



# Mohonk Consultations

“Let’s talk it over at Mohonk.”  
A TRADITION OF CONNECTING  
PEOPLE THROUGH DIALOGUE

2022

“Summer Portal”  
Photo by Jenny Lee Fowler

## A Time to Walk a New Path, Tell a New Story, and Make Peace with Nature

### Dear Friends,

In her widely read book of essays synthesizing scientific knowledge and Indigenous wisdom, Robin Wall Kimmerer speaks about reciprocity between humans and the natural world. In return for the gifts that nature freely offers, we have a responsibility of care. The language frequently used in the environmental movement would have us think that the “environment” is all that is outside of us. But as the late Buddhist teacher, Thich Nhat Hahn, professed, the truth is we belong to each other and the earth: we “inter-are.”

We are relatively new at this. I was reminded at the Making Peace with Nature Conference at Mohonk Mountain House this April that the mainstream environmental movement, marked by the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, is only 50 years old. In 2022, there are many ways of measuring how much worse off nature is, suggesting that the environmental movement has been a failure. And yet, the story we told ourselves then, and for the ensuing decades, of the possibility of unending growth and prosperity without the humility of respect and gratitude for the earth, has been a destructive one based on a one-sided relationship—one of power over, rather than communion with, each other and the earth.

*Stories are among our most potent tools for restoring the land as well as our relationship to land. We need to un-earth the old stories that live in a place and begin to create new ones, for we are storymakers, not just storytellers. ... I dream of a world guided by a lens of stories rooted in the revelations of science and framed with an Indigenous worldview—stories in which matter and spirit are both given voice.*

—Robin Wall Kimmerer,  
***Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*** (2013)

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The thrust of the Making Peace Conference was to shift the narrative in order to rewrite environmental law curricula for present times. The rights of future generations, Indigenous people's self-determination, the Indigenous understanding of spirit in nature, the "one health" response to the pandemic, and Thomas Berry's Universe Story were all referred to as ways of adopting a new story about human relationship to nature.



Tulip Tree Flower  
Photo by Louisa Finn

Berry's *The Universe Story*, published in 1992, narrated evolution as a story with a comprehensive vision of the role of humans. As a self-titled "geologist," Berry coined the term "Eozoic" to name that emerging period in which humans would recover their creative orientation to the world.

*With a story, people can endure catastrophe. And with a story they can gather the energies to change their lot.*

**—Thomas Berry**

In our March webinar on climate change solutions, we highlighted three groups reframing the local story of the relationship between people, land, water, and air. In June, we celebrated our Distinguished Achievement Award recipient, Youko Yamamoto, a native of Japan inspired by its nuclear devastation to devote her life to promoting stories of peace. Through these programs, we glimpse the possibility of rewriting our individual stories to augment the positive impact we have on others. Even one conversation can change a life's course for the better.

*The future needs us. We need each other. At a time when the majority of Americans want to see serious climate action, too many politicians have failed us and undermined those who are trying. We ourselves must respond for those who will be born next week and next decade and next century, who need a planet alive and flourishing in all its exquisite diversity of land and creatures and humans. We have no right to rob them or the young people staring at a chaotic future now of their birthright.* — **Rebecca Solnit and Terry Tempest Williams, "Humanity Can't Equivocate Any Longer: This Is a Climate Emergency," *The Guardian*, op-ed, June 28, 2022.**

Thank you for joining Mohonk Consultations in our efforts to help shift the story of human life on earth to one that represents the values of the Eozoic period. We must remember that our way forward lies in our resolve to highlight the voices of solution seekers, to uplift community conversations, and to remain open to new ideas, new language, and new stories.

**Louisa Finn**

*Chair, Mohonk Consultations Board of Directors*



The purpose of Mohonk Consultations is to bring about a clearer understanding of the interrelationships of all life on earth, emphasize the need for sustainable use of all the earth's resources, including humans, and support the development of practical means to do so.



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[Mohonk-Consultations.org](http://Mohonk-Consultations.org)  
[info@Mohonk-Consultations.org](mailto:info@Mohonk-Consultations.org)  
 845-256-2726

1000 Mountain Rest Rd  
 New Paltz NY 12561

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# Youko Yamamoto Honored With 2022 Distinguished Achievement Award

Photo by Steve Stanne

Our 2022 award ceremony, attended by a record 150 guests, celebrated Hudson Valley resident Youko Yamamoto. Since 2010, she has carried the spirit of service through her work as founder of the Bon-Odori Dance Festival for Peace, gathering taiko drummers, dancers, Hiroshima survivors, and the community in an annual day-long commemoration. We also paid tribute to Youko's support of farmers through her restaurants, Gomen Kudasai (New Paltz, 2008-2018) and Tanma! Ramen Tavern (Kingston, opened 2022); her offering of venues to musicians and artists; and her creation of opportunities for students and teachers of calligraphy, ikebana, and the Japanese language.

