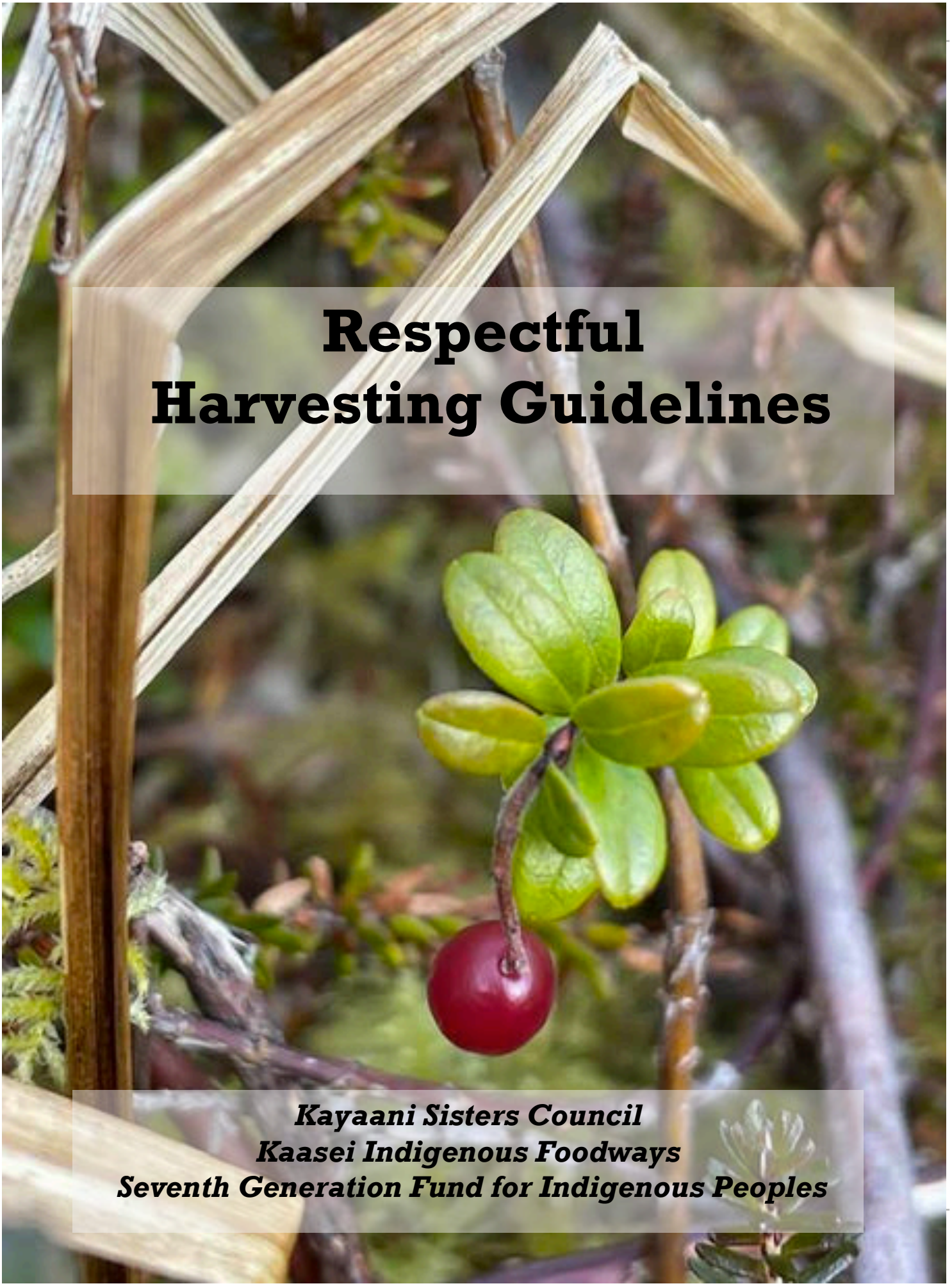


Respectful Harvesting Guidelines

Kayaani Sisters Council
Kaasei Indigenous Foodways
Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples







Welcome to Respectful Harvesting Guidelines

Kaasei
INDIGENOUS FOODWAYS

Dear Reader,

Respectful Harvesting Guidelines was prepared by the Kayaani Sisters Council, a group of Indigenous women across Alaska, and by Kaasei Training & Consulting, who are offering it to you as a gift. Many people have asked us individually and collectively for harvesting guidelines to help educate and inform those who want to learn about Indigenous cultures and want to gather local plants.

