The past year for SEN has been remarkable in many ways. Our vision of a peaceful, sustainable culture is unwavering and we have met so many people all over the world who are on the “same page” with us. This newsletter highlights our activities and also accentuates an emerging world-view—combining both ancient and modern wisdom—that is in the process of shattering the stagnant assumptions of the 20th century. It is our firm belief that we humans are on the threshold of something enormous…a birth of sorts with all its attendant mess and glory.

Of course, there is no guarantee a positive, collective shift will manifest, but all successful biological adaptations have come about in response to environmental pressure. Climate change and oil depletion represent the ultimate environmental pressure for humanity to change business as usual. Although we modern “two-leggeds” like to fancy we are above them, we must abide by the laws of ecology. What we hear at various SEN events again and again is that the creation of vibrant, self-reliant, local communities will be the benchmark of the human animal’s ability to adapt and be the visible backbone of a life-sustaining world-view.

Cheap, readily available fossil fuels have kept the majority of Americans from really looking at a solution that is right in front of us, but there is a huge body of evidence (see energybulletin.net) that this way of life is coming to end. Many people who seriously study the imminent arrival (1-10 years) of Peak Oil (when demand for petroleum exceeds supply) become despairing. There is no available energy source that can provide the huge inputs that liquid fossil fuels offer.

The beauty of “energy descent”, a wonderful term coined by Australian permaculturist David Holmgren, (see fuller description on page 5) is in creative solutions to living with less energy and less stuff. Maybe the maturation of industrial humans means learning how to live with physical limits while accepting there are no limits to our consciousness.

In central New England, where SEN is based, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of small experiments in sustainable living taking place. Every September, there is a showcase for a lifestyle shift called the Garlic and Arts Festival. Deb Habib and Ricky Baruc are two of its co-founders. They gave a talk several months back about what they had learned after talking with thousands of people.

They identified 5 key elements:
1. “Building Bridges”: We can break out of our comfort zone and speak to people who think and act differently than us. Everybody wants clean air and water for their children.
2. Love, Fun, Play: Without these, why live?
3. Being Present: When looking at the ominous trends of climate change, human population growth, etc, it’s easy...
to get scared thinking about the future. Staying focused in the Now can be a tremendous relief. No one knows what will play out.

4. Renewable Energy: As we conserve existing energy resources, it is crucial to jump on the bandwagon of a solar-carbohydrate economy (as opposed to the current heavily subsidized nuclear-hydrocarbon economy).

5. Organic Local Food Production: We all need to eat. Richard Heinberg, who arguably has done more than anyone to popularize the phrase “re-localization,” has said: “Anthropology has shown that cultural change tends to start at the level of our relationship with the natural world, particularly how we get our food.” There is nothing quite like that carrot or potato grown from seed in your own or your community garden.

At SEN, we are here to push the envelope and say that survival is not enough. Our lives are meant to be lived in your own or your community garden.

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Between August 16-31, six hearty souls from all over the USA joined SEN trip leader, Bill Pfeiffer, for what was billed as a trip of a lifetime. By all accounts it was. (see photos on back cover)

Upon arrival in Barnaul from Moscow the group mainly traveled south, with a little westward trip to Ust-Kan. (See map on SEN website) towards the Mongolia border. The purpose of the trip was to deeply immerse in a remarkable wilderness area and in its Native inhabitants’ culture and spirituality. In so doing, we all aspired to have a deeper understanding of what it means to be a human being at this critical juncture in human history and to cultivate the consciousness of sustainability. It turns out that this kind of learning can be fun and even ecstatic.

For Bill, there were several teachings that wove together and deepened his own understanding of why this kind of trip is important. In his words: “We were able to let go into an experience of ‘enoughness’ with life as it presents itself. We realized that we were so filled with the Earth’s blessing and beauty within us we were not craving stuff, busyness or other people to do that for us.”

Danil Mamyev, who has been featured in past SEN newsletters become our main partner in the Altai. He took two weeks off of his job as a regional land use planner and became our guiding teacher. Danil’s style and energy express a state of equanimity; everything is rising and passing away so although we can feel great joy and tremendous sorrow we don’t need to get attached to these mind states. They will change like the weather. He told the group “These expeditions give me the opportunity to share my beloved land in a way where I am not restricted by the usual professional obligations and formality.”

