

Giftng Our Oakland Home/Land to Sogorea Te' Land Trust

We recently completed the paperwork that will, upon our deaths, return our home of 25+ years to the Sogorea Te' Land Trust.

Aware that this land was stolen from its original inhabitants and that no one can "own" Mother Earth, we have stewarded our home near Oakland's Dimond Park as a community and meditation center. We have hosted community meetings, meditation retreats, social justice gatherings, and garden tours. At every group gathering, we acknowledge the Lisjan Ohlone people from whom this land was taken.

The privilege of receiving a small inheritance from each of our families enabled us to purchase this beautiful home on Whittle Creek. As long time racial justice activists, we are choosing not to perpetuate the unearned privilege of passing on our home within our white families. We also feel grateful for the current opportunity to pay the Shuumi Land Tax each month.

When we first moved in, manicured grass and shapely camellia bushes marked our front yard. We became aware of the need to use less water and to create habitat for birds and pollinators. We dug up the lawn, ripped out mounds of weeds, laid down six layers of cardboard and covered it with six inches of mulch. We waited six months and planted native plants, vegetables, and fruit trees. We trust the native flowers and edibles that now abound here will welcome the future Ohlone people who will receive this property.

The legal process for returning land to Sogorea Te' has been a simple one. We met at a safe social distance in our backyard, along the creek, with Corrina Gould, Co-founder of the Land Trust, and staff member Ariel Luckey. Corrina spoke of the sacredness of this land and of her vision for a patchwork quilt across the East Bay of lands returned to the Indigenous people.

After discussing with Corrina and Ariel how our land will be returned, we wrote agreements into our trust designating our home to be distributed to Sogorea Te' Land Trust. It was important to cite Sogorea Te's tax ID number. We included that the distribution of land to Sogorea Te' would occur after both of our deaths or after one of us died and the other had moved to another location. We shared these agreements with our nieces who are our executors. In addition, we designated funds within the trust to Sogorea Te' to cover mortgage payments for the months it may take for our family to clear the house of all that is not wanted by Sogorea Te'.

Our hearts are filled with quiet joy that at the end of our lives, our home and land will be returned to this Indigenous, women-led land trust. We encourage other East Bay homeowners to gift back the land and help weave the patchwork quilt.

Please contact us if you have questions about the process or would like support in your decision-making.

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