

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe



Tribal Resource Connection to Landscapes and Ecological Communities

Presentation to Eastern Lake Ontario
Invasive Species Symposium
June 23, 2021

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Introduction

- Les Benedict
- Life-long Akwesasne Community member
- 31 Years - Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe in the Environment Division serving in various capacities, currently as the Assistant Director.
- Awesasne Task Force on the Environment (ATFE), Black Ash project coordinator.
- Coordinate Black Ash management via NYSDEC Volunteer Stewardship Agreement.
- Consultant to tribal/first nations and federal and state agencies on Black Ash management
- Developed and delivered tribal/first nations ash seed collection training across Great Lakes and NE US and Canada

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- Highlight the connections between Native American cultural practices, landscapes, and ecological communities
- Use Black Ash as an example
- Connections
 - SLELO Region
 - The Great Lakes
 - Northeastern states of the US
 - Eastern and Maritime Provinces of Canada.

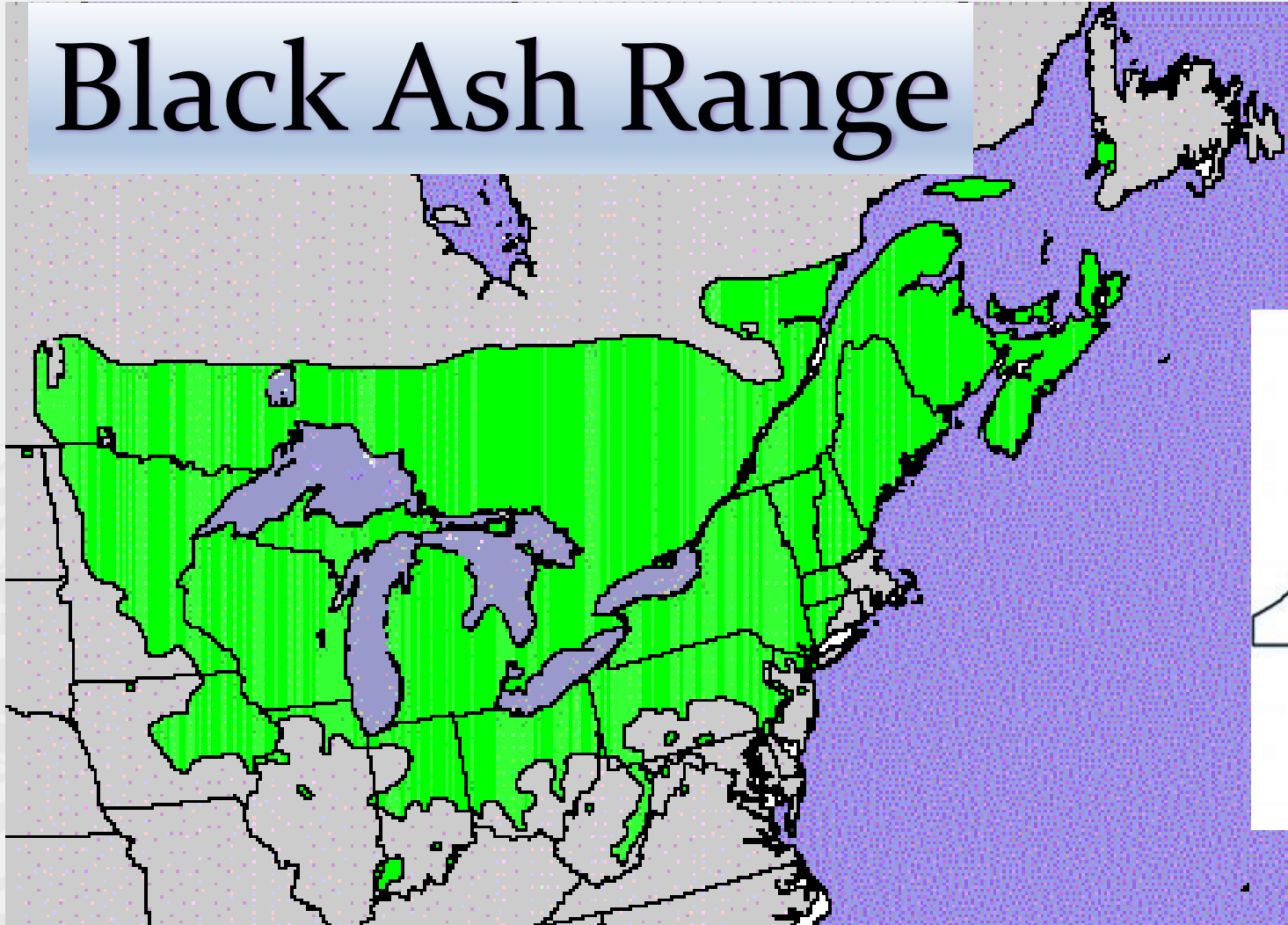


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Black Ash Range



SLELO Region



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Native American Black Ash Basketry



