



Knowing Land

June 15, 2023 - March 2, 2024

CAM



Exhibition Overview

Knowing Land is a mixed media exhibition focused on the relationship between the environment and cultural knowledge through oral history, contemporary issues, and artistic expression.

Our environment is more than just a physical space to pass through or occupy: it is an inseparable part of community, culture, and everyday lived experiences.

While easily overlooked, these experiences in nature turn anywhere into somewhere and anything into something: from a creek or a plant—into *that one* creek and *that specific* plant.

Cultural knowledge of our surroundings can be expressed in a wide variety of ways, including a memory shared about the path to an old fishing spot, the community place name of a local landmark, the image of an invasive species on a work of art, the processing of a local plant into fiber cordage, and more.

Developed in collaboration with the Tuscarora Environment Program (TEP), a subsidiary of the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force (HETF), this exhibition focuses on the culture—environment connection through Tuscarora Nation community based artists, oral history excerpts, and historic photographs.

Knowing Land reminds us of the obligation to steward not only the physical environment, but to also safeguard the cultural knowledge of that landscape for future generations.

(cover) **Erwin Printup Jr.** (Cayuga, Bear Clan), *Seven Generations*, 2021, mixed media

(left) **Lily Ann Truesdale** (Mohawk, Bear Clan), *The Sawmill*, 2023, acrylic



Kà:raʔ

(detail) Scanned Historic Photograph of Edward Jonathan with a sturgeon and spear, ca. 1915

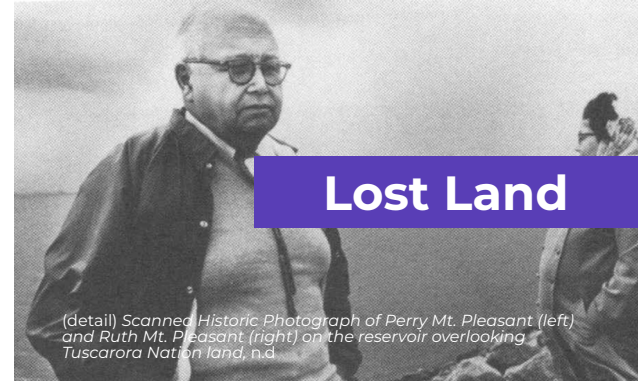
Within Skarù·reʔ (Tuscarora language), lake sturgeon are known as *kà:raʔ* — the same word for dandelion, because the blooming of the dandelion flowers mark the beginning of the sturgeon season.

Lake Sturgeon are a large freshwater fish found locally in Lake Ontario and the Niagara River.

They can weigh up to 300 pounds, grow up to seven feet long, and live for up to 150 years.

After a long legal battle, the Tuscarora lost a 1960 court case before the US Supreme Court. The court sided with the Federal Power Commission and the New York Power Authority to authorize the use of eminent domain to seize sovereign Tuscarora Nation land.

The loss of the case led to a significant change and impact on the physical and cultural landscape of Tuscarora Nation: the destruction of family homes and farms, the loss of prime agricultural land, the channelizing of local streams (Fish Creek and Gill Creek), and the forced displacement of people.



Lost Land

(detail) Scanned Historic Photograph of Perry Mt. Pleasant (left) and Ruth Mt. Pleasant (right) on the reservoir overlooking Tuscarora Nation land, n.d.



Tuscarora Environment Program

(background) Map of trails on Tuscarora Nation for an upcoming invasive insect survey, ca. 2015

The Tuscarora Environment Program (TEP) was founded in 1997. It is a subsidiary of the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force (HETF) founded by the Haudenosaunee Grand Council in 1992.

The HETF is made up of delegates chosen by each of the Haudenosaunee Nations who are committed to identifying environmental problems in their communities and working to find solutions to those problems.

In addition to the preservation of the physical environment, the TEP and HETF preserve and promote cultural knowledge connected to the environment.

From the plant fibers and corn husks used to make cordage and dolls, to the carving of antlers, wood, and soapstone, natural surroundings can provide the raw material for creative expression.

What we experience in our environment inspires emotion and artistry: whether the majestic swirling mists of Niagara Falls in winter, the tiny symmetry of golden flower petals, or the fleeting movement of a deer running in the woods.

Art and oral history can be a powerful medium for raising awareness of specific environmental issues in a community like the pollution of waterways and landscapes, or preserving the knowledge of local landmarks and identifying changes in the environment.



Artistry

(detail) **Jamie Gilbert** (Tuscarora, Turtle Clan), *Beaded Bluebird*, 2023, velvet and glass beads

Exhibited Artworks

All works on loan from the artist unless otherwise indicated

Kay Brayley (Tuscarora, Turtle Clan)
Beaded Moccasins, 2023
leather, glass beads and velvet

Kristiana Ferguson and Brennen Ferguson (Tuscarora, Turtle Clan)
Assorted Cordage, 2017-19
dogbane hemp, wampum and basswood

Melissa Gansworth (Mohawk, Bear Clan)
Picture Frames with Invasive Species, 2023
board, velvet and glass beads

Jamie Gilbert (Tuscarora, Turtle Clan)
Beaded Bluebird, 2023
velvet and glass beads

Jamie Gilbert (Tuscarora, Turtle Clan)
Beaded Collar, Cuff, and Crown Teaching Sample, 2023
velvet and glass beads

Jamie Gilbert (Tuscarora, Turtle Clan)
Strawberry Pincushion, 2023
velvet and glass beads

Rosemary Rickard Hill (Tuscarora, Beaver Clan)
Barrel Purse, 2023
mixed media

Rosemary Rickard Hill (Tuscarora, Beaver Clan)
Hummingbird Medallion, 2023
ribbon, velvet and glass beads

Andrea Patterson (Mohawk, Bear Clan)
Niagara Falls in Winter Vase, 2023
board, velvet and glass beads

John Wesley Patterson Jr. (Tuscarora, Bear Clan)
Lacrosse Sticks, n.d.
mixed media
on loan from Vince Schiffert

Erwin Printup Jr. (Cayuga, Bear Clan)
LXV, 2021
acrylic

Erwin Printup Jr. (Cayuga, Bear Clan)
Seven Generations, 2021
mixed media

Kehala Smith (Tuscarora, Turtle Clan)
Sturgeon on Leather Bag, 2023
mixed media

Claudia Troiano (Tuscarora, Bear Clan)
Trilobe Pincushion, 2023
mixed media

Claudia Troiano (Tuscarora, Bear Clan)
Hummingbird Picture Frame, 2023
board, velvet and glass beads

Lily Ann Truesdale (Mohawk, Bear Clan)
The Sawmill, 2023
acrylic

Lily Ann Truesdale (Mohawk, Bear Clan)
Seven Clan Cards, n.d.
pencil and colored pencil

Assorted spear heads used in Sturgeon spearing, n.d.
mixed media
on loan from Bryan Printup

Project Staff

Curators

Edward Y. J. Millar, Curator of Folk Arts
Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University

Bryan Printup (Tuscarora, Beaver Clan), GIS Manager
Tuscarora Environment Program

All photos and oral history excerpts courtesy of the
Tuscarora Environment
Program.

Acknowledgments

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