Friends of Our Lands
Bishop Mayor Pro Tem Jose Garcia, the first Hispanic in our city’s government, will participate in Latino Conservation Week

This Saturday, July 15, from 4 to 7 pm, a bilingual community outreach event called Nature, Connectivity and Credit (Naturaleza, Conectividad y Crédito) will take place in downtown Bishop.

It is a resource fair that will be held in the parking lot of AltaOne Federal Credit Union, at 462 N. Main Street, to help people who lack a credit or debit card account to apply for one in order to gain access to national parks, as more and more of them are requiring that payment of entry and other fees be made via credit or debit card.

Nature, Connectivity and Credit is part of Latino Conservation Week, a nationwide initiative created to support the Latino community getting into the outdoors and participating in activities to protect our natural resources. Besides the opportunity to apply for credit with AltaOne, our local event will include many educational resources to help attendees learn how to enjoy nature responsibly, how to recycle waste properly, how to protect their home from wildfires, how to register at Cerro Coso Community College, how to find available local jobs, and more.

There will also be Latin music, raffles and FREE food: Two tacos for each of the first 200 attendees, courtesy of AltaOne!

Among the many organizations, government agencies, and individuals who are participating in this event is Bishop Mayor Pro Tem Jose Garcia, who in the 2020 elections became the first Hispanic immigrant elected to the Bishop City Council. Garcia plans to deliver a warm greeting to the community.

“This event perfectly combines the commitment of our local Hispanic community to the conservation and preservation of nature, with the opportunity to obtain a bank account and/or a debit or credit card,” he said. “I am sure that in our community there are people who do not have a bank account, and therefore a debit or credit card. Some people still have to rely on carrying cash in their wallet all the time.”

In fact, people who do not have a credit or debit card can come to Bishop to obtain one, according to Garcia. “Fortunately, AltaOne Credit Union is making it easier for the Spanish-speaking community to have an important form of access not just to national parks, but to independence and the opportunity for economic growth. By having a bank account and/or a debit or credit card, people will be able to save and have better control of their finances. They will no longer have to rely on carrying cash in their wallet all the time.”

He continued: “I think we have to adapt to change. This change implies the implementation of an electronic payment system, that is, with a card, thus eliminating the use of cash. It is a change that we are seeing more and more every day in many areas. Sometimes change is not easy for everyone, but if we support one another, we can all further the adaptation process.”

As an immigrant, Garcia knows what it means to have to adapt to a new country with new customs. Garcia, 60, was born in Mexico. His family is large, like many traditional Hispanic families. Garcia and his seven siblings grew up in Mexico City with his parents, who are now deceased. After coming to live in the United States, he met his eight other half-siblings.

Garcia, the eldest of all his siblings and half-siblings, arrived in the United States in August of 1989, and came to Bishop two months later to visit relatives. And here he stayed. He has six children who were born in Bishop. His eldest daughter and one of his granddaughters live in Mexico, he said.

He himself had to adjust to American culture, where making payments using a credit card is very common. “My recommendation is that everyone should have a bank account and a debit or credit card,” he said.

He also stressed the importance of Nature, Connectivity and Credit’s focus on environmental protection.

“Latino Conservation Week is an opportunity for Latinos to show our passion for nature, which is to be enjoyed and preserved. It is also an opportunity to come together and support one another’s efforts to care for nature. We live in and share the same planet, and it is our duty to care for and preserve nature for the benefit of our children and future generations. The future is now!”

Finally, he extended an invitation to the public, whom he thanks for having elected him to serve on our City Council. “For me it is a pleasure and an honor to be present, and I encourage our entire community to support this event with their attendance. We are waiting for you. Thank you so much!”

Louis Medina is Director of Communications and Philanthropy for Friends of the Inyo and is leading the effort to bring the Nature, Connectivity and Credit outreach event to our community. You can write to him at Louis@friendsoftheinyo.org. We will publish another article following the event.