

BIONEERS

25 YEARS OF VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

YEARBOOK

THE BIONEERS CONFERENCE

SEEING AROUND CORNERS



The Bioneers Conference
Brother, Can You Spare a Paradigm?
The Scene:

When we started Bioneers in 1990, forget being on the radar screen—we might as well have been UFOs. The work and people we were highlighting mainly spanned outlier topics and featured diverse leaders including the voices of indigenous peoples and marginalized communities. They were seldom known in the larger culture, or known in small, specialized circles.

Bioneers became a kind of "star search." Our general modus operandi is to highlight "the greatest people you never heard of." Many have gone on to wide recognition and influence (which hopefully would have happened anyway).

The original cultural DNA of the event has persisted, while evolving and coevolving with the world. Attending the conference is like drinking from a fire hose of knowledge. Nature-inspired solutions occupy the practical and philosophical center. Systems thinking is the lens, polished by the clear light of humility in the face of how little we know and can know. The compass is progressive values of justice, democracy, diversity, equity, and freedom.

We've staked out at the crossroads where the Gaia theory of Earth as one giant intelligent superorganism converges with parallel ancient empirical indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and the cutting-edge design science of biomimicry. The science of Nature's Operating Instructions meets the Original Instructions of First Peoples for how to live on Earth for the long haul and how to be a human being.

"Resilience Thinking" responds to ecological regime change with the decentralization and diversity favored by nature. Ecological Medicine anchors public health in the health of ecosystems, while restorative food systems regenerate ecology, economy and public health. The once separate social justice and environmental movements converge in the recognition that what we do to each other we do to the Earth, and we'll have peace only when we practice justice, a process that never ends. The leadership of women emerges as decisive and fundamental to successful transformation and sane economics. Youth leadership provides new visions and legs, and youth movements do change the world.

> *"IT'S A FORUM WHERE THE IDEA THAT 'IT'S ALL CONNECTED' — A TRUISM THAT CAN ALL TOO EASILY become a platitude — is vividly illustrated. The three-day schedule was filled with scientists, thinkers, activists and spiritual leaders whose collective accomplishments are breathtaking. Somehow, this group manages to relate electoral politics to enlightenment, choreography to solar panels, Zapatistas to constitutional law, the South Bronx to recycled paper, and global warming to beauty… This is the Bioneers flavor: a mixture of heady abstraction with on-the-ground solutions, wonking with hipness, politics with passion."*
>
> – GREGORY DICUM, "It's All Connected: Bioneers Gathers the Eco-Tribe," *SF Gate* (online San Francisco Chronicle)





▲ Photos from top: Dr. Jane Goodall at Bioneers; conference brochures



Burgeoning democracy movements animate the topography of hope shared by vast majorities of the world's peoples, and confront the rhinoceros in the room of corporate power. The emerging movement for the global Rights of Nature irrevocably expands the very notion of rights to the nonhuman world. The mysteries of the cosmos, soul and spirit suggest the re-enchantment of a world that is alive, sentient and responsive to human consciousness and creative participation.

These big ideas, breakthrough innovations, and archetypal megaphors reflect clashing paradigms in the ruins of a drive-by civilization on a collision course with nature and each other. Ultimately the situation calls for a "value change for survival."

The first conference in Santa Fe attracted 250 people, and then grew quickly. We moved it to San Francisco in 1993, kept growing rapidly, and finally landed at the Marin Center in 1999, attracting about 3,000 people annually since.

The early conferences focused on seed diversity, biodiversity, biocultural diversity, organic food and farming, bioremediation and biomimicry (eight years before the field had a name). Also central to the cultural DNA were "green medicine," indigenous knowledge, green business, and progressive political perspectives. From the outset, we've highlighted the imperative of a change of heart, an Earth-centered ethics or a spirituality of interbeing.

◂ Photos from left: Chief Oren Lyons; Janine Benyus

The Biomimicry Institute

by Bryony Schwan, Co-founder

"Janine's first encounter with Bioneers led to a nearly two-decade personal and professional relationship with both Amory and Hunter Lovins. Janine served on the Board of Directors of Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and RMI incubated the first iteration of a biomimicry online database now called AskNature.org. Hunter has included biomimicry as a part of her sustainability courses and Amory has generously nominated Janine for many awards. When Janine was recognized as a Time Magazine Hero, Amory said of biomimicry, 'It will change your life. It has already changed mine. And it may save the world.'

