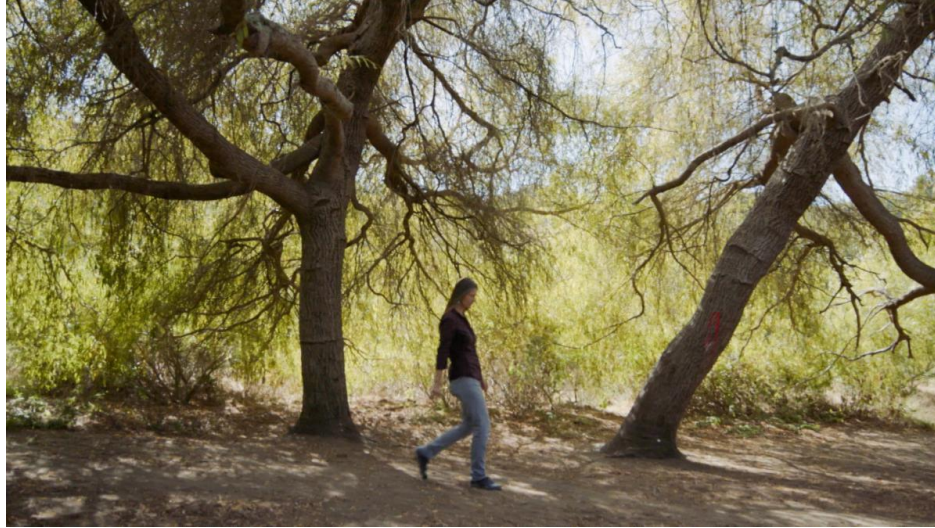


Ode'min Giizis (the Strawberry Moon)
June 2, 2021

Dear TCC Relatives,

After just witnessing the last full moon of springtime, I wish you all good health and wellness as we move into the warmth and heat of summertime. For the Anishinaabeg, we are entering the *Ode'min Giizis*, the Strawberry Moon. According to these teachings, the strawberry is good medicine for the heart and the teeth.

I am writing to you today with some big and exciting news: after 28 years of serving as the first Executive Director and CEO of The Cultural Conservancy (TCC), I am stepping down from this role and “dancing on the medicine wheel.” I am shifting roles as I begin to enter the autumn of my life, care for an aging mother, focus on my writing and scholarship, and take the time to reflect on and integrate nearly three decades of service to TCC. There have been so many deep learnings with extraordinary Indigenous communities locally, nationally, and globally. It has been a deep joy, a sacred burden, and a profound journey growing the organization to the point it is now. From a few boxes of files given to me by Claire Cummings and Kimla McDonald in 1993 (and a new name, Native Board and mission) we have come a long way. It is now time for fresh leadership to direct and shape the organization for the next 30 years and beyond.



I acknowledge and bow to the founders of TCC's parent organization, the Sacred Land Foundation, and to the Indigenous founders, Chris Peters, Mililani Trask, Walter Echohawk, Kalani English, and Dagmar Thorpe, who, in 1992, transformed TCC into a Native-led organization. I was blessed to learn from them and stand on their shoulders as they stood on their elder's shoulders and we all stand on Turtle's back here on Turtle Island (North America). It is our obligation to "dance on Turtle's Back" as Leanne Simpson reminds us, as it is "Turtles all the way down."

Today TCC is an Indigenous-led land-based organization with three sites in Northern California, including two farms. We have grown from a staff of one to 10 current employees, and we also have about 35 global Indigenous partners in a dozen countries. *Chi-miigwech* to all of the fabulous board members, cultural workers, staff, volunteers, supporters, and allies who strengthened us over the past 35 years. We especially recognize the Ohlone and Coast Miwok peoples as the original and ongoing stewards of the lands TCC calls home.

As TCC is part of my heart and soul, I am excited to shift roles and continue to serve TCC's vision and mission in a different capacity. I will now become TCC's Chair of the Board of Directors and remain involved in some of TCC's diverse programs and initiatives, including the Heron Shadow Native Land work, foodways and food sovereignty partnerships, the Native Seed Pod podcast, and curating the archives, in preparation for an eventual book and film and to build out TCC's Resource Library.



I'm delighted to announce that Sara Moncada (Yaqui), Chief Program Officer with us since 2016, is stepping up as our new CEO! Sara has a wealth of talents and experiences as a producer of programs, events, performances, media, and thriving successful teams. Sara is a dancer, educator, and skillful leader who carries big vision and the know-how to implement visions into positive experiences and lasting outcomes. She is an astute listener and observer and is a reciprocal collaborator. Sara is a faithful servant to the wisdom and wishes of Indigenous communities and dances on our Turtle's back with grace and care. "It's Turtles all the way down."

I look forward to my new role with TCC and the good work that will continue under Sara's leadership in deep collaboration with our brilliant and creative team, and with all of you.

"I am truly humbled at this opportunity to serve. There is no way I could do this without the strength and leadership of Melissa, the guidance of our Board of Directors and Advisory Councils, and the incredible team I have the honor of dancing with here at TCC. We are facing a future rooted in land and community, strengthened by our circles of kin, and full of inspiration as we continue this voyage together!" ~Sara



We will have a series of small, intimate gatherings at Heron Shadow this summer, culminating in a fall public event to officially launch our Native Land Campaign to ignite Indigenous resilience and create an Indigenous biocultural heritage oasis at the land we call Heron Shadow. Stay tuned for more details and invitations coming soon!

Please keep in touch with your ideas, requests, and support! I am very grateful for this journey with you and continuing to serve Indigenous rights, environmental protection, and collective liberation for all our relations!

Weweni sago,

Melissa K. Nelson (Anishinaabe/Métis/Norwegian[Turtle Mountain Chippewa])

P.S. you can still always reach me at melissa@nativeland.org!

P.P.S. and say hello any time to Sara at sara@nativeland.org!

Images

Turtle Art by [Joanne Barker](#)

Melissa Nelson walks El Polin Springs in the Presidio by [KCET Tending Nature](#)

Three Generations of TCC, Melissa Nelson, Kimla McDonald, Sara Moncada by Mateo Hinojosa

Sara Moncada and Melissa Nelson tending the field by [KCET Tending Nature](#)

Partners Sara and Melissa by Mateo Hinojosa



The Cultural Conservancy | 415-561-6594 | tcc@nativeland.org | www.nativeland.org

Connect with us

