



HERSTORY OF SEED SCHOLARS

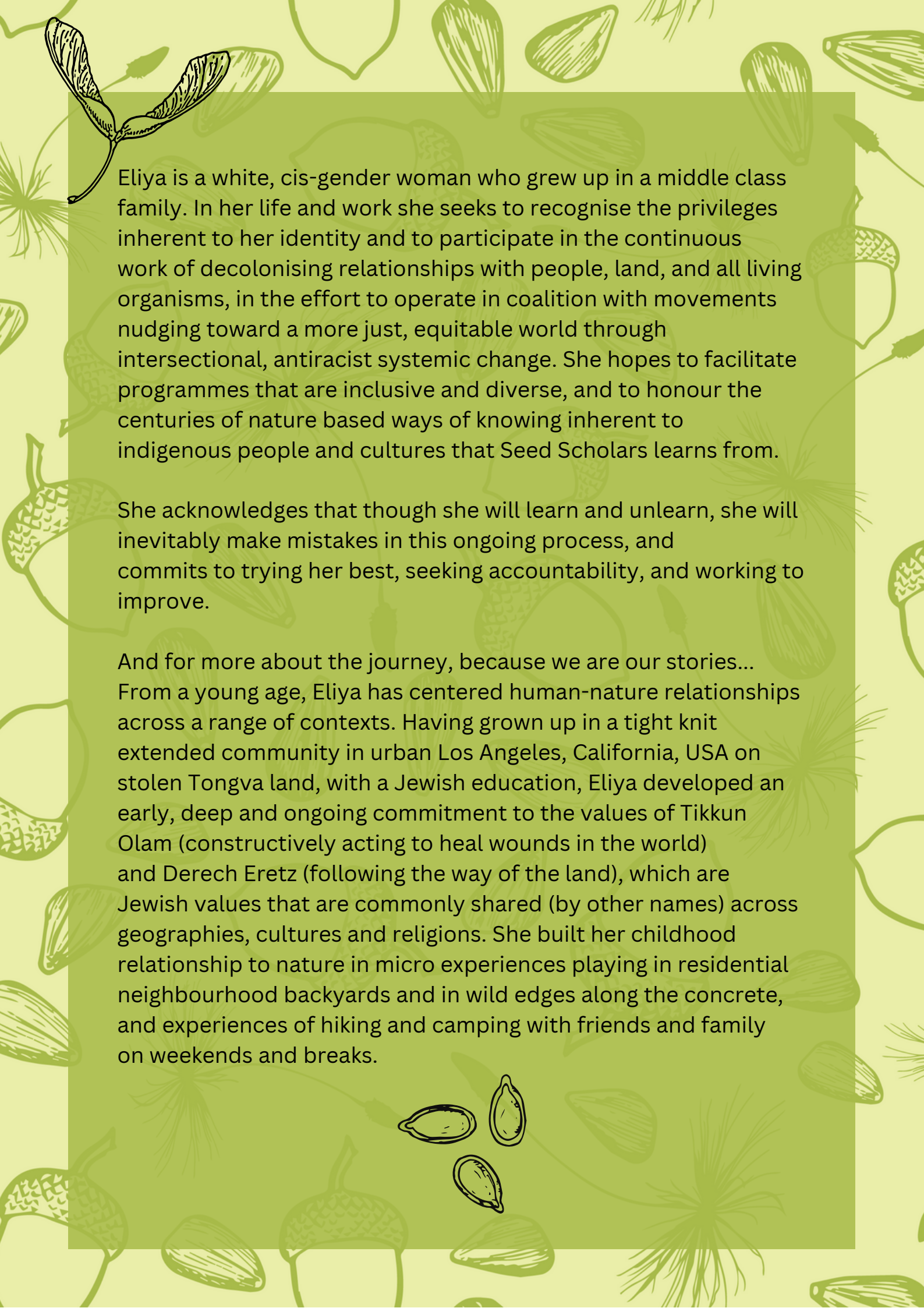
JOURNEY OF FOUNDER, ELIYA LAVINE



Eliya Lavine (she/her) is the founder of Seed Scholars, an experiential eco-education social enterprise which seeks to nurture participant-led nature based learning for young people and their networks of all backgrounds and abilities.

Seed Scholars utilises garden and Forest School methodologies to promote holistic wellbeing and support the ongoing play-work and joy of rebuilding reciprocal, enmeshed human-nature relationships in order to cultivate an active, global citizenship rooted in connection with place.