"Janine also met long time friend and colleague Paul Hawken through Bioneers. Paul and Janine have collaborated on many projects. Janine also met Mary Hansel at Bioneers, a sustainability guru at Corolla Engineers, Inc. who served as a founding board member of The Biomimicry Institute, as did David Fox, another Bioneers connection who made the first significant donation to formally launch The Biomimicry Institute.

"Since that time we have collaborated with Bioneers on two intensive sessions at the Bioneers conference and the first European one. While there have been many media stories on biomimicry that have arisen from Janine or other biomimicry staff speaking at Bioneers, one of the most important connections has been with Leila Connors of Tree Media, resulting in Janine and biomimicry being featured in Leonardo DiCaprio's groundbreaking film *The 11th Hour.*

"There are just too many important connections and stories that have resulted from our 18-year relationship with Bioneers to cover. The relationship



between our organizations has been profound and life-changing and we are deeply appreciative to Bioneers for all that they have nurtured for not only biomimicry, but for so many emerging movements and organizations."

By the mid-90s we moved into climate action, women's leadership, re-localization, environmental justice, racial justice, environmental health, and challenging corporate power and constitutional rights. Soon to follow were the emergence of "Ecological Medicine" and "Resilience Thinking" including models of large-scale ecosystem restoration, re-localization and social resilience. We've also highlighted the emerging movement to enshrine global Rights of Nature in jurisprudence.

In 2001, we innovated with a live 3-day satellite broadcast of conference keynotes to local communities. It grew into the Beaming Bioneers project and Resilient Communities Network program.

From its inception, the holistic Bioneers big-tent framework provoked rich novelty and innovation. As in ecosystems, the edges where different worlds meet are the most fertile and diverse. The conference became the hatchery for a community of leadership across disciplines, cultures and walks of life.

In an exponentially smaller universe in 1990, we figured most people would know each other, at least in their area of work. Not! We then realized that connecting people with each other was equally important to communicating these new (and ancient) paradigms and breakthrough solutions.

LaDonna Redmond, CEO, Institute of Community Resource Development, Chicago

"I have met people I thought I could not have anything in common with and found out we have everything in common. I have met my sheroes and heroes – the list is endless. I have been in Essence magazine as a result of Bioneers' public relations. I have been invited to speak at all kinds of places. I met Van Jones and I am deeply involved in the call to address climate change. I am a Green for All Academy member and we are launching Food For All. I have received checks from people at Bioneers, but the best part of being in what I consider the Bioneers family has been the friendships that I have made that have lasted me longer than money ever could!"



"THE MOST HEARTENING STATISTIC ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING that I can give you is this. Western Europeans, on average, use 50 percent less energy than Americans do per capita. It's not because they're living in caves and having undignified lives. It's not because they have some magical technology that we have been denied. It is because they have a different way of regarding each other. A slightly different ordering of the priorities in their lives."

– BILL MCKIBBEN, author and co-founder 350.org



"WHEN YOU TAKE THE PEOPLE WHO MOST NEED work and connect them with the work that most needs doing, you save. You save that young person's life, you save a whole bunch of money, and you save the soul of this country when you invest and give people a chance, and give people hope, and give people opportunity. It's a green economy!"

– VAN JONES, founder Green For All



▲ Photos clockwise from top right: Van Jones and Arianna Huffington; LaDonna Redmond; Bill McKibben

"THE FUTURE IS ACTUALLY DETERMINED BY THE POTENTIAL OF THE PRESENT, THE POTENTIAL IN each one of us. In these critical times in the human story, potential cannot be wasted. Those who commit to uncovering the hidden wholeness, the potential in others—to witness it, believe in it and strengthen it—may become the architects of the future of the world."

– DR. RACHEL NAOMI REMEN, author and doctor

We've always been a hub of civil society groups, professionals and visionary start-ups; nature-inspired scientists and artists; indigenous leaders; innovators in the food system, health care and the healing arts; educators and students; women leaders; social entrepreneurs, green business innovators, philanthropists and economists; media innovators; and engaged citizens. Today more public servants and mainstream business people participate than in the earlier years.

Over the years, Bioneers has grown into a network of networks and a nexus of movements. At the end of the day, it's about the symphony, not the soloist.

Perhaps above all, it's a deep experience of community. Yet if you scratch the surface, there are serious fault lines: techno-utopians and techno-skeptics; secular and spiritual perspectives; people working with Fortune 50 companies and others seeking to deconstruct the corporate system entirely. Somehow the conference creates a field of kinship, mutual respect and shared vision from this diversity.

