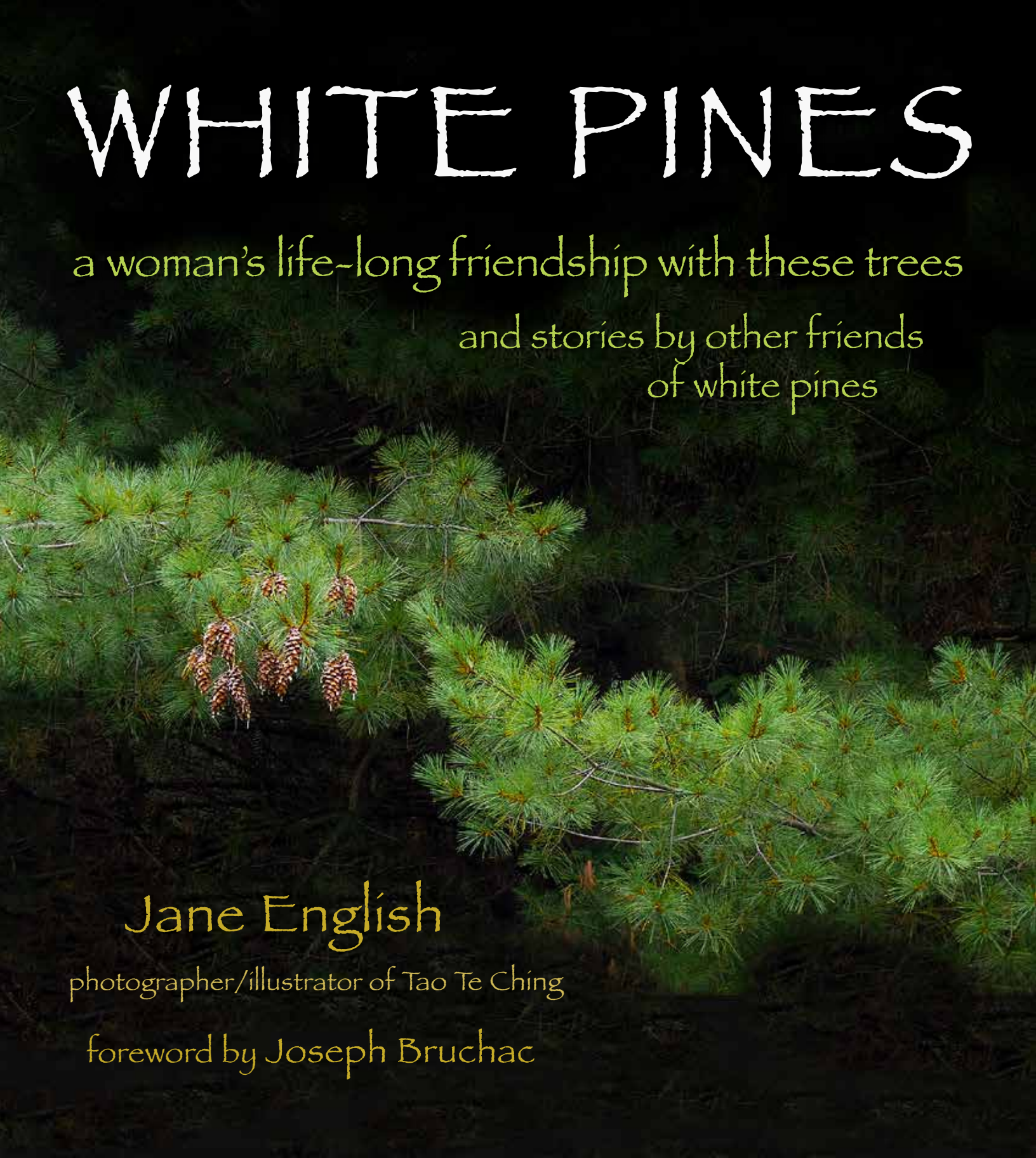
# WHITE PINES

a woman's life-long friendship with these trees

and stories by other friends of white pines



Jane English

photographer/illustrator of Tao Te Ching

foreword by Joseph Bruchac

# WHITE PINES

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a woman's life-long friendship with these trees
and stories by other friends of white pines


Jane English


*with more white pine stories by*

Nicola Marae Allain - Scott Bailey - Rhonda Besaw - Arthur Blackhawk
Joseph Bruchac - Tatjana Cady - Brian Chenevert - Cheryl Denz - Kyle Foster
Angella Gibbons - Erik Gillard - David Govatski - Amy Suzanne Heneveld
Francine Poitras Jones - Patrick Lamphere - Richard Maizell - Neal Maker
John Pastor - David Schein - Steven D. Smith - Esther Thompson - Yasi Zeichner

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# Acknowledgments

Kchi wliwni - many thanks - *more literally, "great goodness flows among us"*

- to the all the white pine trees who have "walked" with me during my 80+ years
- to Mother and Gramma for taking me early out among the pines
- to Daddy and Gramp for encouraging me to play with sweet-smelling pine wood
- to my Indigenous friends who keep reminding me that trees are our relatives
- to friends and neighbors who have encouraged me during the making of this book
- especially to Tina Bielenberg who introduced me to the Western Abenaki language, whose numerous suggestions have greatly improved this book, and who met my occasional bouts of self-doubt with patience and humor
- for the enthusiasm that met my requests for contributions of writings for this book
- to friends who helped sponsor the cost of printing, making the book more affordable, especially to Barbara Butler, an early supporter
- to you the reader for picking up this book—enjoy your "walk" with it

# Contents



## stories from more friends of white pines

# Foreword

## by Joseph Bruchac

There are few trees more important to the Indigenous People of the northeast than *pinus strobus*, the white pine. Among our Wabanaki nations, it has long been known and reverenced as a source of medicine and food. Its inner bark can be eaten raw or dried and ground into a type of flour. Its needles can be boiled to produce a tea that is good for treating coughs and colds. And it is one of the trees whose trunk might be shaped and hollowed out to make a dugout canoe.

The names of some of our Western Abenaki nations include the name of the pine —including my own Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki. Such naming reflects that our homelands and villages were often located where those great trees were in abundance—before the newcomers from across the ocean began cutting the tallest and straightest of those ancient beings to make the masts for their ships or to use in the building of their cities.

I've already mentioned, later in this book *(p.206),* the song "Little Pines" which is found in all five of our New England Wabanaki communities. Its central message is about the importance of elders protecting the next generation by holding out their arms the way white pines hold out their branches, making it clear how much we have always seen those great trees as role models and relatives.

Among the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) nations to our west, the white pine had and still holds an equally important and central place. It is the symbol of their Great League that was formed, perhaps a thousand years ago, after the five original Iroquois nations ended their bloody years of internecine warfare and joined together in peace. Haudenosaunee traditions relate how The Peacemaker, a Messenger from the Creator, convinced them to give up those ways of constant revenge.

When the five nations were finally brought together, The Peacemaker then planted the white pine that became known as the Great Tree of Peace. The weapons of war were buried beneath it. It had four white roots that reached out, one to each of the directions, and anyone who wished to live in peace as part of that league could trace those roots to come together under its shade.



The bundles of five needles that grow together on every white pine symbolize the five nations, known today as the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga (where the tree was planted and symbolically remains), Cayuga, and Seneca. Further—and this is a symbol that was borrowed by the United States—an eagle is said to perch at the top of that tree of peace, holding in its claws arrows bound together, making them much harder to break than a single arrow by itself. *E pluribus unum*.

In song and story, in so many aspects of material culture, and with such great symbolic meaning, the white pine truly is held in the hearts of our Native nations.

