

Wabanaki Youth in Science SEASONAL REVIEW



FEATURING THE WaYS ANCESTRAL LANDS TRAIL CREW

Over 32 weeks - from the muddy days of early spring to the crisp mornings of autumn - the WaYS Ancestral Lands Trail Crew walked miles of ancestral lands, carrying tools, teachings, and responsibilities with them. Wambli Martinez, Jayden Dana, Logan Dana, Matt "Skinny" Dana, George Bailey, Ashton Paul, and Landon Duffy built, restored, and cared for trails across Wabanakik.

Their work was about more than clearing paths. It was about connecting people to place, strengthening relationships with the land, and honoring what matters most: the bonds we build when we learn together, support one another, and walk forward with shared responsibility.

DEDICATED TO GEORGE BAILEY



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WINTER 2025

ANCESTRAL LANDS TRAIL SEASON 2025



In April, the WaYS Trail Crew launched their season with a focus on safety, access, and ceremony. The crew improved the Penobscot Youth Archery Course, completed chainsaw and safety certifications, and wrapped up the month with orientation and Leave No Trace training at nibezun - setting a strong foundation for the work ahead.



In May, they tackled some of the season's toughest work, maintaining rugged Appalachian Trail sections, improving drainage, and constructing a rock staircase using advanced rigging techniques. They also partnered with the Penobscot Nation on tree planting and improved access on the new wahsehtekw trail system, enhancing access and community use.

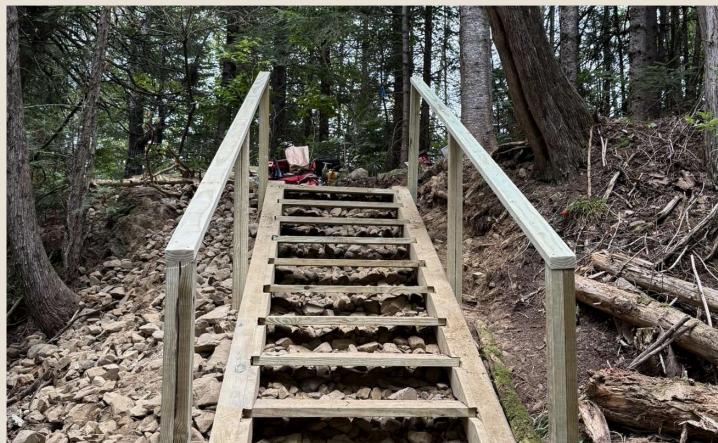


In June, they were at KWWNM, improving nearly 10 miles of trail through brushing, blowdown removal, drainage work, to enhance safety and access. We also worked with the Land Peace Foundation to improve trail access and prepare for future boardwalk installation, strengthening guest experience. Through collaboration, skill, and hard work, the crew supported both land and community.



In July, the WaYS Trail Crew worked to build and improve trails with partners including Down East Coastal Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and Acadia National Park. The crew constructed new trail sections, built retaining walls and bog walks, installed culverts, spread gravel and woodchips, and enhanced access to culturally and environmentally significant sites.

ANCESTRAL LANDS TRAIL SEASON 2025



In August, the crew built new trails, improved drainage, and completed technical rock and stair construction projects at Acadia National Park, HBMI, and the Appalachian Trail. Their efforts improved safety, strengthened access, and supported long-term care of these well-loved places. Through skilled work and strong partnerships, the crew left a meaningful mark on every landscape they visited.



In September, the WaYS Trail Crew focused on care, safety, and long-term stewardship across Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument and Down East Coastal Conservancy lands. The crew improved trails and campsites, constructed rock steps and new bridges, supported habitat restoration, and enhanced access to scenic and culturally meaningful places. Their work strengthened both the landscape and the experiences of those who visit.



In October, the WaYS Trail Crew dedicated their work to restoration and cultural stewardship across Down East Coastal Conservancy, Motahkomikuk, Niweskok and at Indian Island School. They improved trails, drainage, replaced bog bridges, supported school courtyard project, and helped prepare important cultural spaces for gathering and ceremony. This month's work reflects both skillful trail building and deep commitment to honoring community needs and relationships.