Clayton Thomas-Muller



Clayton Thomas-Muller joined Bioneers in his early 20s as a Board member and helped birth the Youth program and Indigenous Forum. Today he is a globally recognized Indigenous leader.

"In 2000, I went to a retreat by Yes! Magazine and was introduced to a group of leaders who would end up being my mentors over the next 15 years: Belvie Rooks, Danny Glover, Tom Goldtooth of Indigenous Environmental Network, Grace Lee Boggs and of course Nina and Kenny. Kenny and Nina asked if I would come open the 2001 conference with a pipe ceremony. The rest of the story is quite epic. I ended up reconnecting with Tom Goldtooth at Bioneers, and campaigning for Indigenous Environmental Network for 12 years. Kenny and Nina invited me to become a youth Board member, and I worked with dynamic leaders like Van Jones, Julia Butterfly and Kristen Rothballer, and we founded the Youth program. Kenny and Nina then asked me to become Board Chair. I used that responsibility to bring in many of our front-line Indigenous community leaders to both be on the big stage and participate in all the workshops. I've seen a dramatic shift in power of our people using this space to be able to tell their story of resiliency and struggle. I recently rejoined the Board, and I'm so incredibly excited about the next 25 years, to continue this revolution from the heart of nature."



"SEEING THAT THIS [GOOGLE EARTH] TECHNOLOGY was very important to create a dialogue with the outside world, we decided to make our experience in our 600,000 acres of rain forest a model, and build a 50-year plan for our future, bringing it to the world through the technology of the Internet so we can build a sustainable future."

– CHIEF ALMIR SURUI, Amazonian Chief

"IN ORDER TO SPEAK THE truth, in order to know the truth, in order to have the deepest knowledge, you have to be in love."

– SUSAN GRIFFIN, author



◂ Photos clockwise from left: Clayton Thomas-Muller; Chief Almir Surui; Susan Griffin

In the end, there's an intangible power in coming together around the council fire to share visions and models of the world we want and how to get there. It's a learning-and-action community. It's radically inclusive. No one has "the" answer. It's fundamentally populist and participatory in character. It requires embracing paradox and contradiction. It's alive and always has growing edges.

The conference continues to be a real-time co-creation story of social transformation and movement building - a social coral reef of nourishment, fertility, innovation and mutual aid. We give thanks for this great gift of the Bioneers community of leadership in a time we're all called upon to lead.



"THE FUTURE ONES ARE IN OUR ACTIONS RIGHT here now. So are the ancestors. I want you to feel them present, along with the brothers and sisters of all species and forms of beauty and strength. Let them laugh in your ears, and slap you on the backside, and pull you forward, because we have great work to do."

– JOANNA MACY, author, Deep Ecologist

TESTIMONIALS

"The conference is known for its eclectic mix of topics and personalities, and for bubbling up disruptive green ideas that find their way into our mainstream culture a few years later."
– Tom McKeag, Reuters syndicated

"This is kind of a seasonal ceremony, Bioneers. If we were migrating birds, this would be our staging ground, where we come and talk about what we hatched this year and what breeding was like."
– Janine Benyus, author, founder, Biomimicry Institute

"The Bioneers community has had a significant impact on my work, introducing me to the visionary work of people like Joel Salatin and Paul Stamets. Every time I go, I learn something and invariably find a few gems." – Michael Pollan, author *The Omnivore's Dilemma*

"It was a great opportunity for me to join hands with the larger community that wants to do the same work my Tribal people – Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo – have been doing for eons, work that must be done if we are to continue." – Greg Sarris, Chairman, Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, California

"Bioneers has been a venue where leaders of color within the environmental justice movement are bridging historical racial gaps in the environmental movement to share grounded strategies and new visions with the promise of creating a healthy, just and sustainable multi-racial society."
– M. Paloma Pavel and Carl Anthony, Breakthrough Communities



"HOW CLEAN A CAR WOULD YOU BUY IF THE exhaust pipe, instead of being aimed at pedestrians, were simply pumped into the passenger compartment? Well, probably pretty clean. Yet we all live downwind and downstream of the products we make."

– AMORY LOVINS, co-founder
Rocky Mountain Institute



▲ Photos clockwise from top left: Joanna Macy, Peter Warshall, Lynn Margulis; Amory Lovins; Lucas Benitez and friend



Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund
Thomas Alan Linzey, Esq.

