Native American Arts and Culture Festival at Colgate University

Colgate University’s annual Native American Arts and Culture Festival will be held on Saturday, September 22 from 9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. The festival celebrates Native American culture with music and dance performances, art and archaeology demonstrations, many vendors selling unique Native American crafts, and more. The festival is free, open to the public, and fun for all ages. It will take place indoors, rain or shine, at the Sanford Field House. Follow the signs on Rte. 12B in Hamilton.

Music and dance acts take place all day, with plenty of seating for all. The Onondaga-based troupe Haudenosaunee Singers and Dancers includes many young dancers performing traditional Iroquois social dances in which the audience is invited to participate. New this year is Encantos de mi Tierra, a music and dance troupe performing traditional Maya Indian dances of Guatemala in colorful indigenous costumes. Alan Cleveland, a well-known Mohawk/Cree performer, will play traditional flute music. A special treat this year is a Smoke Dance competition with fast-paced dances by virtuoso adult, teen, youth, and tiny tot dancers. Sheldon Sundown will serve as the Smoke Dance emcee and singer.

The festival includes a Native American craft market, in which vendors from various indigenous cultures and communities offer a wide array of unique items for sale including exquisite jewelry, pottery, baskets, leatherwork, dolls, and musical instruments. Artists also offer sculpture in stone, antler, and clay, as well as prints and paintings. Purchases from the Native American artists support their efforts to maintain the vitality of traditional culture and crafts.

All of the artists enjoy speaking with visitors about their work, and special craft demonstrations will take place throughout the day, including lacrosse stick making, stone
sculpture, and pottery. Displays of local fauna, as well as Iroquois archaeology and culture presented by Mohawk educator Mike Tarbell, will take place all day.

While visitors browse and chat with the artists and performers, they may also sample traditional Iroquois corn soup and fry bread, as well as strawberry drink, made-to-order Indian tacos, and other foods, which will be available for purchase throughout the day.

All are welcome and families are especially encouraged to attend. Young children will especially enjoy activities in the festive “Children’s Corner” just inside the entrance, including coloring and making traditional cornhusk dolls, paper canoes, and bead bracelets with the help of Colgate students. Visitors may register at the welcome table to win one of the door prizes, which will be given away hourly.

The Native American Arts and Culture Festival is organized by Colgate’s Longyear Museum of Anthropology in cooperation with the Native American Studies Program and Native American Student Association, and generously supported by the Upstate Institute, Core Communities and Identities, Sociology and Anthropology Department, and ALANA Cultural Center. For more information or vendor/competitor registration materials contact Carol Ann Lorenz at the Longyear Museum: (315) 228-7184, clorenz@colgate.edu.