*Joseph Bruchac lives in the Adirondack Mountain foothills of New York in the same house where his maternal grandparents raised him. Much of his writing — in over 180 books, see joebruchac.com — draws on that land and his Native American ancestry. For more of his writing about white pines see joebruchac.com/blog/f/coosuk*

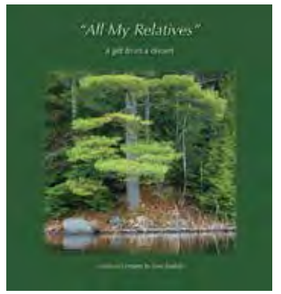
# Introduction

***Ancestors, relatives, and making this book —***

While most of my own ancestors came to this continent, to what we now call New England, almost 400 years ago, Abenaki people and their ancestors have been here for thousands of years. Along with the humans who walked here, the *koak*, the white pines, have long been part of this living land. It is said that, as with most indigenous cultures of the world, the Abenaki experienced the trees, rocks, sky, rivers, humans, and animals all as a community of living relatives, relatives who were respected and related with, not as resources to be "used."

Like many children who spend a lot of time out in nature during early childhood, I had as a child an intuitive sense of being at home with "all my relatives." But since that was not talked about or acknowledged in the conventional world where I lived, that knowing faded as I grew older, though a resonance of it did stay alive in me through my many years of photographing nature. I appreciate how it has been strengthened more recently through my friendships with Indigenous People.

While beginning to learn the Western Abenaki language in late 2021, I received the gift of a dream in which I truly experienced that wonderful sense of being at home, embedded in just such a community of living relatives of many kinds.




The Abenaki consider dreams to be animate beings, not inert things, and this dream is indeed alive for me. Having been taught the importance of bringing such a dream to life in the waking world, I made an illustrated booklet about the dream. *(see more about the dream on page 210)* For the booklet's cover I chose one of my favorite photos, one of a White Pine. I soon understood this choice—White Pine is one of the relatives I had met in the dream, one with whom I have had a life-long relationship.

Being a maker of books, I soon began to celebrate that relationship by creating this book, a book that is a "deep dive" into the world of one of our relatives and of how we interact with that relative. My hope is that this book will facilitate your more fully experiencing our many other-than-human relatives as the community of living relatives that they truly are.

When I awoke from the dream I had been saying the word "wijokami" which is Abenaki for "help me." I have invited friends to help by writing their own White Pine stories for this book.

White Pine is our co-author; we share the profit from book sales with organizations, including Abenaki tribal groups, that support our relative, White Pine.

For me, the most enduring effect of the dream experience of being embedded in community with “All My Relatives” is a lively sense of satisfaction, of not needing “more,” and, in spite of not being very wealthy in the conventional sense, of delight in having enough.

How different our world would be if more people lived in such a sense of plenty, of satisfaction. We would not be destroying our natural world, not so often fighting with each other over “scarce resources.”

I am reminded of a line from *Tao Te Ching*, an ancient Chinese classic that has been a big part of my life for well over fifty years:

> *Those who know that enough is enough will always have enough.*
>
> —Chapter Forty-Six, *Tao Te Ching,* (Gia-fu Feng and Jane English, Vintage Books 1972)

It is my intention that through words and images, the people and the white pines in the book can inspire you to become more aware of and dynamically satisfied with your own living experience in the community of all our relatives—plants, animals, rocks, humans, water, wind, and sky.

Then we can live in a balanced way—experiencing an ancient sense of connectedness at the same time as enjoying the best of what science and technology has brought us—like the camera, the computer and the internet that have been essential to the making of this book.

# Suggestions for you the reader

***Two styles of reading —***

While reading a book that has both words and images, one engages in two different modes of “reading.” It is easy to read the words and glance fairly quickly through the images; it is also easy to absorb the images and just skim the text.

Do read the text, and also take some time with these images. Perhaps you might “read” the book two times—once with focus on the words and once on the images.

***Wandering through the book —***

While some sections of this book follow a linear narrative—there is a trail to follow—other parts can be viewed in no particular order, though while making the book I did have to choose a sequence. Please allow yourself to “go off trail” and delight in wandering through the book, perhaps opening the book “at random,” letting what is here resonate with you in the moment.

***An open book —***

This book does not want to sit closed on a book-shelf. With its lay-flat binding, please let the book rest open on your desk or table so the images catch your eye at odd moments. The White Pines, the *Koak* in the Western Abenaki, can thus continually “speak” to you in their own non-verbal language.

Return again and again to these pages to visit with your friends and relatives, the white pines and the people whose stories are here.

***Yet words and images are limited —***

Words and images are just that—words and images. They are not the true living experiences to which the words and images point.

*Tao Te Ching*, begins with a reminder of the limitation inherent in using words (and images).

> *The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.*
> *The name that can be named is not the eternal name.*
>
> —Chapter One, *Tao Te Ching*

***Beyond the book —***

I encourage you to set this book aside occasionally and go outside.
Find a white pine tree, or whatever tree is native to where you are . . .

> *touch — listen to — talk with — sit leaning against the trunk of — climb — sing with — smell — dance around — hug — imply be present with*
>
> . . . this living being that is part of your community.

# come walk with the White Pines . . .

letting them speak for themselves through these images

(though there is an occasional caption)

photo by Cheryl Denz

*Yellow pollen from the male cones sometimes swirls on the water of a nearby pond.*



*The pitchy female cones dry out in the summer and drop their seeds.*

*some of the seeds from fallen cones feed squirrels . . .*

*. . . while others become new white pine trees*

*small pines growing in an abandoned pasture - last mowed or grazed about 6 or 8 years earlier*

*after being unmowed for about 12 years, this hay field is inhabited by young "fluff-ball" pines, offspring of the big old pines living at the edge of the field*

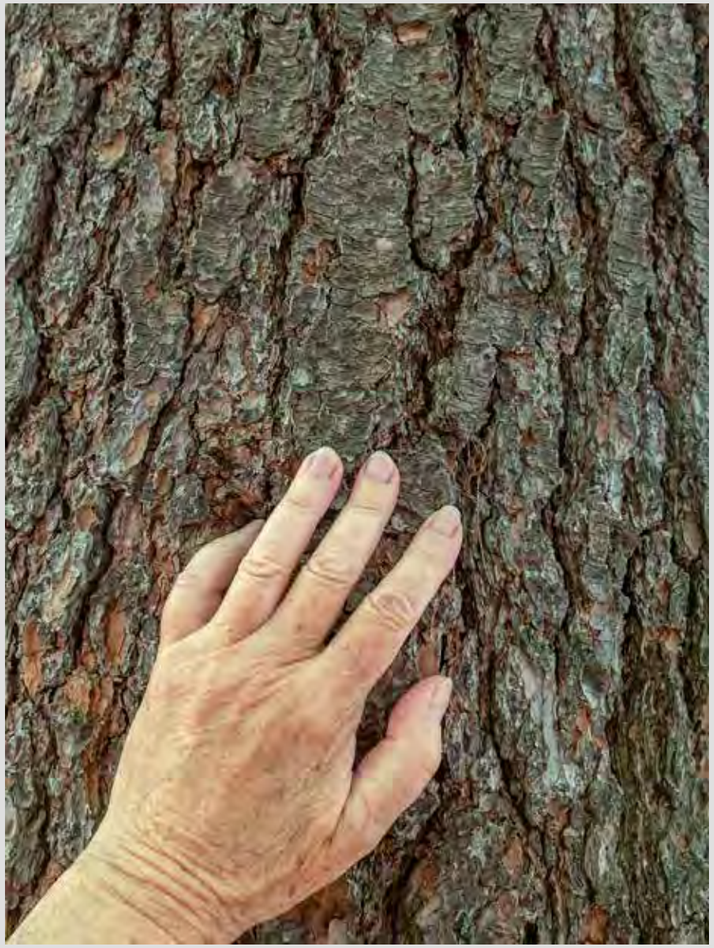
*open-grown white pines often have branches that decide to instead become another top*

*a branch that became a top split off in a storm in 2013*
*the pointed part shows its evolution from tiny twig to muscular branch*

*seven years later - 2020* →

*this big open-grown white pine sowed the seeds of her children into the field behind her . . .*

