

Center for Native Peoples and the Environment



February 25, 2016

Dear AASHE STARS Program Staff,

This letter is being submitted in affirmation of SUNY-ESF's Center for Native Peoples & the Environment in STARS innovation. Since 2007, the CNPE has significantly advanced its goal of becoming a leader in education, research, and outreach which integrates indigenous and scientific knowledge in higher education. The Center has made significant strides to strengthen SUNY-ESF's relationship with Indigenous Peoples, including developing and delivering innovative educational programs in native communities that serve our shared mission of sustainability.

One of the most unique approaches to building alliances with Native Peoples occurred in November of 2015 under the leadership of the Center. College President Quentin Wheeler announced a new College protocol recognizing that the SUNY-ESF campus stands upon the ancestral territory of the Onondaga Nation and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. To our knowledge, this type of recognition is the first of its kind from a higher-education institution anywhere in the United States. The protocol was announced at an event called "Where We Stand," and was attended by the campus community, Chiefs, Clanmothers, and Faithkeepers from the Onondaga Nation, and multiple media outlets. A stone sculpture by Onondaga artist Tom Huff will be erected on campus as an educational focal point for this relationship.

"Where We Stand" also included a campus-wide workshop on how SUNY-ESF might better forge alliances with indigenous people and yielded a comprehensive list of projects and approaches for future work. This theme of environmental alliances will be further explored as the Center is planning an international conference on the topic in the spring of 2017 at SUNY-ESF. As such, I believe these Center initiatives qualify as an Innovation Credit in ESF's STARS assessment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil Patterson Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Neil Patterson Jr.

Assistant Director, SUNY-ESF's CNPE