

ADIRONDACK DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

A current overview of ADI and its initiatives.



 **ANCA**
A North Country for All

A message from our team.

Welcome!

At the heart of any successful organization lies a deep commitment to inclusion, where every individual feels welcomed and valued for who they are. As a team, we believe that fostering a sense of belonging is not just a goal, but a responsibility. When people are seen, heard, and appreciated, they can fully contribute their unique perspectives and talents. Diversity is our strength, but it is our intentional embrace of that diversity that empowers us to thrive together.

Creating an environment where everyone feels they belong allows us to harness the true potential of our collective effort. It sparks creativity, nurtures innovation, and deepens our connection to one another. More than just a tourist destination, we are a community, bound by our shared commitment to respect and inclusivity. Welcoming others and fostering belonging is how we ensure that our doors and hearts remain open to all.



Tamara Jolly
Community Initiatives
Manager



Tiffany Rea-Fisher
Director



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Adirondack Diversity Initiative

Mission

Existing at the intersection of environmental and transformational justice, the Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI) works to make the Adirondacks a welcoming and inclusive place for residents and visitors while ensuring a vital and sustainable Adirondack Park for future generations.



An Adirondack Park and North Country where ALL people feel a sense of safety, connection, and belonging whether they live here or are visiting. We want everyone to feel that they belong here, as the Adirondacks belong to us all.

Our Reach

3 People - 7 Areas of Diversity - 14 Counties

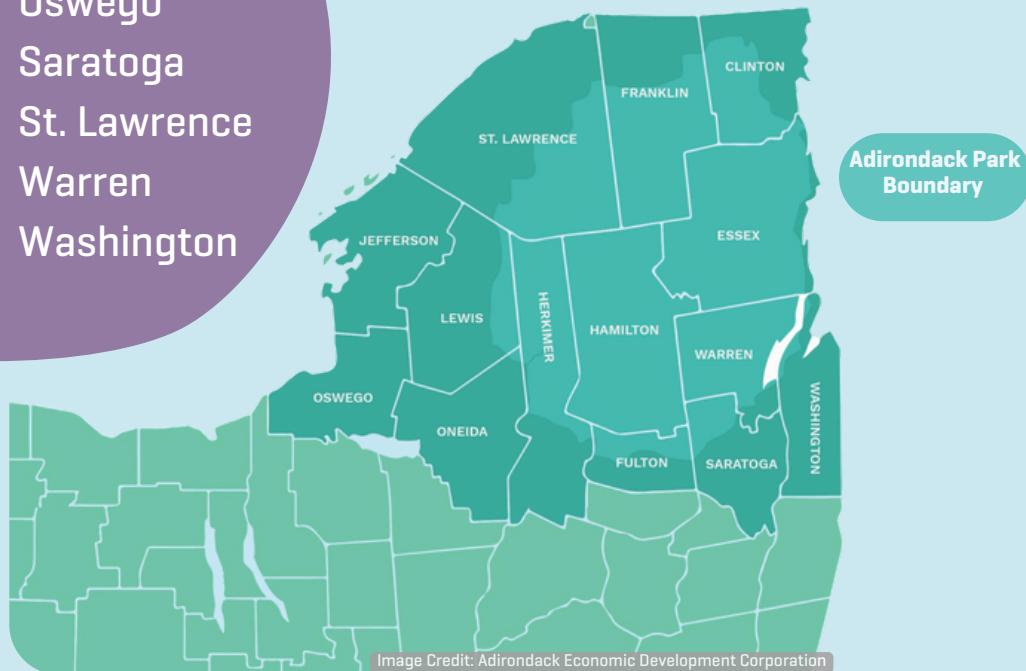
The ADI Team, currently comprised of three members, is responsible for addressing a broad range of issues, across an extensive territory. Our small-but-mighty team is tasked with a significant endeavor and committed to doing our best to meet the demands of this important regional work.

7 Areas of Diversity

- Race & Ethnicity
- Gender & Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Religious & Spiritual Beliefs
- Age & Generation
- Disability
- Socioeconomic Status

14 Counties

- Clinton
- Lewis
- Essex
- Oneida
- Franklin
- Oswego
- Fulton
- Saratoga
- Hamilton
- St. Lawrence
- Herkimer
- Warren
- Jefferson
- Washington



Our Approach

We aim to make a meaningful impact at every level—individual, local, regional, and beyond. Our approach will continue to adapt and evolve in response to the needs of our ever-changing world.

