Ancestral Land Return Programming

Ancestral Land Return is a program where I, the founding steward, accompany community members back to their Native Lands. The trip duration and funding are dependent on the Returner(s).

Our Ancestral Land Return program began the Summer of 2017, with a one month return trip to Blantyre, Malawi, Africa. Tynia Dickson (she/they), brought the concept of therapy dogs to children’s hospitals, supported disabled village youth, and instructed local Malawians in becoming service dog trainers on this self-funded trip. Tynia extended her stay while I departed.

As this is my Ancestral continent too, I was welcomed with such joy. I was taught the native language of Chichewa, local customs, dined on traditional cuisine, learned the effects of colonization/apartheid, and explored local markets. I held an international workshop on trade based economies.

In 2020, we raised 3,000$ to bring our Indigenous Taino Council Member, Ricchi Freeness (they/them) to their ancestral home land Borikén (Puerto Rico) and further their relationships with local organizations. The Indigenous Taino peoples live throughout the Caribbean Islands. Different bands/tribes inhabit each Island. For our second Return Trip we spent a total of 3 months exploring Borikén’s main Island and 7 months in the city of Caguas.

Our focus was on Urbe Apie, a mutual aide network consisting of an art gallery, thrift store, and housing squat. Along with Huerto Feliz, a garden initiative, market place, and houseless occupied building. We saved 11 cultural varieties of Seeds and distributed them to Boriquas in the diaspora. Two other community hubs we frequented were Museo de la Higüera and the Queer Performance and Dance Hall.

The community of Caguas inspired me so much. It was my first immersion into a multi-year People Of Culture led, queer friendly collective meeting a wide range of community needs. I hope to integrate the teachings of the Boriqua into our programming at Authentic Creations Artistic Apothecary.

Our third Ancestral Trip, planned for 2023, will bring Diné folks, primarily youth, back to Big Mountain to work directly with Elders in learning their Ancestral ways.