*. . . a new white pine forest is growing, and the deer make a path through it*



*pines that are not made into lumber*
*lie where they fall in the woods*

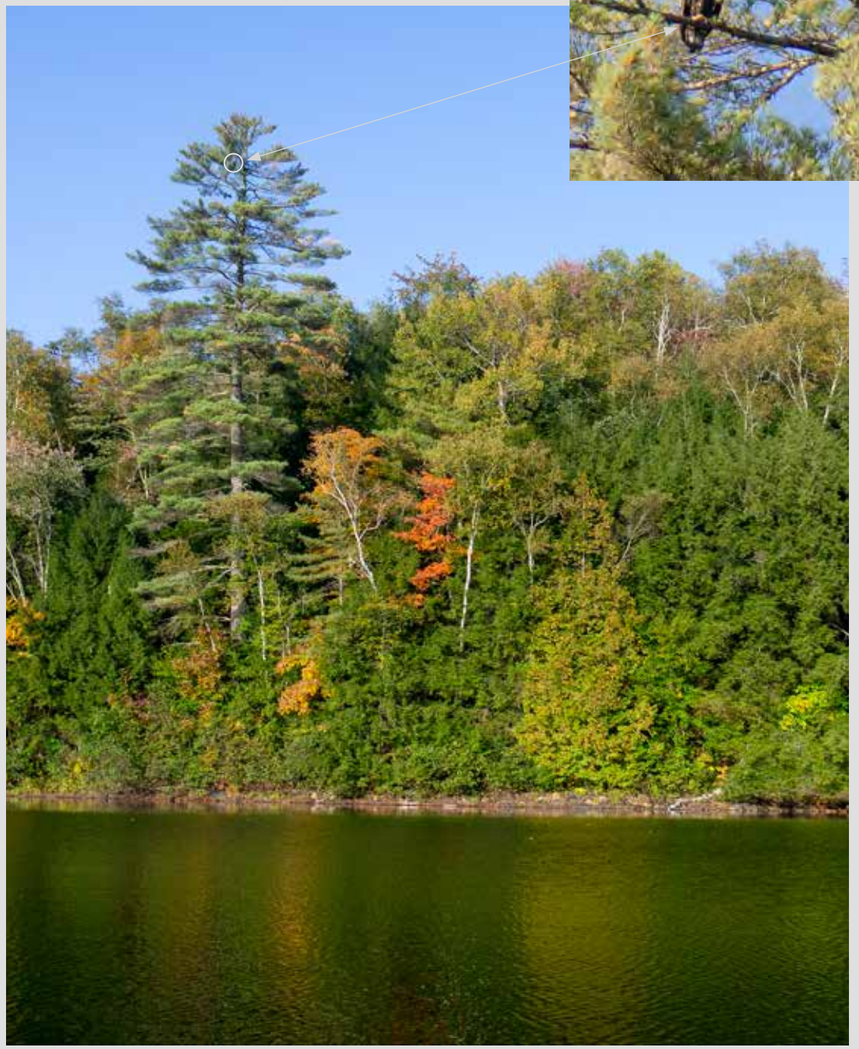
*and host "villages"*
*of their own*



*perhaps becoming an acorn dining table for* Mikowa - *"The One Who Remembers" - Squirrel*

Awasos - *"Walks Beyond" - Bear - dug for grubs and ants all around this rotting white pine stump*

Megeso - *"The Whistler" - Eagle - sits in this tall white pine watching for fish in the pond below.*



Kwikweskas - *"The Red Whistle-Maker" - Robin - makes her nest tucked in among pine branches*

*tending her eggs*
*that will become the next generation*

Mkazasak - *"The Charcoal People" - Crows - congregate in the dead branches of an old pine*

# *my friendship with white pine trees . . .*

A smooth carpet of pine needles - warm - brown - sunlit - sweet-smelling.

Patches of soft green moss and of small shiny green leaves poke up through the pine-needle floor.

A small me is walking with Mother under big white pines in the woods behind the neighbor's house across the road. We had crossed a somewhat rickety, weathered, wooden walkway across a swamp and a brook to reach the woods.

Mother is showing me what is for her, a special place. I do not know how long we stay there, but we return to it fairly often.

I love the sound of the wind blowing through the pine tree-tops.

Closer to our house there in Topsfield, Massachusetts are the "Big Pines," a double row of large white pines bordered on the west by an old stone wall and on the east by the field where we have our vegetable garden. The two rows of trees are about thirty feet apart. The lower branches next to the field lean down and touch the grass—there are sheltered places under these branches. I go out into the pines alone at quite a young age and crawl into these cozy nooks. I feel at home there.

I recall one winter ice storm when during the night we could hear the loud cracks of ice-laden pine branches breaking off those big pine trees.

It is only in looking at old photographs that I realize those "Big Pines" were really not all that big. I think they had been planted as a wind-break by the previous owners of our place. And back then I hardly noticed that they grew bigger each year—that kind of understanding only comes with age.

Most of our back land, that we called "the pasture," probably because that term was used during Mother's own childhood on a New Hampshire farm, had been burned over about fifteen years before my parents moved there in 1941. So the gray birch and white pine trees that had grown back were young. There was one particular clump of small pines that invited me to burrow between its low branches to find an open area inside with the pine-needle floor I had come to love. I liked just sitting in there. Many years later I sat inside a ring of California redwoods, but as good as that felt, it did not quite match being in the clump of small white pines.

In addition to having been burned over in the 1920's or 1930's, our back land, the pasture, had been used (or abused) by a neighbor family for excavating gravel. The predominant soil in our area was a bit of topsoil on top of glacial till—gravel left over from the glaciers of the ice age. That neighbor family had in one area of our land stripped away all the topsoil to sell it.

Also there were several small gravel pits along the west side of the land. These were beginning to fill in with small trees, mostly white pines. And on the land surrounding the pits there were also groves of slightly older but still young white pines. Only many years later did I learn the white pines are one of the first trees to grow on disturbed land like old fields and pasture land—and gravel pits.

When I was about 10 or 11, I was wandering in one of those young pine groves just south of a small gravel pit, enjoying the sound as I snapped off the dead lower branches from these trees. Taking up one such branch, I broke off a piece and poked it into the smooth bark of one of these young pines. I was fascinated with the pitch oozing out. Was the source of this action the same as the fascination, common in many children, with picking the scab off a healing bug bite? Was I just interested in what was under the bark? In any case, I misused these white pine trees, who were otherwise my friends. Now, so many years later, I sing for the trees an Abenaki song I learned from Jesse Bruchac, a song that asks for forgiveness:

*Anhaldamawi liwlaldamana*
*Anhaldamawi kassi palilawaholan*
Forgive me please
Forgive me for all the wrong I have done to you

When my brother and I were old enough to be way out in the woods alone, my mother encouraged us to play in the brook for hours at a time, making bridges and small dams at a spot where the drainage from a swamp became a proper brook as it curved around the roots of some large pines on the east side of the brook. On the far side of the brook a slope was covered with pines and the usual floor of pine needles. We climbed up that slope to the ridge from which we could peer out across the neighbor's big sand pit. Old photos of my grandfather's show my mother and her own brother playing in such a brook in a grove of white pines near their farm home in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 1914.



Our family Christmas trees were young white pines, not the more common fir or spruce Christmas trees. In early December, we would go out into the pasture land to find our tree. If the ground was snow-covered, the tree was brought to the house on a blue wooden sled we had that was somewhat larger than the usual sleds children used for sledding. My brother and I each got tiny white pines for our own trees, which we stood up in holes drilled in blocks of wood and then decorated.

One evening I lay on the rug of the living-room floor with my head just under the edge of the bigger family Christmas tree with its colored lights, the only lights in the nearly dark room. A wonderful feeling came over me, a sense of looking up into a vastness that stretched far beyond my ordinary world.

Our house was a big 1765 center-chimney colonial house. Along the back of the ground floor was the old kitchen with its huge fireplace, around which was wooden pine paneling and over which was a row of small cupboards with pine doors. When in 1941 my parents renovated that room as an informal living room, they stripped the previous owner's paint from and left natural the wide horizontal pine boards that paneled the walls of the old kitchen. The floor was also pine. I have been told that the boards for the new flooring in that room came from the big pine trees that had blown down in the 1938 hurricane on some of my grandmother's old family land in Dunstable, Massachusetts.

We called it the Pine Room—it was the heart of our home.

photo by BWE Sr

In the floor of one of the big front bedrooms upstairs was a pair of pine floor-boards that were each at least twenty inches wide. In them the patterns of knots were mirror images of each other. When the house was built in 1765, they had been sawed off next to each other from the trunk of a giant old-growth white pine.