The event opened with a rousing invocation on the taiko drum by Stuart Paton of Burlington Taiko, followed by a dance performance by Minbuza. Both groups are staples at the Bon-Odori Festival. Speakers were Livia Vanaver of The Vanaver Caravan and Stuart Bigley, formerly of Unison Arts Center, both of whom have warm, longstanding connections with Youko. Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who showed up with an outpouring of appreciation and affection for Youko and her inspiring work.



Photo by Steve Stanne

## 2022 OCTOBER FORUM

### *Universal Basic Income:* **Transformative Policy or Utopian Fantasy?**

Sunday, October 16, 2-5 pm,  
 Mohonk Mountain House Parlor

Mohonk Consultations invites you to a public forum in the Mohonk Mountain House Parlor, on Sunday, October 16, 2-5 pm, to learn about the history and economics of Universal Basic Income (UBI). A panel discussion featuring Almaz Zelleke, Stephen Nuñez, Keiko Sono and Conrad Shaw, will be followed by a Q&A session and small roundtable discussions focusing on problem-solving for local applications. Please see our website for more details.



Do all the  
**good** you can,  
 by all the means you can, in all  
 the ways you can, in all the places you  
 can, at all the times you can, to all the  
 people you can, as long as ever you can.  
 —John Wesley

# What They Say:

“

Ask yourself, what can I do in my everyday life to change the direction of things?

—**Youko Yamamoto**”



## Panelists from our March Webinar on Climate Change:

“

We're learning from local farmers who have had successful soil health implementation already... and we share stories with other farmers.

—**Adam Ristow**”



“

Nature is the true expression of resilience to climate change.

—**Lyndsay Cooper**”



“

I honestly never really understood the separation between people & nature.

—**Heather Eckhardt**”



# *Farm Fields to Riverfronts:* Nature-Based Solutions to Climate Change in the Hudson Valley



As part of Bard College's Earth Day teach-in on climate solutions and justice, Mohonk Consultations offered a one-hour virtual program on March 31 titled, *From Farm Fields to Riverfronts—Nature-Based Solutions to Climate Change in the Hudson Valley*. The Bard event reached thousands of people through collaboration with universities, schools, and faith-based communities. Mohonk Consultations was honored to be a partner in this extensive global network. Solutions are underway in the Hudson Valley, addressing various local opportunities and impacts. These efforts reflect the needs in the Hudson Valley that have emerged with new climate conditions.

Heather Eckhardt represented Scenic Hudson's Northeast Carbon Alliance Project, which is working with farmers in the Hudson Valley and beyond to promote regenerative agriculture to help mitigate climate change while improving agricultural soils. Aaron Ristow, from the American Farmland Trust, described hands-on practices underway at the Genesee River Demonstration Farm in the Finger Lakes region, where New York farmers can see results for themselves.

On the riverfront, Lyndsey Cooper, Climate Outreach Specialist with NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program and the Cornell University Water Resources Institute, gave a walk-through of New York State's ambitious climate goals and introduced how climate adaptation and resilience strategies are being adopted in Hudson Valley riverfront communities, including climate-adaptive designs to address flooding. This ongoing project was conceived in partnership with students and faculty from Cornell University's Department of Landscape Architecture. It relies on natural features and processes to reduce impacts such as restoring "living shorelines" using natural features that protect against floods and designing waterfront parks that can hold flood waters.

*Following the webinar, a large landholder in the Hudson Valley (they farm over 2,000 acres) reached out to Aaron Ristow directly for technical support as they aim to transition their farmland to more regenerative practices.*  
**—Karisa Centanni, American Farmland Trust, April 8, 2022**

FERN TRAIL INVITATION

*The Ruth  
H. Smiley  
Fern &  
Wildflower  
Trail Invites  
You to  
Nature's Peace*

Experience a quiet, secluded, green glade you can walk to in five minutes from the Mohonk Mountain House East Porch. Look for the sign on the road to the Greenhouse. There you will find the A. Keith Smiley Peace Pole, erected by Mohonk Consultations. It bears the message, "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in four of the historic languages of the region—Lenape, Dutch, French, and English.

