



# Mohonk Consultations

**“Let’s talk it over at Mohonk.”**  
**A TRADITION OF CONNECTING  
PEOPLE THROUGH DIALOGUE**

**2025**

## Old Roads Lead to New Perspectives

**“At times of crux and change, looking to past wisdom can provide a port in the storm to steady ourselves and find a sense of identity...”**

—Mohonk Consultations Board Chair Louisa Finn

### **Dear Friends,**

My Smiley ancestors were interested in finding solutions to global problems, alternatives to war, and improving conditions for Native people who at the time were either being killed indiscriminately or pushed off their land. Daniel and Albert Smiley hosted conferences on international arbitration and Native American policy at Mohonk from the late 1800s until World War I, with an additional Native American conference in 1929. Similarly, Mohonk Consultations has since 1980 been dedicated to addressing global problems with a particular focus in recent years on Indigenous issues.

In early 2024, Smiley family members began holding regular meetings to address the historical ramifications of the Native conferences and to consider ways of cultivating relationships with contemporary Native people that acknowledge past harms and create opportunities for healing. This Indigenous Relations Working Group, which I’m proud to be a member of, continues to meet regularly and is establishing relationships with contemporary Native people and seeking their counsel in our efforts to come into a more conscious relationship.

At times of crux and change, looking to past wisdom can provide a port in the storm to steady ourselves and find a sense of identity—grounded in people and place, in order to proceed with more stability into new territory. The hope is to be able, collectively, to be open to new relationships, and ways of communicating beyond barriers of language, history, and identity toward collaborative well-being with this shared planet.

*As Mohonk Consultations plans its programs for 2025 and beyond, we are committed to maintaining continuity with these deeply held values, and we look forward to having you join us on the journey!*

— **Louisa Finn**, Chair



## YEAR IN REVIEW

# Nurturing, Honoring and Celebrating the Ties that Unite Us

The four programs we presented over the past year highlighted different ways of making meaningful human connections. With topics ranging from building strong communities, examining our shared history, linking the food we eat to peace and climate stability, and celebrating the rich art, music, and culture of our region, we brought people together for rich and meaningful conversations.



NOVEMBER 2024

## THRIVING TOGETHER: Strengthening Community in a Time of Rapid Change

**Our sold-out fall conference highlighted the efforts of individuals and organizations working to reunite our fractured communities and move us toward a resilient and sustainable future.**

On Monday, November 11—just one week after the 2024 national election reflected a deeply divided nation—hundreds of representatives of public agencies, not-for-profit organizations and socially conscious businesses gathered in the Mohonk Conference Center for our fall conference.

The speakers were twelve community activists from different geographies—from the Catskills to Newburgh—and various affinities—the worlds of art, health, community revitalization, conservation, farming, communications, and history. After a thought-provoking keynote presentation on “The Science of Thriving,” panel moderators led discussions about successful local community-building efforts, ways that organizations can become more resilient, and strategies for self-care for people doing demanding community work. Roundtable discussions gave participants a chance to affirm the value of the community-based work they are involved in and to forge new working relationships.

With the mountain under our feet, and our hearts and minds open to each other, the day provided a heady mix of perspectives that inspired participants to make connections and commit to efforts to build, mend and strengthen our precious social fabric.



“The single most inspiring community event I’ve been to in years.... Your programs are the antidote to our loneliness epidemic on so many levels: people, peaceful setting, interaction, and leaving with a sense that together we can figure things out.”

APRIL 2025

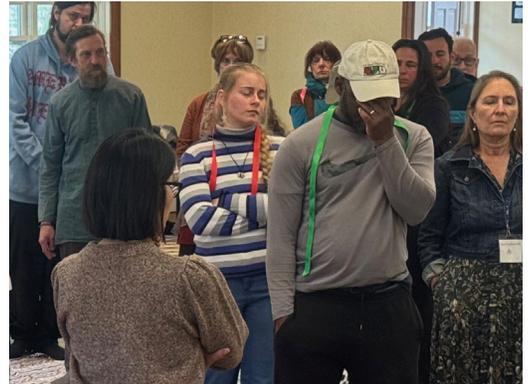
## WITNESS TO INJUSTICE: Blanket Exercise with Neighbors of Onondaga Nation



**Our spring “Peace with Nature” forum featured Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON) and their Witness to Injustice “blanket exercise”—a moving program that builds on understanding about our shared history as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.**

“I liked most the profound sharing of this part of our shared history.”

