

**Camp Neringa, Inc. Member Q&A**  
**Based on a Conversation between**  
**Darius Razgaitis and Seselė Ignė at the 2022 Members' Meeting**

**DR: What does being a “Member” in Camp Neringa, Inc. mean?**

**SI:** Being a Member means that someone takes not only an active interest in, but is also concerned with the management and continuity of the legacy of Neringa. A Member is given the right to vote on certain decisive administrative decisions.

When an organization is legally recognized by the government (e.g. profit, or if non-profit and given the authority to issue tax receipts, be non-taxable, etc.) the Bylaws of the organization outline the RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES of those who are in the governance structure, both those serving on the BOARD and the MEMBERS.

**DR: Everything seems to be the same as before, so, what is the essential difference between CNI now and what was before?**

**SI:** Well, since 2015, when Neringa became Camp Neringa, Incorporated, the Members (the highest level on the governing body) are no longer the Sisters, but, rather, folks from the Neringa Lithuanian-American community. The Lithuanian community has taken on the responsibility for the future of Neringa. They, together with the Board, oversee the administration, management, and continuity of the Sisters' legacy.

**DR: So, does that mean the Sisters are no longer involved?**

**SI:** Yes and No. We are no longer “on top,” nor do we have “the last word,” however, we continue to be involved in being part of the Directors on the Board and are always there to consult on any issues whenever called upon.

**DR: Does being a Member have anything to do with being able to come to different events?**

**SI:** No, not at all. Anyone can come to any event or camp session that Neringa sponsors. All you have to do is register and come. Whereas, to be a Member, to show your willingness and commitment, there is an application, initial fee, and a yearly renewal fee.

**DR: So, what is the point of my being a Member?**

**SI:** That all depends on the level of your concern and interest in Neringa. It's making a commitment and taking on a responsibility to be involved and participate in what goes on behind the “happy and fun” events. Certainly, you can choose just to participate in the various programs and events.

**DR: If I become a Member, do I get anything from the Neringa membership, just like clubs or organizations that have nice deals?**

**SI:** Once again, let's not use that expression of "membership;" it's not like in a club. Becoming a **Member**, I agree to take on an added interest and involvement in what goes on at Neringa. I become part of the governing body. No, don't expect to get "discounts" on coming to camp or events, or first choice in cabins or shower time 😊. You get moral satisfaction that you are contributing to the wellbeing of many individuals by being involved in the mundane, behind the scenes moments of camp.

**DR: What do I need to promise if I become a Member and what do I have to do?**

**SI:** You commit to coming to an annual meeting (in-person or Zoom), to receiving and reading all the activity, financial, and management reports, to participating in the discussion, questions, and issues raised, and to voting for the Directors on the Board and other essential decisions for Neringa. Those are serious responsibilities.

**DR: I've heard of "sustaining donor." Do they become Members because of their support? What's the difference between a Member and sustaining donor?**

**SI:** Someone who financially supports Neringa, even if they were to give a million, would not become a Member. Remember, a Member becomes part of the corporation's governing body. Being a sustaining donor does not entitle one to vote for the Directors to the Board. Of course, the donors get the same news and information that is available to all, but they would not get the administration's activities or financial reports. There are folks who choose to donate, but do not want to be part of the governance.

**DR: When we speak of becoming a Member of Camp Neringa, Inc., I know something concerns you, Sesele Igne. What is it?**

**SI:** When I hear, "Oh, you're 18, now you can become a Member," or hear someone encouraging another to become a Member, as if it is like joining a club, or even remarks like "Neringa has xxx number of Members, do we need more?" I am concerned that the term "Member" is misunderstood.

Formerly, I understood "become a member" in the same sense as being a member of a team, a club, a sorority, a parish, choir, organization, Scouts, etc. This is how most of us understand and use the word. However, having to deal with our community institutions, I gradually learned the legal meaning of "Member" when it is written with a capital "M." "Member" designates a legal governance level of a corporation; Members have specific, restricted powers and responsibilities.

**DR: You keep referring to the Directors on the Board. If there is a board which oversees the administration, management, and programs, why do we need Members?**

**SI:** Having both a Board and Members is a type of checks and balances, especially if people who are not as versed in the life of Camp Neringa become a majority. For example, even if the majority would want to do something “way out,” they need approval from either body. For example, let’s say the Board decides to sell all the land except for that on which the cabins stand, or close Neringa down, or even change the name to Camp Whatever – the Members have to approve anything that the Board wants to do that is out of the ordinary. And the reverse is also true: if the Members would all decide to close down and sell, the Board needs to approve.

**DR: How can I become a Member?**

SI: Very simple. Neringa has a Membership Committee that takes care of registrations and monitors annual dues to uphold active participation. Simply write, register, and pay your initial or renewal dues during the membership drive and you can participate in all meetings and get all the info.

**DR: If Neringa's mission statement says that Lithuanian heritage is a key component, why are Member meetings and communications in English?**

SI: I am one of those fortunate ones who speaks both languages. Obviously, for maximum participation, we all need to understand what is happening, and, in this case, English connects all. Also, remember, all minutes and documents must be in English to present to the government at will. Of course, you can always hire someone to sit down and translate every document into English ☺ or set up translator booths allowing for simultaneous translations during meetings.