Eliya is a trained primary school teacher registered with the Teaching Council of Ireland, qualified Forest School practitioner registered with the Irish Forest School Association, and Registered Technical Forester with the Society of Irish Foresters.



Eliya is a white, cis-gender woman who grew up in a middle class family. In her life and work she seeks to recognise the privileges inherent to her identity and to participate in the continuous work of decolonising relationships with people, land, and all living organisms, in the effort to operate in coalition with movements nudging toward a more just, equitable world through intersectional, antiracist systemic change. She hopes to facilitate programmes that are inclusive and diverse, and to honour the centuries of nature based ways of knowing inherent to indigenous people and cultures that Seed Scholars learns from.

She acknowledges that though she will learn and unlearn, she will inevitably make mistakes in this ongoing process, and commits to trying her best, seeking accountability, and working to improve.

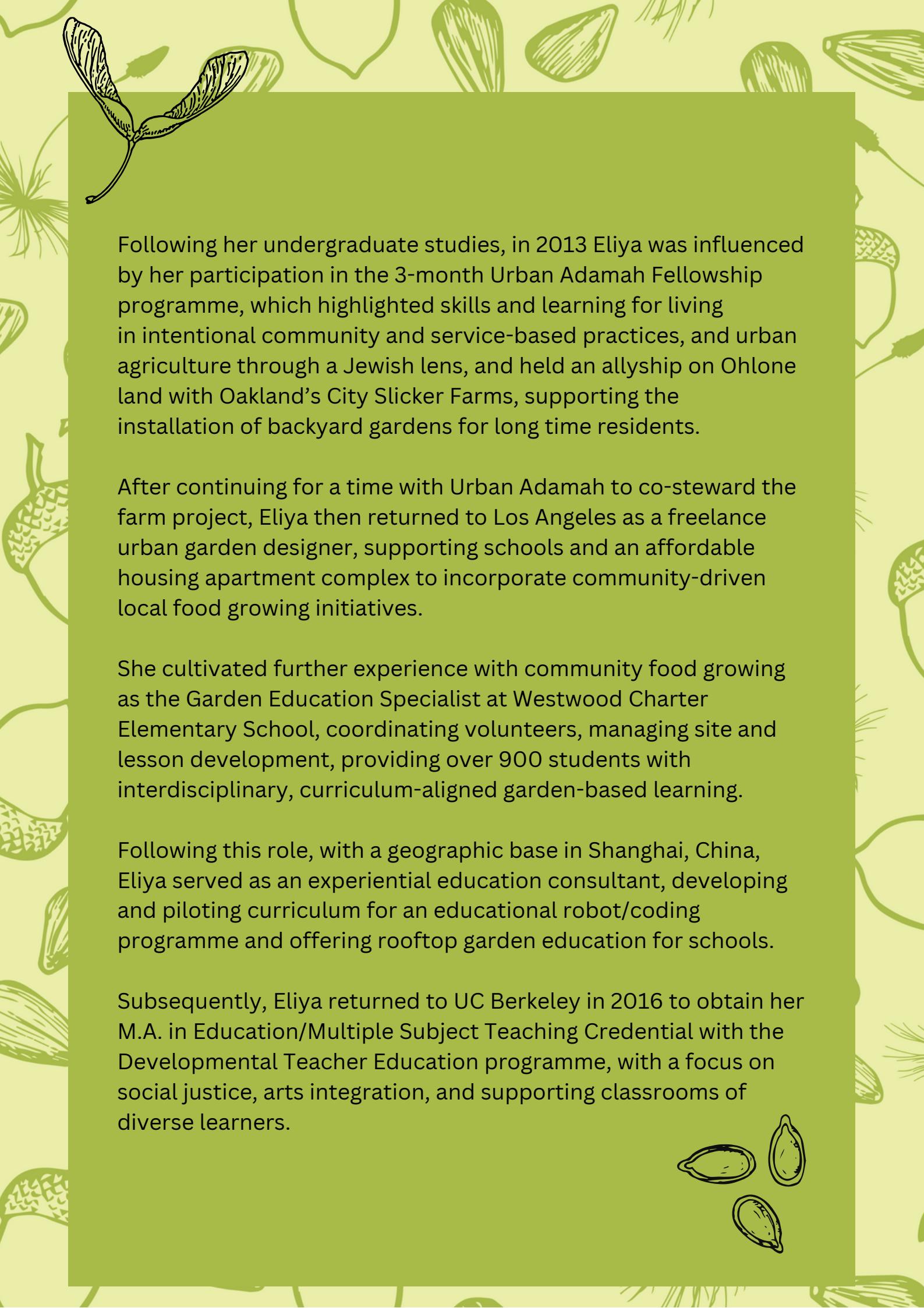
And for more about the journey, because we are our stories... From a young age, Eliya has centered human-nature relationships across a range of contexts. Having grown up in a tight knit extended community in urban Los Angeles, California, USA on stolen Tongva land, with a Jewish education, Eliya developed an early, deep and ongoing commitment to the values of Tikkun Olam (constructively acting to heal wounds in the world) and Derech Eretz (following the way of the land), which are Jewish values that are commonly shared (by other names) across geographies, cultures and religions. She built her childhood relationship to nature in micro experiences playing in residential neighbourhood backyards and in wild edges along the concrete, and experiences of hiking and camping with friends and family on weekends and breaks.