In general, the Altai people emphasize the central importance of relationships. They seem to treat every guest as if they were extraordinarily special, which of course, they are.

The participants’ testimonials speak best to the power and insight that came from this journey. What follows are a few snippets:

Danil Mamyev

“Traveling to Siberia was fascinating and different than anything I have ever experienced. My heart now understands the incredible importance of preserving Altai indigenous culture. The Altains teaching, which is really a way of life, is how the Earth talks to us. They are SO connected, spiritually and physically. I did not think I could experience the way humans related to nature as during the Neolithic or even Paleolithic times (and with the added wisdom of these contemporary Altains evolving consciousness) but I did. They helped me FEEL what it was like to live in those earlier times. It was really comforting to experience this ancient time before the ‘separation.’”

Hasita Nadai

“I also feel empowered to go back to my classroom and my life to create/reshape and bring to life the vision of a place where an emphasis on the Earth is the focus of my teaching. I’ve needed to find balance within me in order to move forward, and this trip has helped me do just that. I am immensely grateful for all the wisdom shared and the opportunity to delve deep into my soul.”

- Susana Moening

“There was a light, a spirit that was turned on within me. I hope to spread this light (in whatever form it may take) with others. It has helped me to open up to nature and listen to nature. Nature is willing to help me on my journey. [The artist], Erenda’s picture of the Altai spirit breathing the gift of kaichi (shamanic throatsinging) into the man has inspired me to ask Spirit for my gift and how I shall manifest this gift for future generations.”

- Charline Sourfrant

“I never wanted it to end” - Frank Weigle

“It was a great trip. I feel nourished, content and full. [One of many] highlights was the way our group came together, sharing, caring, laughing, learning. The little ceremonies Bill did at the beginning and end and throughout were really good. For future generations, I plan to work even more consciously and deliberately for the Earth.”

- Harriet Crosby

“I feel that Sacred Earth Network has located a wonderful group of support, who not only make sure that things run as smoothly as possible, but also bring such a joyful and loving presence to our experience. I am bringing home a first deep sense of commitment to make a difference. I believe that I can bring together deeply dedicated souls who may be able to help one another in protecting valuable sacred lands and culture. The Altai is such an important and grand area. It must be saved.”

- Sara Caile

As Sara demonstrates, falling in love with a place makes you want to protect it… like protecting a child from danger. Two of the participants have become active defenders of the Altai. This is one of those external benefits that we do not actively pursue but allow… which becomes a validation of running a trip with a more receptive, we’ll-just-see-how-things-unfold, attitude.

Maybe you want to join us for Altai Expedition in July of 2007?!”

To survive our minds must taste redwood and agate, octopi, bat, and in the bat’s mouth, insect. it’s hard to think like a planet. we’ve got to try

-James Bertolino
Winter Retreat For Earth-Lovers

SEN continued its annual tradition of sponsoring a “Winter Retreat For Earth-Lovers” on Martin Luther King weekend in January, 2006. Twenty-five people gathered on a cold but not at all snowy weekend and warmed the lodge at Earthlands with laughter, tears, sharing, games, music, improvisation, great food and lots of love. Breaking winter’s isolation and starting the year off with community support and self-expression is a wonderful thing. And yes, we will do it again in 2007, so come join us and be inspired, uplifted and Earth-connected!

SEN Board Expands in 2006

We extend a hearty welcome to three new Board members who joined the SEN team in 2006; Lorrie Klotsman, Shea McGovern, and Jon McGovern. Here are a few words from them.

Lorrie says:

“Among the reasons I’m privileged to serve as a board member for Sacred Earth Network is that doing so brings me together with people who really honor the Earth, both on the Board and within the embrace of the organization’s programs. That, for me, is a much-needed reminder that I’m not alone in my love of nature and my passionate desire to keep Earth-connectedness burning in the human soul. Also, SEN is really at the cutting edge of bringing together indigenous people from around the world, and does so in an empowering and respectful way. The dialog and in-person connections that SEN supports, through its exchange programs, affirm to indigenous people that their voice is valued and much needed in the world today.”

