MOMENTUM CONSERVATION

Building Relationships Through Commoning

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Summer Associate '26

Organization: Land in Common

Challenge: shifting power in conservation

Solution: build trust-based relationships and work in community



All photos courtesy of Land in Common and its land steward members

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Organization at a glance

Established 2008

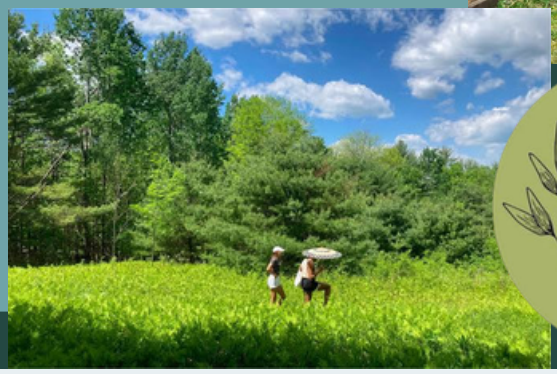
1 Staff, 5 Leadership Council, 8 Board

Statewide













Their Story:

Land in Common is a community land trust that utilizes land as a space to facilitate meaningful connection to people and place through love and fundamental commitment. What began as a community living on rented land transformed nearly two decades ago, into a project to remove financial barriers and disrupt class disparities in land access. From there, Land in Common kept learning, and stayed committed to challenging colonialism and its lasting effects on land access. By building relationships and allying with other organizations, Land in Common grew to include meaningful partnerships with organizations such as Presente! Maine, Bomazeen Land Trust, Journey ONEderland, La Finca, Generations Retreat and Grow Farm, and many more. Now itself a global majority-led organization focused on BIPOC land reconnection, Land in Common functions by acquiring land, taking it off the market permanently, and welcoming it into a community-stewarded commons. The land is matched with permanent land stewards who own the infrastructure, hold 99-year "land commitments" for the land, and build long-term relationships with community and place. Returning land to Wabanaki holdership is a priority whenever possible. By building meaningful relationships, Land in Common has developed a unique solution to social and environmental justice issues. Their work is creating safe spaces for people to heal and deepen connection to land.

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Land in Common

Working in Tandem

All of Land in Common's programs and projects are carried out in close partnership with other organizations. The goal is not to be the center of action, but to facilitate others to build long-term, sustainable land relationships in community. These partnerships are built on trust, love, deep commitment, and shared values. One example is Land in Common's collaboration with La Finca Cooperative to purchase farmland in Oxford County that is now a vibrant space for BIPOC land reconnection and the production of local Halal food. In Franklin County, Generations Retreat and Grow Farm is building a healing, retreat, and nature-based learning center on land donated to Land in Common along the Sandy River. And in the Androscoggin River Valley, Land in Common has returned 180 acres of land to Wabanaki holdership through the Bomazeen Land Trust and is in ongoing collaboration to restore Wabanaki access and connection to this and other lands. By prioritizing relationships first, and trusting the capacity of communities to organize themselves, Land in Common is able to be a strong support to their partners.

Continued Support

Land in Common's ultimate goal is to help facilitate an interdependent network of land-rooted projects and communities that don't depend on the nonprofit for their long-term success. By working from a place of love and trust, Land in Common is able to be a strong support to their partners in the form of technical support, funding, connections to organizations doing similar work, and much more. When land stewards have secure homes, strong connections, and an accountable community, land and people thrive. This is a model of conservation that is resilient in the face of an increasingly uncertain future.

Challenges

Taking on an alternative approach to land justice work isn't easy. Land in Common works hard to tackle systemic social issues such as income inequality, racial inequality, the colonial abuse of land and people, and so much more. Justice work can be challenging and demoralizing at times when the issues and systems of oppression are so widespread and deeply rooted. Land in Common works locally to have a positive impact on the people that they can reach and hopes to be an example of what's possible for other organizations.

Learnings for Other Land Trusts

Working in Partnership

Collaborating with other organizations to initiate projects, manage programs, and access resources leads to a greater impact on the community, enabling more to be accomplished and expanding a single organizations capacity.

Generating Creative Solutions

Land in Common is an organization committed to growing and learning. In doing so, they come up with creative solutions to challenges and transcend traditional environmental justice solutions.

Doing the Best They Can

With limited funding, resources, and capacity, organizations often need to prioritize the most impactful and relevant actions. Land in Common recognizes its capabilities and diligently works within these constraints to maximize impact before considering expansion.

Created by: MOMENTUM CONSERVATION

In partnership with: Land in Common