ADI WILL:

- **Prioritize** initiatives that support historically marginalized communities.
- **Collaborate** with agencies, towns, communities, and residents.
- **Equip** individuals and organizations with tools and resources to act as change agents in their communities
- **Provide** support to enable communities to cultivate and drive their own transformation.
- **Assist** businesses in creating a more welcoming and belonging environment.
- **Engage** in difficult and challenging conversations to encourage reflection & action.
- **Challenge** and disrupt oppressive systems & practices.

ADI WILL NOT:

- **Oversee or police** individual behaviors or actions.
- **Force** our work on communities that are not ready to engage in these efforts.

ADI Initiatives & Programs

At ADI, we place the lived experiences of community members at the heart of our work, believing that communities should lead and shape the pursuit of transformational justice in the Adirondack Park and beyond. Our programming, outreach, and advocacy primarily concentrate on the three areas listed below.



Areas of Focus:

Safety & Belonging

Nature Stewardship

Community Building



Photo Credit: SUNY Potsdam

The following pages outline our current programs & initiatives.

SAFETY & BELONGING

Community Policing Initiative

Over the last four years, we have successfully trained
165+ Officers & DEC Rangers
across ALL 14 Adirondack North Country counties.



ADI works directly with **RENZ Consulting, LLC** to lead this important initiative. This firm specializes in enhancing police-community relations at the state and local levels and has experience working in both urban and rural settings.

Representatives from local law enforcement agencies, including New York State Troopers, DEC forest rangers, correction officers, and others, have successfully participated in training and workshops.

The goal of this initiative is to enhance the relationship between police agencies and the Adirondack communities they serve. It specifically focuses on addressing and eliminating racial disparities that disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), as well as other marginalized residents and visitors. Participants will take part in constructive conversations that affirm the role of police agencies in creating safer, healthier communities that are free from racism and inequality.

Goals include:

- Fostering community involvement in policing
- Providing expert resources to help with police reform
- Providing Cultural Consciousness and Anti-Racism education to help achieve more equitable policing

Trainings are ongoing and expanding to additional agencies.



Cultural Consciousness Building

At ADI, we employ a cognitive-behavioral approach to our work, exploring the underlying reasons for thoughts and behaviors. This allows participants to gain personal insights and make positive changes.

We strive to create a supportive environment that promotes education and understanding while avoiding blame or shame. Our approach encourages meaningful growth and self-reflection, which are essential in building a solid foundation for progress in this work.

It's not diversity training.

Our Cultural Consciousness Building is facilitated as active conversations, rooted in education, and tailored to meet the specific needs of the community, organization, or business that engage our services.

Areas of Focus Include:

- Education
- Community & Ally Outreach
- Coalition Building
- Tourism
- Commerce & Economy



Photo Credit: Regional Council for Hate and Bias Prevention-North Country

Welcoming & Belonging Micro-credential Course

Despite the strength of our tourism industry, our region is confronted with a range of socioeconomic challenges. These include rural demographics, pockets of poverty, declining school enrollment, and a shrinking population. Furthermore, marginalized residents and visitors often feel unsafe due to racism and discrimination. Our mission is to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment in the Adirondacks for both residents and visitors, and we acknowledge the crucial role that local businesses play in these efforts.

To address these challenges and encourage economic growth, we have partnered with the Saranac Lake Area Chamber of Commerce and North Country Community College to provide a course for local businesses and organizations. This course covers skills and best practices for fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment. Upon completing the course, participants will receive an official badge that they can display online or in their workplace. They will also join a network that ADI shares with residents and visitors.

Topics Include: Exploring Vulnerability, Building Trust & Relationships, Identifying Problems, Making Interventions, and Building Culture and Community



Photo Credit: Lake George Land Conservancy



Photo Credit: Regional Council for Hate and Bias Prevention

Schoolyard Response Toolkit

When a child hits another child on the playground, adults quickly step in to intervene. Similarly, when a child is targeted because of their race, gender, religion, or identity, they also deserve immediate protection from adults. However, many people are unsure how to respond effectively in these situations, which often results in silence or delayed action. This can leave the targeted child feeling neglected and unsupported.

To address this, we have developed resources to help teachers, schools, caregivers & families, and community members respond swiftly and compassionately, ensuring children's safety and addressing their social-emotional needs. Our resources guide interventions before, during, and after a situation arises.



