

Community Visioning Document

Partnering with Nature for a Vibrant Future: Planting Seeds of Hope

“You can carry Mother Earth within you. She is not outside of you. Mother Earth is not just your environment. In that insight of inter-being, it is possible to have real communication with the Earth, which is the highest form of prayer”

~ Thich Nhat Hanh

For this special webinar, we brought together four panelists coming from different perspectives to share what was on their hearts and minds as we consider our world today and how we can help sow the seeds for a vibrant future. We also invited input from the community present on the webinar. Our panelists were Pam Montgomery, Myra Jackson, Larry Karsteadt, and Lauren Valle.

We heeded the occasion of ONE’s 10th anniversary as a call to action, and we envisioned a living blueprint for our vibrant future.

Together we move to rededicate ourselves to Earth and all her beings and renew our commitments to a thriving co-creative partnership with all life. We come together in the present to tend to the future.

This document is a summary of highlights from each of the four questions posed to the panel and community. Responses have been edited for length and clarity. Thank you for contributing and participating in this vital conversation. We will feature this summary in article format in ONE’s January newsletter.

Question 1

Elyshia: How has living with an awareness of interbeing, where interbeing is the state of connectedness and interdependence of all life, impacted the way you are living (beingness) and walking your life right now?

Panelists Highlights

Myra: Interbeing has been there always. What I’ve been noticing is that there is evidence that this is something that is rippling through in consciousness to us as the Earth is giving us very

shocking, alarming feedback. We are in a feedback loop with the planetary being, and I pay a lot of attention to that. And the feedback is forcing us to look at our activity and our impact on the planet. But more than that, it's **waking us up to what it means to be truly human. What that means for me is that there is never a moment when we are not in the relational field with the planetary being and with Nature itself.** And not only that the cosmos. And so when we look at that, and we ask, are we living our lives as if life truly matters? All life? It's a hefty charge.

Lauren: For me, when I feel into interbeing, I carry a huge amount of gratitude as I deepen into this concept and knowing in my life. It's hard not to wake up and be alive and feel part of it all. But at the same time, I have a lot of restlessness, and it drives me forward every day to work and to change and to heal and to grow and to figure this out.

It's hard to untangle the gratitude and the heartbreak and the joy and the creation, the work that we are all doing now to create the future and confront the present, and the awareness that's growing. There's so much beauty in all of it, and it seems to be all one thing—these dual, or polar, feelings that I live with, but I wouldn't have it any other way. I think it keeps me out of amnesia, and it keeps me wanting to feel, even if it hurts—I want to know what it feels like to be another being. Because when I feel that in my body, I create and move through my day differently and I feel called to my work.

Larry: Connectedness, and being part of the planet and the universe—its huge for me, it always has been. I come to this from a background of biology, immersing in the Natural world. I'm surrounded by redwoods in our backyards, young redwoods, all much bigger than I can get my arms around. And it's essential to increase the awareness of our connectedness to all life.

Pam: Interbeing is powerful for me because of what's going on with the climate these days and how much of it is because of human impact. As much as I can, **I try to be aware of what the impact is of the particular action that I'm going to take? To the people, to the Earth, to the water? It really makes you stop and go, "If I do that, how is it going to be tomorrow and for the next seven generations?" It's really important for us to think this way.**

And so then—it happens in small ways—but I really pay attention to how much plastic I put in the garbage can. And my shopping habits have changed, so I'm not buying stuff that's got a ton of plastic in it. We are totally connected. We are totally dependent on each other, and what we do impacts everything else.

Community Highlights:

Mikki: I am working very consciously to behave as though I understand there is "no above, no below"—**there is no hierarchy, and we are all equal—all humans, all animals, all plants, all.** I am more careful with the energy that I send out and understand where my anger, frustration, and negative emotions are coming from.

Sulyn: Interbeing is how we walk in the world as much as possible each step on earth in **peace**, breathing in and out with love and quiet presence with trees along the path with sea air and with all beings in peace within and around us.