In preparing these guidelines, the women met as part of a Kayaani Sisters project supported by the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples. Much thought and care went into the preparation of these guidelines to address concerns of elders and individuals about overharvesting, ignorance of local practices, the need for sustainability and the need for healing in our Indigenous communities.

We hope that in following these guidelines we can maintain for the next seven generations the land on which we live and the foods and plants that sustain us. We also hope that local tribes, schools, communities, businesses and individuals will use these guidelines as a starting point for developing additional practices needed to sustain our lands and peoples. We believe that everything is connected. We are all interconnected with the plants, lands and each other. By further developing ways of protecting our resources, we are also healing ourselves and our lands.



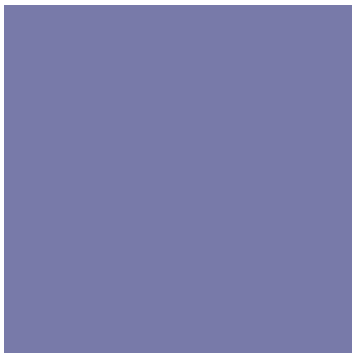
"I want to learn more about plants because they help us and we need to help them too."

-Xein Tlaa, Kalani White, Age 6











Social justice, equity and food sovereignty are also connected. Many individuals currently living in Alaskan communities no longer have access to their traditional foods and plants. This lack of access contributes to poverty, inequity, and a wide variety of social issues.

By sharing the importance of maintaining and strengthening connections with our cultures, local plants and foods, and the importance of preserving our lands and resources, we believe it is an act of love and healing from the effects of colonization and violence against our peoples. We believe plants are our teachers. By learning about them, preserving them, respecting them in the ways we go about gathering and harvesting, we are leaving behind a legacy for the next generations. The Indigenous wisdom and teachings about our connections to our lands and resources is important for all.

By working together to better understand, preserve and respect our local resources, we are creating a better world and learning how to honor one another.

Our goal is that these guidelines encourage you to engage with your own local and cultural plant traditions. We believe that precious knowledge, wisdom and medicine exist within each of us and all around us. Our gift of these guidelines is meant to encourage thoughtful discussion, honesty and hard work to help solve the issues of inequity and develop more sustainable ways to preserve and care for our resources.

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Kayaani Sisters Council

Respectful Harvesting Guidelines

Here are some suggestions that will support building relationships:

Build a deeper understanding and connection to the People on whose land you are harvesting.
The gifts of the land are the legacy of those who came before us. Express gratitude to the first stewards of the land by acknowledging and taking the time to explore the history of the Indigenous peoples in the area in which you are harvesting, including traditions, values and knowledge. Understand the history of colonization and its continued impacts today.

Prepare yourself spiritually.
Being honorable involves preparing yourself to go in a good way to make a connection with Creator, the land and the plants. This process strengthens your relationship with the earth. Make a connection to the spirit of the plant through offering a blessing, songs, prayer, smudging, meditation, talking to the plant, dreams, or other mindfulness practices. Listening and learning from the elders' stories can help you prepare and develop your own practices.

Choose your words carefully.
The heart is like a box and language is the key. Language provides connection to the land and to the ancestors. It is important for Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples to engage with local Alaska Native language by learning words, phrases, plant names and place names and also how to express gratitude in Indigenous languages. Many videos and stories are available at the local library and online. Consider taking a language class. For those whose ancestors are from the land, introduce yourself in your own language. This brings every one of your ancestors with you and gives you strength and connects you to the land. This practice will develop your skills and confidence to talk about plants and foods in a positive and respectful way that brings honor to the Indigenous people.