On April 27, Mohonk Consultations presented an interactive group teaching tool that offered an experiential illustration of what Indigenous Peoples of our region have endured throughout colonization. “WITNESS TO INJUSTICE: Reconsidering Indigenous and US History” is a participatory exercise that illustrates the loss and reshaping of the American landscape as European settlers and colonizers arrived and claimed the part of the world now known as the United States.



Participants were presented with colored ribbons to represent the many Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, symbolically represented by multiple blankets placed on the floor. Six presenters from NOON took turns reading from a narrative of 500 years of the Indigenous experience, from the time before colonization through Columbus, the Sullivan Campaign, the Trail of Tears, the Dawes Act, and much more. As each region’s history was described, the participants were asked to “leave the blanket” and take a seat, symbolizing the fate of the peoples of those regions. At the end of the program, NOON members led circles that allowed participants to share their reflections and discuss ideas about what can be done to move forward to right wrongs.

MAY 2025

## ROOTS OF RENEWAL: Documentary Film Screening/ Discussion



**Mohonk Consultations welcomed environmental advocate/filmmaker Flo Reed as part of Mohonk’s annual “Reconnecting with the Natural World” program.**

A diverse group of thoughtful and inquisitive people—including a number of farmers—came to see Sustainable Harvest International founder Flo Reed present a screening of “Roots of Renewal,” a recently completed short film that tracks Reed’s journeys across Central America to reveal the transformative power of small-scale farms. The lively discussion that followed highlighted the interconnectedness of food, environment, and climate—and the powerful benefits of agroecology.

“With the proper support, small-scale farmers offer us tremendous hope for a resilient planet.”  
—Flo Reed

JUNE 2025

# HONORING KIT'T POTTER

Distinguished  
Achievement Award



**Over 100 people gathered in Mohonk's outdoor pavilion for a joyous celebration of Kitt Potter, Kingston's Director of Arts and Cultural Affairs, and the many ways she has enriched the culture of our region.**

This year's Distinguished Achievement Award began with the exhilarating energy of the Kofi and Sankofa drum and dance ensemble, establishing a party atmosphere that continued throughout the afternoon. In addition to the singing and dancing, numerous community leaders were on hand to pay tribute to Kitt Potter and her life's work of healing, hearing and learning through the arts, including: CCE Executive Director Drew Andrews, Pastor Rob Sweeney, Ulster County Chief Diversity Officer Esi Lewis, Ulster County Poet Laureate Kate Hymes, and FAMILY Board Member Evelyn Clarke. Kitt also received certificates of appreciation from the offices of Congressman Pat Ryan, Senator Michele Hinchey, Assemblywoman Sarahana Shrestha, County Executive Jen Metzger, and Mayor Steve Noble.

Kitt herself came to the podium and delivered a moving acceptance speech describing the challenges, and ultimate triumphs of illuminating our shared history through the arts.

“I'm of Dutch, African and Native American heritage, so New York State history relates to me in three flavors. While I'm proud that my Dutch ancestors turned from being slavers to abolitionists, I'm still a slave rape baby and often brought to tears, by the horrors my Native and African ancestors endured.





## *Honoring Patty Matteson*

**After nearly 20 years of service to Mohonk Consultations, Patricia Matteson retired from the Mohonk Consultations Board of Directors.**



Patty Matteson joined the Mohonk Consultations Board in 2006 and has been continually involved with the organization ever since, as a Board member, Board Secretary, Administrative Coordinator, and editor of the annual newsletter. Patty also helped lead Mohonk Consultations into the digital age in 2009, spearheading development of the organization's first website at [mohonk-consultations.org](http://mohonk-consultations.org).

Patty's lasting contributions to our organization include helping to renovate the annual newsletter—incorporating color photos and launching a digital edition—and moving database maintenance and communications online, launching our first efforts in email outreach and online program registration.

She brought to the work her background in journalism, technical and academic writing, proofreading, editing, and photography, along with a perspective from her doctorate in 19th-century American women's fiction and her experience teaching English and Composition classes.

Patty cites last fall's "Holding Everything Together" book launch/presentation as a highlight of her time with Mohonk Consultations: "It was such an honor to be able to present that special program featuring distinguished Native elders who shared honest and uplifting personal narratives about their lives, their healing work and the worlds they encompass."

