



Mohonk Consultations

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

2023



What do we owe each other and Earth?

Shawangunk Ridge in Autumn • Photo: Onnika Cullickson

In the way of Indigenous peoples there’s no such thing as a right, only responsibility. We don’t have a right to land, animals, water, trees – we have responsibility for all of that.

– **Tiokasin Ghosthorse**

Dear Friends,

Thanks to those of you who joined us this year as we reflected deeply about this year’s title question through our programs.

Last October, our public forum on Universal Basic Income introduced us to the history, logistics, and present-day energy behind this burgeoning movement. Conrad Shaw, passionate UBI spokesperson, put it succinctly in presenting “The Two Big Questions” that providing universal, unconditional cash to everyone provokes in people:

1. The Money question: Can we afford UBI? and 2. The Human Nature question: Do we trust other humans to “do good” with the money?

Of the two, the human nature question is the most critical as it asks us to consider whether a human life is worthy, regardless of lifestyle and work status. We followed up in February with a film event highlighting Shaw and wife Deia Schlosberg’s film project *Bootstraps*, a docu-series that follows people given \$1000/month to live for two years.

Our April public forum, *Words Matter*, brought together two divergent viewpoints; environmental lawyer, Nick Robinson and Lakota tribe member, Tiokasin Ghosthorse, to talk about healing Earth. While recent legal wins for the environment involve “rights” such as the right to a healthful environment or the evolving movement of “the rights of nature”, Ghosthorse reminded us that in the way of Indigenous people, there’s no such thing as a right, only responsibility for nature, which is not separate from us. We are nature. From this view we don’t “owe” Earth anything, but we are in reciprocal relationship to all life, and as it is responsible for us, so too we are responsible for it.

Judith Enck, our June Distinguished Achievement Awardee, embodies the spirit of working on behalf of others and Earth. Hearing her speak practically and tirelessly about the Herculean task of ridding the world of plastic was deeply inspiring.

I welcome your willingness to continue the journey with us in the collective work of caring and widening awareness about our relationship to others, toward a reciprocal relationship with all life.

Louisa Finn

Chair, Mohonk Consultations Board of Directors



2023 November Conference

Room Enough For Both:
**Building Affordable Housing and
Preserving Open Space**

Monday, November 13, 2023, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.,
Mohonk Mountain House Conference Center

Shawangunk Ridge in Autumn
Photo: Open Space Institute



Healthy communities need both abundant, affordable housing and protected land that supports clean water, food production, climate resilience, and outdoor access.

Mohonk Consultations' fall 2023 event will explore the relationship between the urgent need in the Hudson Valley for affordable housing and the continuing importance of conserving undeveloped land for agriculture, environmental quality, recreation, and health. Experts and advocates from the affordable housing and conservation fields will present promising collaborative approaches underway in the Hudson Valley to provide equitable, stable housing options while protecting critical lands that meet community needs and will underscore connections in addressing the climate and affordable housing crises.

Mohonk Consultations developed this program in collaboration with a project called the Hudson Valley Affordable Housing & Conservation Strategy. Co-led by Steve Rosenberg, formerly Scenic Hudson's Sr. Vice President and Land Trust Executive Director and Rebecca Gillman Crimmins, a Hudson Valley native and Sr. Vice President of Real Estate and Development at the Institute for Community Living, the project has drawn together five of the region's leading land conservation organizations and five not-for-profit affordable housing organizations, with the assistance of the Regional Plan Association and the Consensus Building Institute.

The purpose of the project is to develop and achieve a vision of the Hudson Valley as "a sustainable and inclusive home to an economically and racially diverse community, and to help the region develop a holistic, equitable and proactive approach to housing, climate change and land conservation."

"Affordable housing and land conservation organizations have made progress addressing these issues within their own sectors but the problems we face are too urgent, massive, and intertwined to be solved separately – the current siloed approach is not accomplishing enough," says Rosenberg.

Land is the common denominator – neither affordable housing nor conservation goals can be achieved without it. This unique, regional approach built on shared values, trust and mutual support is creating a new "playbook" that can inform our elected leaders, investors, developers, conservationists and our families and neighbors on how to create a more equitable and sustainable future.

Note: Advance reservations are required. Tickets: \$55 general, \$20 students (includes luncheon). Get tickets at mohonk-consultations.org/roomenough



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 acknowledges, with respect and gratitude, that we are living in and sustained by Lenapehoking, homeland of the Lenape peoples. The first peoples who lived here were the Esopus and Minisink peoples of the Lenni Lenape nations. Wars and Indian Removal policies forced most of the Lenape westward. Many of their descendants continue to live here; others live throughout North America. We honor all Indigenous communities—past, present, and future—as we seek to create a safe space for all.