Black Ash Range, U.S. and Canada



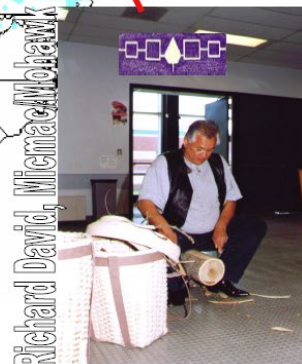
John Pigeon, Anishinabe



The Black Ash growing range includes Western Newfoundland to Manitoba, the Great Lakes and south to Ohio Valley, northern Virginia and much of New England. These are the same territories of Native people who make black (brown) ash baskets.



Dana Pictou, Micmac



Richard David, Micmac



Preservation, reforestation, regeneration and

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Cultural Practices

- Connects us with our ancestors, which is valuable and should not be lost.
- The beliefs and laws laid down by the roots of our culture are meaningful and are for the betterment of our lives.
- Derive an understanding of the world from the natural order's rhythms and cycles of life, and include animals and plants as well as other natural features in their conceptions of spirituality



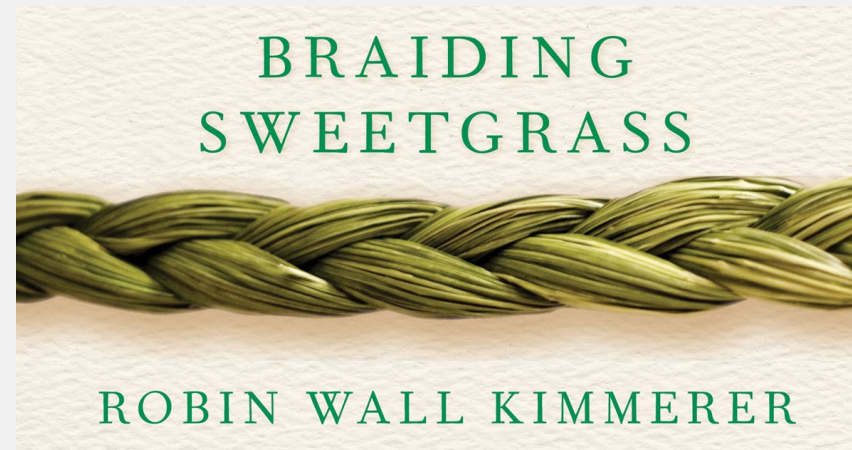
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Cultural Practices

- Practices reflect how people and nature are dependent upon each other
- “Reconnecting people and the landscape is as essential as reestablishing proper hydrology or cleaning up contaminants. It is medicine for the earth.” – *Robin Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass*



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Cultural Practices

- Ohenten Kariwatekwen – The words that come before all else, a.k.a – Thanksgiving address
- Mindfulness of the practices for living in harmony with nature
- Acknowledges ever single aspect of the world including plants, fish, animals, winds, solar/lunar/celestial bodies
- Spoken as a spiritual address to the powers of the natural world, these words are used to open gatherings in order to bring the minds of the people together as one and align the gathered minds with Nature. The roots of these words reach back thousands of years to the very origins of the Haudenosaunee as a people.



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- Embedded in indigenous languages, in particular, is knowledge about ecosystems, conservation methods, plant life, animal behavior and many other aspects of the natural world.
- Kanienkeha
 - Kentsia'kowáhne - place of the big fish (Sturgeon/kentsiakó:wa) - Salmon River
 - Oha'kwarónthne - place of cranes - Deer River



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Native Americans who have strong ties to their natural resources secure their “traditional knowledge” by passing down stories and legends that illustrate important cultural principles through oral history.

Examples of this include **the Legend of the Black Ash Basket (Cocobanoggan)**, told by the Anishinaabe.

The legend tells of a vision of Black Elk and instructions he received in a dream and given to his people instructing them to burn his body and spread the ashes in a place where a special tree grows. It tells of how his people will provide for their families by making and trading baskets.



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The Passamaquoddy creation legend relates the ties of of its nation to black ash, as they came out of the ash tree bark.

The place of ash basketry in Wabanaki life runs deep, as far into the past as collective memory can recount the story of how Gloosekap (alternately spelled Glooskap, Gluskabe, Gloosecap, Glooscap, or Klooskap) shot his arrows into the ash trees to create the Wabanaki people. – Jennifer Neptune



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The 10 plants used most commonly by Native Americans for dyes and the number of uses (Moerman, D. Native American Ethnobotany. 1988).

