

# NSRC Progress Report 2021

## Haudenosaunee Forest Principles

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### 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 will develop 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 will be piloted during Native Earth workshops for youth to engage in participatory research and education, as directed by community needs and goals.

### Progress in 2021

The Center for Native Peoples & the Environment (CNPE) initiated dialogue with our Indigenous partners beginning in May to determine appropriate ways to achieve the intended goals of the project. Discussions with potential host communities included respective COVID pandemic protocols. Collaborating groups and individuals were identified during this period and a survey tool was developed to determine the level of interest for an in-person event. ESF graduate student Sarah Howard was hired in June to help coordinate this effort. Consensus for an in-person event was reached in late summer, and the first-ever Haudenosaunee Forest Forum for discussing forest knowledge and caretaking took place in October on the Onondaga Nation. We took advantage of mild weather to meet in person in a pandemic-safe setting, the Onondaga Nation Tshahononyendakwha's outdoor pavilion. The Forest Forum included an overview of the project, discussion of shared forest principles based on the seasonal cycle of Haudenosaunee ceremonies, and an introduction to the Haudenosaunee Environmental Protection Process.

The topic elicited great interest among community members, and people traveled considerable distances to attend. Twenty-five people from Tuscarora, Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk communities attended the two-day event, with three people joining virtually.

The Forum was co-sponsored by CNPE and the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force, who also hired Research Assistant Brayden "Sonny" White (Mohawk) to assist with the project. A video recording of the Forest Forum and a digital library based on a literature review of Haudenosaunee Forest research was distributed on virtual and hard drives in December.

### Problems or changes

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

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## Plans for 2022

CNPE will work closely with partners to continue the literature review, conduct a second Forest Forum in January/February, and pilot the HEPP to draft criteria and indicators based on the shared forest principles identified in the first Forest Forum. Consensus was reached with community partners to locate a second Forest Forum in Seneca lands, preferably Alleghany Territory, which is scheduled to include a review of the draft principles, an introduction to western forestry practices, and the development of youth curriculum topics. We will continue the discussion of culturally specific criteria and indicators and bring in expertise of Haudenosaunee forest knowledge holders who also work in more conventional western forestry settings. How do Haudenosaunee forest principles align with, and diverge from, forestry practices taught in North America today?

## Collaboration with USFS

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, Forest 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 statewide forest inventories.

# Onoñda'geh Ongwaweñna'

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## HETF & CNPE: Indigenous Forestry Principles

by Tsadeyohdi

The Haudenosaunee, HETF, is the Haudenosaunee Confederacy's national committee on the Environment. The HETF comprises members from each of the Nation's communities. This committee's founding principles are grounded in the Great Law of the Haudenosaunee and formalized into a standing committee in the late 1980s to sustain environmental issues that compromise the balance upon the natural world's ecosystems.

In 2015 Syracuse University's state school component, known as the ESF School of Forestry, instituted a Center for Native Peoples and the Environment to establish and "create programs that draw on the wisdom of both indigenous and scientific knowledge in support of our shared goals of environmental sustainability.

On October 8-9, 2021, the HETF and the CNPE formed a partnership to initiate a workshop to create a discussion on forests and the worldview from an Indigenous knowledge perspective.

The two-day workshop held its sessions for approximately thirty people at the Onondaga Nation TshaHomibyendakwha's outdoor pavilion to follow the Nation's community covid policies and masking protocols.

The turn-out of participants included Haudenosaunee delegates, HETF and CNPE staff, and native and non-native students. The forum also had several Nation communities participate via virtual communicate.

The two-day event discussed how indigenous forest management traditions could work comparatively similarly or differently when applied to current external rules and protections practices. There was a good discussion by indigenous participants, with a web style of note-taking visibly for clarity and review. This brainstorm of ideas will form a draft of baseline principles for a future initiative on Haudenosaunee Forest Principles under the auspices of the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force, HETF.

The workshop included basketry samples, paw-paw fruit tasting, concluding with a sapling and seed exchange share.

The response of Native participants was positive, and the collaboration between and the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force and the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment looks forward to another forum in December in Alleghany.

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*Excerpt from the Onoñda'geh Ongwaweñna', a monthly newsletter distributed from the Onondaga Nation, which is in the middle of the Haudenosaunee territory.*