



# Sacred Earth Network

Newsletter

Winter 2008-2009

Number 24

In 2008, the variety of activities that Sacred Earth Network (SEN) sponsored and organized was unlike any other year. There is more than we can document thoroughly in one of our typical 12 page newsletters so we have decided to provide this overview with the hope that you will visit our website for more detail (with wonderful photos!). On the website, there is also a new “Founders Message” by Bill Pfeiffer which serves as the “big picture” perspective on SEN’s unique way of serving the Earth.



**Film Completed:** With the excellent direction of cinematographer, Jonathan Skurnik, we were able to finish a short film on the US-Siberian Indigenous Exchange. Jonathan began filming with the first Exchange in 2001 and continued with relevant footage in subsequent years. Editing began in earnest in late 2006 to produce the 14 minute film that we believe captures the spirit and goals of the Exchange quite well. If you have donated to Sacred Earth Network and did not receive a DVD, the film is viewable online at our site.

**Endangered Languages Program (ELP):** This is a brand new program. If we consider that the world-view of indigenous people is a sustainable view, then it becomes imperative to protect their languages—languages that are being lost at a faster rate than the Earth’s species! Mariyam Medovaya has done a wonderful job by stepping into the role of ELP coordinator. Eight grants were given in the \$1000-\$5000 range. These were high-quality projects with low overhead in which we thought we could make a difference with our funding. For now, we have only sought proposals from North America and Siberia.



**Leon Secatero Passes Into The Spirit World:** SEN lost one of its most beloved advisors when Navajo spiritual elder, Leon Secatero, died in September. Bill attended his funeral in New Mexico joined by several hundred others. In Leon’s words: “We are going to have to come together. A new pathway has to be open, so that we can make another 500-year calendar to bring in sacredness. Look at the elements. Look at the environment. Look at the clouds, the mountains, the plants, your people, and the grandchildren that are unborn yet. We want to make an entrance, a pathway, a blessing way. We have experienced negativity. There is social illness; there is great pain and suffering. Those kinds of illnesses we do not need to take into this new pathway.”

**Eighth Fire Gathering:** In September, SEN sponsored and organized a very unique and much appreciated “Eighth Fire Gathering” at our home base in Nichewaug (Petersham), MA. The idea was to bring Native American elders from the region to meet with sustainability enthusiasts to discuss how to go forward, together, in a good way for the Earth and for the children. The “Eighth Fire” is a term that arose from the teachings of the Seven Fires Prophecy of the Anishnabe people. In the words of Elizabeth Babin, an Algonquin medicine woman from Canada, “These gatherings must continue throughout the land so that a greater level of consciousness is awakened in order to create sustainability. After all, we are responsible for the next seven generations.”





**Journey to Siberia:** For the third year in a row, Bill Pfeiffer led a journey to the majestic and mysterious Altai Mountains of Siberia. The purpose of the trip, like the previous ones, was for the travelers (this time all U.S. citizens) to immerse themselves in the ecstatic quality of Altai land and culture. In so doing, they were more likely to become enthusiastic protectors of the land and more sensitized to the sustainability ethic built into Altai culture. One of the trip participants, Beth Lorio, wrote: “My recent journey to the Altai region in southern Siberia was an amazing, life-changing experience. I was gifted by the land and people in every conceivable way, and in two short weeks the group of strangers I travelled with transformed into a singular “Traditional Culture” of its own, that could fit into a mid-sized white van!”

**Workshops/Retreats:** Cathy Pedevillano and Bill Pfeiffer facilitated three weekend workshops including the always amazing annual SEN Winter Retreat. Two of the workshops were entitled “Earth Alive, Sustainability and the Sacred” and were both held at the Moonshadow community about an hour north of Chattanooga, Tennessee. One of the participants Randall Tomlinson wrote an entire page of appreciation. Here’s an excerpt: “The ability to step out of what i’m doing and ...into sacred space...and just sit and appreciate everything that is and not have to analyze and justify everything but just observe...was incredibly healing.[It] was the perfect sort of medicine for that moment in time.”



**Wild Earth Intensive:** This was a collaboration with University of the Wild organizers and facilitators-in-training, Patrick Draper and Nika Fotopulos-Voeikoff. Bill Pfeiffer had been dreaming of leading this kind of experience for years and it is in his words: “a chance to really go deep and live in balance”. For 10 days, with the help of four guest “mentors” who would each lead for a day, the group did just that. In the words of Joanna Friedlander, “The Wild Earth Intensive is as wild and intense as it sounds. Intensely empowering and awakening, where connecting, sharing and feeling is like breathing. Wild in the purest sense of no holding back, stretching our safety nets like never before. I’ve never known coordinators who are more in tune with the needs of the group.”

**Administration** is usually the unsung part of any organization, but it is so vital. Kathleen Geary does a remarkable job of making sure the finances are in order, registers people at events, updates the data base and web site ...and she does this working only two days a week! Frank Deitle worked with Lucinda Ramsey on organizational development and grant-making from April 1-July 15. Frank also did a great job of upgrading the SEN web site.



**Small Grants:** Thanks to the Save Our Spirits Fund, Beth Lorio, and John Seed, Sacred Earth Network was able to give away 19 small grants (\$200-\$1,000) totaling over \$14,000. These grants encourage those usually outside of mainstream funding channels to continue their valuable work. They have all been involved in SEN’s projects.

**United Altai:** SEN is working with the Russian NGO “21st Century Altai” to build solidarity between various indigenous and environmental groups who inhabit the four countries of the greater Altai region; Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and China. This project includes organizing a gathering of representatives from each country, including elders and leaders, at an annual conference. We are awaiting a full report from Mikhail Shishin, founder of “21st Century Altai”, when this year’s work is complete.

**Donations:** A huge thanks to “Heart-in-Altai” and all who contributed their time and/or money to our efforts in 2008. Their names are listed on our web site.