

Ebb and Flow

Reversing Falls Sanctuary E-Newsletter

Summer, 2017



Sherry Streeter welcomes Robin Wall Kimmerer, Portrait Unveiling

On May 13 Reversing Falls Sanctuary collaborated with Americans Who Tell the Truth, Peninsula Peace and Justice, Veterans for Peace, Island Peace and Justice, Reversing Falls Women's Circle, Wabanaki/REACH, and Blue Hill Books to host the unveiling of Rob Shetterly's portrait of Robin Wall Kimmerer. The following account of a truly amazing event was written by Chuck Boothby.

“Lots of local groups sponsored the event so word had spread thoroughly and over 140 engaged local folks attended this very special event in the Bay School’s wonderful Emlen Hall. Sherri Mitchell welcomed Robin, a Native American from upstate New York, into Wabanaki territory, after which Rob unveiled the painting. Rob spoke about how there’s a special hauntingness to spirituality that’s not yet fully alive, from a hunger fed with the wrong stuff, and how Robin assuages our loneliness and our hauntedness. Then Robin spoke. If you haven’t read her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, then you’re missing the essence of the new political order, seeking insight on how to change our thinking in order to save our planet. Robin teaches botany related classes at SUNY Syracuse. She knows plants well both from modern and indigenous perspectives. Her most important message is that we must stop calling plants, animals, and parcels of land ITs. IT refers to objects only of consumer value to people. Indigenous people refer to plants as special sacred beings. . . Robin spoke of the need for equal rights not only for women, but also for rivers and the land itself.

Robin’s main message focused on Sacred Reciprocity, the special triangle of gift, responsibility, and gratitude. She described the wonders we experience every morning on the land: trees, plants, birds, creatures, sky, earth, everything we need for Life. She mentioned the world’s too many wounded places, and how we must give voice to the silent ones among us, how plants are our oldest teachers turning air into food for us and giving it to us for free, but there is a necessary reciprocity. We must give real gratitude for this blessing. Nature provides gifts not natural resources. We must accept these Gifts with Responsibility and Gratitude through Reciprocity. Strip mining the land, for example, is so naughty, irresponsible, ungrateful, stupid. Beyond responsible stewardship of the earth, we must also give personal gifts: stories, art, songs, wholehearted gladness. Gratitude is a feeling of fullness, that we already have everything we need.

Robin shared her sincere belief that humanity must reconcile with the plants.”

Thanks to Chuck Boothby for sharing these reflections.



Carolyn Coe sets up a mic in front of an altar bearing moss and sweetgrass.

In the photo below Marilyn Miller, Diana Newman of Timbered Lake, and Daksha Baumann have brought craft work so their hands can accompany their minds. Daksha also brought the sweetgrass seen in the far left in the photo above. Tony *gathered the moss* seen below and behind the lectern.



RFS Visioning – An Interim Report

July 1, 2017

Thirty-eight members of the Reversing Falls Sanctuary Community met on May 21st. Under the leadership of Martha Jordan, we responded to two questions: “What about RFS is most important to you?” “What isn’t working for you?” Sheila Moir took excellent notes on what was said. Kathleen Caldwell wrote down the items mentioned by each respondent on newsprint and danced all around the sanctuary posting them on the walls.

Attendees were given a sheet of paper with those two questions for input during the session and an additional request at the bottom: “Write down the three most important things Reversing Falls could do to sustain/extend/deepen your Reversing Falls community and your continued active involvement.” That same communication then went out to the 200 or so RFS constituents who were not present. More than [20] responses came in. You will find attached a statistical summary of the comments made at the May 21 visioning as reflected in Sheila’s notes and Kathleen’s posts, and, in a separate

column, the comments submitted later in response to the request for the three most important things about Reversing Falls. Those responses were compiled by Doug Cowan.

Here I will attempt to write a summary of what we learned and what that suggests about where we are in this process of setting a course for the future.

On May 21st, there were **59** direct comments about the importance of the **Reversing Falls Community**, **22** of them affirming the understanding, empowering, trusting, welcoming, hopeful and beloved nature of RFS. The multi-faith character of RFS [**6**] and its importance as a model of supportive community [**5**] both received strong support. In short, many cherish what they experience at RFS.

While the May 21st contingent spoke for the most part to the nature of **the RFS community**, **10** mentioned the importance of **reaching out to interact** with other groups on the Peninsula. That concern was matched by **13** of those who responded to the “three most important things” request. In fact, that was the singular focus of their “community” responses. We are a beloved community, but we need to do more to **engage the community** around us. That includes those folks who either have no idea what we are about, or who are actively suspicious of us, as well as the several community organizations with whom we share interests and goals. Note that in May we collaborated with several community groups for the Kimmerer event. More recently, RFS organized the silent auction that accompanied the Soul Benders dance benefit for “Healing the Wounds of Turtle Island.” More than \$7500 was raised.