In November, the WaYS Trail Crew focused on cultural learning, stewardship, and community support across Maliseet territory, Orono Land Trust lands, and Niweskok. They helped pound brown ash for basketmaking, completed important seasonal trail maintenance, and assisted with greenhouse construction - strengthening cultural connection, skills, and partnerships while continuing to care for Wabanaki homelands.

INTERNSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Nora Sappier (Penobscot Nation)

This season, we are honored to highlight WaYS intern Nora Sappier, whose passion for wildlife, community, and cultural connection shines through every part of her work with the Penobscot Nation Department of Natural Resources. Guided by mentors Erik Sappier and Ben Simpson, Nora immersed herself in hands-on wildlife learning experiences, field work, and cultural knowledge activities that deepened both her skills and her sense of responsibility to land and community.

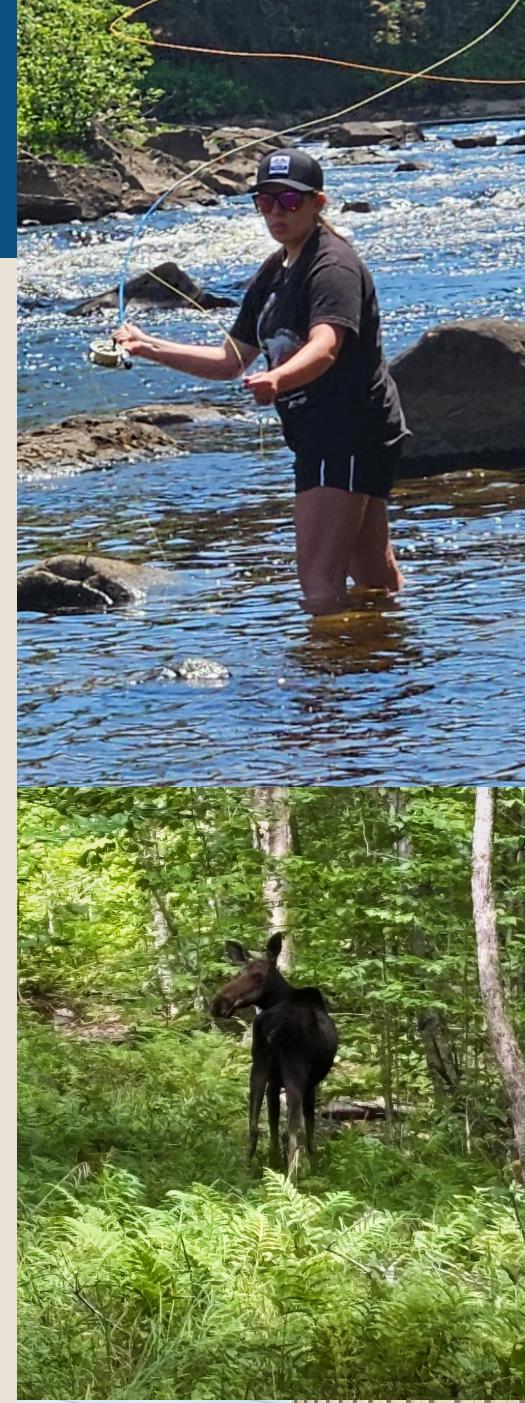
Nora's internship included sorting and analyzing trail camera photos and engaging in wildlife field activities, while also embracing cultural and land-based learning. She participated in meaningful experiences such as fly fishing, ice fishing, hunting, and basket making, grounding her scientific learning in community knowledge and cultural practice.

When asked how this experience influenced her perspective, Nora shares that the internship helped her appreciate the environment in new and deeper ways, strengthening her love for being outdoors and reinforcing why protecting land and wildlife matters. One of her favorite parts of the experience was spending time with other Native youth - laughing, learning, being present on the land, and forming friendships she says will stay with her long beyond the program.