In addition to the Big Pines, there were other white pine trees closer to the house. One stood alone in the lawn just east of the horse-chestnut tree on the far side of the driveway and just inside the stone wall bordering the road. It became a typical "open-grown" pine with most of its lower branches still living. Farther east along the wall were a few smaller pines.

Each year in the fall we raked off the lawn the pine needles and horse-chestnut leaves and had small bonfires of them in the gravel driveway. It was great fun to watch the burning horse-chestnuts explode out of the glowing leaves at dusk.

Close to the west end of the house was another open-grown white pine of a modest size, standing in the smaller area of lawn there. I have a very early memory impression of being out on the lawn under that pine. I was lying on the oil-cloth-covered mat that had been on the playpen floor, crawling off its edge and poking my nose into the mix of grass and pine needles.

There were a few other white pines in that area west of the house. Because of the fire danger with them being so close to the house, most of them were cut down when I was five in 1947, the year of huge forest fires in southern Maine. I still remember riding along a rural road in Maine just before sunset, seeing mile after mile of tall, black, burned white pine skeletons.

The trunks of the trees we cut supplied some of the pine paneling and flooring for our "playroom" at the north-west corner of the house, a room that had been the huge dirt-floored wood-shed in earlier days. The house had six fireplaces so must have required an enormous amount of firewood, both for cooking and for heating each winter in years past. I remember a table saw that was set up in the barn to shape the bevel and the groove on opposite edges of the boards for the playroom's pine paneling. I played with the long thin tapered pieces of sweet-smelling pine wood that came off the beveled edges.

Groves of big white pine trees, like the one across the road from our home, were quite common in the nearby area of northeastern Massachusetts, southern New Hampshire and southwestern Maine. There were numerous white pine groves where we stopped for our family picnics while on trips.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's, near York, Maine, there was a little railroad that ran in a loop through a grove of big white pines. It was magical to sit on one of the little passenger cars and roll through the pine woods on that train pulled by a little (steam?) engine on which the big engineer man sat sideways—maybe so he could watch both the track ahead and his small passengers behind him.

We visited the Cathedral of the Pines in Rindge, New Hampshire, where one could look out to Mount Monadnock while sitting on the wooden benches in a grove of big white pines. In another pine grove was a hillside chapel facing Mount Kearsarge at a camp where I worked for several summers.

Visiting the pine grove at the site of the Abenaki basket-maker's camp in Intervale, New Hampshire a couple of years ago brought back to me the sights and smells of the white pine groves of my childhood.

When I was seven in 1949, my grandparents, my mother's parents, moved into a small house just up the road from ours. Like his father, Gramp (Walter H. James) was a cabinet-maker, so he built a wood-working shop attached to the back of their garage. He used white pine in much of the furniture he made. I spent a lot of time in his shop, often on the floor, poking around in the sweet-smelling pine sawdust. He provided me with hammer, nails, and scraps of pine wood from which I could construct whatever I wanted. I still have a small wooden truck I made there—pine frame, axle, and wheels, with cedar top and sides. When I was ten, Gramp gave me a ruler with one-inch squares of different kinds of wood embedded in it.

How old was I when Daddy gave me his old jack-knife that had rich brown wood on its sides? Maybe ten in 1952. I soon learned that a white pine stick made for easy carving—the blade cut smoothly through it like butter. Thus began a life-long love of carving, especially of white pine. At the nearby Girl Scout camp when I was eleven, we made mini-totem-poles, about eight inches tall, from pieces of pine branch a bit over two inches thick. I let the stub of a small side branch become the nose of a face I carved.

When I was a camp counselor in the early 1960's, I carved from pine branches a small six inch canoe paddle for each of the girls in my cabin, that appropriately enough was called Pine Lodge.

Many years later, about 2010, while a volunteer at EarthWalk Vermont, I carved a spiraled "talking stick." I also carved some three-link wooden chains, all made from white pine. They were inspired by the old carved chain I had found in an abandoned hillside farmhouse our family hiked to in New Hampshire in 1955.

When I showed my chains to the children at EarthWalk, they would often ask how I got the chain links to be linked inside each other. I answered by showing them one set of links that I purposely did not finish so they could see that the linked chains had been hiding in the piece of pine branch I started with. All I did was carve away whatever wood was not part of a link, eventually allowing the links to break free from each other, while still inter-linked.

While at EarthWalk, I also learned to make baskets from the bark of a white pine tree, sewn together with roots from spruce trees. The bark is best from the younger

parts of trees, before it gets grooved. It comes off most easily in the spring when the pitchy sap is running. I made some baskets about 2010 and some better ones more recently in 2023.

A recent pine project has been making “stars” from the sections in the trunk of a young pine where new branches go out in all directions. This was inspired by my older brother saving for me such a “star” from a small pine he had cut down. People have been delighted to get these from me at craft fairs.

While making all these pine projects, I became well acquainted with one inescapable feature of working with white pine—pitch! It gets all over your hands, your tools, and your clothes. When I was young, we would scrub and scrub to get it off.

Then while I was at EarthWalk, I learned the simple solution: any kind of vegetable oil dissolves pitch. So “wash” you hands, tools, and the spots on your clothes with oil, then use a lot of dish soap and hot water to remove the gummy mess of oil and pitch—so simple!

In my many years of making nature photographs, both black-and-white and color, I made many images of white pines, including the 1968 image on the facing page.

In the early 1970’s while I was working with my late husband, Gia-fu Feng, on our editions of *Tao Te Ching* and *Chuang Tsu*, I delighted at seeing how his exquisite Chinese calligraphy flowed from his brush right onto prints of my black-and-white photographs for those books.

One day I got the idea of randomly scattering pine needles on a piece of white paper, then gently moving them around a bit with my finger. Often they looked like the brush strokes of Gia-fu’s calligraphy. The photographs of the “pine needle calligraphy” that I made back then over fifty years ago are no longer in my possession. So, while working on this book I thought of making some new pine needle calligraphy. This evolved into my making images of individual bundles of white pine needles and using them as the little text dividers here.



*A reminder of the spirit of this book — As mentioned in the introduction, I deeply experienced in a dream how rocks, plants, rivers, humans, sky, animals, and trees are all my living relatives, that I live in community with them.*

*White Pine—Koa in the Western Abenaki language—truly is one of my relatives, one with whom I have had a life-long friendship.*

*The writings and the many photographs in this book are one of my ways of sharing this perspective, and of inspiring others to recognize similar friendships in their own lives.*

*Rather than viewing the world of nature only as “natural resources” to be used, may we also fully understand the heartfelt satisfaction of being in the living community of “All Our Relatives.”*

# a family photo album . . .

The next few pages are a family photo album of sorts, snapshots that are relevant to some of these stories and memories related in the previous section.

The earliest photographs were made by my grandfather, Walter H. James (1873-1963), on the Portsmouth, New Hampshire farm where he grew up and where he and my grandmother, Ida Rachel Butterfield James (1875-1966), raised my mother up until her 13th birthday. More photographs are by my mother, Ruth James English (1906-1994) and my father, Benjamin W. English, Sr. (1902-1986). These are labeled with their initials: WHJ, RJE, BWE,Sr. respectively. The photographs I made myself are not labeled.