Photo Credit: SUNY Potsdam

Sustaining BIPOC Leadership Initiative



Photo Credit: Tol Sweeney



Leaders of color, especially women, often bear the heaviest responsibilities in advancing racial equity and social justice, frequently facing overwork and under-resourcing. Using the wilderness as their classroom, leaders in our program will find much-needed respite and healing amidst the Adirondacks' natural beauty. Through our partnership with local Great Camps, trained by our organization, participants can recharge in a safe, empowering, and intentional environment. This support helps organizations sustain their vital work and continue making their impact.

This program aligns with our mission to support racial, social, and economic justice by empowering those who aspire to lead within their communities. It provides emerging leaders with essential leadership skills, a supportive network, and self-care practices to help them balance their responsibilities and effectively uplift their communities. The program will cultivate future stewards of the Adirondacks by introducing new people to the region and the benefits of its wilderness, demonstrating that this is a space where they truly belong, one they can help care for and keep vibrant.

Nature Stewardship

Emerging Stewards Initiative

The Emerging Stewards Initiative aims to develop new generations of Adirondack stewards from marginalized communities throughout New York State. The goal is to foster a deep investment in the sustainability and long-term health of the Adirondack Park and spread the powerful impact of nature. The Emerging Stewards Initiative facilitates several programs, outlined below.



Photo Credit: SUNY ESF

The Reschovsky Scholarships for Students

This program promotes equity, inclusion, and belonging by providing scholarships for children from underserved and historically marginalized communities to attend overnight summer camps in the Adirondacks. These scholarships offer students from within and outside the region unique experiences and learning opportunities that may not be available to them otherwise, broadening their horizons and fostering greater understanding.

Alternative Spring Break

This program invites college students from BIPOC communities to spend their spring break exploring and engaging with the natural world. It offers a unique opportunity for students to step off campus and discover the beautiful landscapes and resources of the Adirondacks they may not have had the chance to experience or feel confident exploring on their own. Through these experiences, the program aims to shape the future stewards of our park, fostering a deeper connection to nature and a commitment to environmental equity.



Photo Credit: SUNY ESF

Claiming Space

Claiming Space is for outdoor enthusiasts or novices of all ages. ADI welcomes excursion and tourism groups from marginalized communities, introducing participants to the Adirondacks in safe ways that affirm and promote belonging. Individuals and groups come to learn about what the Adirondacks have to offer in terms of recreation while sharing positive experiences within their networks to build tourism and support stewardship of the region.



Photo Credit: SUNY Potsdam

Visitor Use Management Initiative

Preserving the Adirondack Park is central to our mission, and truly effective stewards are formed through physically visiting and experiencing the park's natural wonder and beauty. We must ensure that the park attracts a diverse range of visitors, implements any restrictions with caution, and makes all visitors feel welcome and safe throughout their stay. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is developing a Visitor Use Management [VUM] Plan for the High Peaks region. The VUM is designed to enhance sustainable visitor experiences, employing data-driven strategies to create adaptive plans for high-use areas. ADI is committed to ensuring that the study comprehensively incorporates ecological and human protections, that the data collected addresses safety and inclusion for all visitors, and that the data is examined for potential bias. Additionally, we aim to survey individuals who do not visit the park to identify and understand the barriers preventing them from visiting.



Photo Credit: Adirondack Council

Land Trust Alliance Initiative



According to the National Health Foundation, while people of color make up 40% of the U.S. population, they represent less than 30% of those accessing outdoor spaces. Given the mental and physical benefits of nature, it is critical to improve access to nature and education for marginalized communities. These communities face higher stress levels and lower engagement with the natural world. This initiative aims to use partnerships with various land trusts to help bridge this gap, ensuring that more people from diverse backgrounds experience and benefit from the natural world.

Local land trusts have expressed a desire to increase public use of their properties, and we aim to help them be intentional in inviting diverse groups to experience and enjoy their lands. For example, the Adirondack Land Trust has a goal to "engage more people in land protection through educational outreach to landowners, partners, and diverse constituencies." This goal closely aligns with our own mission, and we are working to partner with these land trusts to bring it to fruition.

Community Building

ADI Symposia

The ADI Symposium is a unique community gathering designed to empower residents, organizations, and businesses to increase understanding and awareness and enact positive change toward a more welcoming and inclusive Adirondack North Country. Symposia feature stimulating discussions, panels, and workshops that challenge the status quo and encourage creative solutions.

Each symposium will center on themes that reflect the needs of the region. Participants will have the opportunity to network and connect with fellow attendees, fostering the community and coalition needed to significantly impact our region.