Nora reminds us that WaYS internships are not only about workforce development, they are also about cultural grounding, belonging, leadership, and fun. We are incredibly proud of her insight, dedication, and heart. Woliwoni, Nora, for your commitment to caring for the land and your community. Your journey represents the strength of Wabanaki youth leadership growing forward.



**Scan the QR code to apply for a 2026
WaYS Internship opportunity!**



wskitkamikw EARTH CAMPS: GATHERING IN GRATITUDE



WaYS hosted the Fall Mini wskitkamikw (Earth) Camp weekend on Oct. 17 -19, 2025. The weather, the teachings, and the energy of everyone who gathered made it truly unforgettable. The land greeted us with crisp air and golden leaves: a perfect setting for connection, learning, and fun!

It is a privilege to walk together, learning, sharing, and honoring the land and all the teachings that make us who we are as Wabanaki people.

NOURISHMENT AND CARE

A heartfelt thank-you to **Tawoma Martinez** and **Chanan Bond** - the fabulous sister culinary team, for nourishing our youth, chaperones, and knowledge sharers with delicious meals and warmth throughout the weekend.

Woliwoni to **Director James Francis** and the Penobscot Nation Cultural and Historic Preservation Department for the use of canoes and gear that allowed us to connect with the Penobscot River for water medicine.

COMMUNITY AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

We are deeply grateful for our chaperones and youth leaders **Nora Duffy**, **Nora Sappier**, and **Noela Altwater** and to the incredible **WaYS Team** for your leadership, patience, and flexibility as we moved through the weekend together.

WaYS is profoundly grateful to each of you for your time, teachings, and presence, and especially to the youth, who continue to show up with their whole selves and remind us why this work matters.

Lastly, woliwoni to **nibezun** for welcoming us to your beautiful space where community, learning and healing thrive.

TEK - AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING

LEARNING FROM LAND, WATER, AND CULTURE: FALL TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Traditional Ecological Knowledge learning remained strong this fall, with **368 youth engagements** across WaYS afterschool programming. Over **38 program days** at **five community sites**, youth connected with teachings rooted in land, culture, and community.

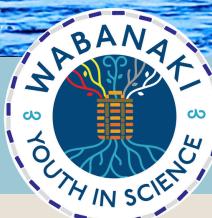


Fall hide processing was a core focus this season, along with ash log processing. These activities expanded the range of programming we offered and strengthened opportunities for youth to learn through hands-on experience, grounded in culture, tradition, and relationship to the land.

Damon and Apemesim are deeply dedicated to sharing and strengthening the tradition of paddling with our youth - spending time on the water, building confidence, and helping youth deepen their connection through canoeing. As national canoeing champions in both whitewater and flatwater, they bring a depth of experience, discipline, and knowledge that our youth are truly fortunate to learn from.

In addition, Damon and Apemesim shared songs and drumming as part of our TEK programming. Through rhythm, story, and song, they guided youth in understanding how our songs carry teachings that connect us to land, ancestors, and one another.

**Woliwoni to the youth who showed up curious
and eager to learn these past few months!
We will see you in 2026!**



THE BUTTERFLY PROJECT

HONORING COMMUNITY THROUGH COLLABORATION



The Butterfly Project is a year-long cohort-style program that fosters meaningful relationships between educators across the state, in classroom and community-based settings, and Wabanaki advisors. As with all WaYS programming, this project aims to connect Wabanaki ways of knowing with western science, highlighting reciprocal relationships with the natural world.

This November, advisors and educators gathered with Brianne Lolar (Panawahpskek), Wabanaki Studies Specialist at the Maine DOE, for community, learning, and connection. After sharing food and conversation - complete with dessert from Katahdin Kitchen - the group joined Damon and Apemesim Galipeau for a brisk paddle around Alenape Menehan (Indian Island).

At WaYS, we honor the Wabanaki value of uplifting one another so we can grow together. We are grateful to partner with leaders like Brianne, whose work continues to strengthen Wabanaki Studies education across Maine.