Now having grown to recognise “nature” more broadly, as complex ecosystems of nonliving and living things, of which humans are a part, in her youth, conversely, she perceived “nature” as something found in pockets of garden and park, as well as something to be traveled to, out there to explore when there was extra time.

From earlier school days and early adulthood working in early child care, tutoring, and in afterschool programmes with Los Angeles public schools, to initiating school-wide recycling initiatives and social justice campaigns, to facilitating groups of young people as a counselor at summer camps at local parks and in the Yosemite mountains, Eliya has a long history of operating at the lively and intricately linked intersection of care for people, play and natural environment.

Since then, Eliya completed her Bachelors of Science studies at University of California, Berkeley in Conservation and Resource Studies, with a focus on Sustainable Food Systems and Forestry and Natural Resources. During college, beyond classes, she was shaped (among other things) by her experience living in community-based cooperative housing, time studying agriculture/geography/dance, researching food growing and farmer experiences in peri-urban settings whilst on exchange at the University of Ghana, Accra, her educator role with the Student Organic Garden Association, exposure to and volunteering with local food justice programmes like The Edible Schoolyard Project, facilitation of social and food justice oriented programming through Berkeley Hillel, and and her 2-month participation in UC Berkeley’s immersive, residential Forestry Field Camp in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.




Following her undergraduate studies, in 2013 Eliya was influenced by her participation in the 3-month Urban Adamah Fellowship programme, which highlighted skills and learning for living in intentional community and service-based practices, and urban agriculture through a Jewish lens, and held an allyship on Ohlone land with Oakland's City Slicker Farms, supporting the installation of backyard gardens for long time residents.