Arts Inclusion Initiative



Photo Credit: Kathy Ford

"Welcoming & Belonging" Mural by ADK ArtRise

ADI deeply believes in the impact that art has on inclusion. Art raises awareness about the struggles faced by marginalized communities, challenges stereotypes, and can dismantle harmful biases. It can break down barriers to promote a more inclusive society and provide a means for individuals to begin engaging in this work. Art can create a platform for marginalized voices to be heard and empower artists to become agents of change. Embracing inclusion in the arts enriches the experience for both creators and audiences while reflecting a wide range of perspectives. Diverse art expands our understanding of the world and encourages us to question our beliefs and assumptions, inspiring personal growth and evolution. Organizations we have collaborated with include:

- John Brown Lives!
- Adirondack Center for Writing
- ADK ArtRise
- Lake Placid Center for the Arts
- McClure Productions
- And more!

Listening Series

The practice of listening is fundamental to building understanding. Our commitment to hearing and appreciating the diverse voices and perspectives within our communities is at the heart of our approach. We acknowledge the importance of traveling across the region to engage with residents and build personal connections. Listening sessions have been highly impactful, and we recognize the importance of continuing this work.



Photo Credit: Aaron Marbone Adirondack Daily Enterprise

Speaker Series

ADI recognizes the importance of showcasing diverse and knowledgeable speakers from within and beyond the region. Their contributions provide a wealth of perspectives that enrich discussions, challenge conventional thinking, and educate audiences. We are committed to featuring speakers who embody a broad spectrum of experiences and expertise, encouraging dialogue and collaboration.



Photo Credit: Adirondack Explorer

Community Involvement

Cultural Celebrations Support

At ADI, we believe that celebrations can help individuals feel valued and recognized within their community. These events bring people together to celebrate and nurture a sense of belonging. By embracing the multicultural fabric of the community, cultural celebrations unite individuals and enhance social cohesion, ultimately contributing to a stronger, more resilient society. We actively engage in and promote cultural celebrations throughout the region, whether by leading, partnering with, or sponsoring events. We aim to foster joy, raise awareness of community diversity, and promote inclusivity.

Some of the celebrations we support include:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Pride Events
- Juneteenth
- President Quezon History Day
- And more!



Photo Credit: Saranac Lake Police Department



Photo Credit: Heather Gallaher

Additional Staff Contributions:



Tiffany

Tamara

- Saranac Lake Area Chamber of Commerce Board Member
- Hate and Bias North Country Regional Council Member
- Energy Equity Collaborative Founding Steering Committee
- Broadband Coalition Member
- Statewide Community Regrants Panelist for the Adirondack Quad-County Region of Clinton, Essex, Franklin & Hamilton Counties Adirondack Lakes Center for the Arts [ALCA]
- Voters for Change Member
- High Peaks VUM Stakeholder Conversation Participants
- Artist-in-Residence with John Brown Lives!

- LGBTQI+ Health Advisory Board
- NY Engage Racial Equity Community Partner
- Education Advisor, Elephanatics
- Debar Lodge Board Member (2022-2024)

- Adirondack Explorer Board Member
- Ranger School Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Social Justice Committee
- City Neighbors High School Board Member



Melanie



Our Partners

ADI's partner organizations currently include many of the leading civic, educational, and environmental groups in the Adirondacks and surrounding area. Partners contribute resources and expertise to ADI projects and programs they are passionate about. These partners have also assisted with funding, sponsorship, office space, marketing, media, training facilities, and more.

Our partners include but are not limited to:

- Adirondack Almanack
- Adirondack Council
- Adirondack Experience
- Adirondack Foundation
- Adirondack Land Trust
- Adirondack Mountain Club
- Adirondack North Country Gender Alliance
- Adirondack Wild
- Camp Dudley & Camp Kiniya
- Camp Sagamore
- Cloudsplitter Foundation
- Common Ground Alliance
- Eagle Island Camp
- Fidelity
- Hamlets to Huts
- John Brown Lives!
- The Nature Conservancy, Adirondack Chapter

- North Country Chamber of Commerce
- North Country Community College
- North Country School
- Northern Forest Center
- Northern Lights School
- Paul Smiths College
- Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST)
- Saranac Lake Area Chamber of Commerce
- SUNY Canton
- SUNY-ESF Northern Forest Institute
- SUNY Potsdam
- The Wild Center
- Unitarian Universalist of Saranac Lake

And Many More!!!

Adirondack North Country Association

ADI is a program of ANCA, a regional nonprofit that uses innovative strategies for food systems, clean energy, small businesses, and equity and inclusion with the goal of building prosperity across northern New York.



Photo Credit: Toi Sweeney



Photo Credit: Heather Gallaher



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