

# Indian Visions on National Trails Day

MONTPELIER, VT – June 8 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – Native Voices Foundation announced today that thanks to the American Hiking Society inviting “America’s First Caretakers,” the Indian Nations, to their 13th Annual National Trails Day at over 1,100 US events on June 4th, it inspired exciting visions and hope for future generations. The MVP’s of the Day were Nancy Lyons (Vt. Abenaki) and her husband Howard (Iroquois), a Nammy Music Award winner, who led a blessing for the safety of hikers and drummed a thanksgiving prayersong that echoed again through the Green Mountain Trails – 450 miles of them – now “guardianed” by the Green Mountain Club, USDA Forest Service and others.



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*Photo Caption: Howard Lyons (Iroquois) drums a prayersong for hikers at Underhill, which echoed again through Vermont’s Green Mts. on National Trails Day. Credit: Paul Schaberg.*

The setting was “absolutely beautiful” Underhill, on the back side of Mt Mansfield, where dedicated hikers gathered to give something back to Mother Nature in the form of vital trail maintenance. “The Lyons’ presentation surprised and fascinated the group, particularly Nancy’s sharing with the Boy Scouts that one of their founders, Ernest Seton, called ‘Black Wolf,’ was adopted by the Lakota Tribe,” said the spirited event coordinator, Paul Schaberg PhD, a forest health scientist and Green Mountain Club (9,000 members) volunteer.

"I hope the cultural gems that Howard and Nancy brought, especially to our young ones, are just a start of a broadened collaboration that strengthens the stewardship of our nation's trails. They showed us what a valuable perspective that Native Americans can bring to enhance conservation efforts," said Schaberg.

"Nancy was the catalyst for this tribal invitation happening this year, thanks to her e-mail last Monday, graciously offering their services," said Rutland Vermont-born Olympic skier, Suzy Chaffee, co-chair of Native Voices Foundation, which was chosen to spearhead the President's Healthier US Initiative on behalf of Native Americans in the Great Outdoors. "I was on overwhelm returning from a similar awesome outreach meeting with the National Ski Areas Association, while helping Connie Marlow launch Aspen's Thoreau Seminar, also that Saturday, which revealed his 4,000 page Indian Notebooks." (TheAmericanEvolution.com).

"The American Hiking Society, added to the Boy Scout and Thoreau revelations, turning June 4th into American Indian Appreciation Day," said Chaffee.

Seton said, "Indians are the best people because they are the most attuned to and respectful of Nature." Through his Indian lore, handbooks, and later founding the Brownies and Woodcraft League, Seton inspired love for Nature across America and Europe.

Howard and Nancy also led a prayer for the late Abenaki Chief Homer St Francis, who first spoke out about the dangers of acid rain over 20 years ago. "The Chief would be proud of your work, Paul, for leading a recent discovery, as a UVM professor, of the affects on the forests of acid rain, (from burning fossil fuels like coal for electricity)," said Nancy. Schaberg's team found acid rain leaches calcium from our trees, affecting their immune systems, and similarly making birds' eggshells thinner. "I imagine when I turn off unused lights and appliances that the trees, birds and fish are smiling," said Howard, who performs at the Smithsonian and Lincoln Center. "There is only one Mother Earth, and everyone is responsible and accountable for caring for Her."

They also led a silent moment for Wolfsong, a spellbinding Abenaki storyteller, the first American Indian hired by a US ski area, Mt. Mansfield, to share his stories and songs to help inspire a deeper appreciation of the mountains in their employees and ski visitors. Chaffee later invited Wolfsong to Pico's "Reunion of Champions," and taught him to ski, where he was honored by the Olympians and Pico for keeping the Green Mountains pristine for thousands of years. "He was such a hit," said Chaffee, "that Joe Jones, the gifted coach who put five of us on the road to the Olympics, was inspired to share, 'I'm part Abenaki.'"

"I am so proud of my Vermont Abenaki (and Iroquois) leadership and culture, including the enchanting seashell-laced regalia in their Swanton Museum, thanks to a tour by Chief April Rushlow, Homer's trusted daughter," said Chaffee: NVF's Billy Kidd, the Stowe (VT) Abenaki Olympian, now captain of the Native American Olympic Ski Team, helped inspire over 100 ski areas to invite their tribes home to ski and snowboard, coached by their Olympians.

John Perkins (Abenaki) gave the epic keynote speech for the World Bank's Sustainable Conference in 2002, and his book, "Confessions of an Economic Hitman," is a New York Times Bestseller. Also Jeff Munger (Iroquois), is the legislative liaison for Senator Jeffords on the Senate Committee on the Environment who helped NVF get a California bill enforced warning pregnant moms, especially Indian, of the dangers of silver (mercury) fillings to fetal brains. They are now protecting Vermonters from dental mercury contaminating the waterways by mandating office filters. Howard's uncle, Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Iroquois Confederacy, is an eco advisor to the Prime Minister of Sweden.

"If anyone takes the time, they will discover a fascinating blueprint of an abundant world for everyone, by connecting with the descendents of the first families of their states. While their Indian artifacts are priceless, the People are America's Treasures," said Suzy "Chapstick," whose dad, Keen, planted the seeds with their magical stories fishing and hunting with the First Nations in Canada, and Keen teaching Jones to ski.

"This year's National Trails Day was our biggest and best ever," said national coordinator Ivan Levin. He echoed Schaberg's sentiments in hoping that "America's First Caretakers" will share more of their heritage at next year's hike, and hopefully even lead them, to help us again see Nature through their eyes, and those of all our ancient ancestors. "Many thanks to NVF for fostering this collaboration in Vermont and elsewhere, which benefits all," said Schaber.

Native Voices Foundation (NVF) is a Colorado non-profit 501(c)3, whose mission is "to create joyful unity through sports to help heal Mother Earth for all our children." ([www.nativevoices.org](http://www.nativevoices.org))

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