

Building Native Futures

Honoring Indigenous Pasts

Forge Project is a Native-led non-profit organization whose mandate is to cultivate and advance Indigenous leadership in arts and culture. Located on the ancestral homelands of the Moh-He-Con-Nuck people, Forge is situated on a 38-acre campus in the Mahicannituck (Hudson river) valley.

A change-making model for Native cultural self-determination and leadership, Forge fuses traditional and contemporary knowledge and practices to build community, public education, and collective action.

Forge is now seeking partners and donors to join us in shaping a new, decolonial future and who share our vision of Native self-determination and governance. We are guided by the leadership of the Indigenous Steering Council, Executive Director and Chief Curator, Candice Hopkins (Citizen of Carcross/Tagish First Nation) and Director of Indigenous Programs and Relationality, Sarah Biscarra Dilley (yak titYu titYu yak tiłhini). **Investing in Forge creates new cross-cultural pathways urgently needed in the United States to combat acute inequality for Native people.**

Forge's starting point is a transformative gift from Becky Gochman that includes two buildings designed by the renowned artist and activist Ai Weiwei, as well as the land, art collection, three years of base operating funding, and a matching endowment. Along with co-founder Zach Feuer, the shared intention was to **provide support for current and future Indigenous leaders, to serve as a model for repair and redress in colonial institutions, and to directly combat inequities in Native representation in these same institutions.**

THE CURRENT CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

By investing in Native cultural workers, Forge seeks to counter profound social, economic, and cultural dispossession as a result of the theft of traditional lands, forced assimilation, ecological devastation, and wars that have impacted Native people for over 500 years.

The effects of colonialism are extreme and persistent: in the United States, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Native American people have the least monetary wealth, experience the most acute health issues, have the lowest life expectancy, and are victims of violence at higher rates than any other population in the country. These statistics are amplified when considering intersections with gendered violence, targeting due to sexual orientation, impeded environmental access, and disability.

We are calling on others to make real and actionable change, particularly in regions like the Mahicannituck Valley.

OUR COMMITMENTS

By investing in cultural leaders, Forge builds Native futures by honoring Indigenous pasts.

Forge is generating new models for Indigenous cultural self-determination and knowledge-sharing, education, language regeneration, and wealth redistribution as a form of decolonization, and providing culture workers time and space to advance their practices.

PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

Forge has already made a resounding impact through its distinctive programs and initiatives, demonstrating the transformative possibilities for Indigenous leadership in arts and culture.

The annual Fellowship Program has hosted 16 Indigenous fellows to date in fields including architecture, food justice, mental health, law, music, language revitalization, design, dance, and visual art. Forge Fellows each receive a \$25,000 unrestricted cash award and three weeks in residence at Forge, along with vital recognition and a larger peer network.

Our ongoing partnership with the Stockbridge-Munsee Community on whose homelands Forge is located includes two dedicated annual Fellowships, shared local programming and hosting, place-based collaborations, and support for cultural resurgence.

Forge stewards a premiere lending collection of over 175 works of contemporary art, by Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit artists. Works are loaned to museums and cultural institutions throughout the U.S. and around the world, directly countering the exclusion and marginalization of Native artists in mainstream museums.

PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

continued

A partnership with Bard College established the new Center for Indigenous Studies, and helped launch a transformative \$53 million endowed fund for Indigenous faculty, students, scholarships, knowledge-sharing, programming, and archives thanks to the generosity of the Gochman Family, George Soros, and Marieluise Hessel Foundations.

Our curated digital journal (*Forging*) highlights the ideas and issues at the center of Forge's mission. **A new publishing imprint** will release its first work, *Native Visual Sovereignty: A Reader on Art and Performance*, in spring 2024.

In our **Native land and outdoor learning kitchen** focused on food sovereignty, Forge hosts regular workshops and exchanges with Native and BIPOC seed-savers, food-growers, and farmers.

We've embarked on **the regeneration of 38 acres of land** by reintroducing native seeds that have not sprouted in hundreds of years, enabling broad biodiversity and a healthier ecosystem, and demonstrating the direct benefits of Native land stewardship.

Facilitation of Indigenous placemaking to counteract colonial erasure is paramount to the mission. The Mahicannituck valley is a site of systematic displacement and removal of Native peoples since the 1600s. Through tribal relations, hosting residencies and programs, as well as by cultural investment, **Forge brings people back to their homelands.**

IMPACT

Since its founding, Forge has contributed to accelerated support for Native art and culture.

Native artists are increasingly represented in museums and galleries across the United States and there is heightened awareness and repatriation of ancestral belongings and human remains from colonial institutions and corporations.

Similarly, tribes have made significant gains in #landback initiatives & campaigns, including the return of Monument Mountain in Massachusetts, a sacred and ancestral site for Moh-He-Con-Nuck people.

Forge is creating a program and model that is unique in the United States and worldwide.

Forge is in an exciting new growth phase, having recently transitioned from a project to a permanently incorporated not-for-profit organization. Supporting Forge means contributing to a growing resource for Native cultural work.

Your gift directly supports

- Investing in Native futures;
- Creating opportunities for Native leaders;
- Supporting Indigenous-led programming;
- Redistributing wealth to counteract the egregious inequity that exists for Native communities;
- Rewriting history from Indigenous perspectives;
- Providing direct economic support for Native artists;
- Publishing that centers Indigenous voices to fill historical gaps;
- Developing new models of Indigenous governance;
- Enabling ecological sustainability.

WHO WE ARE


Forge is led by Executive Director & Chief Curator **Candice Hopkins** and Director of Indigenous Programs & Relationality **Sarah Biscarra Dilley**. The leadership team is supported by the seven members of the **Indigenous Steering Council**, the **Board of Directors**, and a diverse team of arts and culture professionals.

INDIGENOUS STEERING COUNCIL

Jeffrey Gibson (Choctaw and Cherokee)
Sky Hopinka (Ho-Chunk Nation/Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians)
G. Peter Jemison (Seneca, Heron Clan)
Jasmine Neosh (Menominee)
Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora Nation, Turtle Clan)
Kerry Swanson (Michipicoten First Nation)
Monique Tyndall (Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohicans)

OUR TEAM


Emily Alfeche, Residence Manager
Sarah Biscarra Dilley, Director of Indigenous Programs & Relationality (yaktityutityu yaktiłhini [Northern Chumash])
Frances Cathryn, Editorial Projects Manager
Candice Hopkins, Executive Director & Chief Curator (Carcross/ Tagish First Nation)
Amelia Russo, Director of Collections & Exhibitions
Paloma Wake, Strategy & Operations Manager
Robbie Wing, Public & Community Programs Coordinator (Cherokee Nation Citizen)
Phoebe Zinman, Development Manager



Once overlooked, but no more. Art by modern Indigenous American artists is getting more attention these days. And one new project has found a way to push the movement further forward.

JEFFREY BROWN

Host, *PBS Newshour*

A group of people are gathered around a table covered with a red and white checkered tablecloth. They are working with numerous small glass jars with silver lids, some of which are filled with a dark substance. Several papers are scattered on the table, some with handwritten text in blue ink. One person's hand is visible, pointing at a jar. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an outdoor or well-lit indoor setting.

Forge and other new initiatives are making a difference. We're making spaces for ourselves. We're taking care of our own communities and making sure [we are] not silenced anymore.

**LAURA ORTMAN (White Mountain Apache),
2022 Forge Fellow; musician and composer**