Far and away the most responses were about **Programs** — **82** responses on May 21 and **71** in the follow-up request for a total of **153**. Here there was a lot of overlap between the two, and I’m going to analyze the totals several programming areas received. The **women’s circle** received accolades from many of the women who responded, **21** in all. Most comments focused on the importance to the life of the respondent, to the quality of what happens at their meetings, and to the circle’s function as the heart and soul of the RFS community. After woman after woman began her remarks with the significance of the woman’s circle in her life, one of the first men to weigh in started his comments with “the women’s circle, of course.” That can be taken in jest or with utmost seriousness, but it deserves the latter. This report could well be titled: *The Women’s Circle, of Course!*”

Spirituality was mentioned by **17** people in total. As a multi-faith community, we have offered many avenues to spiritual exploration and mutual understanding, but there is clearly a hunger for paths we have not yet trod. Among the subset concerns related to spirituality are ritual and ceremony, music, and community conversation. Where is this always done well? The Women's Circle, of course! Seasonal celebrations, like our **Solstice and the Equinox** celebrations [13] and our annual **Advent Spiral** [9] were especially valued among our programs that offer spiritual nurture. The labyrinth received only **3** mentions, but has often been a deepening dimension of a spiritual offering.

“The Gallery Within” has created a venue for **The Arts** that rivals in function and beauty many of the galleries in the area. And the importance of the arts was highlighted by **17** folks. The arts include exhibitions of a variety of artistic media, art making workshops, plays, and more. The gallery has offered a venue for local artists and for a national tour exhibition of drone quilts. Pat, Daksha, Bec, Zuzonna and Galen have done the spade work to make so much possible. But that work is considerable, and a concern here is finding a way to spread or ease that burden. Hiring an administrative assistant is one answer to this and other concerns as the organization grows in numbers and in activities.

Music was noted [9] both in its importance to community gatherings and programs, and in reference to Friday community sings. Music is a dimension of our commitment to the arts, an element in the nourishment of spirituality, and essential to our determination to build community. Friday sings feature very eclectic selections. Music at programs is chosen to serve the purpose of the day. But a question hangs out there: What music expresses our community life in particular? Can we find musicians who will stick with us till we find a musical direction that feeds our souls and fuels our work?

The commitment of the RFS community to **Peace and Social Justice** [9] and to **Environmental Consciousness and Action** [8] have ever been part of our mission and have dominated our programming for most, perhaps all, of our life together. And that emphasis has been manifested in the Brooksville Farmers' Market, the Greenhouse Project, and the WindowDresser's Build with more initiatives on the way. This year we have sought to be allies with Native American water protectors here on the Penobscot and with those who gathered at Standing Rock. That we should continue programming and collaboration with Sherri Mitchell and others in the **Native American Community** was strongly emphasized by the **5** who mentioned it.

Missing from our programming these past few years have been **Entertainment and Fun** events mentioned by **6**. These evenings have been important in building and sustaining community and in bringing the larger community into our life together. Also missed by many though mentioned specifically by only **5** in the two reports combined is **Community Conversation** as a major portion, if not the centerpiece, of all programs.

The third area that received a significant number of responses had to do with how Reversing Falls Sanctuary functions as an **Organization**. Leadership is aging and involves too few persons. Decision making needs wider input which engages more of the RFS community [**10**]. How decisions are made for the community is not transparent to the membership [**3**]. This is an opportune time to raise and resolve these concerns as RFS reorganizes as a 501(c)3. And as we rethink issues of vision, mission and identity, the question arises: What kind of organizational structure do we need to serve those ends?

The fourth and fifth areas concern **offerings for different age groups**. **22** remarks or suggestions from May 21st and the follow-up are about doing more programming for **younger people**, for children and their parents. And there were **12** comments regarding serving, engaging, making friends with seniors. We are a group of **seniors**, folks largely 50 to 80 years of age. Is that where we should focus our efforts and attention? Or can we think of the needs that parents and children have in the community and ask ourselves what we may have to offer? This is not so much a disagreement as it is an invitation to an honest exploration of who we are and the limits of our human and financial resources, keeping in mind the overwhelming support for more outreach to the larger community. Note the amazing success of our recent collaboration with Tinder Hearth and the Soul Benders to benefit “Healing the Wounds of Turtle Island.” The attendees ranged from crawling babies to dancing elders.

The sixth and seventh areas are about **The Building**. On May 21, **5** spoke eloquently of their love for the RFS space. In the follow up questionnaire **5** suggested we look for a way to secure the building for our continued use without necessarily owning it, and **2** on May 21 pointed to the crucial decision we face about investing in the repair and maintenance of the building. In both reports there was an emphasis [**7**] on the need for **water, a kitchen, a bathroom, a septic system**. What we have learned so far, and what we will learn in the next steps in this visioning process, will inform and clarify decisions that need to be made about the building.

