

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**WILD CENTER, AKWESASNE CULTURAL CENTER, SIX NATIONS INDIAN MUSEUM AND
NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN TRAVELLING COLLEGE
OPEN WAYS OF KNOWING**

Tupper Lake, NY – Indigenous voices come together to bring you *Ways of Knowing*. Working in partnership, the Akwesasne Cultural Center, The Six Nations Indian Museum, the Native North American Travelling College and The Wild Center unite to broaden and heighten our understanding and appreciation of the natural world. The collaborative and multi-faceted project opened at The Wild Center on Friday, May 25th and encourages visitors to continue their exploration at the Akwesasne Cultural Center in the Mohawk community of Akwesasne, The Six Nations Indian Museum in Onchiota and the Native North American Travelling College on Cornwall Island.

Even before opening in 2006, The Wild Center recognized that its focus was on western science and interpretation, missing the opportunity of the thousands of years of Indigenous knowledge. *Ways of Knowing* brings several Native American tribal entities and Indigenous knowledge experts together to help The Wild Center incorporate traditional ecological knowledge, including different perspectives and culture into its exhibits and experiences. At The Wild Center that translates into a reinterpreted permanent exhibit area and the installation of three traveling exhibits for this summer.

The Wild Center invited artist and Director of The Six Nations Indian Museum, David Kanietakeron Fadden, to reinterpret the Oxbow, a living wetland exhibit. He envisioned the *Thanksgiving Address*, a Haudenosaunee (Six Nations/Iroquois) greeting that invites reflection on the ways our existence is interconnected with the natural world. This new experience will offer insight into the culture of the Haudenosaunee people, one of the groups who have inhabited the Adirondack region for thousands of years. Through the intersection of original art created by Fadden and storytelling videos, this new experience honors the ways of knowing our northern landscape.

We Are From Akwesasne is an interactive traveling exhibit of Mohawk art, artifacts, songs, stories, beliefs and craftsmanship. Curated by youth from Akwesasne alongside artist and Program Coordinator Sue Ellen Herne from the Akwesasne Cultural Center, *We Are From Akwesasne*, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, offers a visual, auditory and hands-on experience that illuminates the continuing culture and artistic heritage of Akwesasne.

Roots of Wisdom: Native Knowledge. Shared Science, a traveling exhibit, highlights the experiences of four Indigenous communities as brought to life through the voices of elders and youth community members. This interactive exhibit immerses students in the story of how native peoples are using a collaborative approach to encourage sustainable solutions to real world challenges. *Roots of Wisdom* was created through collaboration between the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), Indigenous Education Institute (IEI), Smithsonian Institution National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), and Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) and features the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation, Native Hawaiians, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Tulalip Tribes

Additionally, the Native North American Travelling College, a cultural site in the northern portion of Akwesasne is sharing *Sacred Foods*, an exhibit that showcases the resilience and survival of traditional Haudenosaunee food. *Sacred Foods* provides an intimate look into the past -- from traditional gardening, the tools used for gathering, and real live plants to get a better understanding of Haudenosaunee food systems.

"I am honored that our partners collaborated with us to add this missing voice to The Wild Center," said Stephanie Ratcliffe, Executive Director of The Wild Center. "Offering different perspectives has been an integral part of our philosophy since opening and the traditional ecological knowledge of the Indigenous people enhances western science and The Wild Center. We hope that people are inspired to visit the other partner sites for additional Haudenosaunee experiences."

"This is an exciting partnership that is enriching all of our sites," said Sue Ellen Herne, Program Coordinator at the Akwesasne Cultural Center. "It is important for people to gain a deeper appreciation for the environment. That appreciation is an integral part of the teachings that have been passed to us by our ancestors. We don't always follow the path that we should, so we have been given teachings that help us to make the right decisions. David Fadden's new interpretation of the oxbow exhibit at The Wild Center is based on that fundamental teaching. It is a natural fit for The Wild Center to work with the Six Nations Indian Museum and the sites based in Akwesasne because the mission of The Wild Center is basically that same teaching. They want to help people to interact with the environment in a balanced and sustainable way. Both David and I are happy to be able to share the work of our museums with a larger audience. My work at the Akwesasne Cultural Center – Museum has been focused on developing ways to broaden understanding of the many facets of Mohawk culture. We serve our own community and the visiting public. There has been a history of miseducation related to Indigenous people, and also a history of lack of education on our perspectives. It is very heartening to have The Wild Center director state that they are making a change in their organization to include many "Ways of Knowing," not only the Western Science model."

"When I was first approached by The Wild Center about the idea of re-interpreting the Oxbow wetland exhibit I immediately thought of the *Ohenton Karihwaterhkwen* (Words before all else) also known as the Thanksgiving Address," said David Kanietakeron Fadden, Director of the Six Nations Indian Museum. "The address is an acknowledgment and a message of gratitude to all aspects of the natural world. From an artist's point of view I wanted the exhibit space to lose the sharp angles and industrial look to more accurately reflect what nature looks like. This was a challenge as I had to paint in two dimensions to bring a look of a giant pop-up book. It is my hope that this project will bring an awareness of

the “oneness” with nature that most Native people feel and that those who experience this exhibit will walk away with the same passion.”

He continues, “For me, these words not only express gratitude but instill a sense of belonging to the Earth, our home. We are a mere part of a larger family. Every part is personified as a family member. The earth is our mother. The sun is our elder brother. The moon is our grandmother. We treat these beings with great respect as we would treat our family, with respect. Our existence is dependent on all aspects of creation. These words acknowledge these gifts and with a sincere heart we, with one voice, send greetings and thanks to each part of creation.”

Come and celebrate *Ways of Knowing* on July 7th from 10am until 6pm. Special experiences will be happening all day, including a social dance with the Native North American Travelling College, storytelling with David Fadden, a sweetgrass bookmark making workshop with weaver Robin Lazore and a booth from the Akwesasne Cultural Center Museum. Akwesasne artisan vendors will be displaying authentic crafts all day.

Ways of Knowing continues for three years, with new exhibits among the partner museums over that period. Visit a partner website to find out about new activities and experiences during this time.

For additional information about the Akwesasne Cultural Center, please visit www.akwesasnecculturalcenter.org or contact Sue Ellen Herne at 1-518-358-2461.

For additional information about the Six Nations Indian Museum, please visit <http://www.sixnationsindianmuseum.com/> or contact David Fadden at 1-518-891-2299.

For additional information about the Native North American Travelling College, please visit <http://www.nnatc.org/> or contact Amanda Tarbell at 1-613-932-9452 ext. 225.

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(IMAGES AVAILABLE)