Jon says:

“I feel really good about joining the SEN Board after attending my first meeting in January 06. An essential distinction between indigenous cultures and our own is that they still act from the inside as part of Earth, whereas we in the dominant culture don’t have a clue on how to do this. We act as if we were on the outside, strictly as observers. Ivan’s sense that a central part of SEN’s mission is to communicate this insiders’ point of view is right on target. We have an autistic relationship with the natural world and it’s critical that we heal this. Indigenous cultures offer a perspective that is key to our survival. SEN and groups like it are really the Earth calling us back to herself through the medium of indigenous wisdom.”

Shea says:

“I’ve worked in non-profit management and administration for many years. What I like about SEN is that it moves from the heart. It’s projects go out from its center across national and personal boundaries to bring people together to learn and to heal - themselves and the Earth. My work has been primarily with educational, environmental and world service organizations. I am especially excited about SEN’s approach to experiential learning.”

“...false permaculture co-founder David Holmgren in his new book Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability. With brilliantly pragmatic insight, he analyzes how communities can embrace “energy descent” through permaculture with “whole-hearted adaptation to the ecological realities of decline which are as natural and creative as those of growth.” From an evolutionary outlook, he argues, the steep ride down energy descent can precipitate spiritual and cultural ascent: “When an adolescent sense of immortality and values of speed, novelty and endless growth define a whole civilization, we are close to its demise and the birth of a new cultural paradigm.” Ethan Genuer on energ bulletin.net

Winter Retreat For Earth-Lovers

January 12-14, 2007
Earthlands, Petersham, MA

Do you spend energy working for positive change on the planet?
Are you in need of time to rest, rejuvenate and renew your commitment to yourself and your work?
Then this retreat is for YOU!!

For more info, contact Kathleen at (978) 724-0120 kathleen@sacredearthnetwork.org

Soil for legs
Axe for hands
Flower for eyes
Bird for ears
Mushroom for nose
Smile for mouth
Songs for lungs
Sweat for skin
Wind for mind
Just enough.

Nanao Sakaki
Indigenous Peoples Exchange 2006
Magic in the Altai Leads To Deepening Connections in the Stunning Southwest

This year SEN organized two amazing exchanges; a spring trip to the Altai region of Siberia with four Native American elders, and an autumn trip to the Southwestern U.S. with four native Siberian elders. (To get a fuller picture of these exchanges, please read the articles on our website www.sacredearthnetwork.org)

In June, Bill Pfeiffer guided Don Alejandro, a Quiche Mayan, Benjamin Jojola from Isleta Pueblo, Dine (Navaho) Kelvin Long and Mayan Elizabeth Araujo to the majestic and mysterious Altai. As Bill wrote, “We were surrounded by mountains, with the largest being Uch-Enmek. This is also the name of a 60,000-hectare, Native controlled “Nature Park” headed by our host, elder and geologist Danil Mamyev. Right away I noticed the delighted expressions on the faces of the American Indian elders to see so many things that reminded of them of home, or the way home used to be. This was a theme that would play out repeatedly; a glance here, a petroglyph there, a song there, all being held by the power of the land that reverberated in everyone’s souls. Don Alejandro, who was the eldest elder on the trip would say many times, ‘They keep killing us [Earth people], but we keep coming back. We love the land and insist upon singing Her song.’”

In the following two weeks the group traveled 800 miles visiting such places as the stunning Karakol Valley, the “Magic Waters” of seven sacred springs, the spectacular Katun River, Chui-Oozy Nature Park with its huge petroglyph complex and a megalithic stone circle in Kosh-Agach. The group met with shamans, elders, villagers, and those involved with sacred site and nature protection. A ceremony was held for the group in the Karakol valley with local shamans and 60 villagers, a dazzling sight with all the medicine people in their finest regalia. The group also met with Arzhan Kezerekov, a “kaichi”, shamanic-throat-singer-story-teller of exceptional talent, and Tatyana Kobezhkova, a shaman from the province of Hakassia, both who would subsequently travel to the southwestern U.S. as part of the autumn exchange.

This monumental trip culminated in a Gathering of Indigenous Elders with ceremony and discussion around indigenous self-determination, cultural renewal, land rights and a planned gas pipeline from China to northwestern Siberia. What emerged was the “Karakol Declaration”, a document in the making openly declaring the emerging unification of Native Peoples the world over, and the rights they have to determine what happens on their ancestral lands. The participants of this exchange came away enriched and eager for more with a sense that anything is possible.

