Introduction by Bonney Hartley, Tribal Historic Preservation Manager, Stockbridge-Munsee Community (aka “Mohican Nation”)

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Koonamunthe, I am a member of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community and I have the privilege to live here within Mohican homelands, from which the Tribe was removed. I live in Williamstown, Massachusetts and manage the Tribe’s Historic Preservation Program. Our scope is to preserve Mohican and Munsee ancestral places, and to return ancestral remains and cultural belongings from museums or other institutions. This caretaking work is an honor to steward. I find a great deal of purpose and meaning in doing so and find it restorative toward our heritage and identity.

Historic Preservation work often takes an investigative mindset to research and document evidence and international relations acumen to work amongst multiple Tribal Nations, Federal Government and other representatives. Of course, it takes a love of community and our ancestors at the center of everything. It feels like a blessing to be of service in this way.

I remember taking a family trip to the homelands about 15 years ago, and my eyes being open to the abundance of what our ancestors and the land still hold for us, the amount of memories that are at the surface. On the other hand, I was struck by the erasure of our history in the settler-colonial present; I expected that when I came into Stockbridge, Massachusetts that there would be something very visible about the Mohican people, and the nearly total absence was

jarring. Within a few years, it unfolded that I was working for the Tribe and tasked with opening a Historic Preservation office in our homelands. It has grown to a staff of four and we have a positive partnership with Williams College for student support as well.

On a personal level, I completed a Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing earlier this year from the Institute of American Indian Arts. My genre is poetry. I am working on revising my manuscript toward eventual publication. Being a Tribal member who lives on the land, interacts with the rivers, mountains, ancestral places and belongings, as well as the cast of characters that are present each day, I cannot help but need to find a form for what I observe on the page!

In my decade now living in Mohican homelands, I've witnessed much interest and goodwill from local residents. For repatriation work, we always do appreciate when people don't hesitate to reach out to ask if something in their private collection might be a cultural heirloom of our ancestors, for example. I think the key is asking the Tribe, and respectfully accepting the response. Our future is ours to determine. Oneewe (thank you).

Stockbridge-Munsee Community (SMC) pamphlet about voluntary repatriation
SMC's voluntary Site/Artifact Reporting Form.

UPCOMING EVENTS in January 2026

ONGOING
Mohican Miles Exhibit
Open Thursday – Monday from 10 AM – 4 PM
The Carriage House, Mission House Museum Courtyard, 19 Main Street, Stockbridge, MA.

Footprints of Our Ancestors: Mohican Walking Tour of Main Street Stockbridge: a self-guided virtual tour of Stockbridge, MA, part of the Mohican homelands and the site of an eighteenth-century experimental missionary community, co-governed by Stockbridge Mohicans and English colonists.