*White pines, big and small, on the Portsmouth farm about 1906* -- WHJ



*Walter H. James driving a load of white pine logs from the Portsmouth farm to a sawmill - 1908*
*Limbs from the tree lie scattered on the hillside behind.*
*All cutting was done with hand saws- no chainsaws back then* -- photo from WHJ collection

*The James family were often in the pine woods having picnics, taking walks, or sitting by "friendship fires."*
*left to right: unknown woman and her daughter, my uncle - Arthur James,*
*my mother - Ruth James, and my grandmother - Ida Rachel James - about 1912* -- WHJ

*Picnic among small pines on the Portsmouth farm - June 20,1909, the 10th wedding anniversary of Ida Rachel and Walter James (Walter was behind the camera)*

*Left to right: unknown girl, Ida Rachel James, Ruth James, Annie Mary James (in the dark dress - Ruth's grandmother), unknown woman (probably the mother of the girl)*

*The pine woods near the farm about 1910 - the farmhouse is in the distance*
*An old field with young pines is between the house and the foreground pines* -- WHJ



*Arthur (left) and Ruth (right) playing in the brook in the pine woods at the farm - 1914* -- WHJ
*Now I understand why my mother encouraged my brother and me to play in our own brook.*

*Ben Jr. (almost age 3) and me - Jane (10 months) - February 1943 at the Big Pines* - RJE



*Ben Jr. and Jane in 1945 at the Big Pines* - RJE

*Jane in a happy place,*
*sitting by a white pine*

*December 1947*
*- BWE Sr*


*Jane and Ben, Jr. by the front door of the 1765 colonial house - each with their own little white pine Christmas tree*

*December 1947*
*- BWE Sr*



*The Pine Room about 1950 - BWE Sr*
*The floorboards and the walls are pine.*
*The pine foot stools and pine chest of drawers were made by my grandfather, Walter H James.*
*A small blanket chest at the left is tamarack - a family treasure from the 1700's.*
*The fireplace is seven feet wide. The picture at the left is a drawing of the front of that house.*

*The back of our house with the old wood shed on the right. Windows were added when it became our playroom. Beyond it is the big white pine by the west door of the house.*

*Jane in 1955*
*at the now much bigger*
*Big Pines* - BWE-Sr



*Cathedral of the Pines and Mount Monadnock - about 1953* - BWE Sr

*Camp Marlyn chapel,*
*Andover, New Hampshire*
*and Mt. Kearsarge - 1966*

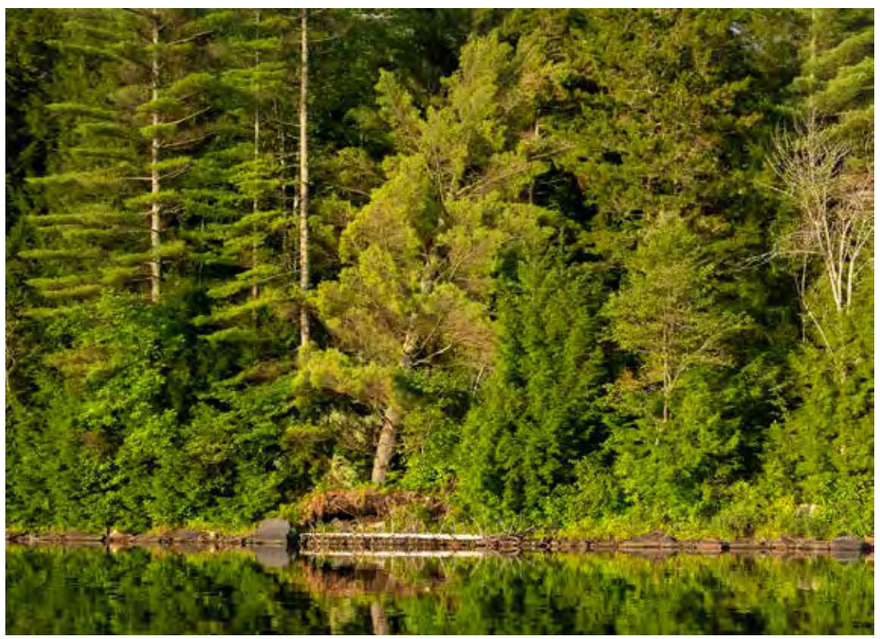
It is important that we not romanticize White Pines. They are not only beautiful and inspiring, they also can be fierce—as when they finally fall. The massive trunk and huge branches tear through smaller trees as they crash down, sometimes crushing the life out of animals—and humans—on which they fall. People near large white pines need to respect these tall presences—do not make camp under a big old pine in a storm, no matter how inviting the soft pine-needle floor under it may seem.

*Here Walter H. James (left) and a friend are cleaning up after the 1938 hurricane at Whippoorwill camp on land that had been part of the farm where Ida Rachel James, my grandmother, had grown up in Dunstable, Massachusetts.* - WHJ collection

*The young folks at EarthWalk Vermont called this "the Fallen Giant" - 2014 The trunk is a bit over 3 feet thick and the tree was about 110 feet tall. More about this tree is in Yasi Zeichner's story on page 134.*



*In 2017 much of our pine forest at EarthWalk blew down in an intense squall.*



*This big pine blew over in a strong thunderstorm in 2013.*
*The roots on its pond side did not extend very far from the tree, so were weak.*

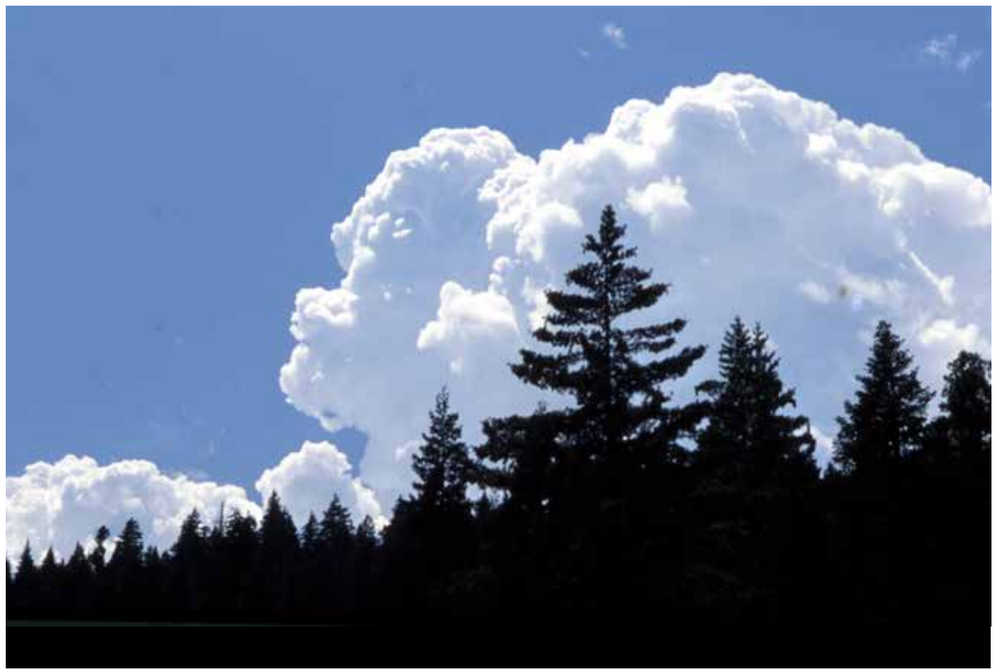
*Watching my grandmother, Ida Rachel James, make this hooked rug in the mid 1950's, I understood that she too had an affection for pines, and for oaks.*

*White Pine (Pinus strobus) - near my home in Vermont - 2015*



*While living near 14,162 foot tall Mount Shasta in far northern California from 1987 to 2002, I was happy to discover that Sugar Pine, a much larger cousin of White Pine, grows there. Sugar pines have enormous cones, up to 20" long, as shown on this big, rather scraggly sugar pine.*

*While I was living a long ways from my friends the white pines, their cousins brought me some of the same sense of being at home.*



*Sugar Pine (Pinus lambertiana) and spruces - near my Mount Shasta, California home - 1999*

*the small wooden truck I made in Gramp's shop with his help on the saw - about 1951*
*pine floor, frame, axle, seat, and wheels, with cedar sides and top*

*from Gramp's journal - August 15, 1951*

Jane is pretty good at planning things and nailing things together


*part of a ruler similar to the one Gramp gave me*



*white pine items carved while at Camp Marlyn in 1967 - the oar is 8″ long*

*white pine chains*
*top - the one found in an abandoned farmhouse*
*middle - my incomplete chain showing how it is done*
*lower - 7″ long carved at EarthWalk, summer of 2017*

*white pine talking stick 21″ tall*

*carved at EarthWalk about 2016*

*the spiral is left unfinished because my life is not yet complete*

*white pine bark and spruce root baskets made at EarthWalk about 2012*

*more white pine bark and spruce root baskets made in 2023 - better craftsmanship*

