



## Haudenosaunee Forest Principles

PI Robin Kimmerer, State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry

### Project Abstract

Haudenosaunee people are the traditional caretakers of over twenty million acres of forests in what is now called New York State. A growing number of forest managers today are required by policy (NYSDEC) or certification programs (SFI, FSC) to integrate Indigenous stewardship and access into management plans. The goal of this project is to bring together Indigenous community leaders, knowledge holders, and practitioners to consider the ways that Haudenosaunee forest protocols and traditions can be applied to contemporary forest management practices. Together, we are developing a set of Haudenosaunee Forest Principles based on the Haudenosaunee Environmental Protection Process, a guideline developed by the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force (HETF) in 2007. The development of Haudenosaunee Forest Principles will also result in the creation of lesson plans designed to teach and demonstrate traditional forest knowledge from Indigenous elders and practitioners to youth during *Native Earth*, a program for Indigenous students to explore the intersection between traditional ecological knowledge and environmental science. The lessons are piloted during Native Earth workshops for youth to engage in participatory research and education, as directed by community needs and goals.

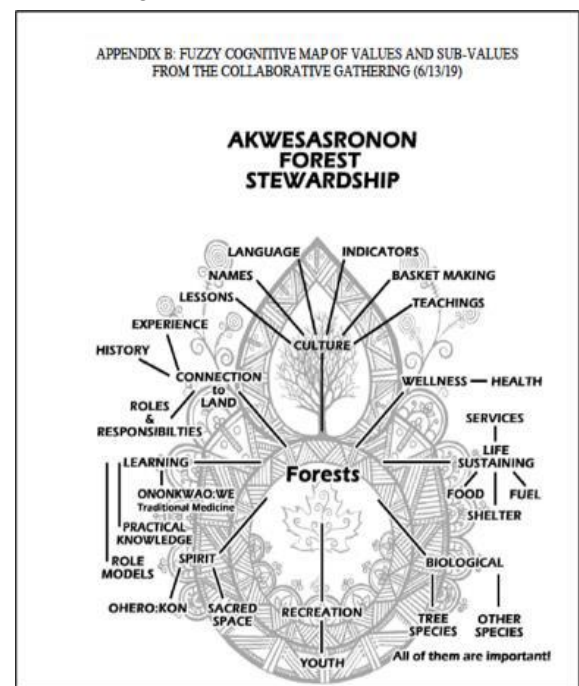
### Progress in 2022

Second Haudenosaunee Forest Forum:

The Center for Native Peoples & the Environment (CNPE) at SUNY ESF continued to work with our Indigenous Partners to hold the second Forest Forum in Akwesasne Mohawk Territory on February 11, 2022. The Second Forum included a review of the proposed Haudenosaunee Forest Principles based on the seasonal cycle of Haudenosaunee ceremonies and presentations from Indigenous Forest Practitioners to consider additional criteria and indicators referenced by the Principles. Nineteen people from Tuscarora, Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk and Anishinaabe attended the event. A summary of the presentations include:

**Haudenosaunee Forest Stewardship** with Abe Francis (Akwesasne Mohawk): One of the few previous attempts to capture Haudenosaunee Forest principles in writing comes from Abe Francis’s Master Thesis, “Haudenosaunee Forest Stewardship.” Abe presented his research at the Second Forum to explain how he conceptualized Haudenosaunee Forest Stewardship guided by the research question “What are relationships between Indigenous communities and forested lands?” A basket metaphor was used by Francis (see figure) to represent the fuzzy cognitive mapping of values and “sub-values” emerging from the case at Akwesasne.

**Alignment of Haudenosaunee forest principles with western forestry practices** with Chris Craig (Senior Forestry Technician at South Nation Conservation Authority) and Les Benedict (Akwesasne Mohawk). The presentation covered various approaches in forest certification programs, including



*Akwesasronon Forest Stewardship diagram from Haudenosaunee Forest Stewardship (Francis, 2009).*



## NSRC Progress Report 2022

aboriginal rights, water, ecosystem values recognized by the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. Several discussions about Indigenous access to forested private lands, treaty rights, and border crossings led into more guiding assumptions of Haudenosaunee Forest Principles. Craig and Benedict reviewed their work on Black Ash, including their experience working with western foresters and other forest health practitioners to address Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). Akwesasne is currently working with the USFS to introduce four different wasp species to suppress EAB using diverse ovipositor lengths and different tolerances to cold. A discussion found:

1. Private ownership constraints: Biological control and other systemic approaches to improved forest health are limited by patch sizes and should ideally be planned at a physiographic or ecosystem scale.
2. Climate Change is not going away: But Haudenosaunee People have learned from trees how to adapt and how to plan for future generations.
3. Use techniques to amplify the process: technologies should be used to find and protect middle ground with a priority on preservation of the knowledges- stories, songs and dances keep it alive regardless of the living forest legacy.
4. Focus on the seeds: Outward-facing intervention in the form of seed care not typically associated with Haudenosaunee stewardship, including spaces where elders and youth can go and collect medicines and share knowledge together.

**Youth Outreach:** Forest education workshops were piloted twice in 2022: at a Winter Botany Workshop held in Akwesasne on February 10 and again during Native Earth, a program for Indigenous students to explore the intersection between traditional ecological knowledge and environmental science. During these events, participants engaged in traditional forest knowledge and practice on the land and considered how communities might implement Haudenosaunee Forest Principles drafted by the ongoing forums.

### Problems or Changes

Due to the ongoing COVID pandemic, CNPE and partners exercised extreme caution around the levels of accessibility and participation by Haudenosaunee Forest Knowledge Holders.

### Plans for 2023

The Forest Forums will continue in partnership with Indigenous leadership, who all have voiced support for continued collaboration. We plan to make the Haudenosaunee Forest Principles Lessons a permanent module in the Native Earth Program.

### Collaboration

While much of the alignment and/or collaboration with the USFS is still uncertain, a shared set of Haudenosaunee Forest principles has the potential to advance recognition and implementation of Indigenous rights by providing USFS managers with criteria and indicators for protecting culturally significant species. For example, forum participants have already identified several culturally significant forest species that could result in the development of shared research in support of restoration for land and people. These species could be included in state-wide forest inventories conducted by USFS or by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

### Publication

Native Earth, CNPE Blog <https://cnpe.home.blog/2022/09/19/native-earth-2022-back-in-action/>