

Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space Training II

SUSTAINING BALANCE IN THE ERA OF CLIMATE CHANGE

March 12th and 13th, 2026

Blue Mountain Village Conference Center

The loss of biodiversity, natural spaces and relationships with the land due to climate change is one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time. As the climate crisis continues, ecosystems, species and communities are being forced to adapt, migrate, or face extinction. Climate change alters the delicate balance established by natural law, leading to a cascade of negative effects across the planet. The UNESCO Niagara Escarpment Biosphere is home to a unique and diverse communities of humans, plants, and other animal relatives, many of which are at risk due to environmental pressures. G'chi Bimadinaa ('The Great Cliff That Runs Along' in Anishinaabemowin) or Kastenhraktátye ('Along the Cliffs' in Kanyen'kehá:ka/Mohawk) for time immemorial has been a great teacher to all who live within it. It is time to gather and listen, and restore balance to our biosphere.

This gathering will explore the practical ways in which Indigenous principles can be shared to develop a response to the degradation of balance in nature caused by human actions. An essential aspect of this series is to reveal the benefits of Two-Eyed Seeing and how it can be successfully implemented to create ethical space within conservation practices. With the intent of training Biosphere leaders, we will explore the pragmatic protocols and tools needed to create ethical space with Indigenous partners in developing effective conservation practices.

The conference goal is to create Ethical Space for the engagement of ideas and inspiration as we live within a new ecological scenario exacerbated by climate change. Topics to be featured include:

- Global frameworks on Two-Eyed Seeing and Ethical Space in conservation
- Advancing towards Canada's Target 3 to protect biodiversity and natural spaces
- Using Two-Eyed Seeing to address the consequences of climate change
- Developing Ethical Space for true collaborative partnerships
- Preventing Species Extinctions and Protecting Indigenous Culturally Significant Species
- Youth Response Panel

Agenda

Day One: Roots for Tomorrow

7:00 am – Sacred Fire: A sacred fire will be lit for the duration of the conference, overseen by the Fire Keeper, Jim Kewaquom (Saugeen Ojibway Nation). Please feel welcome to visit the fire at any point during the conference.

8:00 am – Doors Open, Sign-in, coffee/tea served, booths available

9:00 am – 9:30 am – Traditional Opening given by Trish Meekins (Chippewas of Nawash First Nation/Saugeen Ojibway Nation).

9:30 am – 10:30 am – Overview of Two-Eyed Seeing, Ethical Space, and Global Environmental Frameworks Shabot Obaadjiwan
Elder Larry McDermott and Doran Ritchie will provide an overview of Ethical Space and Two-Eyed Seeing in the present-day conservation landscape, with emphasis on practical applications and challenges. Highlighting key governance principles that are often overlooked and offer grounded examples of how reciprocity and relationship strengthen stewardship decisions. In addition, a welcoming video presentation from Antonio Abreu, UNESCO Director of the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences.

10:30 am – 10:45 am – Break

10:45 am – 11:45 am – Looking to the future of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere
Charlene Winger-Jones (Hereditary Council member, Water Walker, and co-chair of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Network).

11:45 am – 12:45 pm – Lunch

12:45 pm – 1:00 pm – Networking, Reflection, and Opportunity to Visit Booths

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm – Keynote Session: Saugeen Ojibway Nation's Coastal Waters Monitoring Program, presented by Katrina Keeshig and Ryan Lauzon.

2:30 pm – 2:45 pm – Break

2:45 pm – 3:45 pm – Protecting Natural Spaces Through Partnerships and Reconcili-Action
NEBN and Ontario Nature Partnership presented by Kelsie Bonnyman, Jocelyn Baker, and Kerry-Ann Charles.

3:45 pm – 4:00 pm – Reflection of the day and orientation for the upcoming day

4:00 pm – 4:30 pm – Traditional Closing given by Trish Meekins (Chippewas of Nawash First Nation/Saugeen Ojibway Nation).

4:30 pm – Wander and Wonder with Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Network
Join NEBN Board of Directors for a walk around the pond.

Day Two: Carrying the Seven Generations Forward

8:30 am – Doors Open, Sign-in, coffee/tea served, booths available

9:00 am – 10:00 am – Traditional Opening given by Roronhiakewen Dr. Dan Longboat (Turtle Clan, Mohawk Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River)

10:00 am – 10:30 am – Break

10:15 am – 11:45 am – Keynote Session: Beneath the Forest, presented by Alyssa General (Turtle Clan, Mohawk Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River) and Levi Brant (Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte)
Beneath the forest floor, the stories grow — not written in books or sung in songs, but stitched into the earth itself. And they wait, patiently, for someone who will listen. Join in for a discussion on mushrooms, plants, and folklore!