The last item on the list is about **Politics**. The May 21st folks [4] are seeking political discussion with a request for an integration of the political and the spiritual while at least **1**, perhaps **2**, are suggesting in the follow-up report that we “stay out of politics.”

The group that planned the May 21 visioning and the follow-up are suggesting, with the approval of the program team, that our next step be a **series of smaller listening circles** in order to hear more deeply and more widely from members of the RFS community. You will soon receive a doodle in your email inviting you to indicate the days and times of day you would be available to participate in a circle. This has been but a first step in a process that will take place over months.

Attached with this newsletter is the statistical compilation upon which this report is based.

Thanks for your interest and participation. The May 21st planning team:
Martha Jordan, Doug Cowan, Pat Wheeler, Carole Pascal, Gary Vencill

Calendar, Summer, 2017

7, 5-8, 7 p.m. Bagaduce Theatre: Chekhov’s “The Cherry Orchard”

7/9, 3 p.m. Bagaduce Theatre: “Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike,” an homage to Chekhov by Christopher Durang
4 p.m. Women’s Circle at RFS

7/10, 4 p.m. Women’s Meditation Circle with Gail Page at RFS
6 p.m. George Mitchell speaks at David’s Folly

7/11, 7 p.m. Larry Dulong and Random Sightings concert at
Brooksville United Methodist Church

7/12, 7 p.m. Bagaduce Theatre: “One Atlantic: Bishop and Lowell”
by Monique Fowler

7/13-15, 7 p.m. Bagaduce Theatre: “Becoming Dr. Ruth” by Mark
St. Germain

7/14-17, “Healing the Wounds of Turtle Island” in Passadumkeag

7/16, 3 p.m. Bagaduce Theatre: "All My Sons" by Arthur Miller

7/18, 7 p.m. Ellacappella concert at Brooksville United Methodist Church

7/19 & 20, 7 p.m. Bagaduce Theatre: "Hattie and Robert: Letters in our Pockets" by Monique Fowler, a Tapley/Wasson story from the 1860's in celebration of Brooksville's 200th anniversary

7/23, 1 - 2 p.m. Memorial Gathering at Town Landing for Brooksville citizens who have died during 2016
3 p.m. Bagaduce Theatre: "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" by Tennessee Williams

7/25, 7 p.m. Curtis Brand concert at Brooksville United Methodist Church

7/26-29, 7 p.m. Bagaduce Theatre: "Shakespeare, Moliere, Love and all that Jazz!" adapted by Monique Fowler

7/29, 7 p.m. An evening with Judith Sloan, "Off the Record: Between a Laugh and a Hard Place – Stories of Climate Change, Migration, Refuge, and Finding Home." Opening act by Warren Lehrer. At RFS

7/30, 3 p.m. Bagaduce Theatre: "End of Summer" by S. N. Behrman

8/1, 7 p.m. Emy Taylor concert at Brooksville United Methodist Church

8/6, 4 p.m., Women's Circle

8/7, Women's Meditation Circle with Gail Page

8/8, 7 p.m. Mike and Susie Fay concert, Brooksville United Methodist Church

8/10, 4 p.m. "Choices that Matter," Brooksville Library [see note on next page]

8/11, 7 p.m. Ellacappella concert at RFS

8/15, 7 p.m. Archipelago concert at Brooksville United Methodist Church

8/17, 4 p.m. "Choices that Matter," Brooksville Library

8/19, 7 p.m. An evening with Paul Weiss and Timbered Lake at RFS



Timbered Lake at Robin Wall Kimmerer Event

8/20, 4 p.m. Barbara Cates of Wabanaki/REACH will offer a program at RFS about continued efforts at reconciling Wabanaki peoples with other citizens of the State of Maine and the State itself

[For those who couldn't take part in the recent two day-workshop, "Choices That Matter," Barbara Sinclair and Susan Ostertag will offer it again on August 10th and 17th at the Brooksville Library, 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. To sign up, please email Polly Bishop, mahalabishop@gmail.com or call her at 266-9066. Contact her soon, attendance is limited to 12.

Prior to this new series, participants will be able to see the Frontline documentary of Atul Gawande's *Being Mortal* at the Blue Hill Library on July 27.]

Photo credits: Pat Wheeler Editing: Anne Ferrara

Article on Robin Wall Kimmerer by Chuck Boothby

Website: www.reversingfalls.org Facebook: [Reversing Falls Sanctuary](#) Info: 469-7850

More photos from Kimmerer event below, the last two show Carole Pascal arriving with forsythia and Tony Ferrara contemplating as he walks.



Artist Rob Shetterly greets Anne Ferrara who introduced the evening



Robin Wall Kimmerer meets Richard Gregor