"Bioneers creates a one-of-a-kind infectious experience by spreading ideas that might save the world and that promise to pull us back from the brink of economic and environmental collapse. Our participation in the 2004 Bioneers conference gave us access to a network of professionals, activists and media that enabled us to grow our nascent community activist trainings, access the Bioneers network, and follow up on media leads from the nation's top progressive magazines. An immediate result was the extension of our Democracy Schools to several Beaming Bioneers satellite locations, which has been critical to our local community organizing. An introduction to an individual donor led directly to the creation of an organization called Envision Spokane – a coalition of twenty-eight labor union locals, neighborhood associations, and nonprofit organizations which has set its sights on amending the Spokane City Home Rule Charter with a Community Bill of Rights guaranteeing rights to housing, healthcare, transportation, and sustainable neighborhoods.

"We connected with filmmaker Jeremy Kagan to produce short videos about communities taking on some of the world's largest corporations, and with Anneke Campbell who co-authored our first book, *Be the Change,* the direct result of a meeting with the publisher at Bioneers. Your media have allowed our work to enter classrooms, organizational meetings, and public discourse. We are constantly being contacted by individuals and groups who have watched the Bioneers DVDs. Our appearance in Leonardo DiCaprio's *The 11th Hour* and the dissemination of our work on the Bioneers radio series have raised our visibility and opened doors to several communities that would otherwise have remained closed. Appearance in that film then resulted in another film currently in production, *We the People 2.0.*

"DiCaprio's film was circulated in Ecuador to support our work there, which resulted in a new national draft Constitution in 2008 that recognizes the rights of ecosystems. The work of the Legal Defense Fund in Hawai'i to assist communities there with the banning of genetically modified seeds and crops began with one of our Democracy Schools at the conference.

"Not only has the Bioneers conference served to amplify the work of the Legal Defense Fund, it has also resulted in practical funding, organizing, and media opportunities that have enabled the organization to service additional communities across the United States and the globe."

"Bioneers is one of the great social innovations of our time. Bioneers brings us together at the axis of personal and planetary healing. If Bioneers didn't exist, we'd have to invent it."
– Michael Lerner, President, Commonweal

"Bioneers has long informed and inspired my work, linked me with many much higher primates, and helped spread our word far and wide." – Amory Lovins, founder Rocky Mountain Institute

"I love Bioneers! I come because I learn so much. I draw on what I learn here all year long. I also come to see friends and network and do movement building because this is the place to make it happen."
– Annie Leonard, Producer-Director, "The Story of Stuff"

"Bioneers really renewed my sense of hope and optimism about what the future can hold. It gave me a new framework to think about the future in terms of solutions, and has been a vital part of my journey and my political life." – Van Jones, in *E Magazine*



▲ Tom Linzey, Dave Henson, friend, Richard Grossman

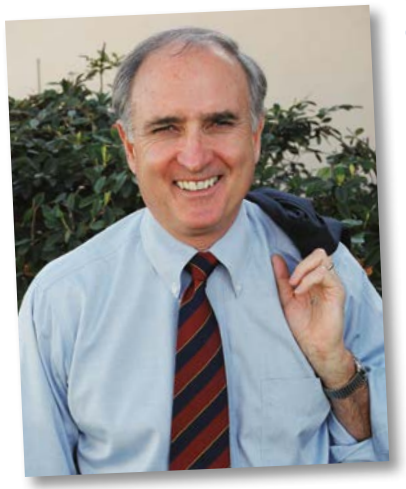
"The work you are doing is fantastic. The conference was great, and the charismatic and intelligent speakers were amazing!"
– Helen Ågren, Director, Division for Sustainable Development, Ministry of the Environment, Sweden

"It may be impossible to come to Bioneers and not be inspired. As we design a future that is truly sustainable, an essential ingredient is the integrated spirit of creativity, aspiration, innovation, and optimism that is Bioneers. I can always count on Bioneers to make me stronger for having been there."
– Paul Anastas, "father" of Green Chemistry

"Workshops become national strategy sessions on the critical issues of our day."
– Dave Henson, Director, Occidental Arts and Ecology Center, CA

"This experience was one of those things in life that you know happened, but you do not find the words to explain the impact it had in your life. It opened many doors. People became more interested in the work I do, and I have more opportunities to continue spreading environmental awareness wherever I go. This was a life-changing experience I will never forget. Si se Puede!!! Yes, we can!!
– Erica Fernandez, environmental justice organizer