11:45 am – 12:45 pm – Lunch

12:45 pm – 1:00 pm – Networking, Reflection, and Opportunity to Visit Booths

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm – Making Two-Eyed Seeing Work Panel
Experienced panelists (including Natalya Garrod, Chris Craig, Larry McDermott, Joanna Jack) share their reflections on the lessons learned working towards Two-Eyed Seeing in conservation partnerships. Moderated by Doran Ritchie.

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm – Workshop on Seeing With Two Eyes
Participants work through an activity exploring how to identify and overcome challenges to implementing Ethical Space and Two-Eyed Seeing. Moderated by Joanna Jack.

3:30 pm – 3:45 pm – Break

3:45 pm – 4:45 pm – Youth Response Panel: Two Eyed Seeing Vision for the Future
Youth will be responding to what has been presented and what they see as a way forward. Moderated by Abraham Francis and Jacob Thompson.

4:45 pm – 5:00 pm – Reflections on the discussions of the conference and lessons learned

5:00pm – 5:30pm - Traditional Closing given by Roronhiakewen Dr. Dan Longboat (Turtle Clan, Mohawk Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River)

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Speaker Bios

Trish Meekins

Trish Nadjiwon Meekins, carries her master's in social work and has been a therapist and a teacher of First Nations' history for over 30 years. Being that all of her education was taught by a two-eyed seeing approach, Trish understands the meeting of western practices integrated into Anishinaabe ways of knowing and being. She and her husband own a retail store named All My Relations Gift Shop and Trish continues working at her practice Nikaanaganaa Counselling & Learning Centre, all located at Neyaashiinigiing.

Roronhiakewen (He Clears the Sky) Dr. Dan Longboat

Dan is a Turtle Clan member of the Mohawk Nation and a citizen of the Rotinonshón:ni (Haudenosaunee - People of the Longhouse), originally from Ohsweken - the Six Nations community on the Grand River. Dan is an Associate Professor in the Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies at Trent University, founding Director of the Indigenous Environmental Science/Studies program (IESS), co-founder of the award winning TRent Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge and Science Initiative (TRACKS), and acting Director of the Indigenous Environmental Institute (IEI). He was also the first Director of Studies of Trent's Indigenous Studies Ph.D. program. Dan designed and developed the IESS program - the first of its kind on Turtle Island, an innovative and multidisciplinary program that brings together principles of both Indigenous and Western (or neo-European/colonial) Knowledge systems for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners. While speaking on Indigenous issues across Turtle Island, he stresses the importance of learning from elders and knowledge holders as the critical foundation for Indigenous identity, vision, and life purposes. He creates links between Traditional Indigenous teachings and science and promotes using a "Good Mind" as part of our responsibilities in taking the collective actions needed to restore the Earth for the next seven generations.

Larry McDermott

Larry McDermott is a member of Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation. He served on the Ontario Public Advisory Committee Species At Risk and as the Aboriginal member of the Ontario American Eel Recovery Strategy. He was also a member of the Ontario Natural Resources Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Working Group, the National Advisory Panel for Protected Areas and was a member of the Ontario Professional Foresters Association Council as an appointed public member. He has served the Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Sectorial Commission for Natural, Social and Human Sciences, and special advisor to the CCUNESCO Secretary General on reconciliation. Larry was one of two Indigenous members of the Ontario Human Rights Commission from 2009 until 2016. He is a member of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB). Larry has written in the IUCN publication *Policy Matters* on the subject of Indigenous law and advocates for the reconciliation of western and Indigenous legal systems. Larry is currently Executive Director of Plenty Canada, an indigenous non-profit organization devoted to the sharing of Indigenous knowledge and western science for environmental protection, sustainable development and healthy communities.

Doran Ritchie

Doran Ritchie is an Indigenous governance and conservation practitioner, and the founder of 8th Fire Consulting. He currently serves as Manager of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Network and brings applied experience from Indigenous-led environmental decision-making, co-governance models, and implementation-focused engagement.

Charlene Winger-Jones

Charlene Winger-Walker is a Water Walker, walking for the water. It is the responsibility of all of us to take care of the water. I have walked in ceremony across the whole Niagara Escarpment, called G'chi Bimaadinaa in my language. The 740km Bruce Trail is a walking trail used by my people since time immemorial for trade, and we walked about 20km per day, and it was a six-week commitment. I also attend community events about the environment and water, asserting Indigenous rights, and am part of the Hereditary Council at Nawash as the Headwoman of the Jones family. I am proud to be a climate leader trained by Al Gore in Minneapolis in 2019, and co-chair of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Network since 2022, and I want to create more awareness about the water.