*white pine star tree ornaments made in 2019*

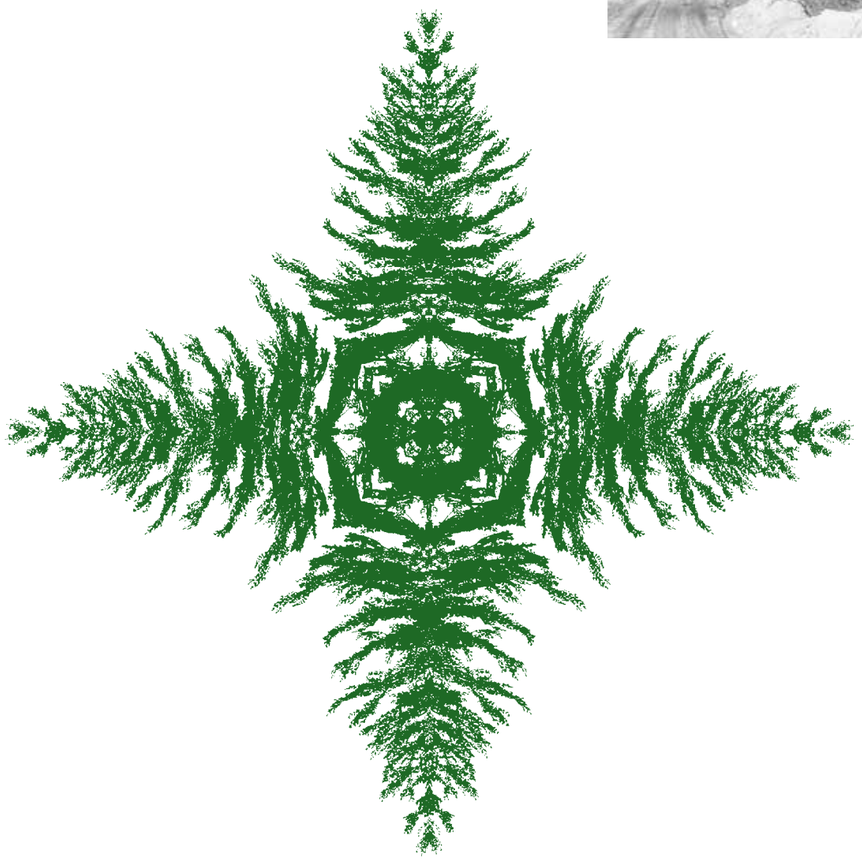
*a pine tree star as it grows in a young pine tree*



When I got my first desktop computer and flatbed scanner in the early 1990's, I began to "play" with my new "toys." One of the first things I did was to make tree art designs using parts of trees, copied, flipped, and rotated, usually eight times.

For the design below I copied and made high contrast the part of the white pine tree that is inside the white triangle in the photo at the right.

Together, my friend White Pine and I created this art.



# White Pines through the seasons . . .

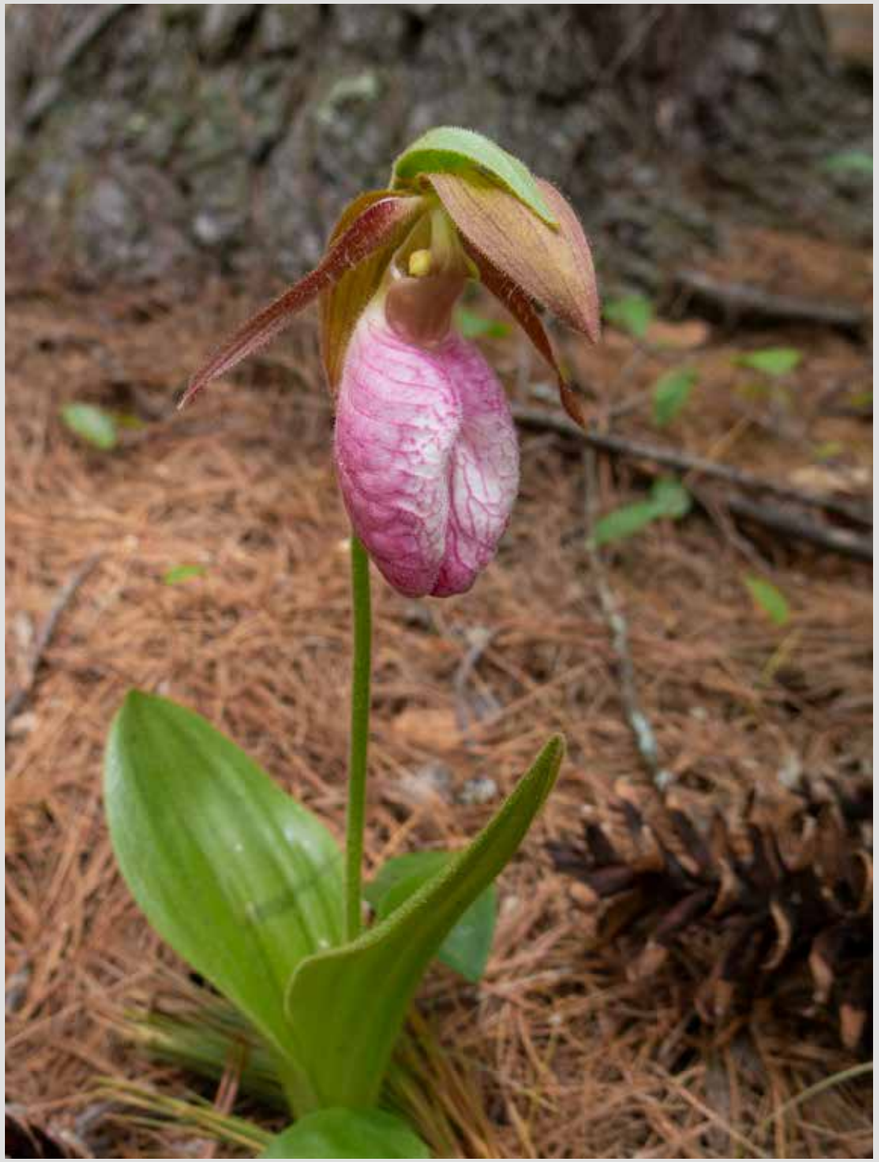
*summer*

*a gentle September day*

*chilly November*

*sunlit pine needles with snow flurries — in the mountains*

*spring color in the flowers of the red maples*
*a new beginning surrounds an old white pine*





*summer - bushy with two years of needles*

*winter - thin with one year of needles*

# White Pines in monochrome . . .

*the pine with a hemlock below and to the left of it*

←

# A Persistent Pine

Just above the dirt road that runs along the hillside across the valley from my Vermont home, there is a white pine that has lived through many difficult times. The top is dead, there is a crack in the trunk from a long-ago lightning strike, and there are large holes in the trunk made by pileated woodpeckers.

Yet the tree persists; it lives on. Two still-living lower branches reach out over the road, finding the sunshine there in the gap in the woods created by the road. An upper branch also reaches out over the road.

Amazingly enough, on this upper branch a new top has sprouted. It looks like a whole new tree perched way out on a branch high up in the air. A count of the sets of branches coming from this new "tree-trunk" shows it to be about twenty years old.

When I walk by this elder white pine friend, I thank her for reminding me to persist through the difficult times in my own life.