We are grateful to Patty for her years of contributions and pleased that she will continue to engage with Mohonk Consultations as an advisor.

Patty has given her heart and soul to Mohonk Consultations' mission. As a Smiley family member, her relationships with the history of Mohonk and its people have been a guiding force in our programs. Her scholarly knowledge, organizational memory, and attention to detail have been instrumental to our success.

—*Louisa Finn, Mohonk Consultations Board Chair*

"If we don't appreciate each other, we fail to appreciate the land and vice versa....If we take from the land without reciprocating, then we also do the same in our interpersonal relationships."

—*Lucas Buchholz, A Book of Balance*



2025 FALL CONFERENCE  
**THE FUTURE IS NOW:**  
Leadership in a Critical Time

**Join us at Mohonk for uplifting stories and insightful discussions about how we can work together to inspire new leaders and help them succeed.**

This moment in history urgently requires the emergence of fresh and visionary leadership—ready to shift from wielding power to embracing collaboration and transcending divisiveness in favor of inclusiveness, reconciliation, and support of the common good.

Join us at Mohonk on Sunday, November 9, for a day-long conference that will gather expert voices, neighbors, and local changemakers to explore new paradigms of leadership, generate courage and hope for current leaders, and develop strategies for recognizing and supporting leadership potential in others—and ourselves.

Here are some of the extraordinary people who will be sharing stories and leading discussions about the changing nature of leadership and how new leaders can be identified and supported in these times of sweeping social change.

**Deirdre d’Albertis**  
Bard College

**Kalha-kú McLester**  
Oneida Nation

**Sarah Urech**  
Omega Women’s Leadership  
Center

**Limina Grace Harmon**  
New Paltz United Methodist  
Church/Ulster County Legislature

**Andrew O’Grady**  
Mental Health America of  
Dutchess County

**Aleks Vitanov**  
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**Esi Lewis**  
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**Jana Mader**  
Hannah Arendt Center, Bard College

**Abe Uchitelle**  
Ulster County Legislature

**Monday, November 9, 2025, 9:30 am – 4 pm**  
Mohonk Mountain House Conference Center  
**Tickets: \$75 general, \$20 students (includes luncheon)**

Advance purchase required: [mohonk-consultations.org/futureisnow](https://mohonk-consultations.org/futureisnow) →

PLEASE NOTE: In order to bring as many voices into this conversation as possible, subsidized tickets are available for people who cannot afford the full ticket price. Email [info@mohonk-consultations.org](mailto:info@mohonk-consultations.org) for details.



# Thanks to our recent donors and partner organizations!

We are deeply grateful for the generous donations that support our mission and make our programs possible.



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*In memory of Frank Annunziata*

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[mohonk-consultations.org/donation](https://mohonk-consultations.org/donation) →



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The purpose of Mohonk Consultations is to bring about a clearer understanding of the interrelationships of all life on Earth, emphasize the need for sustainable use of all Earth's resources, including humans, and support the development of practical means to do so.

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- Lauren Thomas (*pp. 2, 4, 8*);
- Jason Taylor (*pp. 1, 3, 5, 6, 7*)

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**2026 PROGRAMS:** The exact details for next year's programs are still being worked out, but we encourage you to mark these dates on your calendar. We will send out email updates as soon as the program topics are finalized, so please subscribe by visiting [mohonk-consultations.org/subscribe](http://mohonk-consultations.org/subscribe)

**Sunday, April 19**  
 SPRING FORUM

**Sunday, June 14**  
 DISTINGUISHED  
 ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**Sunday, November 8**  
 FALL CONFERENCE



*Left to right: Cara Lee, Jason Taylor, Kitty Brown, Louisa Finn, Brad Berg, Sarah Underhill, Lisa Schulte, Rob Michel, Marty Irwin.*

Mohonk Consultations acknowledges, with respect and gratitude, that we are living in and sustained by Lenapehoking, homeland of the Lenape peoples. The first peoples who lived here were the Esopus and Minisink peoples of the Lenni Lenape nations. Wars and Indian Removal policies forced most of the Lenape westward. Many of their descendants continue to live here; others live throughout North America. We honor all Indigenous communities—past, present, and future—as we seek to create a safe space for all.