



A Beautiful View

The CNC team recently connected at Vista Hermosa, an MRCA site, for a staff meeting to plan future programming and learn about the history of the park as well as the land on which it was built.

Find out more about this park in the Community Spotlight below. We hope to see you outside soon!

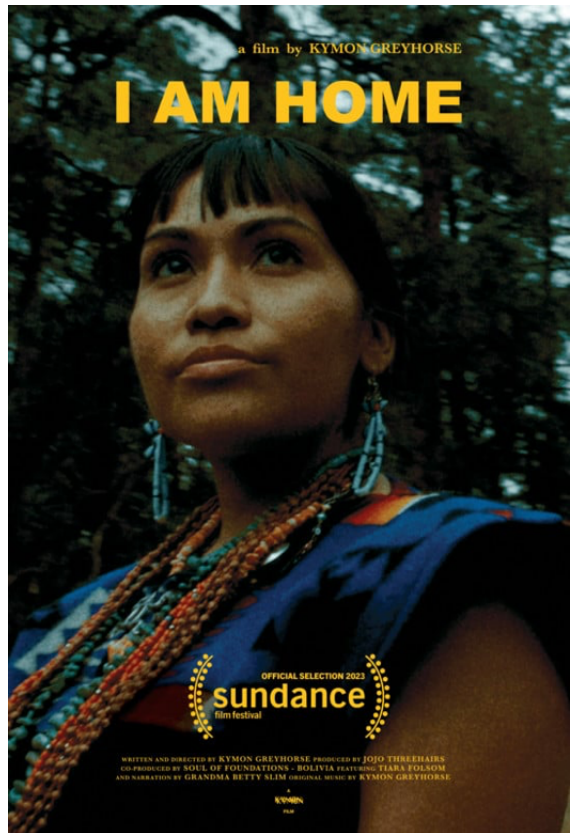
Highlighting Indigeneity

“The land knows you, even when you are lost.”

— Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

We acknowledge the land on which CNC operates as the unceded ancestral lands and home of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples, original stewards and custodians of this territory. We recognize their continuing connection to land, waters and culture, and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.





Photos courtesy of Sundance Institute

While Indigenous communities are leading movements from [LANDBACK](#) to [Stop Cop City](#) and [Stop Willow](#), let us not overlook the abundance of art and creativity unfolding concurrently with this work.

Indigenous storytelling is a powerful force that takes many different forms. This

year Indigenous filmmakers brought stories to the screen that highlighted issues such as sovereignty, connection to the land, settler violence, and healing through collective joy.

Many of these highly anticipated works were recently featured at the [Indigenous House](#), a celebration of Native strength and artistry at the Sundance Film Festival. This inaugural event was created by the Native women-led racial justice organization [IllumiNative](#).

Here are just a few of the films that were recognized at the festival:

- [Fancy Dance](#) - directed and produced by Erica Tremblay, Seneca–Cayuga; screenplay by Erica Tremblay and Micians Alise, Tlingit
- [Bad Press](#) - directed by Rebecca Landsberry-Baker, Muscogee (Creek)
- [Gush](#) - directed, written, and produced by Fox Maxy, Payómkawichum and Mesa Grande Band of Mission Indians
- [I Am Home](#) - directed and written by Kymon Greyhorse, Navajo and Tongan
- [Headdress](#) - directed, written, and co-produced by Taietsarón:sere “Tai” Leclair, Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) and Mi’kmaq

How You Can Support

1. Learn about the crisis of [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives](#)
2. Contribute to the [Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples](#)
3. Support Indigenous journalism through the [Native American Journalists Association](#)

Message from the Executive Director

A Privilege of Time or the Barrier of Time, and the Outdoor Movement

To conceive that the Santa Monica Mountains were a real environment and not a prop was not possible since my family never visited them. The nearby Baldwin Hills were simply considered an amalgamation of urban land uses (oil

rigs, cemeteries, a community college, housing, recreational parks, and an abandoned reservoir). As for the San Gabriel Mountains, well you just rarely saw them—due to smog conditions. As such, growing up in Los Angeles—through the 1970's and early 80's, my only view of the local natural environment was when the bus dropped me and my friends off at the beach during the summer. So, while there were aspects of nature all around me, I just didn't have anyone to point it out to me back then or the knowledge the same way I do today.

