



2021 Annual Report

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As we approach this annual milestone we reflect with appreciation and joy at the impact Earthroots made during the 2020–2021 academic year. Thank you for being a part of the Earthroots community.

Together, we are creating opportunities for people to transform through new and deepening connections with nature.

Mission and Vision

Earthroots is a non-profit 501(c)3 educational organization dedicated to cultivating a sense of care and connection between people and the natural world. Earthroots vision is to create a world where people of all ages, abilities, cultures, and affiliations understand how our actions influence the world around us. With this understanding, the hope is to inspire choices that improve the health of the earth, themselves, and each other. Earthroots is firmly committed to supporting people from all backgrounds and abilities to connect with nature.

Since its founding in 2005, Earthroots has grown both programmatically and structurally to enable the organization to serve an ever-broadening range of local residents including school children, families, universities, and businesses. This growth and community engagement has further allowed Earthroots to purchase and conserve a beautiful 39-acre property in Orange County, known as Big Oak Canyon.

Year in Review 2020-2021

Overview of July 2020 through June 2021

There were many challenges in 2020, and we have learned great lessons in overcoming them. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our community and the creativity of our staff, we made it through the year with many things to show for it! While most of the year's in-person programming was canceled, this gave our team time to focus on diversity, equity, and inclusivity efforts and develop new offerings to bring nature connection to more people. We are so grateful for the gifts that come in mysterious ways and look forward to sharing them with you in 2022.

**“Study nature, love nature,
stay close to nature.
It will never fail you.”**

Frank Lloyd Wright

Land Updates

Big Oak Canyon

Big Oak Canyon is a 39-acre property located on ancestral Acjachemen and Tongva territory in Silverado Canyon, California. Earthroots gives a deep bow of gratitude to the previous stewards who have left a legacy of 200+ year old oak trees, diverse native flora, flowing creeks, and ample intact ecosystems. There is no better gift to leave future generations than that which sustains life. As the current land caretakers, Earthroots holds the highest vision to preserve that which is whole and regenerate the areas of this land that need healing.

Interagency partnerships are important to us in the canyon. With a helicopter pad on site, Big Oak has been used by OCFA for fire safety and emergency response for decades. This year, Big Oak Canyon was evacuated due to the Silverado Canyon fire. The fire was extinguished on the southern ridge of the canyon, about half a mile from the heart of Big Oak Canyon. Our hearts go out to our neighbors in Silverado and Williams Canyons, the native animals, habitats, and plants that suffered losses in the fire.

This land is truly taking shape as a place to connect with our natural world and learn the art of regenerative living. We share this land with a diverse range of wildlife and bring their presence into focus to expand one's awareness of bird language, animal behavior, the value of wildlife, regenerative living values, and the importance of community.



Earthroots program participant holds a worm



*Left: Sign at Big Oak Canyon.
Right: Silverado Creek at Big Oak Canyon
Bottom: Centuries old oak trees at Big Oak Canyon.*



Fuel Load Reduction

This year, Earthroots has been making strides to reduce the potential for a fire to burn severely at Big Oak Canyon by removing excess dead wood and fire ladders (places where flammable branches are layered vertically and fire would easily climb into the canopy), cutting back overcrowded trees and shrubs, and clearing accumulated material around the bases of old trees. Since fire is a part of the landscape in this climate, we must prepare for it and make sure it does not cause long-term damage. We have identified key regions around heavily used areas and old trees and are focusing on reducing the fuel load in these areas. In one section, we coppiced (cut back to a stump, which stimulates it to grow straight shoots for craft material) several foothill ash trees which were forming fire ladders into the oak woodland canopy. We also cleared dead leaves and wood around the bases of old oaks and cut down a few pine trees that were either dying or growing into the oak canopy in another area.

Before Fuel Reduction



After Fuel Reduction



Nursery

Fig, carrow, juju bee, mulberry, dragonfruit, and additional potted plants in the nursery are being prepared to plant on-site after soil remediation. The soil at Big Oak Canyon is currently compacted and with the help of the nursery stock (currently all potted plants), we are developing a plan for our future plantings and healthy soil composition on the land. Using strategies of regenerative agriculture, we are putting extensive care into tending the soil to ensure high microbiological diversity. By improving soil fertility on the property, we are hoping to yield abundant and healthy plants, giving us more nutrition and joy in our present and future.