"A gathering of inspiration and innovation, Bioneers is creating a community of social change. I think this is such a poignant time. I am aware every single day of this full range of expression. I think of T.S. Eliot, 'turning shadow into transient beauty.' Living in the desert you hear the coyotes crying; you see them calling at the moon. You see drought. You see fish stranded on the cracked sand. You see willow flycatchers surviving, and you think that if the willow flycatcher can continue to sing between intervals of thunder, then we can too. I cry everyday, not because I'm sad but because I feel. In many ways that's our most important task at this moment in time: to not avert our gaze, not to allow ourselves to be numb to the world. Being numb is another form of suicide. The question emerges: How shall we live? I want to live as openly, as wildly, as present as I can. I think of the wonderful haiku by Issa: 'Insects on a bough, floating downriver, still singing." That's what we're doing. We're singing. All of us. It's one of the things that's so daunting to me - when you step into community here at Bioneers, we are singing, even in the midst of heartbreak." – Terry Tempest Williams, author



"It has been so great to see so many Bioneers people become household names and mainstream figures. It looks like your dreams are being realized and affecting a great many people."
– Jeanette Leehr, Board Chair, Via International

"I met my wonderful wife at Bioneers!" – Billy Parish, founder, Mosaic
[We know of at least 10 marriages that originated at Bioneers.]

"HOPE IS A VERB WITH ITS SLEEVES ROLLED UP."
– DAVID W. ORR



"THERE IS NO ENVIRONMENT OUT THERE AND we're here, and we've got to regulate our interaction with it. We are the environment. There is no distinction. What we are doing to our surroundings, we're doing directly to ourselves. This is not rocket science."
– DAVID SUZUKI, biologist, author, broadcaster

▲ Photos from top: David Suzuki and Severine Cullis-Suzuki; David W. Orr

BIONEERS YEARBOOK CREDITS

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2014

25th ANNIVERSARY

BIONEERS

SUMMIT CONFERENCE



























- Photos from top left clockwise around the edge: Gay Dillingham, Joshua Fouts, Clayton Thomas-Muller; Nina & Kenny; Severine vT Fleming; Belvie Rooks; Indigenous mutual honoring ceremony, from left, Tom Goldtooth, Dune Lankard, Cara Romero, Clayton Thomas-Muller, Chief Sidney Hill, Chief Oren Lyons, Nina Simons, Kenny Ausubel; Manuel Pastor; Youth Poetry Slam; Three Sisters Farming with Robin Kimmerer, Sage LaPena, Roxanne Swentzell; Climbing PoeTree.
- Photo insets from top left clockwise: Osprey Orielle Lake, Nina Simons, Jodie Evans; Naomi Klein; Indigenous Youth Mural Art Project; Destiny Arts Performance.

"NINA AND KENNY HAVE GROWN A SIMULTANEOUSLY meticulous and wild garden from the seeds of diversity, struggle, and compassion. They have tended it with the water of listening, including, expanding and intermingling with the sunlight of community, of questioning and discovery. They are now beginning to see the bloom of a whole new way of being on this Earth. An invitation to Bioneers is an invitation to join your story, your struggle with the many struggles. It is an invitation to open your heart and mind, to go further, to be braver. From mushrooms to meditation, from the rising wisdom and vision of the Indigenous to the shared concrete steps of movement building, Bioneers is a Garden of Re-imagination, the green weaving of the story of our survival."

– EVE ENSLER, author, artist, founder
One Billion Rising and V-Day





▲ Photos from left: Afia Walking Tree, Deb Lane, Eve Ensler at Bioneers conference 2014; attendees at Bioneers conference 2007

DOUBLE DOWN ON BIONEERS

Make a Difference that Really Makes a Difference

AS WE CELEBRATE BIONEERS' 25TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2014, it's a golden moment to double down on your support to ensure and optimize Bioneers' ongoing contributions to help turn the tide at this once-in-a-civilization moment.

We invite you to deepen your investment or start now to generate a Return on Engagement that harvests 25 years' of visionary leadership, practical experience and actionable knowledge.

When you support Bioneers, you're leveraging our entire community of leadership—a movement of movements.

We thank each and every one of you who has helped us reach this remarkable milestone. Every single gift—large and small—has helped bring us to where we are today.

Play big. Make a difference that really makes a difference by generously supporting Bioneers.

You can make a secure online donation at www.bioneers.org or contact give@bioneers.org or 415-660-9305.

To learn about our Kinship Circle of engaged higher donors, and about our Legacy Giving program, please contact Executive Director Joshua Sheridan Fouts at josh@bioneers.org or 415-660-9302.

With your generous support, our greatest legacy is yet to come.

CLICK HERE TO DONATE NOW