- Mountain Alder
- Red Alder
- Bloodroot
- Rubber rabbitbrush
- Smooth sumac
- Canaigre dock
- Eastern cottonwood
- Black walnut
- Skunkbrush sumac
- Butternut



<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/ethnobotany/dyes.shtml>

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Common names of North American native plants that can be used for dyes. (Note: Most plants can produce more than one color. Additional colors produced by a specific plant are included in parentheses. The part of the plant needed to produce the desired dye color is not included. In addition, mordants and processes needed to use successfully the natural dyes are not included.)

Table 3. - Common names of North American native plants that can be used for dyes. (Note: Most plants can produce more than one color. Additional colors produced by a specific plant are included in parentheses. The part of the plant needed to produce the desired dye color is not included. In addition, mordants and processes needed to use successfully the natural dyes are not included.)

Dye Color	Plant Common Name (Additional Colors)
Yellow Dyes	Yarrow (green, black)
	Honey Locust
	Golden wild-indigo (green)
	Tall cinquefoil (black, green, orange, red)
	Pecan (brown)
Orange Dyes	Indiangrass (brown, green)
	Western comandra (brown, yellow)
	Prairie Bluets (brown, yellow)
	Bloodroot (brown, yellow)
	Sassafras (black, green, purple, yellow)
	Eastern Cottonwood (black, brown, yellow)
	Plains Coropais (black, green, yellow, brown)

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	Bloodroot (brown, yellow)
Red Dyes	Sassafras (black, green, purple, yellow)
	Eastern Cottonwood (black, brown, yellow)
	Plains Coropais (black, green, yellow, brown)
	Oxark chinquapin (black, yellow, brown)
	Sumac (yellow, green, brown, black)
Purple / Blue Dyes	Chokecherry
	Prairie Parsley (yellow, brown)
	Slippery Elm (brown, green, yellow)
	Black Willow (black, green, orange, yellow)
	Indian Manket (black, green, yellow)
Green Dyes	Hairy coneflower (brown, green, yellow, black)
	Red Mulberry (brown, yellow, green)
	Mountain alder (brown, red, orange)
	Summer Grape (orange, yellow, black)
	Black Locust (black, green, yellow, brown)
Gray Dyes	Butterfly milkweed (yellow)
	Texas Paintbrush (green, red, yellow)
	Rocket flower (yellow)
	Sagebrush (yellow, gray)
	Stinging nettle
Brown Dyes	Goldenrod (yellow, brown)
	Iris (black)
	Butternut (brown)
	Canaigre Dock (yellow, green, brown)
	Prickly poppy (green, orange, yellow)
Black Dyes	Texas Paintbrush (green, red, yellow)
	Elderberry (yellow)
	Downy Phlox (brown, green, yellow)
	Northern Catalpa (brown, yellow)
	Sumac (yellow, red, green, brown)
	May-apple (brown, yellow)
	Sand Evening Primrose (green, orange, red, yellow)

<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/ethnobotany/dyes.shtml>

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There are baskets and individual weaves that represent life forms found in our environment. These life forms have cultural resonance for the Mohawk people and other Haudenosaunee – Thistle Basket



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Medicines are associated with the black ash and other trees of the forest



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Canopy associates of black ash include:

- Red maple (*Acer rubrum*)
- Silver maple (*A. saccharinum*)
- American elm (*Ulmus americana*)
- Yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*)
- Basswood (*Tilia americana*)
- Balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*)
- Northern white-cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)
- Green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*).



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Common herbaceous plants include:

- Northern bugleweed (*Lycopus uniflorus*)
- Mad-dog skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*)
- Wood anemone (*Anemone quinquefolia*)
- Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*)
- False nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*)
- Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*)
- Pennsylvania bitter cress (*Cardamine pensylvanica*)
- Fringed sedge (*Carex crinita*)
- Great bladder sedge (*C. intumescens*)
- Small enchanter's nightshade (*Circaea alpina*)
- Goldthread (*Coptis trifolia*)
- Fragrant bedstraw (*Galium triflorum*)
- Fowl manna grass (*Glyceria striata*)
- Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*)
- Wild iris (*Iris versicolor*)
- Wood nettle (*Laportea canadensis*)



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Common herbaceous plants include:

- Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*)
- Wild mint (*Mentha canadensis*)
- Partridge berry (*Mitchella repens*)
- Naked miterwort (*Mitella nuda*)
- Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)
- Clearweed (*Pilea pumila*)
- Elliptic shinleaf (*Pyrola elliptica*)
- Dwarf raspberry (*Rubus pubescens*)
- Water parsnip (*Sium suave*)
- Skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*)
- Wild violets (*Viola* spp.)



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Oral culture functions – Native American Oral Tradition

- Practical experience – immediate, concrete
- Specific situations faced daily
- Memory (not documented in writing)
- Performance skills – articulation
- Skills and craftsmanship passed on from person-to-person – apprentice, face-to-face

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The Greatest Properties of Black ash

- Teaching Patience
- Providing for families
- Carrying traditions
- Fulfilling ceremonies
- Speaking for people
- Providing medicine for healing



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Tie in to EAB and other Invasive Species Impacts

- The adaptability of Native Americans
- Previous shifts in traditional basket weaving styles and materials
- Reliance on traditional knowledge about resources in the environment

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Atsienhanonne means Firekeeper.

