

LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the
Dishman Hills

November 2006

BIONEERS

This article was written by Bea Lackaff, Association member and we thought it may hold some interest for us conservation folks.

Bioneers? What are they? If you are reading the "Dishman Hills Lights and Shadows" – YOU may be a Bioneer! I had never heard of the Bioneers before a friend assured me I was one, and encouraged me to join a dozen or so Spokaneites attending the 16th Annual Bioneers Conference in San Raphael, California in late October of this year.

"Revolution from the Heart of Nature!" Wow – that sounds great! But, what does it mean? Essentially, starting small in 1990, the Bioneers now put on a Conference every year where for 3 days speakers address 3 thousand + attendees, and thousands more attending through live large-screen TV hookups at 17 satellite sites across the United States. Punctuated by opportunities to hang out, enjoy art, and eat a variety of delicious foods, the afternoon and evenings offer interactive workshops with the plenary speakers and other guests, a film festival, more informative and/or retail booths than you can possibly visit, a book store with signings and conversation with featured author/speakers, indoor and outdoor stages with poetry, hip-hop, reggae, world and rock music with a DJ-shake-your-booty dance party, lots of activities by and for young people, and group yoga and meditation opportunities. Every evening, those more interested in communicating with 13 indigenous grandmothers, gathered in Dharmasala, India (Including Native American, Australian Aborigine, Tibetan...) connected through a live interactive satellite link.

Essentially, Bioneers believe that people are sharing this wonderful opportunity to live on this unique and beautiful planet with each other and all aspects of nature as part of a vast interactive and inter-connected web of life (and consciousness) – and that if we want to SURVIVE into future generations with what we consider quality of life – we had better learn from nature and indigenous wisdom and insist on social, economic, and ENVIRONMENTAL justice for all. (As Pete Seeger said about one of his favorite songs, " Either we're ALL going over the rainbow, or NOBODY's going.")

Highlights of the Bioneer Conference include: A presentation by mycologist Paul Stamets (Mycelium Running) who revealed astonishing evidence of how the fungi can provide solutions to restore and nurture ecosystems and human health.

Michael Pollan (The Omnivore's Dilemma, The Botany of Desire) stressed the value and importance of shopping at our local Farmer's Markets, to eat healthy, keep money in our community, and to protect local farming and lands in agriculture. He also stressed the importance of the up coming Farm Bill – and the need for citizen involvement if we want to keep family farms from becoming industrialized soy bean and corn syrup factories. (Note to self: read Pollan's introduction and Daniel Imhoff's Food Fight: The Citizen's Guide to a Food and Farm Bill.)

Lois Gibbs. "25 Years of an Inspirational journey: From Love Canal to the Nation." She is rightfully a legendary champion of environmental justice. She spoke of her beginnings as a docile housewife and how watching the nearby factories pollute the water and the children falling sick and dying turned her into an activist who 25 years later still encourages and supports communities to demand a healthy, safe, and economically sound future.

Canadian Tzeporah Berman, director of Forest Ethics, spoke compellingly about "The Fate of the Last Great Forests", and her organization's on-going efforts to save the boreal forests, with suggestions for us Yanks on how to protect our own Redwoods and other forests (including open canopy Ponderosa Pine stands in The Dishman Hills!)

This description barely scratches the surface of the information and inspiration available at the Bioneers Conference. Try as we might, all of the attendees faced limits on what we could do and what we could take in. But that is part of what the Bioneers are about – we each just do the part that we can do, and together we can – - well, what would you like to do? Shall we save the World?

Guess what? If you are hiking in the Dishman Hills, and doing what you can to support the Dishman Hills Association, then you are already a Bioneer!

Folks attending the Conference from Spokane brought back a selection of the Plenary Presentations on DVD, and films from the Film Festival to share anyone who might be interested. For more information, call Bea Lackaff, (ad hoc Spokane Bioneer Librarian) at 509-327-8303.

BIG ROCK UPDATE

We are still trying to close the deal for the land exchange. The other party has changed important wording in the agreement and has requested extra money for the deal to happen. We are scrambling to keep up with this "moving target" and will keep you informed.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving nature areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton, 747-8147, if you have questions. We meet every other month on the third Tuesday of the month at 7pm, at Opportunity Elementary School, S. 1109 Wilbur. Our next meeting will be January 16. This is our annual meeting with officer election.

The following are our October donors that have consented to be listed: Joseph Collins, Paula Everett, Allen Fix, Harold Fix, Don Griffiths, L.K. Hatch, Hobnailers Inc., Mary Joe Kester, Jean Koch, Lucille Marchand, Mary Meagher, Gloria Nicol, Joy Peterson, Ambrose & Willene Priestley, Jeanne Wilson, Peter Witherspoon, and one anonymous donor. We are very thankful for your support.

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