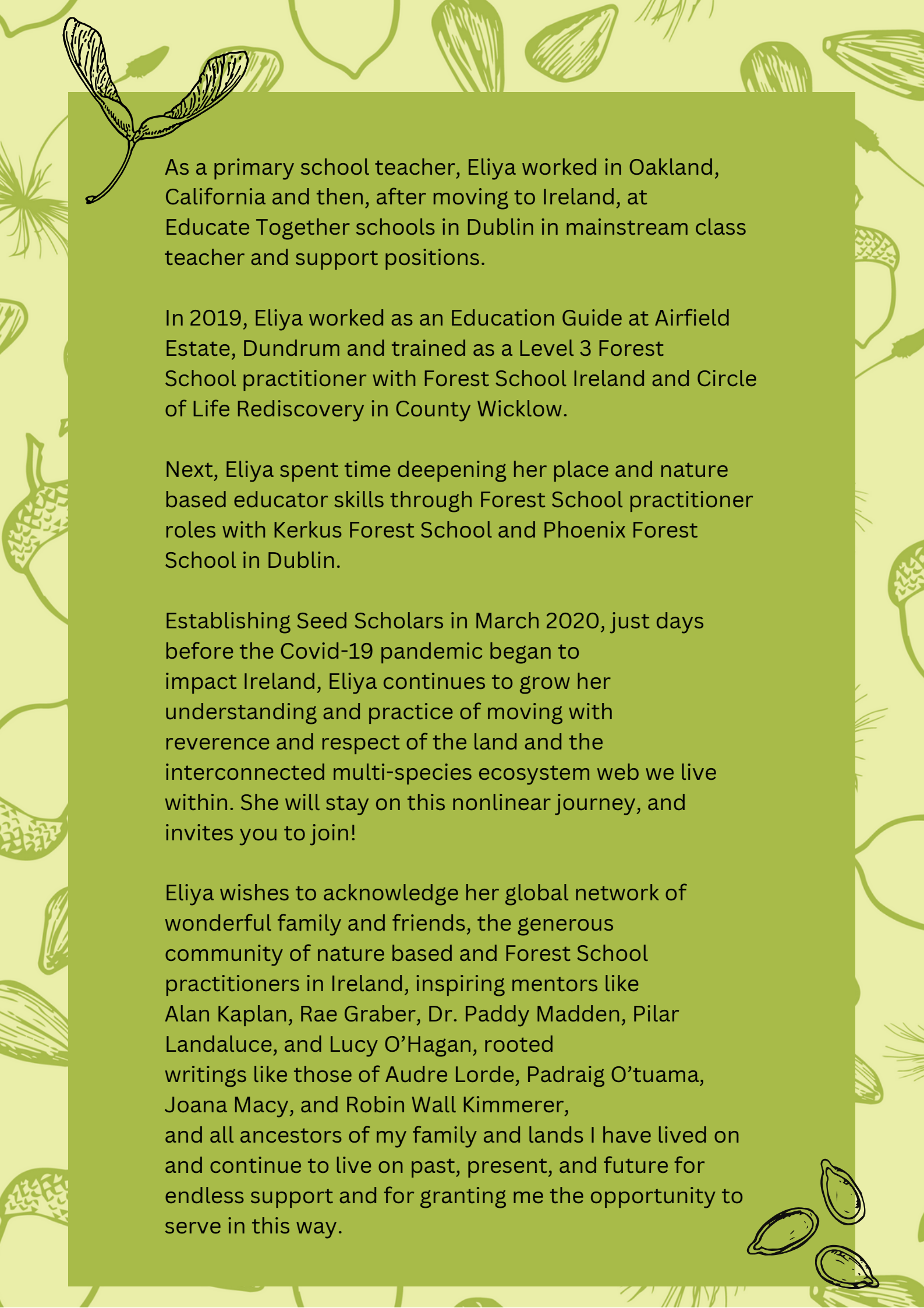
After continuing for a time with Urban Adamah to co-steward the farm project, Eliya then returned to Los Angeles as a freelance urban garden designer, supporting schools and an affordable housing apartment complex to incorporate community-driven local food growing initiatives.

She cultivated further experience with community food growing as the Garden Education Specialist at Westwood Charter Elementary School, coordinating volunteers, managing site and lesson development, providing over 900 students with interdisciplinary, curriculum-aligned garden-based learning.

Following this role, with a geographic base in Shanghai, China, Eliya served as an experiential education consultant, developing and piloting curriculum for an educational robot/coding programme and offering rooftop garden education for schools.

Subsequently, Eliya returned to UC Berkeley in 2016 to obtain her M.A. in Education/Multiple Subject Teaching Credential with the Developmental Teacher Education programme, with a focus on social justice, arts integration, and supporting classrooms of diverse learners.





As a primary school teacher, Eliya worked in Oakland, California and then, after moving to Ireland, at Educate Together schools in Dublin in mainstream class teacher and support positions.

In 2019, Eliya worked as an Education Guide at Airfield Estate, Dundrum and trained as a Level 3 Forest School practitioner with Forest School Ireland and Circle of Life Rediscovery in County Wicklow.

Next, Eliya spent time deepening her place and nature based educator skills through Forest School practitioner roles with Kerkus Forest School and Phoenix Forest School in Dublin.

Establishing Seed Scholars in March 2020, just days before the Covid-19 pandemic began to impact Ireland, Eliya continues to grow her understanding and practice of moving with reverence and respect of the land and the interconnected multi-species ecosystem web we live within. She will stay on this nonlinear journey, and invites you to join!

Eliya wishes to acknowledge her global network of wonderful family and friends, the generous community of nature based and Forest School practitioners in Ireland, inspiring mentors like Alan Kaplan, Rae Graber, Dr. Paddy Madden, Pilar Landaluce, and Lucy O'Hagan, rooted writings like those of Audre Lorde, Padraig O'tuama, Joana Macy, and Robin Wall Kimmerer, and all ancestors of my family and lands I have lived on and continue to live on past, present, and future for endless support and for granting me the opportunity to serve in this way.