*pileated woodpecker holes*

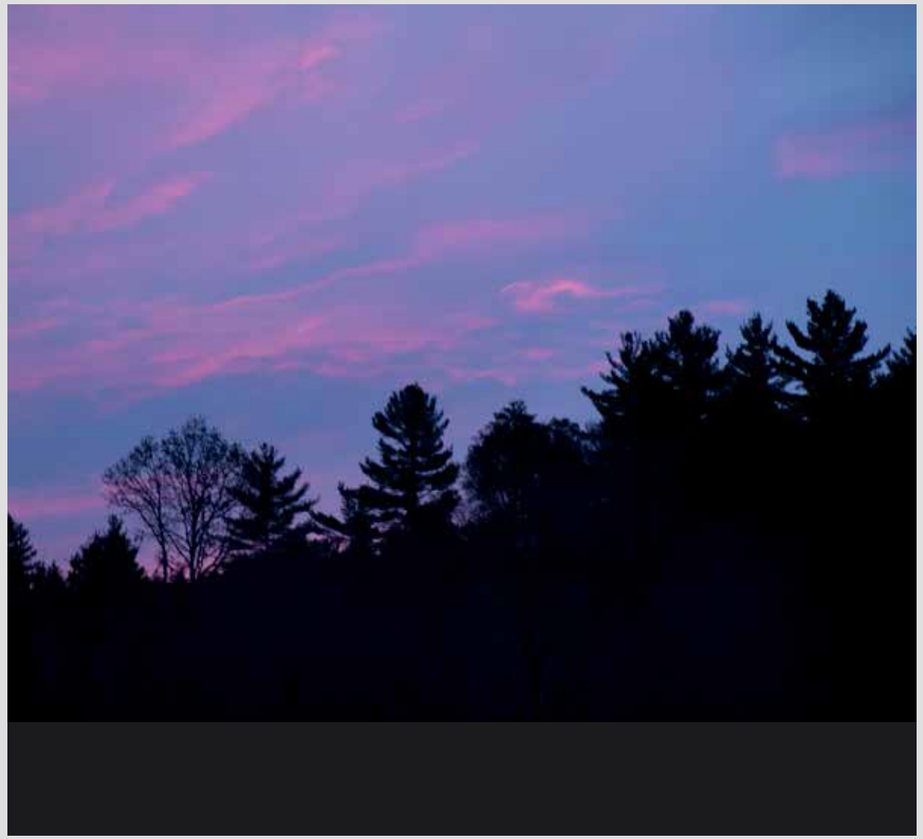
*the new top and the lightning crack*

*In spite of all the trouble in our human world,*
*each day the pine trees still greet the coming sunrise.*

*I join them in that greeting.*

*Wlispôzowiwi*

oo-lee-sponz-o-wee-wee
"good rising" or "good morning" in Abenaki





# More Stories by Friends of White Pines

In the following pages are stories of other people's White Pine friendships.

Interspersed with the stories are wordless images of White Pines that invite you the reader to take your time, absorbing all that White Pine offers.

## A Very Brief History of People and Pines

story and art by John Pastor

After approaching a large and magnificent tree, the first thing most of us do is touch it gently or give it a pat. Tree huggers, hikers, artists, scientists, and loggers all do this. This simple act of communion is the spark for the stories that we tell about these trees. Is there another species that has been so frequently touched by human hands and inspired as much awe in the human soul as the white pine? Eastern White Pine (Pinus strobus) is the foundation species of the North Woods and the cultures that inhabit it. White pine is a generous tree, providing nest sites and perches for bald eagles, seeds for red squirrels, and cavities for birds to nest in; its downed and decaying logs give moisture and nutrients to mushrooms and the voles that eat them.

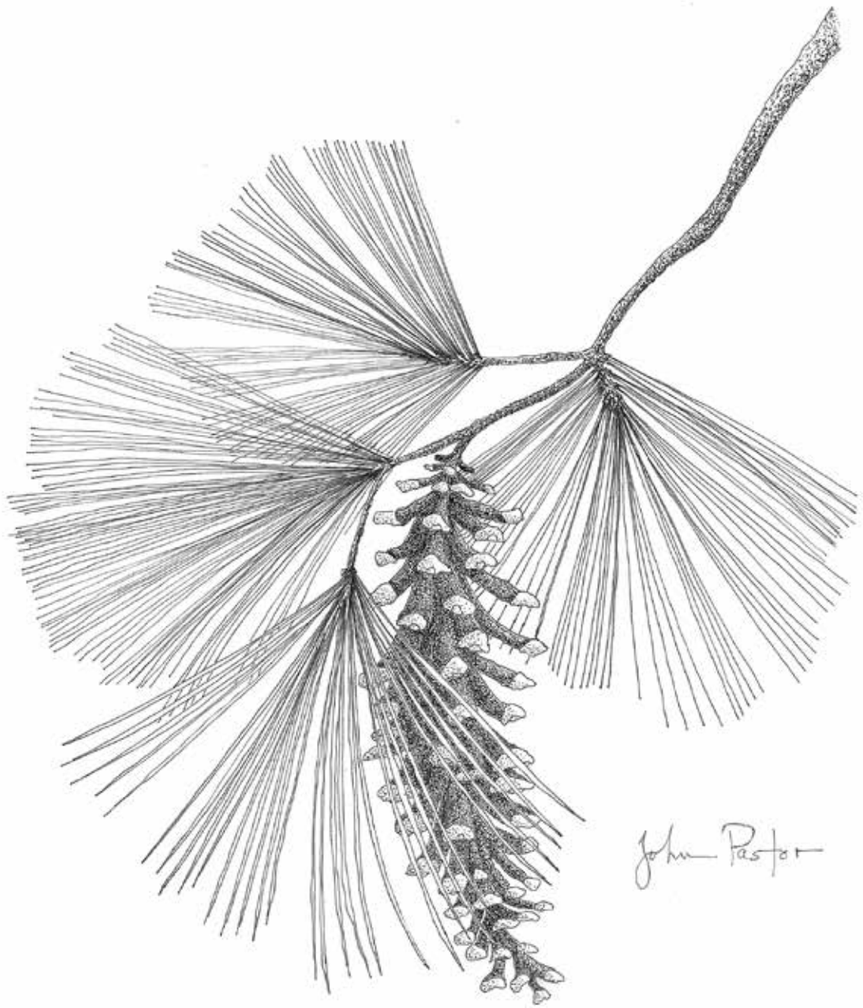
White pine arrived in New England 9,000 years ago from its Ice-Age refuge in North Carolina and Virginia. There, it was greeted by the ancestors of the Abenaki and other Algonquin tribes who preceded it. These peoples have known white pine longer than anyone else and have come to consider white pine a relative.

Old growth white pine forests, untouched by axe or saw, have inspired the American idea of wilderness, from Thoreau's trips into the Maine Woods to the designation of the Adirondacks as a Forever Wild Preserve, the first of the nation.

White pine also built this nation, providing beams, lumber, and paneling for homes and barns from Maine to Minnesota. By 1900, much of the original white pine forest was lost as few if any seed trees had been left to start a new generation. This was and is a great sadness. Still, it required a great deal of skill and courage to fell a mammoth white pine, drag it out of the woods, and saw it into lumber to build homes and furniture.

Loss of white pine throughout much of its original range was the impetus for the development of the sciences of ecology and forestry in America, which lead to the restoration of white pine forests that are managed in more ecologically sustainable ways. As humans increasingly dominate the earth's biosphere, we need to make crucial decisions that determine the future of white pine and all other species. These decisions will be scientific as well as societal. They will require us to treasure our stories about white pine and other species that are foundations of their ecosystems and the cultures that inhabit them.

*John Pastor is an ecologist and emeritus professor of biology at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, where his teaching and research focus on the natural history and ecology of northern ecosystems. He is the author of* White Pine: The Natural and Human History of a Foundational American Tree.



## ***A Grandfather Tree in a City*** - *story and photo by Esther Thompson*

When I discovered that being a Trustee of the Trust Fund for the City of Rochester, New Hampshire, included oversight of the thirty-acre forest downtown, I asked to be nominated. My element is the woods; the woods are my favorite environment. I was nominated, and the City Council voted me in. Management of the investments and authorization of disbursements is the main work of a trustee. Not of interest to me! Fortunately, the other two trustees were tuned in to the boring work and did not need my to help.

My fellow trustees accepted me as I am and were ready to join me outdoors. We went to the outskirts of town, trudging around forgotten cemeteries deep in the woods under tangles of overgrowth. We walked through the pine forest, Dominicus Hanson Park, with our forester. I learned a lot. I fell in love with Hanson Pines. What a treasure Rochester has! These woods lie between the Cocheco River and the high school. Students walk a pedestrian bridge, the Dewey Street Bridge, over the river and through these woods every day to get to school.

