Mohican Homelands

The Albany-Hudson Electric Trail crosses the ancestral lands of the Muhheconneok, "People of the Waters that are Never Still," Native Americans whose name refers to the tidal Hudson River. Called Mahicans by early Dutch settlers and Mohicans by the English, they inhabited the upper Hudson Valley and parts of western Massachusetts and Connecticut until the American Revolution.

Mohicans lived in settlements along streams, with families sharing bark-covered wigwams. They grew crops of corn, squash, and beans in fertile river lowlands and hunted deer and small game and gathered plants in forests and meadows. Mohicans also relied on fish from the valley's many waterways.

European arrival in the Hudson Valley in the early 1600s presented opportunities—and great challenges—for the Mohicans. Dutch traders offered valuable goods such as metal tools and kettles, blankets, and firearms in exchange for beaver pelts and the furs of other animals. They also brought with them deadly diseases that killed more than half the Mohicans and other Native Americans in the region. By the mid-1700s, conflict with other Native Americans and colonists, the loss of land, and missionary activity saw many Mohicans move to Stockbridge, a "praying town" in Massachusetts.

After the Revolutionary War, the Mohicans resettled in central New York in the hopes of reestablishing their communities, but by the 1820s and 1830s they had made their way to Wisconsin under the federal Indian removal policy. There they joined with Munsees, people originally from the lower Hudson Valley. Today, the federally recognized Stockbridge-Munsee Community continues to assert their cultural ties to New York's Hudson Valley.

EMPIRE STATE TRAIL

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY.

▲ "THE GRANDFATHER"

Contemporary artist Len Tantillo painted this early 1600s scene of a tribal elder retelling a story to a captivated audience at a Mohican village on the Hudson River near present-day Castleton, New York. Source: Len Tantillo.

◀ **ETOWAUKAUM**

Mohican leader Etowaukaum visited England in 1710 to meet with Queen Anne to warn her of rising tensions with the French and their Indian allies. During the visit, Dutch artist Jan Verelst painted this portrait of Etowaukaum. Source: Library and Archives Canada.

ARTIFACT REPATRIATION ▶

An archaeologist and members of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community examine artifacts recovered from a Mohican site in the Hudson River Valley. Source: Stockbridge-Munsee Community.

ONE INCH

Artifacts shown larger than life-size

Artifacts, left to right:

PROJECTILE POINT

Archaeologists call this a Madison projectile point, an arrowhead used by regional Native Americans from about 1350 until Europeans arrived in the early 1600s. This example is made of chert, a flint-like stone prized for making tools and weapons.

TRADE BEAD

Early Europeans traded colorful beads such as this example from the late 1600s recovered from a Mohican site in the upper Hudson Valley. Beads made from shell, called wampum, were used by natives and Europeans as a medium of exchange in the trade for furs.

POTTERY SHARDS

The Mohicans made clay pottery, recovered fragments of which are shown here, to store and cook their staple foods, which included meat, corn, squash, and beans.

Source (all artifacts): Hartgen Archaeological Associates Inc.