

Walking the Path of Peace Together * – March 2021 Update

Over the winter, plans for the use of the land the spring, summer and fall of 2021 have been developing in exciting ways, led this year primarily by an Indigenous member of the Walking the Path of Peace Together's Land Council, Maureen Buchanan. Over the past year including through the winter, there has been an increased use of the land by Indigenous people and groups such as the Kingston Indigenous Language Nest (KILN) for ceremony, teachings and renewal.¹ Maureen is a director of KILN, and through the winter brought together a team of people, including a Master Gardener, to develop plans for the creation of two 'Tiny Forests' on the land this coming fall. These two 'Tiny Forests' of indigenous trees and shrubs will be intensively planted consistent with a [planting method](#) developed by forestry experts Shubhenu Sharma and Akira Miyawaki.

In January 2021, the Land Council formally approved the establishment of the two *Tiny Forests* on the land. This month, we approved a more comprehensive and detailed plan, for the establishment of an *Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden*, including the same tiny forests on the land, that was also spearheaded by Maureen Buchanan. The plan includes the planting of 20 mounds of corn, beans and squash, the traditional "Three Sisters", and a fruit guild of five fruit trees to start. Several funding proposals are being prepared or have been already submitted, and there is much excitement building for this next chapter on the land. The soil will be prepared and seeds planted beginning as early as next month, and planting activities will carry on through the fall.

All of this work will be led by a team of seven lead Indigenous volunteers committed to the plan's implementation and supported by a Circle of Advisors made up of nine individuals of Indigenous and settler ancestry with significant gardening expertise (by profession and personal experience). In addition to the KILN, the proposal identifies two other community partners, Mulberry School and One Roof, an Indigenous youth project, to help with heavy jobs. In addition, many other community members and groups, including the local public school, have shown interest in helping out.

The proposed layout for the land locates the various gardens and two storage sheds, preserving the centre space for sacred ceremony, gathering, teaching and learning as well as other cultural and programmatic activities, offered by or in association with community partners.

¹ For further information on the Language Nest, see: <https://kingstonindigenoulanguage.ca>

The Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden is about more than the planting of Indigenous food crops, but links the planting of Indigenous species on the land with the revitalization of language and cultural practices and traditions, and of providing an opportunity for the community to gather in ceremony and care of the earth. Here is how Maureen described their vision recently:

This project is a pathway of logical and simple steps that will engage us in the interdependencies of language and cultural revitalization, food sovereignty and the land: We will build the leadership of second language learners by supporting their learning relationship with first speakers in the planning stage. Learners of all proficiencies will speak/hear our languages while in ceremony and while caring for the garden. We will build our community knowledge about gardening methods and grow food and medicines for distribution to our community. The culminating workshop will build our capacity as a community to be agents in our own food sovereignty and strengthen our partnerships with those who have similar goals. This project is a steppingstone, a first step to a broader vision: tapping maple trees, berry picking, indigenous gardening, manoomin (wild rice) gathering, hunting, and fishing as we engage in ceremony, learn our languages, and help ourselves and our children connect to the land and remember who we are.

The Indigenous-led plans to create an *Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden* and two *Tiny Forests* is an exciting development for the land and the Walking the Path of Peace Together Land Council in partnership with the Kingston Indigenous Language Nest. It represents a giant step forward in realizing the shared vision imagined for Walking the Path of Peace Together back when it began.

* *‘Walking the Path of Peace Together’ is a shared initiative of Faith United Church – Kingston and members of the Indigenous community of Kingston. We are committed to the repatriation of the land to the Indigenous community, land that was purchased years ago for Faith United Church to build a church on, which it chose not to do. Faith members have happily rented worship space in Kingston East now for 32 years and counting.*