Honoring Sandra Smiley, Director Emeritus



After spending her youth growing up at Mohonk, Sandra left to pursue her callings. These included spiritual teachings, travel far afield to places such as India and Tibet, and a career as a Social Worker including a stint working in prisons. Sandra returned to Mohonk, becoming keenly aware of the importance of family involvement in the operation of the hotel. Her personal values and life experiences aligned well with the mission of Mohonk Consultations, started by her father Keith in 1980. For the past 43 years Sandra has served Mohonk Consultations. As her father aged, she became “Smiley family shepherd” of Mohonk Consultations, leading from behind as Keith did, with integrity, commitment and gentleness.

It's important to get people together in a setting that's comfortable to talk about whatever issues are prominent in the world.

— Sandra Smiley

The following poems were contributed by Board members inspired by Sandra's presence on the Board.

A gentle soul who walks
 Lightly on this earth.
 Her essence filters through the
 Ferns like the morning mist.
 — Lisa Schulte

I see Sandra
 Eyes shining with the light of kindness
 With serenity and purpose
 Enduring and far-seeing
 Like her mountain.
 — Sarah Underhill



Sandra Smiley
 Photo Credit:
 Louisa Finn

Sandra of the serene soul;
 I hope we can walk together again
 In this life, or the next.
 — Brad Berg

Sandra
 Quiet Quaker, a hippie once.
 Always a woods walker, kind
 friend, deep thinker,
 A smile that warms our souls.
 — Kitty Brown

Walking Meditation
 Gathering white pines
 Her poesy this whole mountain
 Sandra maps her root.
 — Nancy Graham

Voices from our 2023 Programs



“ We go through life in this society, in this (English) language, of “conscience” — what’s right and what’s wrong. But in the old Lakota way it’s only consciousness— respect for all life, respect for everything, including yourself. ”

– **Tiokasin Ghosthorse, member of the Cheyenne River Lakota Nation of South Dakota, guest faculty member at Yale University’s School of Divinity, Ecology, and Forestry**



“ A practical thing we can all do is ask our legislative bodies... to adopt the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People as a policy. To align with how to be responsible to those who were here before the ships came, and work to restore the health of Earth. ”

– **Nicholas Robinson, Kerlin Professor of Environmental Law Emeritus, Elisabeth Haub School of Law, Pace University**



“ We only contemplate a basic income in a society in which there is a fundamental commitment to equality, but in which individuals and families cannot meet basic needs on their own. ”

– **Almaz Zelleke, Professor of Practice in Political Science, NYU Shanghai**



“ Poverty is a structural problem, not a moral shortcoming. ”

– **Steve Nunez, Lead Researcher, the Jain Family Institute**



“ I asked myself what would it take to preserve our balance [of work, play] and health? Starting in 2018 and on reading Andrew Yang’s book *The War on Normal People...* UBI, to me, presented the indispensable prospect to live in that kind of society. ”

– **Keiko Sono, Artist, Activist**



Discussing the Value of Being Human: Our Forum on Universal Basic Income

Q&A led by Conrad Shaw • Photo: Jason Taylor



Our October 16, 2022 public forum—Universal Basic Income: Utopian Fantasy or Transformative Policy?—drew a small but passionate crowd to Mohonk Mountain House parlor.

NYU Professor Almaz Zelleke educated the audience about the history of “cash transfer” programs in the U.S., crediting the conceptual basis to Thomas Paine, who proposed that all citizens should receive money for their loss of “natural right to the land” when society made the transition from an agricultural to industrial economy.

Steve Nunez from the Jain Family Institute followed with information about the economics of a Universal Income program, defining what is meant by “Universal, Unconditional, and Unrestricted” and explaining how programs that don’t have all three of these elements tend to fail people and society in various ways.

Hudson Valley artist/activist Keiko Sono highlighted her work for Andrew Yang’s presidential campaign, leading the local “Yang Gang”, inspiring adolescents and others to discuss and spread the word about UBI.

Documentary filmmaker Conrad Shaw shared a clip of the inspiring docuseries he is making with his wife, filmmaker Dhea Schlossberg (their film, *Bootstraps* was screened at Mohonk Mountain House on February 6).



People care about each other, especially in times of trouble.

— Conrad Shaw, UBI Researcher, Producer, Writer, Activist



Words Matter: Indigenous, Ecological and Legal Pathways for Healing Earth

Tiokasin Ghosthorse and Nicholas Robinson led our thought-provoking Peace with Nature Forum on April 23, 2023. Their mutual respect and knowledge captivated the Mohonk Parlor filled with nearly 100 people, allowing opportunities to question previously held concepts and shift thought patterns.


They explained the major differences between English and Lakota language structures, and reflected upon how a language built largely of nouns, such as English, leads to a commodifying culture, imbued with the value of domination over others and things. What would a language of mainly verbs (e.g. the Lakota language) mean for our relationship to nature?