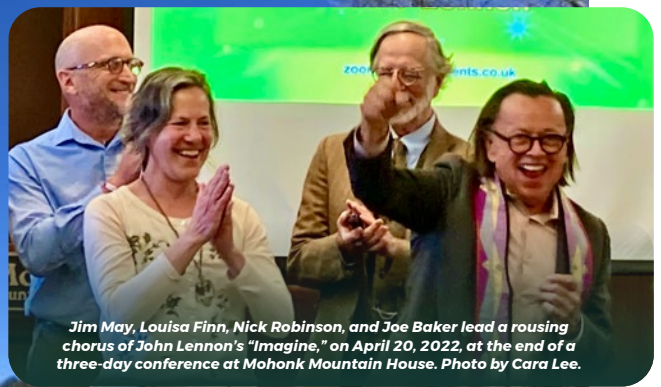
The Board of Mohonk Consultations recently visited this sanctuary and found ourselves calmed, centered, and inspired to express these thoughts:

*The Trail is a special place to be silent and listen to birds, wind, leaves, and the trickle of a small seasonal stream. It offers an invitation to dwell in the harmony of diversity—to be part of something greater that permeates nature and all of us. One can sit on a roofed bench nearby to meditate and ponder life's peace and beauty.*

**Avail yourselves of this special place.**

# *The Normandy Chair For Peace:* **Making Peace with Nature**

An International Peace Conference in  
Cooperation with The International Council  
of Environmental Law



Jim May, Louisa Finn, Nick Robinson, and Joe Baker lead a rousing chorus of John Lennon's "Imagine," on April 20, 2022, at the end of a three-day conference at Mohonk Mountain House. Photo by Cara Lee.



Mohonk Consultations was fortunate to participate in a unique three-day brainstorming session of the Normandy Chair for Peace (NCP), a group of global and local leaders working to create new law curricula and philosophical directions for environmental law and peace initiatives around the world.

With the phrase "We will have Peace on Earth when we have Peace **with** Earth," the group was skillfully led by Nicholas Robinson, professor emeritus of the Global Center for Environmental Law at Pace University. Robinson chose Mohonk Mountain House for the event because of its history of peace conferences, continued today by Mohonk Consultations.

Participants engaged in spirited dialogue with representation from three generations of environmental lawyers (many trained at Pace University), Indigenous leaders of the Lenape tribe (the first people of the Hudson Valley region), environmental, peacemaking and religious scholars, and representatives of the United Nations.

Mohonk Consultations chair and Smiley family member, Louisa Finn, welcomed the group with a presentation on the history of peace conferences at Mohonk. Mohonk and the Smiley family were lauded by the group for their commitment to intergenerational values, a theme of the conference proceedings.

Current NCP chair and environmental lawyer Anthony Oposa of the Philippines brought his passionate messages of H.O.P.E. (Help Our Planet Earth) and his Good Stories movement, saying that without "the language of the heart," real change will not happen on earth. Oposa is famously the first to win an environmental case that named his grandchildren as plaintiffs. That ruling in the **Minors Oposa** case (1993) recognized the "doctrine of intergenerational responsibility for the environment" in the Philippine legal system, and thus advanced international environmental law.

Robinson stated that Indigenous people still care for the most important biodiverse places on Earth. Founders of the Lenape Center in NYC contributed essential insights, as well as ceremonial songs and drumming to set the stage for a "meeting of the minds."

The group proceeded to celebrate Earth Day in NYC by reporting on its research and findings to U.N.-affiliated officials. In September 2022, the U.N. General Assembly will vote on the human right to a healthy environment.

*There is no better place than Mohonk Mountain House to pose these questions and have these discussions. The great idea of hosting this time of reflection at Mohonk is already fulfilled—I feel it.*

**—Pascal Buléon, Head of the MRSH (Research in Scientific Humanism), University of Caen, Normandy**

# A Profound *Thank You* to our donors and partner organizations!

We deeply value your donations because they go directly to support our mission and collaborative programs on behalf of the land, water, and people of the Hudson Valley and beyond.

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**Partner Organizations:** American Farmland Trust in NYS, Bard College, Bon-Odori Dance Festival for Peace, Northeast Carbon Alliance, NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program, in partnership with the Cornell University Water Resources Institute

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New Paltz NY 12561  
845-256-2726  
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Watch for 2023 program news via email, Facebook, or on our website!

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#### *2022 October Forum*

### Universal Basic Income: Transformative Policy or Utopian Fantasy?

Sunday, October 16, 2-5 pm  
Mohonk Mountain House Parlor  
Registration is required.



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## 2022 U.N. International Year of Glass

At its 75th session, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2022 the International Year of Glass to underline its scientific, economic and cultural roles. Glass supports many vital technologies, facilitates sustainability and a green world and enriches our lives, yet often goes unnoticed. For more information, head to the International Year of Glass 2022 website using the QR code or link below.



[bit.ly/3Ljinwi](https://bit.ly/3Ljinwi)