Compost bins at Big Oak Canyon

Eagle Scout Projects

Hot water shower

Marin S. was a past participant in Earthroots Afternoon Adventures when he was 4 years old and it made a meaningful impression on him throughout his childhood and teenage years. We are grateful that he chose to support Earthroots (now at age 17) by installing a hot water shower at Big Oak Canyon for his Eagle Scout Project. His project is quite an improvement to the property. *Thank you Marin!*



Marin S. and Earthroots staff member Shane Brown install new hot water shower at Big Oak Canyon



Solar Powered Light at the Shed

We're sending a big thank you to Kellye R. and his Boy Scouts crew for their hard work bringing solar electricity to our storage building at Big Oak Canyon. Kellye, thank you for completing your Eagle Scout project with Earthroots.



Program Highlights

Eco-Literacy

Eco-Literacy on Campus is a weekly program developed for grades K-8 and held at local elementary schools. The program at the Journey School site has become a true demonstration of sustainable living practices, mentoring 230+ students each week during the school year. Teachers, students, volunteers, and administrators actively engage in growing fruits and vegetables, harvesting rainwater, composting lunch waste, recycling, minimizing single-use containers, and restoring native habitat. Our unique grade-appropriate Eco-Literacy curriculum is building future environmental stewards through education and inspired action.

Earthroots launched a new set of Ecoliteracy lessons for the Journey School this year for their K-5 students to use at home during the 2020-2021 school year. This task has kept our staff busy all year long and the work is incredibly meaningful.

Astronomy Night

Earthroots hosted multiple evenings of stargazing and stories at Big Oak Canyon this past year. Participants learned how to read the night sky, observe its patterns as humans have done for millennia, and discovered some of the constellations and the stories that connect them. Attendees also had the opportunity to look through a telescope to view the stars and moon.

Remote Learning/Nature Kits

With the intent to make our nature connection curriculum more accessible, Earthroots staff members created an array of lessons with materials that can be sent directly to homes around the country. Lessons on herbal salve making, compost dyeing, natural paints, and creative projects with natural materials are now available to purchase at the Earthroots online store.

Family Bird Language

Several families attended this program at Big Oak Canyon to deepen their understanding of animal communication and the pattern language of the birds. Participants learned about different vocalizations that birds make – alarms, songs, juvenile begging, contact calls, and territorial calls – and how to train their ears to hear them. Participants were able to decipher the language of birds and deepen their relationship with birds through listening, observations, stories, and games.

Naturalist Walks

Big Oak Canyon's caretaker and naturalist Shane Brown takes participants on a 2-hour casual wander observing the flora and fauna of Big Oak Canyon. Walks are focused on plants, birds, animal tracks, and are catered to participants' nature curiosities.





Left: Sifting the compost at the Composting Workshop



Right: Looking through the microscope with Shane Brown, certified soil-food web lab technician.

Below: Fairy Camp participants play in the creek at Big Oak Canyon

Composting Workshop

This workshop was led by instructor Shane Brown, a certified soil-food web lab technician trained by Dr. Elaine Ingham, foremost soil restoration scientist and Founder of Dr. Elaine's™ Soil Food Web School. Participants learned the ins and outs of the composting process, looked through a microscope to discover what lives inside the magical soil, and built flow-through worm bins to take home and begin their composting journey.

Fairy Quest Camp

The day camp started with a treasure hunt, exploring the land at Big Oak Canyon, and following the fairy's path through the enchanted setting. Participants learned the history of Big Oak Canyon and observed the wonders of the nature surrounding them. Gathering nature treasures at each stop along the fairy route, participants created a backpack charm to take home as a reminder of the magical splendor of Big Oak Canyon. Fairy quest camp sparked the imagination and wonder that deepens our connection to the natural world.