Honor and respect your teachers.
The connection to your teachers is as important as the connection to the land. Avoid relying *solely* on books and online resources such as Facebook posts because many of those resources may not provide a close connection to important and critical local knowledge and may be inaccurate for your area. Some plants may be usable in certain places, but poisonous or not usable at all in others. Local Indigenous knowledge can clarify these issues and help create a spiritual connection to the land and resources. Hands-on learning and gathering with an experienced person, elder or expert is critical for safe, sustainable harvesting. Where possible, seek guidance from elder women, as they are the traditional gatherers. This may take several visits or even several years. Express gratitude for your ancestors' knowledge and for the knowledge your teachers share. Name the lineage of your teachers when appropriate and respect oral traditions. It is customary to bring sacred plants, foods and other gifts to your teachers as a way of showing your appreciation and as a way of honoring them. Understand that some knowledge is intended to be shared while some knowledge is meant to be protected.

Honor and respect your plant teachers.
Plants are also your teachers, so take the time to observe closely and get to know them well. Practice reciprocity by considering what you can give back. Offer good intentions to the plants and the place where you are harvesting. Some may offer a gift (such as tobacco, a strand of hair, cedar), song, or prayer in gratitude for the gifts of the plants. Others may pick up garbage or remove invasive plant species.

Ask for permission.
Find out who's land you're planning to harvest on and then ask for permission to harvest there.

Harvest safely.
Plants can potentially transfer toxins to us so it is not safe to harvest everywhere. Avoid harvesting from roadsides, near railroads, old military sites, mining and oilfield sites, agricultural areas, and any other places that may be contaminated or sprayed with herbicides or pesticides. Out of respect, do not harvest at or near cemeteries or other sacred places. Be aware of wildlife in the area and other safety concerns.

Harvest carefully.
Plants contain powerful medicine so we must be careful in handling them. Make sure you absolutely know what you are harvesting before touching it. Know how to identify the plant by its characteristics such as color, texture, scent, where it's growing, and other indicators throughout all the seasons. Know what parts and what times of the growing season are appropriate to harvest. Learn how to identify plants that are poisonous and how to tell the difference between look-alikes. If in doubt, do not harvest because some plants can look similar. Misidentification can lead to illness or even death. Be aware of safety concerns for children, elders, people with pre-existing conditions, nursing or pregnant women. Some medicine plants should only be used for a short period of time, as cumulative effects can be harmful.

Harvest thoughtfully with gratitude.
Plants provide essential foods for animals. Their roots interact with fungal mycelia in the soil. They also play a critical role in relationship to the rest of the ecosystem, so take only what you need and not more. Be aware of how much of the plant is available and harvest only where there is abundance. Some harvesters take up to 10-20% of the plants and leave the rest for other humans and living beings. Be respectful to elders by leaving more easily accessible plants for their gathering. Plan ahead of time for how you will process the plant, and calculate how much time it takes to clean, prepare or preserve so there is no waste. Recognize that while you may only pick something in one season, this plant has its own life cycle and it takes time to grow. Be aware of how your harvest will affect the plant's growth and give appreciation to this process.

Practice reciprocity and leave no trace.
Make sure you share your harvest with elders or others who are not able to gather for themselves, as generosity is a core value and practice in Indigenous ways of being. When harvesting wild foods, clean up the area and make it better than when you arrived. Part of giving back is taking care of the land and protecting what we were given.

The above list of guidelines is not meant to solely represent every community and culture. Please use this list as a starting point for collaborating with your own community members to develop guidelines that honor your local Indigenous knowledge and the unique needs of your peoples.