Question 2

Elyshia: Is there a particular aspect of nature within this vast ocean of interbeing that you have felt particularly connected with, and what kind of work and relationship you've done with this nature ally, and how you came into be in relationship?

Panelists Highlights

Myra: One mainstay that has been an ally for some time, and it's a relationship that is growing, and that is with water itself. That is the Nature ally I've been walking very closely with.

Freshwaters have been the place where I have found, for human beings and for life itself, to be one of the most generative places to be in relationship with right now.

When I began working with estuaries—most recently, the East River, which is in the New York area—I was leading a small group, and we were spending an hour with the East River, and the river was exhibiting such joy and excitement and enthusiasm for our being there, that is sort of took me by surprise because the river is quite polluted. And it [the joy] just came through and rippled through my lips. You could feel it. It opened and activated the registers of my body. It was rippling across my oxytocin registers, and it made total sense that the water beings we are, and the hormonal fluids in our bodies would be the natural ways we would receive communication in our bodies.

Pam: Last year, I got this strong calling from the ocean. So I came to Belize last winter and spent a lot of time with the ocean, and that's where I am right now, back in Belize for the winter and spending time with the ocean again. It's like this new kind of love. And I'm getting to know the ocean in ways I've never experienced before in my life.

Spending time in the ocean here, I ended up in a school of fish, teensy fish, and there were thousands and thousands of them, and they were iridescent, and they started going into one-mindedness, murmuration. I also went into the one-mind space with them, these teensy little fish. **It was one of the most profound, magical, spiritual experiences I've had in my life. I got it- We're all here together with one mind. I had understood this intellectually before, but never viscerally in my body.**

Larry: In my life, the redwoods are close and vibrant. Their energy is huge. And studies by our local scientists, who filmed the whole canopy system of the redwood forest have found that most of the species diversity is in the canopy system. And now that's been discovered around

the world, with new species of earthworms and salamanders living high in the redwood trees, two hundred feet up.

We are so connected. We are a cosmos, and we exist within a cosmos, and I have come to the belief, fairly scientifically founded, that as the universe formed and is expanding the process is to increase complexity to the point of creation of life. Sometimes, it seems to me that the evidence for the universe awakening to its own incredibleness, its wonder, is us.

Lauren: I had the opportunity to do a Hawthorn Initiation with Pam on her land early in the summer, and since that time Hawthorn has been living in my body, in the center of my chest and heart. One of the things that Hawthorn has been telling me is that they are coming into a new understanding of how the human being works, because they're here to help us heal. And here **to help us embody and live in our hearts, which is really the place we need to go, and be, and expand into, for all of this consciousness shifting that everyone is talking about.**

We think we can't hold all of the heartbreak of our personal lives and our families and our communities. What I was saying earlier about the duality of heartbreak and gratitude—Hawthorn is really helping me to expand into the heartfield. And there's so much we can hold in the heart field. That's where compassion lives, that's the shared space. Hawthorn teaches about boundaries, too, and how to be so big and contained, and how to live in the heart more and more every day, and to let the heart be the guide and the wisdom holder.

I think what many of us are trying to do right now is let go of what we don't need—the plastic-wrapped items, and the dopamine hits of modern life. Can we quiet down and find joy and meaning and nourishment in the quieter parts of life—in community, growing food, walking around in a body, swimming, the clouds—so we don't need so much other stuff?

Community Highlights:

Sharifa: Part of my daily practice is to greet the Elements and Realms of Nature with gratitude and honor. I send prayers for healing and protection. I also include humanity in this love and prayer.

Nathalie: Moss, absorbing sorrows and blocking memories, comforting. Moss is also ancient and bears the memory of the world, of humanity. She doesn't have roots in the ground but thrives in communities. Very important for unrooted people (refugees as well as people fleeing from the cities to the countryside) and for building communities.

Diana: Water for me, too, this last year. I'm consciously relating to water as I'm cooking, drinking, watering the plants, speaking up for the Watauga River, the stream next to my house, the Elk River, sending blessings down them for the good health of everything "downstream" (I'm

at the headwaters in the Appalachian mountains). Talking to it as it flows through my body as blood, etc.

