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Crossing *the* Bridge

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FOUR BRIDGES TRAVELING PERMACULTURE INSTITUTE

We are a diverse group of people dedicated in preserving and sharing our cultures and restoring a healthy way of life through a collective effort of farmers, educators, healers, youth, elders, and spiritual leaders.

A Year in Review

Taking a look back at our accomplishments in 2009



As we look back at the accomplishments of 2009, we see that it was a year of planning and organizing. We spent most of the first half of the year formalizing the work that we were already doing around the world.

The first steps in developing an organization that could support sustainable programs in various regions with different and varied cultures included establishing a name. The four directions are very important in most native cultures, however, we wanted to imply that our work was a combination of give and take; a two way street, hence the name Four Bridges. We also wanted to convey that our work was not rooted in one central area, but that we would travel to where the need is greatest. Finally, we practice under the principals of permaculture.

So, with the name Four Bridges Traveling Permaculture Institute, we began to work on a logo. We adopted a basic design from the Hotinoson:ni, or Iroquois People. The circle of men and women represents people of all races working together for a better tomorrow. On the inset of the logo we added the word bridge, in four different languages; English, Spanish, Mohawk and Quechua, the main communities that we currently work with.

With these basic tools established, we began to develop organizational guidelines, and a project plan. From there we began to work hard on the tasks of grant writing, public relations, and program development.

To date we have succeeded in securing a seed grant from the Kalliopeia Foundation,

and a generous donation from Grandmother Flordemayo, Seed Grandmother, International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers.

We are now operating a 3 acre educational farm in Santa Cruz, NM. Sken:nen Ken'hak, or Peace Forever Farm is a place of quiet solitude, peace and tranquility. Although much of the growing season had passed by the time we took over, we have been busy preparing the land for the 2010 growing season. We have plowed the fields, planted winter rye, established several compost processing areas, and are developing plans for an irrigation system. We are also preparing an area for taking on some farm animals including chickens, ducks, geese, goats, and perhaps a pair of llamas.



Spirituality & Agriculture

We at the Four Bridges Traveling Permaculture Institute believe in the spirit of the land. Our planting, cultivating, and harvesting practices include prayers, song, and special rituals that our ancestors practiced in ancient times. We believe that, in order for a plant to grow healthy and strong, one must be at peace in the garden. As we were opening the Sken:nen Ken'hak Educational Farm, we were fortunate to have a visit from world famous labyrinth builders Robert Burton and Jeanne-Rachel Solomon of Maui Synopsis in Maui, Hawaii. They designed, and assisted us in building a special labyrinth for the farm. This labyrinth is the focal point of the farm, and offers a place for prayer and meditation prior to any major activities at the farm. The labyrinth is also the place where we hold our monthly Moon Ceremonies. For a schedule of upcoming ceremonies, refer to our website.

Respect for the land through prayer, song, and ancient practices of meditation.

Soapmaking from Buffalo Tallow- Ancient Ways Meet Modern Times

We kicked off a series of soapmaking workshops this fall at the Sken:nen Ken'hak (Peace Forever) Educational Farm, in Santa Cruz, NM. Lorraine Kahneratokwas Gray has been making soap from various ingredients for over 10 years.

While she has worked with vegetable fats, olive oil, and coconut oil, her favorite medium for making soap is buffalo tallow.

Making soap from buffalo tallow is a lengthy process. She begins by processing the raw fat that is discarded after a buffalo has been

butchered. In ancient times, native people did not just use animals as a source of food. Every part of the animal was used; bones for tools, sinew for sewing, and fat for its softening properties.

At the present time, Gray receives buffalo fat from the Picuris Pueblo Bison Project. She processes the fat in the colder months, since the boiling process produces an unpleasant aroma that attracts flies in the warmer months. The raw fat is boiled down over several days, adding water as needed. The process of heating during the day, and cooling at night helps to speed up the break down of the fats. Once the membranes have completely broken down, the mixture is strained through a sieve, and allowed to cool. As

the mixture cools, the fat rises to the top and hardens, producing a round cake of tallow that resembles a cheese cake.

Once the tallow is ready, the lye must be prepared. The hard wood ashes from the fire used to boil the fat is now recycled to make lye. This is another lengthy process that takes several days of filtering fresh spring water through the ashes to produce a lye strong enough to make soap.

Finally, organic herbs and essential oils, many of them donated by Grandmother Flordemayo, are added to the mixture to make a hard soap with creamy bubbles that produces a wonderful aroma.

New classes on soapmaking will be offered in mid-January.



SUSTAINABILITY:
It's not only about food.



We would like to thank all members, individuals, and organizations that supported us this year, including Grandmother Flordemayo Seed Grandmother, International Council of Indigenous Grandmothers, Picuris Pueblo Bison Project, Lauren Peppersack, REV Productions, Ronnie from Santa Cruz Farms, Katie Blanchard, and the Kalliopeia Foundation.

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