



## Seneca Nation Celebrates Earth Day With Sunrise Ceremony at West Valley



Members of the Seneca Nation of Indians and others from the community gather at the [West Valley Demonstration Project](#) for a sunrise ceremony before beginning activities to mark Earth Day.

**WEST VALLEY, N.Y.** – Members of the Seneca Nation of Indians kicked off an event to mark Earth Day this year at [EM's West Valley Demonstration Project](#) with a sunrise ceremony, paying tribute to the earth and raising awareness of the need to protect the Cattaraugus Creek watershed for future generations.

“Each step taken today is a prayer for healing for all our relations,” said Maria Maybee, the event coordinator with the Seneca Nation. “This event is a reminder that we must work together to protect the environment, for it provides everything we need in life. It’s important that this message is never forgotten, for we only have one environment.”

Maybee asked everyone at the gathering to form a circle as a symbol of togetherness. Participants received tobacco, which was used to communicate prayers to the spirits. They also voiced prayers, with some praying for employees at [WVDP](#) to remain safe as they continue EM’s cleanup mission to reduce legacy risks at the site. They played drums and sang a song, welcoming the sun.



Next, participants went for a walk, cleaned up the banks of the Cattaraugus Creek, and went kayaking and rafting. The following day, they cleaned up a beach along the creek within the Seneca Nation territory.

“We enjoy the many offerings Mother Earth provides, from water to drink and vegetables to eat,” Maybee said.

“However, it’s important that we protect these natural resources from harm, especially for future generations to benefit from these offerings.”

*-Contributor: Joseph Pillittere*