



# BLUEBERRY HERITAGE HILL

Vision and Model

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## Overview

The Blueberry Heritage Hill is a donations-based pick-your-own 25-acre organic blueberry field situated on top of a small but spectacular peak on a parcel of 40 acres in mid-coast Maine. As part of Sacred Connections Land Trust we will provide not just an agricultural experience but a chance to connect with nature and learn about traditional sustainable land care practices. The fields are managed in partnership with local Native American tribal members who employ traditional ecological knowledge and practices to ensure we honor and heal the land. We cultivate a vibrant community space that encourages healthy living through outdoor activities and organic produce while celebrating indigenous knowledge and combating climate change.

The Blueberry Heritage Hill addresses outdoor access issues by creating a space for community and partner events, harvesting, hiking, and even snow-shoeing excursions.

Our goal is to raise \$210,000 to purchase and protect the land outright. This will ensure long-term organic cultivation of the wild blueberry fields and safeguard the land from future development threats. With this acquisition, we will:

- ❖ Preserve a fragile and sacred ecosystem and wild food source
- ❖ Preserve Maine's endangered blueberry barren heritage
- ❖ Provide educational and recreational opportunities rooted in sustainability
- ❖ Foster a place of healing and community resilience through land connection

- ❖ Promote Indigenous stewardship and economic opportunity

## About Sacred Connections

Sacred Connections is an indigenous-led land trust dedicated to restoring harmonious relationships between humans and land. Our mission is to restore Maine's natural environment while building bridges between cultures. Through collaborative conservation projects, we unite diverse communities in healing the land, sharing traditional wisdom, and creating lasting environmental and social change for future generations. Our model supports a circular economy where land, knowledge, and resources are shared by all.

We believe conservation cannot succeed unless it is both relational and inclusive. To that end, Sacred Connections practices shared stewardship, a model in which Native and non-Native people work together under Indigenous leadership, listening to the land and to one another. In this model, plants and animals are not “resources” to be extracted but relatives to be cared for. Our approach addresses multiple interconnected challenges: environmental degradation, cultural isolation, and community fragmentation to cultivate lasting environmental and social impact.



## Mission

Our goal is to protect these blueberry fields, and the entire 40-acre piece of land. With this we plan to cultivate a vibrant community space that encourages healthy living through outdoor activities and fresh produce, and serves as a place of learning, healing, and connection with nature.



Blueberry plants can live for over 100 years! As these blueberries are wild, they are a sustainable crop that require less water and can be grown without the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides. And Wabanaki peoples have been caring for blueberries for thousands of years. We prioritize Wabanaki rights to their ancestral lands and aim to support indigenous lifeways and economic development by paying

Wabanaki ecological and farming experts to co-steward this land as we protect it from the open market.

Our vision is to protect this land for future generations as a living model of climate-resilient agriculture, Indigenous stewardship, and regenerative community building. We aim to:

- ❖ Provide public access to wild foods and traditional practices
- ❖ Celebrate and amplify Wabanaki land relationships
- ❖ Educate about sustainable land care, native species, and nutrition
- ❖ Create alternative economic opportunities through donation-based and community-supported models



## Background

**Nico Sidoti** grew up spending summers at camp near the blueberry fields. Like many in his large network of friends and family, he developed a deep love for the land, and even raked blueberries as a teenager. Nico purchased the blueberry fields in 2005 years ago to protect them from development. Since then, the land has been managed organically and holds MOFGA organic certification.



To ensure Nico’s vision of permanent protection and indigenous-led stewardship lives, his close circle created *Friends of Blueberry Hill*, a community alliance working to prevent trophy homes or condos from replacing this natural haven. Now the time has come to put these beautiful fields under long-term stewardship that will ensure the cultivation of organic blueberries across the generations. To raise funds and engage the local community on this project Sacred Connections along with the Friends of Blueberry Hill will partner with The Possibility Alliance and the Little River Coalition, two nearby grassroots organizations committed to ecological restoration, land justice, and regenerative living. Approximately \$210k is needed to pay off debt on the land and transfer ownership.

## Opportunity

The project leverages the rising public interest in organic, locally sourced food and experiential outdoor learning. By centering Wabanaki expertise, it also addresses the systemic exclusion of Indigenous communities from land access and agricultural economies.

This initiative offers a replicable model of



community-supported land ownership, climate-resilient food systems, and Indigenous led conservation. With your support, we will ensure that this land continues to nourish bodies, spirits, and ecosystems for generations to come.

The initial investment required for land acquisition, equipment, and land care will be fundraised. There is a good chance of grant funding as we will hire tribal experts and local laborers. Possibility Alliance and Little River Coalition will organize local volunteer groups to help with labor. We will plan to request not to pay town taxes. We are exploring the best ways to make the "pick your own" model by donation to offset land management expenses.

Venture AI predicts that there will be around 300 visitors per year based on the current trends in the geographic area, with an estimated donation of between \$5 and \$20 based on the current income data in the county and including tourist activity in the region would give an average of around \$3,000 a year through donations. Add this to the Adopt-a-bush annual donations, and corporate sponsorship opportunities detailed in the Fundraising Section and the annual donations could be around \$20,000.

## Fundraising

Our fundraising strategy includes:

- Partnering with local businesses for donation matches
- Community sponsorship opportunities such as adopt-a-bush for annual re-occurring donations, or sponsor-a-kiosk, and name-a-trail for large donations
- Corporate sponsorship program for company picking-and-picnic days
- Organizing public events and harvest celebrations



- Launching an awareness campaign with flyers, media and instagram outreach

## Estimated Budget

Expense	Amount	Occurrence
Loan	210,000	One time expense
Land Management	5,000	Per growing season
Insurance	3,000	Per year
Fundraising materials	1,000	First year
Out house		Second year
Picnic area		Second year
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 219,000</b>	

## Donations & Easement

Donations to this project are tax deductible. We will bookkeep the donations as a temporary loan and send all the donors of \$5k or more a certified letter explaining the "loan agreement" which will clearly state it is NOT considered a donation until the land acquisition is finalized. Once the land transfer is official, a gift letter will be provided per donation and donors can deduct the amount from federal taxes. Donors get 100% of their money back if we are not successful in raising enough money, or if the transfer does not go through for any reason.

