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Syracuse University, Onondaga Historical Association, Skä-noñh Center Team up for Lacrosse Expo

FEATURED

By Rob Enslin // Thursday, September 5, 2013

Expo to include games, demos, clinics and Native American arts and crafts

Thousands of people of all ages are expected to converge at Onondaga Lake Park in Liverpool, for the first annual Haudenosaunee Wooden Stick Lacrosse Expo, Sept. 28-29. The event, which is free and open to the public, takes place at the park's multipurpose fields, near the main entrance on Onondaga Lake Parkway.

The expo is sponsored by Syracuse University, in association with the [Onondaga Historical Association \(OHA\)](#) and [Skä-noñh—Great Law of Peace Center](#). (Skä-noñh is Onondaga for "peace and wellness.") The program includes wooden-stick exhibition games, clinics by players from the [Iroquois Nationals](#) and [Onondaga Redhawks](#) lacrosse teams, stick-making demos, Native American arts and crafts, live entertainment, and food and apparel vendors.



Alf Jacques

The Burton Blatt a voice to nonve CHAT (Commur explains how on the program.

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expo honors not only the people who originated the game, but also the culture from which it came. We want to educate and inspire people of all ages and backgrounds about lacrosse and the Haudenosaunee.”

Arnold is founding director of Skā-noñh, as well as associate professor of [religion](#) and [Native American studies](#) in SU’s College of Arts and Sciences.

The expo begins on Saturday, Sept. 28, at 8:30 a.m. with a traditional opening ceremony. The schedule for both days includes clinics (9-10 a.m.); exhibition games (10 a.m. to noon and 1-3 p.m.); social dancing, demos and talks (noon to 1 p.m.); and a men’s open game (3:30-5 p.m.). The expo concludes on Sunday, Sept. 29, at 5 p.m. with a closing ceremony.

Arnold is particularly excited about the exhibition games—played with wooden lacrosse sticks and traditional leather balls—and the stick-making demos with legendary lacrosse carver and box player [Alf Jacques](#), a member of the Onondaga Turtle Clan.

“He learned the art of stick-making from his father, who, in turn, was a master lacrosse carver,” says Arnold. “Alf will discuss cutting, seasoning, steaming, bending and carving from hickory wood, as well as the webbing technique used to create leather netting.”

Known as “deyhontsigwa’ehs” (“they bump hips”) among the Onondaga, lacrosse is central to Haudenosaunee culture and heritage. The sport is often called the “Creator’s Game” because it is understood to be a gift to the Haudenosaunee, or “People of the Longhouse.”

“The influence of the Haudenosaunee on our American way of life is extensive and profound, but is often unrecognized,” says OHA Executive Director Gregg Tripoli. “Lacrosse is one of the fastest-growing sports in our country, yet many people do not realize that it originated here.”

More than a thousand years ago at Onondaga Lake, five warring nations came together in peace, as a result of playing lacrosse. These nations—the Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, Cayuga and Mohawk, along with the Tuscarora—became the bedrock of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

“When Haudenosaunee men play ‘deyhontsigwa’ehs,’ they are playing for the Creator,” says Arnold. “While they are known for their amazing stick skills and feats of athletic prowess, these men understand that they play not for money, fame or personal gain, but for the pleasure and enjoyment of the Creator.”

Adds Tripoli: “The expo will shed light on the heritage of our indigenous community and on the true meaning and historical significance of this sport that we, as Americans, have come to enjoy.”

Located on the former site of the Sainte Marie Among the Iroquois Museum by Onondaga Lake, Skā-noñh is a new Haudenosaunee heritage facility. The Great Law of Peace is a protocol that has governed the confederacy for centuries.

“Onondaga Lake is one of the most important places for the Haudenosaunee because it’s where the Great Law of Peace was established,” says Arnold. “The Onondaga, Tuscarora and the Tonawanda Seneca [located in Western New York] still use their ancient Longhouse form of government today.”

Skā-noñh is overseen by the OHA, in collaboration with the Onondaga Nation, Onondaga County, SU and other neighboring educational institutions.

On Nov. 14-15, Skā-noñh and OHA will partner with SU, Le Moyne College and Onondaga Community College for “[Listening to the Wampum](#).” The conference is free and open to the public and is part of the 2013-14 Ray Smith symposia, sponsored by SU’s College of Arts and Sciences. For more information, contact SU at 315-443-1414.

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