

2nd Annual Literature and Photo Contributors

In the inaugural volume of Indigenous Stewards, a contest was used to spark the interests of Native youth in their environments through the submission of what they felt environmental health meant. In the second volume, anyone who wanted to contribute was asked to do so. Here are their submissions.

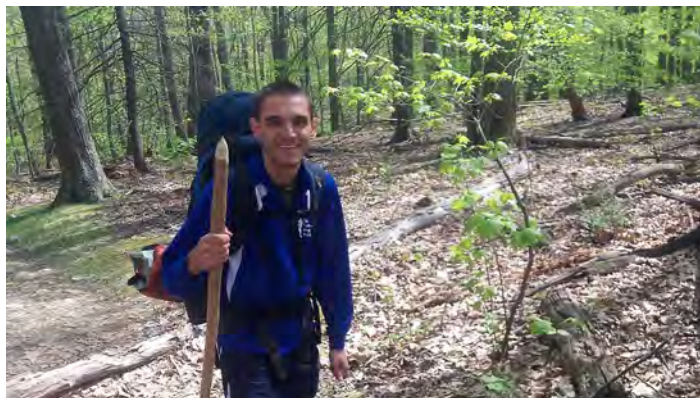
A Human-Powered Movement Against Climate Change

By Edward Schuyler Chew, PhD Candidate

Mohawk, Six Nations of the Grand River
Hometown: Tuscarora Nation in New York

University of Arizona Department of Soil, Water, & Environmental Sciences

Winds and rain whipped across the rugged ridgetop of the Tuscarora Mountains as we scrambled over moss-covered boulders along treacherous terrain. Thick fog distorted landmarks that had looked so obvious on the map. Trudging through this unforgiving landscape was hardly how I envisioned day one of my weeklong hiking trip. Exhausted from nine miles already backpacked, we camped not far off the trail. I collapsed and hardly noticed raindrops dancing across the nylon of my tent.



*Southern Pennsylvania hike with the Tuscarora Migration Project, 2013
(Courtesy Of Waylon Wilson).*

Hours later, I awoke to footsteps. Warm in my sleeping bag, I laid still, imagining that they belonged to my ancestors. A group of 300 weary Tuscarora migrants

shuffled past in eerie silence, moving only as quickly as the eldest and youngest. Carrying the bones of their lost relatives, they know all too well the perils of trespassing on enemy soil. The zipping of a nearby tent brings me back to the rainy, cold dark of Appalachia.

Five weeks earlier, I'd travelled with a group of Tuscaroras to North Carolina in order to memorialize our ancestors' 1713 defeat at Neyuheruke. Following this battle, Tuscarora people had little choice but to leave their homelands and migrate to New York, where they established the community I call home. We'd gathered at the site to send off a youth group on the Tuscarora Migration Project, a 1,300-mile journey to retrace our ancestors' footsteps from south to north. I was only able to stay for that weekend because of my research at the University of Arizona, but made it my priority to rejoin the Migration Project for 80 miles of hiking.

On that second morning on the trail, the fog hung heavy as we continued northward. The Tuscarora have a saying that when somebody dies, the rain will come to wash away their footprints. With the memory of our ancestors' loss heavy on our hearts, the rain poured. The trail grew more obscured by the shattered trunks of collapsed trees, both young and old, uprooted and in disarray, though buds emerged from their broken branches. I wondered what this forest looked like hundreds of years earlier. Eventually, the rainy veil lifted and sunshine enlivened our hike to the confluence of the Susquehanna and Juniata Rivers where the group and I parted ways.

When the Tuscarora left their North Carolina homelands, they sought to protect the seventh generation of unborn faces coming up from the ground. Today, a warming climate is prompting important species like sugar maples to migrate northward away from our current homelands in New York, but we no longer have the freedom to move with them. Our challenge is to strive, just as our ancestors did, to maintain a healthy homeland for the next seven generations. What I'm trying to do as a doctoral student is to inform tribal environmental decision-makers with climate-adaptation science so they can improve their capacity to adjust to this changing world. Undoubtedly, this journey toward sustainability will require us to shift from unclean energy to the human-powered movement of our ancestors.