In hindsight, I feel like my lack of any regular connectivity to the nature around me growing up had more to do with a lack of time rather than accessing it. Namely, my dad worked. My grandparents worked. My aunts and uncles worked. My dad, along with my grandparents, aunts, and uncles, all migrated from Mexico to the United States in the 1950's. Upon their arrival, their hustle started, specifically around “making ends meet.” There was no privilege of paid time-off to spend with your family or recharge, no luxury of savings to take unpaid leave, or disposable income to travel.

Before and after I was born, my dad hustled. He worked a day-job as a copier technician and a weekend job as his own handyman. As a result of a kind of time privilege— being a latch-key kid meant I was afforded boredom (i.e. time in absences of demands) at the expense of a parent that was regularly working. To this day, even though he is retired and no longer needs to hustle, he still finds it difficult to relax. This speaks to the importance of having the time to practice how to rest, to rest, and the spaces needed to engage in physical and mental wellness.

My own life's irony is that for so little time spent in nature or the environment growing up that I should have committed the last 30 years of it advocating on environmental issues related to health, education, justice, habitat, access, and natural services.

Yet, so many low-income, BIPOC, and migrant families, similar to my own father, lack the time themselves to access outdoor and natural spaces. Individually, any one of these identities could affect one's time to access outdoor and natural spaces, especially with family members; however, taken collectively, lacking time in the outdoors is almost a certainty.

In 2023, most government agencies and environmental/park access/outdoor focused non-profits, speak on the need for more natural areas, more natural areas in BIPOC communities, and more access to these natural environments, underpinning this argument with the mental and physical health benefits of being in nature. A critical element missing in these conversations is the concept of 'time', namely that most low-income, BIPOC, and migrant families do not have it because the young adults and adults are too busy having to work. Hustling to pay for housing, healthcare, transportation costs, utilities, or food; hustling to contend with additional factors beyond their control like inflation, gentrification, and or unemployment. A dangerous and unhealthy situation materializes where whole communities and generations are in a constant state of hustle and never having, getting, or given time to rest, reflect, create, restore, or rejuvenate.

CNC must figure out how to join, braid, and weave the greater movement of movement's work to address late stage, racialized capitalism and the commodification of 'time' into our own work. We must build upon the idea that people and communities have 1) spaces to heal and reflect, 2) have access to those spaces, and just as importantly 3) have the 'time' to engage in the practices of healing, reflection rest, creativity, and the joyful pleasure that comes from the simplicity of communing with nature.

--Delaney Alamillo, Executive Director

Program Highlights

William O. Douglas Outdoor Classroom

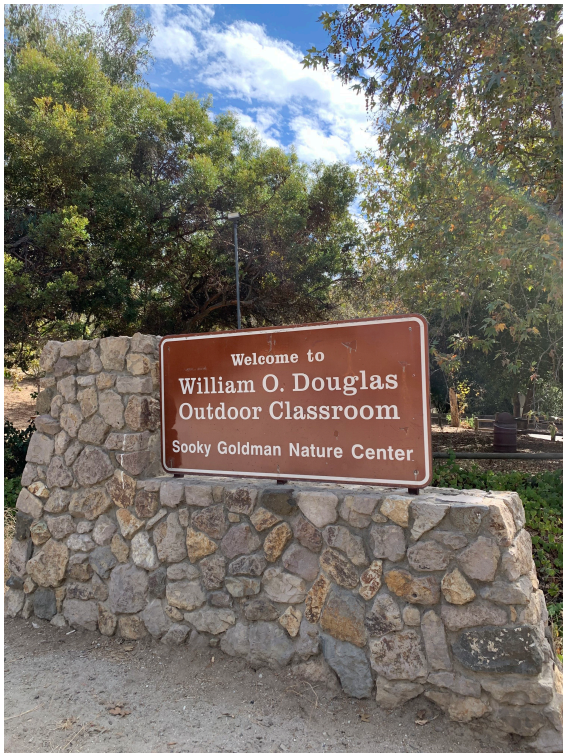
The William O. Douglas Outdoor Classroom (WODOC) at Franklin Canyon Park provides public programs and field trips to Title I schools. Programs are led by CNC staff and/or trained volunteers and feature guided strolls and hikes and contain standards-aligned curriculum that spotlights cultural history and the local ecology.