In October, SEN reunited Siberian elders Tatyana, Arzhan, Danil and Erjen Khamaganova (who has been a Russian-English interpreter and advisor for the IPE for 6 years) this time in the stunning Southwest. Benjamin and Kelvin were instrumental in organizing this exchange and set up meetings with many different Native Americans in Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado. They have brought the Indigenous Peoples Exchange much wider recognition and support in their native communities. In Kelvin’s words, “The knowledge we are gathering is part of the preparation for the next stage of human development with Mother Earth, after the time of purification. The trip in June to the Altai changed my life and I can now see more clearly my path. Working with the Siberians is a definite part of it.”

Beginning in Phoenix and ending in Albuquerque, this group traveled a 1,600 mile arc through places such as Flagstaff, the Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, Durango, Mesa Verde, Taos Pueblo, Ojo Caliente, Okhay Oweenge Pueblo, Santa Fe and Isleta Pueblo. Highlights included a feast with Kelvin’s family on the Kaibito Navaho Reservation, meeting an organization of American Indian students at Fort Lewis College, ceremony with Navaho medicine man Gomo Martinez, visits to Mesa Verde and Taos Pueblo, making traditional pottery with Apache elder Felipe Ortega, visiting with tribal council and casino owners of Okhay Oweenge Pueblo, the SEED Institute’s Oil and Water Conference, excursions with Navaho elder Leon Secatero and a grand finale at Isleta Pueblo.

Based on the impressions from all those involved in these exchanges, we can truly say that bringing together Native American elders and their Siberian counterparts is a mutually empowering and a potent alliance for Mother Earth. In Benjamin’s words, “When we are together the road is open. Now we just need to make sure there is a road.”
The Wisdom of Life!

Whenever we are engaged in a SEN project or event, we notice a high level of cooperation based on a felt sense of connection. The following interview with Elisabet Sahtouris, (extracted from “What is Enlightenment?” Magazine Spring/Summer 2003), points out just how fundamental cooperation is to living systems.

“The Globalization of humanity is a natural, biological, evolutionary process. Yet we face an enormous crisis because the most central and important aspect of globalization—its economy—is currently being organized in a manner that so gravely violates the fundamental principles by which healthy living systems are organized that it threatens the demise of our whole civilization.” - Elisabet Sahtouris, “The Biology of Globalization”

WIE: At this unique time, we’re faced with unprecedented changes in almost every dimension of human existence—biological, social, political, economic, technological—and all of this, as you have noted in your work, is happening in the context of our historic move toward economic and social globalization. Can you describe, from your perspective as a futurist and evolution biologist, the nature of the global changes we’re experiencing and what new opportunities and challenges they present us with at this time?

ELLISABET SAHTOURIS: From my perspective as an evolution biologist, what I see happening now in the human species’ move to social and economic globalization is, in essence, the same thing that has happened previously on Earth to almost all other species. For example, billions of years ago, ancient bacteria, after millions of years of hostile competition that ultimately threatened them with extinction, began to negotiate with each other to form amazing cooperative colonies. In their cooperative phase, they had developed elaborate technologies such as the electric motor, solar energy plants, and heat-producing nuclear piles, along with infrastructures resembling cities that we can only now see under the newest microscopes. The tiny archaebacteria, with their specialized lifestyles and technologies, then created the most dramatic event in our planet’s history, when they engaged in successful negotiations and cooperative evolution. This process—whereby tension and hostilities between individuals lead to negotiations and then ultimately to cooperation as a greater unity—is the basic evolutionary process of all life forms on our planet, as I see it.

This same cycle accounts for how competing nucleated cells united into multi-celled creatures (like us), and it is happening now for a third time, as we cooperative multi-celled humans are driven to evolve a new, cooperative global society or “cell,” which will function at a higher level of complexity and unity than any species before us could achieve. Like the ancient bacteria, we humans are evolving from a competitive, aggressive, juvenile phase to a cooperative mature phase as we complete the cycle.

WIE: Just to clarify what you said about globalization, are you talking about the emergence of a wholly different organism, as different as the nucleated cell was from bacteria?

