

## Frogs & Dogbane: Summer at the CNPE

The Center for Native Peoples and the Environment is taking the show on the road this summer providing a number of hands-on and “ears-on,” experiences. This is in no small part due to the addition of CNPE intern Cassandra Beaulieu. Cassi is a Senior Environmental Chemistry major at SUNY-ESF of Mohawk heritage and a CNPE Indigenous Environmental Leaders for the Future Fellowship Recipient. Welcome Cassi!

The Center began preparing for the summer during the cold moons of winter, unveiling a new “Onondaga Frog Sounds” Project by early Spring. The Project was designed by a team of community experts and ESF faculty in response to concerns about local To:hti, or Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*) populations around the Onondaga Nation territory. Students at the Onondaga Nation School learned to identify frogs by sound and sight in hopes of preparing citizens to monitor future changes in frog populations. Nyaweh to CNPE faculty member Dr. James Gibbs, and his students Tess Youker and Stewart Lapan, for the excellent frog lessons.



*ESF graduate students Tess Youker and Stewart LePan cover frog calls at the Onondaga Nation School.*

The work of the Center was featured at the ESF in the High School Environmental Summit held on the main ESF campus in Syracuse, NY. Over 150 high school students and teachers listened as Neil covered traditional Haudenosaunee knowledge, language and science during the keynote luncheon address. ESF in the High School provides college-level coursework for over 600 students in over forty partnering schools across New York State. The message



*CNPE Associate Director Neil Patterson Jr. talks about Haudenosaunee natural law and language at the ESF in the High School Environmental Summit.*

was likely familiar to some of the high school teachers attending, many of whom had Mr. Patterson in their classroom during his time as a former National Science Foundation GK12 Fellow.

The Center continued work at the Onondaga Nation School with an Ecological Scavenger Hunt conducted for as part of Project Challenge Week in July. Over 120 students in grades 4-8 identified nannyberry, white ash, wild currant, and green frogs along the ONS boardwalk built over fifteen years ago through the help of SUNY-ESF. Thank you to ESF graduate student Catherine Landis for help in identifying the wide variety of plant life along the boardwalk.

In a new development, the CNPE provided a Traditional Plant Knowledge workshop for high school students attending the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Summer Camp at Pack Forest in Warrensburg, NY. Students heard about the indigenous history of the region during a plant

hike pointing out culturally-significant species. The group finished the workshop learning to weave Ruskye:ne, or dogbane (*Apocynum cannabinum*) fibers into bracelets, necklaces, and, for the expert weavers, a fishing line to catch the big one! The Center's participation in the DEC Summer Camp was a result of recent collaboration with the NYSDEC on increasing Haudenosaunee student participation and programming in the camps held at several locations across the state. The DEC also offered several scholarships for Haudenosaunee students through the advocacy work of the Center.

The Center's outreach culminates this summer at the sixth new Native Earth Summer Stewardship Camp being held at the Adirondack Ecological Center. Now in its sixth year, Native Earth will focus on stewardship through a backcountry-hiking trip into the high peaks region of the Adirondacks. Students will learn about the bio-cultural significance of Adirondack systems and complete a small research project.

The SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) established the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment in 2006 to focus on developing connections between traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and western scientific approaches through education, research and public outreach. More information can be found at <http://www.esf.edu/nativepeoples>

*Nyaweh!*



***Interested?***

*The CNPE is looking for chaperones and community elders to join us during the Summer Stewardship Camp August 15-22, 2015. Housing and meals provided. (Backcountry & first aid experience is preferred for those wishing to participate in the backpacking). Please call or email Neil Patterson Jr. at 315.470.6870 [nvpatter@esf.edu](mailto:nvpatter@esf.edu)*