In addition, the two speakers highlighted recent legal victories in NYS and at the UN that, for the first time, provide people with the right to a healthy environment. Both speakers stated that the present is a time to stretch beyond a view of personal rights to one of shared responsibility for all life. The audience traveled along on the journey of ideas, words from the heart, and unifying music, reminding all that we’re not separate from the ecosystem.

Conferences like this one are a sign that people are being called to change culture, to contribute to a new way of living with Earth.

— Forum Participant, April 23, 2023





Judith Enck Honored with 2023 Distinguished Achievement Award

(L-R) Cara Lee, Mohonk Consultations Board member; Judith A. Enck; Jen Metzger, Ulster County Executive; Kitty Brown, Mohonk Consultations Board Member. Photo: Sonya Stark

On June 11th, 2023, Mohonk Consultations hosted 180 people at the Mohonk Mountain House Skating Pavilion to celebrate and honor Judith A. Enck, the founder and president of Beyond Plastics, a not-for-profit dedicated to eliminating plastic pollution. Judith, a Rensselaer County native, has dedicated her life to the environment. Starting as a NYPIRG intern, she served in the NYS Attorney General and Governor's Offices, prior to being appointed as EPA's Region III Director during the Obama administration, overseeing environmental protections in NY, NJ, eight Indian Nations, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.

Judith shared the Beyond Plastics official mission statement ("Eliminate plastic pollution, everywhere") and the unofficial mission statement ("ten pissed-off women, in a hurry" ...). As for being in a hurry, Judith pointed out the ocean is being turned into a landfill, with one pound of plastic present for every three pounds of fish. She characterized recycling as "a failure", at only 5 - 6% of the waste stream. The production and disposal of plastic is a social justice issue, as it disproportionately affects communities of color.

Judith, her staff and volunteers have been focused on legislation for New York called the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Act. When adopted, it will be the most effective plastic packaging reduction policy in the world, requiring packaging companies, (think Amazon) to pay fees - rather than taxpayers - to fund local waste reduction and recycling programs and sets a goal of 50% reduction in plastic packaging over 12 years. It would also ban the worst toxic chemicals currently found in packaging including PFAs, lead, and formaldehyde and would ban plastic burning - a direction advocated by the plastics industry.

Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger lauded Judith's work, as well as Ramon Cruz, previously deputy director of Puerto Rico's environmental regulatory agency and recent president of the national Sierra Club, describing Judith as someone who did not give up her advocate's heart when she became an administrator.

Betty and the Baby Boomers, a beloved and long-time Hudson Valley folk music group, bookended the program with lively songs devoted to environmental protection. Attendees left with more knowledge, resolve, and a feeling of lightness and gratitude - for Judith Enck and the people, ideas, and actions she brings together.

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

September 2022 - 2023

We are deeply grateful for your donations and continued support for our mission. Your generosity goes directly to help support the land, water, and people of the Hudson Valley and beyond.



James E. Amigh Jr.,
In memory of Ruth & Keith Smiley

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In loving memory of Bert Smiley

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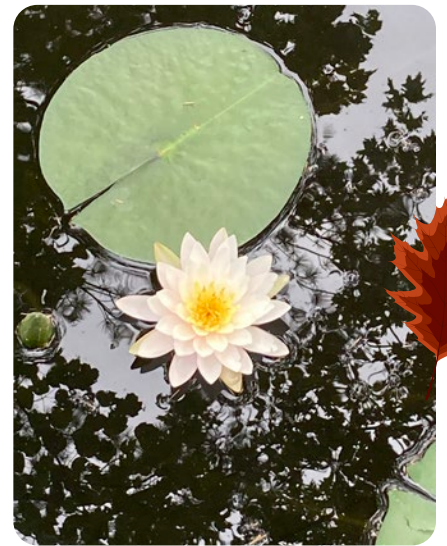
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mohonk-consultations.org/donation

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Room Enough For Both:



Building Affordable Housing and Preserving Open Space

Monday, November 13, 2023

9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Mohonk Mountain House
Conference Center

Advance Reservations are required.

Tickets:

\$55 general

\$20 students (includes luncheon)

PLEASE NOTE: Our goal is to bring as many voices into this conversation as possible, so we are offering a limited number of subsidized tickets to people who cannot afford the full ticket price. For additional details, please email info@mohonk-consultations.org



2023 UN International Year of Millets

At its 75th session, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2023 the International Year of Millets to highlight their minimal impact on the environment. Millets offer an alternative to reliance on imported cereal grains and therefore assist countries with increasing their self-sufficiency and resilience to climate change. For more information, visit the International Year of Millets 2023 website using the following QR code or link:



bit.ly/46dicfc