Left: The Wonder Studio students identify native plants

Below: Family Fun Day participants with natural paint at Linda Lane Beach



Big Brothers, Big Sisters

In the Spring of 2021, Earthroots partnered with Big Brothers, Big Sisters to host an online natural painting class for 20 big brothers, big sisters, and 20 littles. Each participant received a painting kit and watercolor paper at home and logged onto Zoom for a lesson on the history of where natural pigments come from and a session painting together.

Wild Craft Camp and Family Nature Skills Camp

Earthroots partnered with The Human Nature Center of Ventura, CA to host live video classes for students across the country. Additionally, Earthroots offered DIY Summer Camps for families to do nature connection lessons at home with our hand-curated nature kits.

School Field Trips

Earthroots field trips are designed to create an experience that enhances students' in-classroom lessons. This year, The Wonder Studio brought their preschool and elementary students to Big Oak Canyon to experience hands-on lessons in plant medicine awareness and native plant identification, ending with a nature walk through the creek.

Family Beach Day

This annual family fun day draws long-time Earthroots community and new friends alike for a day in the sun and waves. This year, participants painted rocks and their bodies with a palette of colors made from the Earth, learned beach safety skills, and made hands-on nature crafts.

Ancestral Arts Series

This 6-part series taught participants the practices that people have used for thousands of years. Each session had a unique theme: shelter, fire and light, food, animal tracking, natural fibers, and natural dyeing. This series also included practical skills, storytelling, and wildcrafting ethics. Participants enjoyed the beauty of Big Oak Canyon while engaging in fun activities like animal tracking, shelter building, making fire by friction, caring for the Earth, and harvesting her abundance with gratitude.

Volunteer Days

Earthroots holds one volunteer day a month at Big Oak Canyon in Silverado, CA. With the help of volunteers, we can work towards creating a more resilient native ecology. This past year, volunteers prepared the land for ecology and agricultural education programs, removed invasive plant species, planted native species, stabilized the soil, and assisted with various site preparations. All ages are welcome to assist with restoring and stewarding the land. We are so grateful for the volunteers who donned a mask, washed their hands, and helped tend the land this year.

Private groups

Earthroots welcomes visitors to the 39-acre Big Oak Canyon on a limited basis throughout the year. We offer the natural space for self-guided nature walks, yoga, meditation, bird watching, animal tracking, forest bathing, and other peaceful nature activities. This year, Earthroots hosted a medicinal plant workshop, Thomas Coyne survival skills courses, and a Trusted Advice Wilderness First Aid course.

Filming Projects

Earthroots offered their site at Big Oak Canyon to Chapman University students to assist them in completing their graduate thesis film. The Dodge College of Film and Media Arts is the fastest-rising film, advertising, and broadcast journalism school in the country. Students scouted sites on the property and found location shots to shoot their films. We are so honored to assist these students in earning their Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Production at Chapman University.

Poisonous Plant Guide

Earthroots created a pocket-sized field guide to share knowledge about various poisonous plants. Learning about hazardous plants is an essential part of connecting with nature. As knowledge of plants grows, so does excitement, confidence, and desire to share with friends and family. We hope this guide will empower readers to know how to identify plants while spending time in nature.



Volunteers assembling Earthroots nature kits at Big Oak Canyon



Earthroots student studies poisonous plant guide



Earthroots hosts film projects at Big Oak Canyon

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

At Earthroots Field School we believe that nature connection is a public health issue. Nature is for everyone. As such, we created the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council to better understand our Earthroots community, how we are serving you, and in what ways we might broaden and better serve our community. The Council conducted an internal audit of our organization and has also reached out to our community for their feedback related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We have volunteers and staff willing to do the work necessary to make strides in the right direction.

Our DEI Council (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) is made up of dedicated community volunteers and staff who are continuing to assess, guide, and raise funds to ensure Earthroots organization represents and includes people of all backgrounds in our work of connecting people with nature.

Thank you to our DEI Council members Caroline Colesworthy, Chrisha Favors, Karen Graham, Staci Hansen, and Stacey Stormo.