Susie Michael: It is through the plants. I live surrounded by forest purposefully. Practicing with the plants via herbalism, Ayurveda, gardening daily, and noticing their beauty, subtlety, and powerful medicine. Adding the energy medicine, meditation and breathing with the plants brings me understanding the elements are me, I can see my beauty by witnessing theirs.

Question 3

Elyshia: How have you brought your relationship with Nature from having an inward-looking energy to focusing on serving the Earth? You are welcome to share 1 or 2 ways, small and bigger, that you are doing or have done this.

Panelists Highlights

Lauren: I grew up on the ocean, and as a kid, I was in a very unconscious, rapturous relationship with the ocean. And then I fell away from that connection to life, and I went to college, and I got involved as an environmental activist in New York City, and I got really angry. I was doing a lot of work on things like mountaintop removal and coal funding and was hanging out with people who were yelling and screaming about what was happening. And I got into that vibe. And then I realized that actually **I wasn't connected to the Earth that I was advocating for**. So then I started farming and went to live in the woods. **I needed to be really quiet with the Earth for a few years and just heal from the chaos of being an environmental activist**. And now it's coming outward again. I've just started a community center in my town. I've been involved in activist work this whole time, but I'm figuring out how to merge the inward and the outward, and they are actually becoming the same work and the same thing. **I think there's a way you can walk with your relationships—with the quiet, the gratitude, the saltwater in your hair, the trees inside of you.**

Larry: I've long been aware of the unfortunate negative human impact of people on the planet. And I've done what I can, in many different ways, to minimize our impact. But that's impossible to avoid. We've been gifted to be with incredible teachers, scientists, and healers all over the planet. And that's critically important.

[A gift that I am exploring and] that I express more and more in my life is in music. Just in the last few months, I've written so many new songs. I'm on a burst of creativity, and it's a pleasure to let the music come through. Sometimes, I can feel the trees that made that guitar speak to me through that instrument and teach me new things I didn't know I could do.

Myra: It's what we know when we are children. When I was a little girl—I was carrying this wish to hug the world, and assure them we will be well. And I'm interested in not just being here, but being here in harmony, being here and experiencing the wonder and awe that really arises naturally when you notice, my goodness, life is happening here.

What we are doing is bringing our bodies back into a mind, a meta mind that can understand and know itself to be part of a living universe. And that's what we are waking up to. And I know that's part of my work.

You can see in my bio, that there's a lot of global work, and all of it is grounded locally. So just remember that **we have to have coherency in the small things in community, in which you can see the eyeballs of the people you are interacting with. Feel the trees, and have a relationship with the life around you. The more I was in relationship with the ecosystem that I lived in, knowing where my watershed was, that deepening relationship informed what I needed to do.**

Pam: When I founded the ONE organization ten years ago, what I had in mind was an organization that brought the heart, soul, and spirit into the environmental and ecological arenas, and we were going to do that in partnership with Nature. A co-creative partnership.

You've heard several of us speaking about what Nature wants. **It's not just an anthropocentric way of being where we decide what action we should take. We actually take the time to listen to Nature. That was another huge aspect of creating ONE, was that we were going to bring Nature in here to have a voice, to have a place at the table.**

I feel really good about channeling my energy through ONE, partly because it is collaborative. Where we're headed is we've got to come together. We've got to be co-creative together. **I feel like a really important aspect on this planet right now is realizing that basically, this crisis we are in right now is about separation.**

Community Highlights:

Anna: I grow vegetables, organic no dig, I encourage others to join. I respect all life as consciousness, of great value. I also have reduced the carbon footprint as much as possible and share with friends and family in hope they too may be inspired

Sarah: I share this relationship through my writing and my workshops. I have developed a simple model for others to cultivate a purposeful and intentional connection with nature. I work with others to explore and deepen their relationship with nature - in a practical and simple way. As an environmental scientist, I truly believe it is our individual and collective relationship with nature that will heal our planet.

