



SACRED KEEPERS SUSTAINABILITY LAB

Sacred Keepers Sustainability Lab (SKSL), based in the Bronzeville Community of Chicago, is a non-profit organization dedicated to teaching youth to become true inheritors of the Earth. Our goal is to connect youth to nature through the study of indigenous cultures and environmental value systems. We build relevant, place-based service learning models to enhance STEM learning while fostering social responsibility through environmental arts, sciences and positive community engagement. SKSL's Bronzeville Monarch Network Initiative is an initiative that utilizes monarch ecology as a tool to promote urban ecology and the creative use of urban spaces.

SACRED KEEPERS YOUTH COUNCIL (S.K.Y.)

It's timely we give our kids the tools they need to be socially responsible, global citizens - to give as much as they are fortunate to receive, no matter how great or small. Youth who have voice, agency and the will to serve are more confident, balanced, gracious, connected, generous, socially intelligent and able to explore human complexity. The role of the Council is to bring harmony, solutions, knowledge and tools to the community and planet it represents. It is the Council's honor to peacefully collaborate, selflessly serve, seek wisdom, grow, share and advise - to promote peace and equity for people who need voice and the freedoms that are our inherent birthright – clean air and water, a secure sense of place and power, and the right to move about and cultivate land for the use and survival of all living things. The Council builds awareness, holds space and gives voice to those who disproportionately suffer from the effects of climate change.

The Sacred Keepers Youth (S.K.Y.) Council is a special group dedicated to making the world a better place through the study of climate and culture. The S.K.Y Council is Sacred Keepers' flagship program which serves as a vehicle to empower the voice and vision of our youth for the world THEY want with the full support of the communities charging them with the responsibility of solving our climate crisis. The SKY experience includes but is never limited to the following:

- Emotional Intelligence & Social Leadership Development
- Nature & Social Stewardship
- Cross-Mentoring & Leadership Practice
- Public Arts & Culture
- Monarch Butterfly/Urban Ecology & Habitat Cultivation
- Energy Efficiency Training
- Eco-Social Justice Strategy & Advocacy
- Youth Dialogues & Circle Practice
- Summer Ecology Internships
- Ability to Serve on the Where I Stand Collaborative Action Initiative (ask us about this!)
- Summer Picnics, Eco-Summits & Overnight Camping
- Sacred Service Global Service Trips

SKY Council Achievements(2012-Present):

Environmental Action & Stewardship

- Hosted 15 Beach Clean Ups in partnership with Great Lakes Alliance (2012-2019)
- In Partnership with the US Forest Service-Int'l programs, SKSL pioneered the Bronzeville Monarch Network Initiative, a network of butterfly/pollinator habitats located throughout Bronzeville (2 full gardens and 2 habitats) and the Burnham Wildlife Corridor (5 habitats). Over 60 SKY Council members have helped to establish, cultivate, monitor, cross-train and generate monarch health data through the Monarch Ecology Summer Internship program.
- Planted over 5000 trees and scrubs and over 10,000 plants throughout Chicago and Kenya.



Sustainability & Climate Change Mitigation

- Trained over 200 community members on energy efficiency, SmartGrid technology and distributed over 300 weatherization kits, serving as a Chicago Weatherization Action Team in partnership with Chicago Sustainability Leadership Network and the Illinois Science, Engineering & Innovation Foundation (2014 & 2015)
- Co-Lead community bike rides in partnership with Slow Roll Chicago and Divvy Bikes (2015-2018)
- Conducted walkability assessment of the King Drive Blvd (43rd-48th St.) resulting in infrastructure to mitigate dangers to pedestrians and bikers. (2013)
- Designed and conducted an intergenerational, inter-cultural exchange for the event, 'Past, Present & Future of Energy' in partnership with the Illinois Institute of Technology(IIT) , the Chinese American Service League, the IIT Black Student Union and Institute for Cultural Affairs. (2016)

Leadership & Social Practice

- Hosted 2 films and co-lead two panel discussions for the One Earth Film Festival (2014 & 2015)
- Hosted workshops on conscious leadership and consensus building in partnership with the Technology of Participation (ToP) and ICA-USA.
- Hosted and lead 3 overnight camping trips to Cook County Forest Preserve and 3 day trips to Starved Rock
- Created and hosted 7 Conscious Kickback events, a youth social circle designed to create safe and authentic space for healing, reflection and mindful celebration
- Mentored youth ages 7-11 in the SKY Summer Day Camp
- Participated in two Illinois Environmental Action Lobby Day in Springfield
- Hosted 9 Arts in the Gardens events

Climate & Culture Studies

- Conducted 2 trips to Kenya, Africa to study Maasai culture, install a water well and plant 300 trees in partnership with the Green Belt Movement, Engineers Without Borders and My Chosen Vessels. (2015 & 2016)
- Held Sacred space, helped build, listen and co-create at the Standing Rock Sacred Stone Camp (2017) 889
- Pioneered the inaugural 'Where I Stand' Collaborative Action Initiative', an internship and event designed to foster youth voice and authentic social intelligence and build cross-sector youth solidarity in eco-social movement work.
- Fundraised in partnership with SolFood Natural Soaps to raise over 6,000 for climate relief projects and youth organizations, local and abroad



Where I Stand: Cross-Sector Youth Cohort Building for Collaborative Action Projects

In 2018, Sacred Keepers Sustainability Lab (SK) hosted its inaugural ‘Where I Stand’ youth retreat, which engaged cross-sector youth-driven organizations in dialogue and training using self-restoration, communications and networking, sustainability, stewardship, and personal well-being/identity as intersectional frameworks. The retreat was a 3-day/2-night, in-residence youth retreat held in April of 2018 at the Institute for Cultural Affairs in Chicago’s Uptown community. Youth groups included, Student Voice for Activism & Fellowship (SVAF), Bodhi Spiritual Center Teens, Sacred Keepers Youth Council (SKY Council), Chi-Nations Youth Council, Ujima Umedics, Equiticity, Public Narrative (29Eleven Consulting) and Creative Passages.

After the impact of bringing youth with dynamic approaches to resilient communities, across Chicago’s 77 neighborhoods, it was apparent that sustained engagement was a critical component, and in fact should be the rational and experiential aims of the ‘Where I Stand’ design itself. This year’s WIS will be a sustained, intersectional initiative where youth will propose action projects to address eco-social issues in communities most impacted by climate, social and environmental injustice. Our objective is to fund five to eight youth-led projects, and to document the process and impacts to environment and youth leadership practices. The project will help strengthen connections to key communities in Chicago, while also helping to build a constituency of skilled, active and informed youth.

Exploratory Focus:

- **Mindful** – What you must know about yourself and what are you believing about the function of the world around you?
- **Planet & People** – What you must know about the world around you and what’s at stake?
- **Justice** – How can you identify and move your power through this world to make the changes you want to see? How do youth take a stand in today’s complex world? What do youth need to know to navigate unprecedented intersections of people and planet justice? What tools and skills do youth need to advocate for themselves, build a better community, and, ultimately, a better planet? How can youth deepen their understanding of the interconnectedness of social and environmental justice issues that are rooted in institutional and structural racism & conflict? How can youth form alliances with one another that strengthen their voice and activism? How can we design a conference that allows youth leaders to heal, learn and advocate for their unique needs, peacefully? How can youth mentors and educators learn from our youth and mitigate adultism in youth work?

To apply/recommend a S.K.Y. Council member, or if you would to support/sponsor a member or project, please email, info@sacredkeepers.org or call, 312.869.9546.