ES: Yes. From my perspective, globalization is the biggest thing that’s happened since the nucleated cell. Our global economy, and more generally, our global family, will be made up of existing individuals, families, and larger social units, but we will weave ourselves together in unforeseeable new ways. In essence, we are forming a species super-organism that will be able to merge cooperatively into our ecosystems and the living systems of the Earth. So far, in our adolescent empire-building phase, it’s the old systems that are still around and will continue to operate, but it’s equally the job of the new global society or “cell” to reorganize these systems in a way that will support the living organism, as different as the nucleated cell was from bacteria.

WIE: So given the critical conditions that you have outlined here [see www.wie.org for entire interview], what are the primary capacities that human beings will have to develop in order to respond?

ES: Well, what holds us up is our economic system because its win/lose mindset is appropriate only for a juvenile species. Competitive capitalism is a system designed to concentrate wealth among the few while inevitably depleting the wealth of the vast majority. Such destructive behavior is permitted only because we have not recognized that we, as a species, are a living system, just as are our individual bodies and our families. Notice that families don’t starve three children to overfeed the fourth, for example, or beautify one corner of the garden by destroying the other three. We understand living systems up close, but we have not been taught to see the larger systems, such as our global economy, as equally alive and in danger.

We haven’t recognized ourselves as a living system because we don’t understand living systems. Science has interpreted nature in terms of physics and engineering, seeing it as composed of mechanisms. The biggest innovation we need is a completely new scientific worldview, in essence, a systems, or biological, perspective. A biology-based model of a living universe shows self-organized and self-regulated holarchies (self-contained systems which are interdependently embedded in each other, such as a cell, an organism, a family, or an ecosystem).

It’s a beautiful, elegant universe. Yet it’s difficult to change a scientific worldview—the old guard can’t afford to understand and acknowledge the well-researched information that will turn their whole worldview over. It’s like expecting a caterpillar to be enthusiastic about dissolving so that a butterfly can form!

WIE: So you’re saying that the primary capacities required would be, first, to recognize how destructive our current worldview is and, second, to be willing to bear the discomfort of letting that worldview go?

ES: Yes. It’s hard to create anything new in the living world without some chaos or disruption or dissolution of old systems. We’re in a situation now that’s very much like the development of a butterfly in a chrysalis. The caterpillar’s immune system is still trying to protect itself as a caterpillar—and to me, that’s what our insistence on clinging to the oil age is all about. From a biological perspective, it’s the job of the old system to protect itself as long as possible. But it’s equally the job of the new system to rally its forces until it can overcome the old immune system and build the new.

In the North, purple light appears. In the East, yellow light appears.

From the Earth, flowers appear. Yearning to live a long and joyous life.

We are these flowers.

We are the Butterfly Maidens.

Listen to our song! We sing to the Creator.

And the earth repeats our song to the Creator.

We begin singing as soon as we see the yellow light of dawn, the dark retreating.

Our sound repeats and repeats.

We are the Butterfly Maidens.

—Hopi Kachina song
**A Few More Things...**

**Welcome to the Maldives Climate Conference**

We would like to also extend a hearty welcome to Kathleen Geary who has joined the team as SEN’s administrator. Kathleen says: “I am happy to be able to lend my administrative skills to SEN. I am grateful to be part of an amazing spirit-centered effort on behalf of the Earth, led by a group of wonderful people.”

**Small Grants**

Thanks in large part to the Save Our Spirits Fund, SEN was able to give away $3,700 to shamans, elders, medicine people, and earth defenders in 2006. One elder said, “A lot of people don’t really understand who we are or what we do. You folks do. Thanks much.”

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*Sacred Earth Network* (SEN) is a non-profit (501(C)(3)) international organization based in Petersham, Massachusetts. We are part of a planetary groundswell deciding to build a balanced and sustainable culture despite numerous negative trends. Our focus is connecting with the Earth and remembering indigenous wisdom.

Our activities are rooted in two core beliefs:

* that all of Nature is sacred and must be treated with respect and honor, and
* that it is possible to "Restore the Hoop of All Nations" on this miraculous, interconnected living system we call Planet Earth.

Many, if not most, people in the industrial countries seem to be lost in a trance of consumerism that ignores the sacredness of Nature and the critical issues of the day. These countries “economic interests” completely disregard disappearing species, climate change, radioactive waste, and the whole plethora of threats to the biological foundation of Planet Earth. Correspondingly, a certain socialized numbness, denial, and resignation can plague even the most active among us.

**About Sacred Earth Network...**

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