SCIENTISTS ARE STORYTELLERS

This fall we returned to our friends at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences with a centering theme - Scientists Are Storytellers. We explored how science, story, language, and relationship to place are deeply connected through teachings grounded in Wabanaki Knowledge Systems.

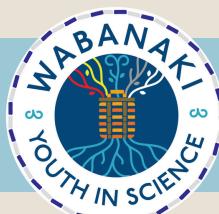
Youth voices were present thanks to Minsoss and WaYS' intern Nora, who brought young voices, heart, and inspiration - reminding us that the next generation of knowledge carriers and caretakers of land and water is already stepping forward.



We are deeply grateful to Heather Augustine for leading the facilitation of this gathering with care, grounding, and intention and to Minquansi for her engaging storytelling and knowledge sharing.

This experience reinforced that science is not only data and research, but also relationship, stories, and lived experience. When we honor both Indigenous knowledge and Western science together, we deepen understanding and strengthen our responsibilities to land, water, and one another.

It is always special to be back at Bigelow Laboratory, and we appreciate their continued partnership and welcoming space.



MEET THE WaYS TEAM



JENNIFER GALIPEAU - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Provides overall leadership, strategic direction, and organizational management for WaYS programs, partnerships, and staff



ESTHER SAPPIER - PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

Oversees administrative coordination, communications, and logistical support across all WaYS programs and partnerships



WAMBLI MARTINEZ - TRAIL CREW LEADER

Leads and mentors WaYS Trail Crew members in land stewardship, conservation, and trail restoration projects across Wabanakik



JAYDEN DANA - TRAIL CREW LEADER

Leads and mentors WaYS Trail Crew members in land stewardship, conservation, and trail restoration projects across Wabanakik



LOGAN DANA - TRAIL CREW AND MEDIA SPECIALIST

Supports the WaYS Trail Crew and documents programming through photography, video, and storytelling to amplify youth voices



DAMON GALIPEAU - FORESTRY LEAD

Leads forest knowledge initiatives, including tree identification, habitat monitoring, and ash preservation work in collaboration with tribal forestry partners

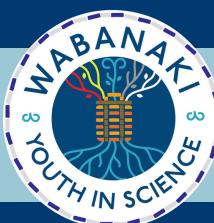


APEMESIM GALIPEAU - CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Coordinates cultural learning opportunities and collaborations to support language, TEK, and intergenerational learning

WaYS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Christopher Phillips (Wolastoqey), Alan St. Jean (Wolastoqey), Cherish Cole (Mi'kmaq), Jenny Paul, Donald Soctomah (Peskotomuhkati - Motahkomikuk), Matt Dana II (Peskotomuhkati - Motahkomikuk), Evelyn Lewey (Peskotomuhkati - Sipayik), Paula LaCoute (Peskotomuhkati - Sipayik), Candi Ewer (Panawahpskek), Selena Neptune-Bear (Panawahpskek), Keyana Pardilla (Panawahpskek/WaYS Alumni Seat)





Wela'lin - Woliwon - Woliwoni - Thank you

Dear WaYS' community,

As we close this season, I want to pause with deep gratitude for everyone who helped make this year meaningful, impactful, and full of learning. WaYS youth, interns, staff, Cultural Knowledge Sharers, mentors, families, and partners all played a vital role in supporting opportunities rooted in culture, community, and connection to land.

Together, we strengthened relationships, supported youth leadership, connected to our lands and waters, and continued building pathways for the next generation of Wabanaki leaders in science, stewardship, and community care. None of this work is possible without your commitment, encouragement, and belief in the youth and each other.

Woliwoni for walking this path with us. I look forward to the learning, growth, and the good work in the seasons to come.

Gratitude and good medicine,



Jennifer Galipeau, WaYS Executive Director

Help us continue this work!



Wabanaki Youth in Science empowers Indigenous youth by connecting them to culture, science, and the land through hands-on, land-based learning rooted in Indigenous knowledge.

WaYS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All donations are tax-deductible.
EIN: 47-5239057

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