Transparency is key in our mission. We are committed to changing our policies, increasing our awareness, and being a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for all. To view our present action plan, future and in-progress goals, please visit earthrootsfieldschool.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusion

Our Immediate Changes Include

- Modifying our hiring practices to be more inclusive.
- Conducting an internal audit of the organization via a survey sent out to current, past, and potential participants.
- Creating BIPOC Scholarships for people who identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color.
- Acknowledging Indigenous ancestral land, the history of Indigenous people, and how to support local Indigenous tribes (Acjacheman and Tongva) during programs, on the Earthroots website, social media, and promotional marketing materials.
- Creating our Nature is for Everyone campaign dedicated to raising funds to support nature connection education in historically excluded communities.

We recognize and embrace the fact that we are very much a work in progress. As such, we have dedicated much of our time to also educating ourselves, continuing to learn about the struggles of others, and bringing these lessons to our staff and the local community. We have a long way to go, but we are dedicated to providing a welcoming, inclusive place for people of all abilities, backgrounds, and walks of life.

Future and In-progress Goals

- Acquiring additional funding through grants, donations, fundraisers to fund DEI efforts
- Providing DEI training for staff and board members
- Building more relationships and partnering with local Indigenous communities
- Supporting BIPOC staff and community members through
- Dedicating a portion of each staff meeting to discuss DEI training, address any issues or concerns that may have come up in classes, and provide opportunities for staff to raise concerns and provide suggestions anonymously
- Incorporating techniques in programs to address inherent bias and inclusivity
- Increasing engagement with the local Tongva and Acjachemen tribes
- Creating an online curriculum platform designed to help children who may not have access to natural spaces learn and connect with nature
- Hiring a DEI consulting group to help guide our organization through becoming more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

Nature is for Everyone

The Nature is for Everyone campaign was spearheaded by our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council to raise funds for scholarships for people who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of color in our community. 100% of the profits from the Nature is for Everyone merchandise (magnets, stickers, and shirts) go towards the BIPOC scholarships and DEI efforts. We are working towards adding additional funding efforts to this campaign in the future.

“The land is the real teacher. All we need as students is mindfulness.”

Robin Wall Kimmerer

Goals for 2020-2021

The concept of goals has taken on a different meaning for many of us with all that has gone on over the last couple of years. How do you focus on your goals when things can go awry, situations can change in the blink of an eye? At Earthroots, this period of challenge and change has reminded us to look to the land as our teacher. Nature is life-focused, forgiving, and resilient. She offers both solitude and connection, new and old, light and darkness. If you want to fully embrace life, and be a good steward of the planet in the process, you need only look to and learn from the land.

This year Earthroots Field school has embarked on some bold projects in addition to growing our service to our Earthroots community in Orange County. We are excited and grateful for the opportunity to create and grow the programs and relationships outlined in this report. Being stewards of Big Oak Canyon in service to the surrounding community is a commitment we take very seriously.

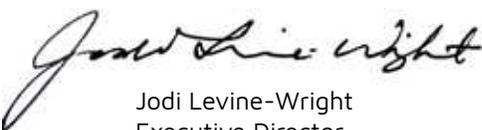
It is because of our commitment to Big Oak and the future of this land that we have set the goal of working beyond our borders, sharing our knowledge and experience with people who may never have the opportunity to visit Big Oak for

themselves. Whether their nature teacher is their backyard, patio, the local park, or a national park, Earthroots wants to help them cultivate a sense of care and connection with the natural world.

By bringing together traditional ways and technology, Earthroots is creating the Earthroots Treehouse, a fun and educational learning portal for children and families everywhere, and a Land Connection and Blessing event with Adelia Sandoval, spiritual overseer of the Juaneno Band of Mission Indians/Acjachemen Nation, that we hope will have people participating from coast to coast. We know these are big goals. However, we also know, as Robin Wall Kimmerer has said, that if we remain in connection with the land, if we watch, if we listen, if we are mindful, we will manage well the path ahead – together.

Thank you for being a part of Earthroots!

Sincerely,



Jodi Levine-Wright
Executive Director