CNC staff and volunteers recently hosted a full moon hike where visitors enjoyed a night sky interpretive program. Upcoming programs include Movie

Magic, Storytime and a volunteer orientation.

Teachers and educators interested in scheduling in-person field trips for Fall 2023, we are currently taking reservations. For more information on school trips, please contact us at WODOC@communitynatureconnection.org.

Severe storms in January caused flooding and blocked roads at Franklin Canyon, resulting in a closure of the park and suspension of programming at the Sooky Goldman Nature Center. As of March 1, the southern entrance (via Beverly Hills Drive) is currently open and accessible to the public, however the northern entrance (via Coldwater Canyon Drive) remains closed. The park is expected to fully reopen when road repairs are completed. In the meantime, programming has transitioned to virtual programs and in-school visits.



Akuutet Learning Nursery at Elyria Canyon

Through the support of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), Community Nature Connection has the opportunity to restore Elyria Canyon Park's native plant nursery to an operational state that will consist of flourishing local shrub and tree species.

In partnership with Para Los Ninos Youth Workforce Services program, CNC staff recruited 13 interns from Sotomayor High School and Franklin High School in Northeast LA to participate in the the Akuutet Learning Nursery internship program. The interns are restoring and enhancing fire-prone habitats using methods known to reduce fire risk in addition to learning how to lead park volunteers in large-scale fire resilient restoration efforts.

This February CNC staff hosted a tour of the Akuutet Learning Nursery for the Governor’s Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, and the Nursery is planning to host a grand opening May 6, with board members invited to be guest speakers.



Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) seedlings are coming up nicely as spring approaches at the Akuutet Learning Nursery!

Outdoor & Coastal Access Leadership Institute

The Outdoor & Coastal Access Leadership Institute (OCALI) is a hybrid learning course for individuals interested in outdoor and coastal access issues

and projects. It is designed for individuals to understand the dynamic and current advocacy efforts to maximize public access to local outdoors.

The latest OCALI cohort will focus on outdoor access, native plant identification, CalNat training, watershed and coastal preservation. Additionally, the program will offer virtual sessions and camping activities.



Transit to Trails

Transit to Trails is a free shuttle program in Los Angeles County focusing on communities impacted by racial, socio-economic, and disability injustices. Outreach locations include proximity to community-based organizations and public libraries in the greater Los Angeles Area. Programming includes interpretive, guided tours, and activities that focus on various topics related to the coast and the Santa Monica Mountains like ecology, wildlife, marine life, oceanography, the importance of watersheds, coastal and mountain protection, tide pools, and the cultural significance of these sites to indigenous cultures and the public.

While severe weather has impacted programming and some planned trips had to be rescheduled, Transit to Trails recently led a bilingual Coastal Access trip for LIFT members and hosted 9 project partner meetings. The Libraries to Trailheads program conducted information sessions and a community meeting with the Teen Council at the Chinatown Branch Library. More Transit to Trails trips are scheduled to take place between March and June 2023.

The program also added a new staff member in lead naturalist Bree Salazar. Program coordinator Zee Zetino participated in the National Outdoor Leadership School's (NOLA) Wilderness Outdoor First Responders (WOFR) in Santa Cruz and became certified to better assist in outdoor emergencies.