Danielea: My long-time personal relations with a team of Nature Elders (Water, Rock and Tree) gave birth during the lockdown in 2020 to a ceremonial space called The Listening Field where

Humans and Nature Elders can speak directly on matters of mutual interest and concern. We are bringing the LF to groups and organizations who wish to partner with Nature. We have recently hosted LF with the Canadian WildFires, the Nature Elders of Nova Scotia, Endangered Aquatic Species (in partnership with a federal government), and with the Nature Elders of the Middle East. I have recently began conversations with an Ancient Olive Tree in Palestine. I was guided to open this field to inquire as to how we can support them during recent events in Israel and Palestine.

Question 4

Elyshia: From your unique perspective, what do you feel is essential for us to engage with right now that will contribute to a vibrant future?

Panelists Highlights

Larry: Stewardship, caretaking of the planet, is absolutely crucial. In a way that empowers people to re-heal the planet, support life, and appreciate the importance of diversity. Human diversity and the diversity of life. And, to engage in a way that isn't just what we know about the planet, but what we feel about the planet. We are the planet, and it is us. And that connection that many of you have expressed so well, the heart-centered connection, sharing in any way that we can through song, story, concert, conferences, webinars—that is very important.

Pam: We are talking about change that needs to happen on a massive level. I keep waiting for the hundredth monkey, the leap in consciousness. When the species reaches a certain level of consciousness, there's a leap. But how does that happen? One of the things I've seen, is what really changes people in their relationship with Nature is when you have a deep personal experience with Nature.

So how do we do that? We need to have those deep personal experiences like I did with the little fish in the ocean because it opens us up wider and wider to the magnificence, intelligence, and vibrant life that our planet is. So, providing an opportunity for up close and personal contact with Nature that lands in the heart, spreads through your whole being, activates the release of oxytocin, and causes a whole cascade of events—that's part of what we are doing here with ONE, guiding people to places and experiences in Nature that really touch them.

Myra: **We need to look at the language we're using, because every way in which we are speaking, is part of our perception. If we know ourselves to be one with life, then our language needs to uphold that. And we have a language that separates. So, we do need to be creation of a new language.** The word "primitive" in its origins means being close to what sources life. And you all know what happened to the word primitive. It became pejorative. And that was intentional. In the industrial age, we know that scientists understood the power of words, and words change. The word Nature went from being capitalized to lower-case.

So you have to see now that we are in a space where we can play with language again and bring the language of what we are present to into the world. That's what we need to do right now to have our visions right.

Lauren: What I would like to talk about is food, and the importance of **creating new webs and relationships in our communities around food growing and our food needs.** I'm a gardener, and I'm so grateful to the garden because I think we can be in a relationship with a garden that touches so much of everything we've talked about, **from the cosmos to the center of the Earth. The garden is a teacher.**

One of the things I'm learning a lot about right now is oatmeal. Oats grow really well in my garden, they grow well in Maine, we have lots of oats here. It turns out that oats are a delicious savory food. I'm transforming my brain from thinking that oats are a breakfast food that need to be eaten with sweet things to—I can serve oats with curry to my family for dinner. **That kind of brain shift and creative ways of thinking, and also remembering our ancestral ways and remembering how we used to be a community, how we used to grow food together, how we used to have common land, how we used to steward together, how we used to share seeds—those are areas that I feel are really essential.**

Community Highlights:

Cindy: Become aware of what you are investing in with each decision -- our time, our energy, our dollars.

Didileia: Supporting other mothers and their families in acknowledging our wholeness, and being present in our senses with awareness and daily personal choice. As a mother, it has been important to nourish diversity within the wholeness of family and acknowledge the wisdom of many different expressions of human nature and roles to play and how we can each contribute.

Sarah: I will continue to help others cultivate their connection to nature and themselves - manifesting and deepening our feelings of love, joy, peace, wonder, awe, gratitude, and beauty with nature and ourselves. Our relationship with the natural world is our foundation for finding our purpose, harmony, balance, and sense of belonging in the Universe. We are all connected;)

Willow: Having connections with nature brings more awareness and caring behaviors. People find a way to be with nature and to pay attention to reciprocity. We have grant funding for our Forest Bathing offerings as a way to address the great loss and grief of our community from fires.