Henry Arquette kept the fires of creativity, endurance and hard work alive by passing on his knowledge to many devoted students in the Mohawk community of Akwesasne.



Martha Cooper Photo | Courtesy of TAUNY Archives

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Basket-making plays an important role in the political socialization of indigenous women, attributed to the evolving politicization of women traders and the growing role of market art. They are not only considered “vessels” for giving life, but also hold a significant place in keeping distinct traditions alive. – Emily Burkhart on Kelly Church and Cherish Parrish – Gun Lake Band of Pottawatomi



Photo Credit – American Indian. 2018 Smithsonian Institution

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“Brown ash basketmaking ultimately is and should be inseparable from spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing” – Gabriel Frey - Passamaquoddy



Photo – Abbe Museum

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The image of the rooted ash tree is an important one to hold in mind. It is true that a tree does, for a time “own” the earth. Yet it owns no further that its roots or branches can span and when it dies, all of its ownership ceases. Then, it goes back into earth itself. With its people, an ash tree may spread through a great territory, yet it does not keep out all the other trees and its “ownership” is a balance rather than a dominion. – *Rooted Like the Ash Trees: Abenaki People and the Land.* Joseph Bruchae.



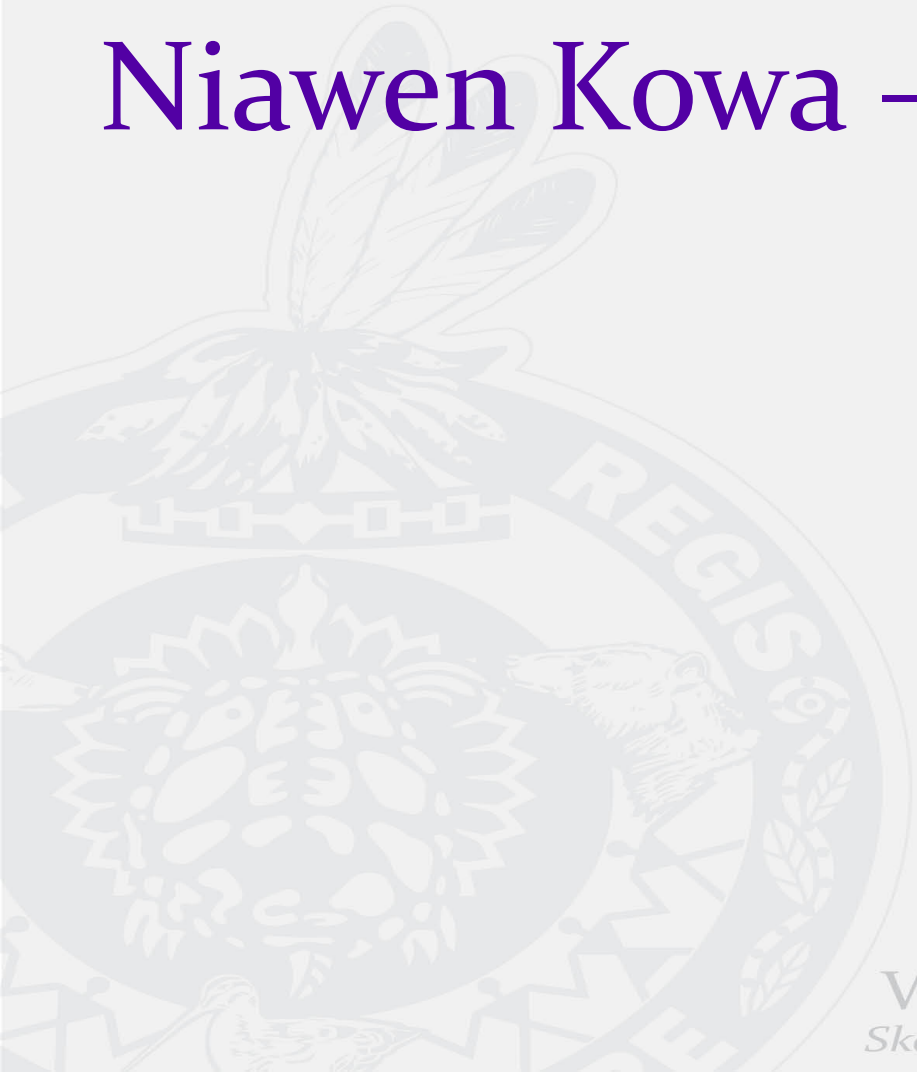
Photo – Les Benedict

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Niawen Kowa – Thank you Greatly



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