Emerging Naturalists & Continuing Connections

We are proud to announce the re-launch of CNC's Emerging Naturalists program led by our new program manager Jenna Cobb. This initiative engages community partners and youth participants in programs that focus on a variety of outdoor careers and skills and instills a sense of stewardship. One cohort of Emerging Naturalists will take place in Spring 2023 in partnership with Northeast Los Angeles high schools and environmental clubs.

The Continuing Connections program provides alumni of CNC trainings with additional opportunities for community building, networking, and leadership development. Stay tuned for further details about upcoming alumni programming!

Create Lasting Impact

Spring is right around the corner and that means we'll be ramping up our programming to get more folks out into nature! We hope that you'll consider a donation at this time to help facilitate meaningful outdoor experiences for folks across LA County.

Supporting CNC is quick and easy with PayPal. Any amount is meaningful and helps to sustain our community-based programming. Show up for outdoor

equity with a contribution today!

Donate with PayPal

Want to make an even bigger impact? Set up a [recurring monthly donation](#) on our website!

Welcome New & Returning Staff

We're excited to formally introduce our newest team member, Jenna Cobb, and welcome back Bree Salazar for their second winter season with the organization!

Bree and Jenna bring invaluable experience, knowledge, and passion to their roles at CNC. Jenna will serve as the Program Manager for our Emerging Naturalists Youth Leadership Series and Alumni program, while Bree will deliver interpretive programming as our Lead Naturalist. [Learn more here](#)

**BREE
SALAZAR**

Lead Naturalist





JENNA
COBB

Program
Manager



Community Spotlight

Located at the western gateway to Downtown Los Angeles, 10.5-acre **Vista Hermosa Park** is an urban natural park developed by the MRCA that boldly returns the serenity and diversity of nature to the Los Angeles urban core. Operated in collaboration with the Los Angeles Unified School District and the City of Los Angeles, Vista Hermosa Natural Park is a popular destination for residents of this densely populated neighborhood.

The park features walking trails, streams, meadows, oak savannahs, picnic grounds, and a nature-themed playground amidst native Mediterranean vegetation. An outdoor amphitheater in a grotto provides an ideal setting for environmental and natural history education, and other public events.

Interpretive programming led by CNC naturalists include the free “Transit to Trails” trips to sites in the Santa Monica Mountains.



Park Location: 100 N Toluca St, Los Angeles, CA 90026

Driving directions: From the Hollywood Freeway (101), exit onto N Alvarado St. Travel south on Alvarado St to Beverly Blvd, turn left. Take Beverly Blvd to W 2nd St, then turn left onto Toluca St. The park is on the right. There is street parking and a small paved lot. You can also use the 110 and exit at W 2nd St.

Metro Routes: Take the 14/37 Metro Local Line bus to 1st & Beaudry stop or 16 Metro Local Line bus to 3rd & Lucas stop.

Participant Story

On a recent Transit to Trails Explore the Coast trip in collaboration with [LIFT](#), participants learned about the geological features of Temescal Gateway Park and created sun prints with local flora.

Through this activity folks gained an

understanding of a practice
Indigenous communities have
utilized for centuries -- to create art
from natural materials as a way to
connect with nature and share
stories with one another.



Upcoming Events

Check out our [website](#) and [social media](#) often for the latest trainings and programs!

- [Volunteer Orientation](#)
 - Saturday, March 11
 - 10 AM - 11:30 AM PT
 - Online via Zoom
 - [Transit to Trails](#)
 - Saturday, March 18
 - 8:30 AM – 5:30 PM
 - Chinatown Branch Library to Abalone Cove
 - [Storytime Online](#)
 - Saturday, March 25
 - 2 PM - 3 PM PT
 - Online via Zoom
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Please note: Some photos included in this newsletter were taken before the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore do not reflect our current safety protocols.



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Our mailing address is:

P.O. Box 31187 Los Angeles, California 90031

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