2021 Kayaani Sisters Council Members

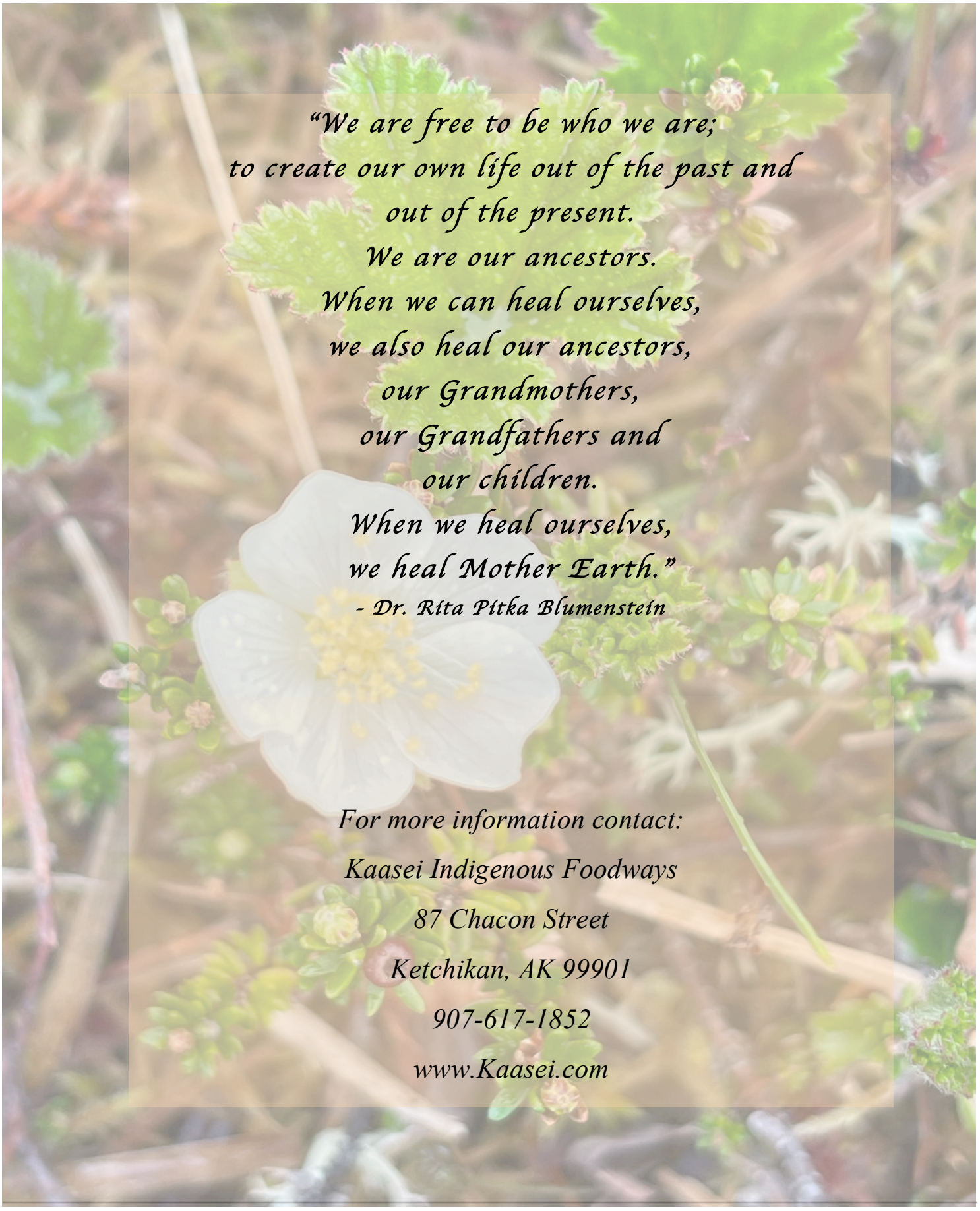
Thank you to the 2021 Kayaani Sisters Council Members for sharing their time, expertise and dedication for this project and for all you do in your families and communities.
Thank you also to the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples for your support in making this project possible.

Trixie Bennett, Ketchikan, Alaska
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Eva Burk, Nenana, Alaska
Tia Holley, Soldotna, Alaska
Naomi Michalsen, Ketchikan, Alaska
Gloria Simeon, Bethel, Alaska
Disney Williams, Juneau, Alaska

Seventh Generation Fund
for Indigenous Peoples, Inc.







"We are free to be who we are;
to create our own life out of the past and
out of the present.
We are our ancestors.
When we can heal ourselves,
we also heal our ancestors,
our Grandmothers,
our Grandfathers and
our children.
When we heal ourselves,
we heal Mother Earth."
- Dr. Rita Pitka Blumenstein

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