Kellsie Bonnyman

Kellsie is a Conservation Campaigns Coordinator with Ontario Nature, where she is focused on assessing near-urban Protected and Conserved Areas towards the 30x30 Target and advocating for biodiversity conservation at local, provincial and national levels. She is also supporting collaborative efforts to bridge Indigenous and non-Indigenous conservation partnerships grounded in principles of ethical space. Kellsie graduated from Fleming College with an Ecosystem Management Technician diploma and from Trent University with a Bachelor of Environmental Sciences. She now lives in Nogojiwanong (Peterborough) with her partner and very spoiled cat.

Kerry-Ann Charles

Kerry-Ann Charles is a member of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, a proud mom of 2 boys, and had the pleasure of serving her Community as the Environment Coordinator for 8 years as well as an elected Council Member for a term. She has been a Team member of Cambium Indigenous Professional Services (CIPS) since 2017 as the Environment Partnership Co-ordinator and is currently transitioning to Partner as the founder and Executive Director of a new Not-for-Profit named Ne'ikaanigaana.

She has had great success in initiating and building relationships with various environmental organizations, developing partnerships to co-ordinate and carry out various environmental activities with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners as well as promoting education and Community involvement in environmental initiatives within her Community and other Indigenous Communities including advocating for urban Indigenous participation. As a result of this work, Kerry-Ann has gained international recognition and has been asked to speak across Canada, in the US as well as Mexico, and as far as Egypt, in the area of Indigenous perspectives on environmental initiatives. Her wide range of career experiences give her a unique perspective that can be very valuable when assisting others wishing to find their balance of operations and carrying out their environmental responsibility.

Jocelyn Baker

Born in Kitimat, British Columbia, Jocelyn grew up in Queenston, Ontario. She attributes the view from her bedroom window (the Niagara Escarpment) as the main reason for her immense connection to nature. Jocelyn has been working in watershed conservation at the local, provincial, federal, and bi-national level for the past 30+ years. She holds an undergraduate degree in Geography and Fine Art, a Water Resource Management diploma, and a Masters in Sustainability Science. Jocelyn's early career focus was water quality improvement through the implementation of stewardship and ecosystem restoration best practices, evolving into Great Lakes remediation and restoration. Jocelyn is a full-time Professor of Environmental Science at Niagara College. She is also an environmental consultant and a Project Management Professional (PMP). In her spare time, Jocelyn is the Canadian Co-Chair of the Niagara River Binational Ramsar Designation Steering Committee, working with community partners to secure a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site) designation for the Niagara River.

Katrina Keeshig

I am a proud member of the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, and my work is grounded in my responsibilities to my community, our lands, and our waters. I currently manage the Coastal Waters Monitoring Program, having previously worked as a Technician within it. Through this work, I have seen firsthand how community-driven monitoring builds pride, strengthens connections to the water, and creates opportunities for learning and leadership among our youth and membership. We are protectors, stewards, knowledge brokers, and rights-holders. Each of these roles carries responsibilities that guide how I approach my work and relationships. My core passions include water and environmental protection, language revitalization, and building strong relationships that support our communities and future generations.

Ryan Lauzon

Ryan Lauzon is a fisheries management biologist and program supervisor with the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, focused on Great Lakes fisheries assessment and ecosystem stewardship in Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. His work spans field monitoring, fish identification and population assessment (including coregonines and fish stocking), and collaborative research with academic and agency partners. He is especially interested in bridging Indigenous knowledge and western science to support evidence-based decision-making, uphold Indigenous fisheries governance, and strengthen long-term sustainability for community and ecosystem well-being.

Alyssa General

Alyssa M. General is Mohawk Nation Turtle Clan from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. She is an artist, educator, and language revivalist. Alyssa has helped create a series of films in Kanyen'kéha with Onkwawén:na Kentyóhkwa, developed illustrations for the children's television show Tóta tánon Ohkwá:ri, and has received national recognition for her poem Enkonte'nikonhrakwaríhsya'te. Alyssa has worked as an Artist-Educator with the Royal Conservatory of Music, a Graphic Designer with the Six Nations Language Commission, the Kawenní:io Language Preservation Project, as well as Wahta Mohawks, as an Advisor for the Greenbelt Indigenous Botanical Survey, and is a Kanyen'kéha language teacher and the Artistic Director with the publishing company, Spirit & Intent.

