



Northern
Forest
Center

NEWS RELEASE

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CONFERENCE TO EXPLORE USING LOCAL HERITAGE, CULTURE AS LEARNING TOOLS

More than 200 teachers, practitioners and supporters of place-based education will attend *Promise of Place*, a conference that promotes the use of place-based education in the Northeast and beyond.

Place-based education immerses students in local heritage, cultures, landscapes, opportunities and experiences, using them as tools in the study of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects. Because it is based on local experiences to which students can more readily relate, place-based education creates bonds between students, teachers and their greater communities that boost student achievement and, in the long run, improve a region's overall environmental, social and economic vitality.

The Northeast is an ideal setting for teachers who want to use place-based education to thoroughly engage their students. This is particularly true in the Northern Forest states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York. With Native American and French cultures mingling with traditions of European immigrants and a centuries-old history of working the land, the region offers teachers wonderful living examples for their students: oral history projects rely on elder residents for memories of logging camps and community traditions; rock formations tell stories of how glaciers shaped the land; traditional craftsmen can still teach the arts of basket making, wooden boat building, carving and weaving; storytellers use humor and drama to sustain legends that are generations old; and musicians bring cultures alive with song and dance.

Promise of Place is co-hosted by the Northern Forest Center and Shelburne Farms, in partnership with The Center for Place-based Learning and Community Engagement, a program of the National Park Service Conservation Study Institute. This year's core supporter is the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation—Upper Valley Region.

This year's conference takes place at the Lake Morey Inn in Fairlee, Vermont from March 15-17. Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit*

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Disorder will give the keynote address. Music events includes songwriter Erica Wheeler, whose music focuses on the small towns and open roads of the American landscape, and Jeh Kulu, a Vermont-based group that performs the traditional rhythms and dances of Guinea, Senegal and West Africa.

Ways of the Woods, the Northern Forest Center's "museum on wheels" will be open to conference attendees on Friday and Saturday. This traveling exhibition uses interactive displays to showcase the history, culture and heritage of the Northern Forest. *Ways of the Woods* begins its second season of community visits at *Promise of Place*.

"This is our fourth *Promise of Place* conference, and each year we hear back from participants about how thrilled they are to incorporate what they've learned into their work," says Pat Straughan, program coordinator of Shelburne Farms, "This year's 42 workshops cover a wide range of topics, including 'Stories in Stone: Geology of the Upper Valley'; 'Timber!! It's Good for the Birds'; 'Building Community One Nail at a Time'; and 'Based on a Book: Community Reading as Place-Based Education.'"

Promise of Place's goals are:

- To link place-based educators and community members into a place-based education network for on-going collaboration and support;
- To strengthen a shared vision for the promotion of place-based education through the presentation of current work and philosophies;
- To build knowledge and skills through concrete ideas and experiences; and
- To develop ideas for collectively realizing the promise of place-based education in the Northeast and beyond.

For more information about the conference, including registration details, visit www.promiseofplace.org.

The Northern Forest Center, a nonprofit organization, mobilizes people to build healthy communities, economies and ecosystems by working together across the Northern Forest region.

Shelburne Farms is a 1,400-acre working farm, National Historic Landmark and a non-profit environmental education center that welcomes visitors to enjoy its spectacular landscape.

The Conservation Study Institute's Center for Place-based Learning and Community Engagement is a unique public/private partnership that works to advance the state of the art in place-based education by facilitating collaborative efforts in research, program design, technical assistance, resource development and dissemination. The Center is a partnership with the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park and Shelburne Farms.

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EDITORS NOTE: Reporters are welcome to attend *Promise of Place* at the Lake Morey Inn in Fairlee, VT, March 15-17. Conference fees will be waived, and food and lodging will be available at cost. Reporters attending plenary and workshop sessions are asked to observe and hold their questions for interviews after the session is complete.

Photos from previous *Promise of Place* conferences are also available for reprint. A virtual tour of *Ways of the Woods* is available at http://northernforest.org/programs_wayswoods.htm.