Center for Native Peoples and the Environment

“Skywoman” is used with the kind permission of the artist, Bruse King (Oneida).

ESF
State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Our Mission

We are committed to educating the next generation of environmental leaders, to draw upon the wisdom of both indigenous and scientific ways of knowing for the well-being of the earth and all its inhabitants.

The Center brings together indigenous and scientific knowledge in a way that protects and respects indigenous knowledge and prepares students with the cross-cultural skills to contribute to an increasingly globalized society.
Located in the traditional homelands of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Central New York is the home of two great intellectual traditions regarding stewardship of the earth: traditional ecological knowledge of indigenous people and scientific ecological knowledge. Through its Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry uses its special expertise and unique location to create programs that draw on indigenous and scientific knowledge to support our shared goal of environmental sustainability. The Center achieves its mission through initiatives in education, outreach, research and community partnerships.
Our Teaching

The Center for Native Peoples and the Environment enriches the ESF curriculum by creating innovative courses that explore indigenous perspectives on the environment. These courses highlight the contributions of indigenous knowledge to scientific efforts toward environmental sustainability in both the ecological and social realms.

Our educational offerings will soon expand with a new minor in Native Peoples and the Environment which includes courses in Native lands and cultures, ethno botany, restoration ecology and indigenous models of stewardship. In addition, the Center is working with a tribal college, the College of the Menominee Nation, to develop a shared course in forest ecology that draws upon both traditional and scientific knowledge of forest management. The course will be taught at both colleges and will link the Menominee Forest in Wisconsin and ESF’s Huntington Wildlife Forest in the Adirondacks as “sister forests” for a student research exchange focused on forest resilience in the face of climate change.

Our Scholarship Programs

The Center benefits from scholarship programs provided to support the participation of Native American students in environmental education at ESF. The Oren Lyons Scholarship supports students from the traditional Haudenosaunee territories; and a new Fellowship for Indigenous Environmental Leadership, supported by the USDA Multicultural Scholars Program, will support five Native American students in a small, close-knit group that connects environmental science with indigenous issues.
Our Research

ESF faculty and graduate students are involved in a diverse range of research projects of interest to Native American communities. Among them are projects that focus on:

- Integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) with forest ecology to help indigenous basketmakers in Maine manage basket-quality black ash trees
- Defining historic habitat conditions for eco-cultural restoration in the Onondaga Lake watershed
- Developing the “Helping Forests Walk” program, which will establish demonstration groves and forest education programs to assist in the protection of culturally significant forest species threatened by climate change
- Exploring new models for integration of traditional knowledge and science in collaborative problem solving
- Integrating TEK in efforts to restore sustainable forests with Mayan communities in Mexico

Our Partnerships

The Center for Native Peoples and the Environment is committed to partnering with Native American communities to develop environmental projects of shared interest.

That commitment is exemplified by the Native Earth Environmental Youth Camp, now in its fourth year, which serves native high school students from an array of indigenous nations. The 10-day camp, supported by National Science Foundation funding and developed in collaboration with the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force, is held in part at ESF’s Cranberry Lake Biological Station and taught by indigenous leaders, ESF faculty and students.
The Center is also involved in educational outreach engaging native youth in ecological and biocultural restoration in the Onondaga Lake watershed. This work not only promotes participation in environmental stewardship but also encourages Native American youth to pursue higher education in environmental science.

The Allyn Environmental Internships support teams of college and high school students working on environmental projects in Native American communities. Projects include community gardens, nature trails, plant knowledge revitalization and biodiversity monitoring.

The Center works collaboratively with Native programs at Syracuse University and the citizens group “Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation” to present community-wide education events.

**Our Faculty**

**Dr. Colin Beier** studies the structure, function, resilience and adaptive management of forest landscapes during periods of rapid social and environmental change.

**Emanuel Carter** is an associate professor of landscape architecture whose work focuses on revitalizing American cities and making them sustainable.

**Dr. Stewart Diemont** works with native communities in Mexico, Belize and Guatemala studying how TEK contributes to ecosystem restoration.

**Dr. James Gibbs**, conservation biologist and director of the Roosevelt Wild Life Station at ESF, has recently done research on the use of wildlife by indigenous people in Guyana and the impacts of grazing on biodiversity in Altai, Russia.
Dr. Robin Kimmerer is a plant ecologist who focuses on ethnobotany, mosses and the restoration of culturally significant plants.

Dr. Jack Manno has worked with the Onondaga Nation traditional government on a variety of issues, including working with the Council of Chiefs and the Neighbors of Onondaga Nation on the Two Row Wampum Campaign for 2013.

Dr. Sharon Moran does research on political ecology and environment-society relations, focusing on the human dimensions of water and wastewater issues, gender and nature, and sustainability indicators.

Elizabeth Vidon focuses on human geography and attitudes, values and the environment.

Our Students and Alumni

James Costello, (Mohawk), is completing his master’s thesis on restoration of wild rice at Akwesasne

Suzanne Greenlaw, (Maliseet), is conducting her master’s research on traditional knowledge of black ash management among native basketmakers in Maine

Becky Begay ’10, (Navajo), completed her M.P.S. in environmental interpretation and works as a ranger for the National Park Service

Carol Thomas ’08, (Onondaga), earned her B.S. in environmental and forest biology and works for the Yukon River Intertribal Watershed Council in Alaska.

Jade Gabri ’12, (Mohawk) earned her B.S. in forestry and works with the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force on issues of climate change

For more information about the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, contact:

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Founded in 1911, the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry is the nation’s oldest and most respected college dedicated solely to the study of the environment, developing renewable technologies and building a sustainable future.

ESF ranks among the top national and public universities (U.S. News & World Report 2012), providing a “best value” educational experience (The Princeton Review 2012) and ranking third among the best colleges for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Forbes 2010).

The main campus, located in Syracuse in upstate New York, is small, hosting some 1,700 undergraduates, 600 graduate students and 130 faculty. The College benefits from its historic partnership with Syracuse University, which is literally across the street and provides the educational, cultural and recreational resources of a large university to members of the ESF community.

Surprisingly, ESF has one of the largest extended college campuses on Earth with nearly 25,000 acres of properties that support the research and teaching program. These field stations include the Adirondack Ecological Center and the Cranberry Lake Biological Station in the Adirondack Park, the Thousand Islands Biological Station in the St. Lawrence River and a field station for tropical studies in Costa Rica.

SUNY-ESF is classified as a doctoral research university by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The College is focused on research and education related to managing natural resources.