Levi Brant

Levi Brant is Mohawk from the Bay of Quinte. He is an avid fisherman, and fungi enthusiast. He has worked with Mori Nurseries as a production and shipping supervisor and with Old Town Building Company as a carpenter. Levi has

transferred his knowledge of plants and trees into foraging. He has led many forays in and around Six Nations, as well as led fishing, fire making, and foraging workshops with Wahta Mohawks. He currently resides in Six Nations with his family.

Joanna Jack

Joanna Jack is an environmental practitioner with 20+ years of experience working for government and not-for-profit organizations, over half of that working with and for First Nations peoples in the Yukon and Ontario. She pursued a B.Sc., double majoring in Biology and Environmental Policy from University of Toronto, and completed a M.Sc. studying the impact of roads on forest birds with the Geomatics and Landscape Ecology Lab at Carleton University. Thanks to the generosity of many knowledge keepers sharing their perspectives with her, as a person of settler ancestry she then embarked on an important journey of unlearning. After witnessing challenges with implementation of Two-Eyed Seeing through partnerships, Joanna embarked on a Mitacs research project to better understand factors contributing to success, through the University of Guelph's Masters of Conservation Leadership program. This led to her current role supporting the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources' emerging Two-Eyed Seeing Co-Learning Hub.

Natalya Garrod

Natalya Garrod is the Indigenous Relations Advisor to the Escarpment Corridor Alliance. Natalya has Bachelors degree in Environmental Governance, a Master's of Science in Rural Planning and Development and an advanced Planning Certificate in Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas. While Natalya is of mixed European descent, she has experience walking between two worlds professionally. She has worked as the CEO of Caldwell First Nation, a Consultation Advisor to Chief and Council of Scugog Island First Nation, and as a Graduate Researcher with Chippewas of the Thames Treaty, Lands and Environment Department. She also has experience working as a Registered Professional Planner for the Town of Blue Mountains and the Niagara Escarpment Commission. She has worked diligently to learn, listen and understand the world of collaboration, engagement, and relationship building between various levels of government and nations.

Chris Craig

Chris Craig a member of the Algonquins of Pikwákanagán and Senior Forestry Technician at South Nation Conservation. He graduated from Sir Sandford Fleming College and is knowledgeable with invasive species, species at risk, forest resource inventories, tree and plant identification. He is knowledgeable with First Nation values through Two-Eyed Seeing and was one of the founding members of the Eastern Ontario First Nations Working Group. He is a certified: Chainsaw cutter, Tree marker, Ecological Land Classification, Butternut assessor, seed and stock collector and much more. He also sat on the Ontario Invasive Plant Council as the Aboriginal chair as well as the National Risk Assessment for Forest Stewardship Council of Canada and the FSC Standards Development Working Group and has worked with Ontario Nature for Biodiversity Offsets and Pathway to Canada Target 1, and Indigenous perspectives on protected areas.

Abraham Francis

Abraham Francis is Deer Clan (Mohawk Nation) from Akwesasne. He has a BSc in Microbiology, 2014, and MSc in Natural Resources, 2019, from Cornell University. Recently, he became a Ph.D. student at Clarkson University studying Environmental Science and Engineering. Previously, he was the Environmental Services Manager for the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. The position allowed him to develop and implement projects inspired and directed by community needs and influenced by his research interests. His research interests are at the intersection of environmental studies, Indigenous methodologies, community engagement, education, health, social services, law, and cultural foundations as a means for empowerment and healing within Indigenous Communities. He has cultivated his expertise around his research and grown an extensive network of Indigenous Scholars/Knowledge Sharers, and Allies that carry a variety of expertise. His expertise and network inspired the founding of the Aronia Collective, which seeks to align Indigenous Communities with experts to meet their unique needs and non-Indigenous organizations to engage Indigenous peoples meaningfully.

Jacob Thompson

Jacob Thompson is Deer Clan from Akwesasne. In his role, he supports relationship building, meeting facilitation and reporting, as well as seeking out additional funding. Jacob holds a BSc in Biology from SUNY Potsdam. Currently, he is a research assistant within the Aronia Collective since August 2025 to gain experience and understand the complex negotiations needed between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. Additionally, Jacob is exposed to spaces to understand the importance of ensuring that Indigenous voices are properly reflected in negotiations, projects, and policy. They are drawn to work that uplifts and gives a voice to those who need it as well as the preservation and revitalization of their people's culture and knowledge. Formerly a Youth Education Specialist within the Akwesasne Boys and Girls Club as well as the My Brother's Keeper Program at Massena Central High School. Conveying complex ideas in a comprehensible and easily accessible manner in addition to managing and maintaining professional interpersonal relationships.