I asked the Rochester Facebook group for their memories of walking Hanson Pines while in high school. Their words speak of a woodsy world that brought some balance to their high school student lives:

*"There is a secret bench near the bridge where we smoked weed and giggled as we watched unsuspecting people walk by."*

*"My son spent a lot of time there when he was supposed to be at school."*

*"I spent a lot of time there as a teen and young adult. Love the Pines."*

*"I walked through the pines every single day after school. There was a secret trail in the woods where everyone would go to skip school and smoke weed."*

*"If them pines could talk . . . . "*

*"Soooo true!!!"*

In 2017, the second year of my term as a trustee, Rochester funded a million-dollar project to replace the Dewey Street Bridge. The new pedestrian bridge would span the river in one span. The piers of the old bridge would be removed. Unobstructed river flow is good news for all of us in kayaks and canoes.

To minimize disruption to pedestrian traffic and to ease the construction project, the new bridge was sited alongside the old bridge. This required the removal of several white pines near the Hanson Pines landing. In that set was one of the oldest trees in the park, an enormous white pine on the riverbank. We asked our forester about its age. "Hard to know," he said, "but it was definitely here long before Rochester became a city."

We went to city council. We had some leverage as trustees. The city must abide by the terms of the trust, and Trustees of the Trust Fund were in charge of managing the park to those terms. A year later the city removed that hundred-year-old responsibility from us, but that had not yet happened. I testified at the city council meeting, "This grandfather pine has stood beside the Cocheco River overlooking the city from the days before Rochester was a city. We do not want the granddaddy to be sacrificed to this project."

The city engineer was prepared with what the costs would be to keep the tree. He had a plan which the forester agreed would allow the tree to live for many more years. The city council, notoriously tight-fisted, voted to spend the additional money to save the tree. Grandfather Pine still stands, now overlooking the new Dewey Street bridge.

On a recent tour of the park for city officials, as we approached the pedestrian bridge, the forester said, "This is Esther's tree." Grandfather Pine is not my tree, but people know I love it. They know it is alive today because some of us spoke up to protect it.


NASA image

*Part of the City of Rochester, New Hampshire*

*Esther Thompson started exploring pine woods with her father as soon as she was walking. Eighty years later she still walks the pine forests of Massachusetts, northern New England, and the Canadian Maritimes. She and Jane English were elementary school classmates in Topsfield, Massachusetts in the 1950's and also shared Girl Scout woods adventures.*

*The pine while the new bridge was under construction →*

*The detailed forest plan for Hanson Pines, with maps and photos is at tinyurl.com/3cjj2wch*

## *White Pine Beaded Leather Pouch*

*Francine Poitras Jones*

The beaded pouch is one I made a few years ago on request from a gentleman for his wife, whose favorite tree is the White Pine—the Koa.

I was born in 1948 and grew up in Fitchburg, Massachusetts during a time when children spent a lot of time playing in the woods all year round. We children had an area we played in that we actually called, “The Pines.” I can still remember how the pines smelled on a warm summer day and it wasn’t unusual for me to have sticky pine sap on my hands!

The floor of the woods was covered in pine needles from their dropping year after year. Maybe it was just me, but I found that they made the woods a quiet haven.

Today I live in Virginia with yellow pines instead of white pines, but I still appreciate them. I’m looking out my window at one at this very moment. Her bark is beautiful.

I have children, stepchildren, grandchildren and great grandchildren! As an Elder, I’m active with my Nulhegan Abenaki tribe, even though I live far away from them.

I am a member of the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association - abenakiart.org/francine-poitras-jones/

*also see her Etsy page, BlueWolfCrafts*

## *Hardy Pioneers: White Pines on White Mountain Landslides*

*story and photographs by Steven D. Smith*

The long, bare scars of landslides in the White Mountains are stark displays of the destructive power of Mother Nature, and also of her power to heal. According to Edward Flaccus, whose dissertation, Landslides and Their Revegetation in the White Mountains of New Hampshire (Duke University, 1958), is the seminal work in the field, landslides almost always occur after torrential rains, on steep slopes covered with unconsolidated soil. To the backcountry adventurer, these landslides present scenes both of beauty and of devastation, along with unique views of the surrounding terrain. For students of geology, the slides offer excellent exposures of mountain bedrock and a close look at current geological processes. Those interested in ecology can examine various stages of plant succession in the wake of major disturbance.

In the course of visiting dozens of landslides in the White Mountains of New Hampshire over the last few years, I have been intrigued by the presence of small and medium-sized white pines on numerous slides often well above the normal elevations at which white pines occur. I remembered reading about this arboreal mystery on the informative "White Mountain Sojourn" blog, written by the late Alex MacPhail, a renowned former Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) hutman.

*Pine at 4250′ on*
*← Carter Dome*

*The Arrow Slide on North Hancock*
*seen from South Hancock ↓*

*Two Eastern white pines on the 1954 Gale River Slide, with a spur of North Twin Mountain in the distance.*

While conducting a study of plant succession and soil development on the 1954 slide in the Gale River valley, MacPhail became curious about the origin of a forty-foot white pine that he observed partway up the slide at an elevation of nearly 3,000 feet. During repeated visits he found a total of twenty white pines distributed across the slide, with heights varying between eight and forty feet. There are no other white pines within perhaps two miles of this site. How, he wondered, did these white pines get established as pioneer trees on the barren and disturbed surface of the slide?

I've gone through the photos I've made on 81 White Mountain landslides, and have found at least one white pine, ranging from stunted seedling to medium-sized tree, on 55. On some landslides there is just one or maybe two; on others there are several, though nowhere are they numerous like the yellow and white birches, pin cherries, red spruces and balsam firs that typically revegetate a slide. In 2024 I found them on two slides caused by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. So far, I have seen none on slides triggered by the 2017 Halloween storm. Too soon, I assume. The pines are also lacking on some of the wet, ledgy slides. Not surprisingly, they are most often present on the dry gravelly slides, which present a favorable habitat for white pine seeds.

Of the 55 slides with pines, 29 have occurrences above 3,000 feet, and two above 4,000 feet. One of the more remote occurrences is at 3,700 feet on a slide on the east side of South Twin Mountain, far up in the Little River drainage. *(photo on page 118)* Here the pine is across from a lone tamarack, a species that is only occasionally found on slides. This is in no way a scientific survey, and I may have missed seeing the white pines on a few landslides since I wasn't specifically looking for them until the summer of 2023.

This contrasts significantly with the "presence list" compiled for twenty-two White Mountain landslides by Edward Flaccus in his 1958 dissertation. He found white pine on only five. Some of the slides he visited were recent; others were several decades old.



The slides that I have visited range from the 2010's back to the late 1800's. The most recent slides on which I found white pines slid in 2011.

The obvious question is, how did the pines seed in at these high, remote locations, far from their usual domain? U. S. Forest Service documents give the normal elevation range as up to 2,000 feet in New England and New York and 3,500 feet in the southern Appalachians. Though they are seen on the roadside along the Kancamagus Highway up to the height-of-land at 2,800+ feet, and they are found up to 3,100 feet on Catamount Mtn. in the Adirondacks. Alex MacPhail observed white pines at 2,700 feet on Whitewall Brook above Zealand Falls Hut, and at 3,100 feet on North Moat Mtn. Note that these are all edge or disturbed habitats. The dry gravelly slides are suitable habitat for this sun-loving pioneer species, but how are the seeds dispersed so far from the pine's normal range?

*A stunted Eastern white pine at 4,100 feet, near the top of the Arrow Slide on Mount Hancock.*

*An unusual pairing of tree species is seen at 3,700 feet on a slide on the northeast side of South Twin Mountain. A tamarack is on the left and an Eastern white pine on the right. A flowering pink rhodora bush is in the center; some slides have stunning rhodora displays in early June.*

*Elevation, Location and Slide Year of some of the White Pines*

5000′ Mount Washington - disturbed ground beside the Auto Road - “pinus alpinus?” - 119*
4250′ Carter Dome - Northwest Slide - early 1960’s - diminutive pine - 114*
4100′ Mt. Hancock - Arrow Slide - 1800’s - stunted pine - 117*
3850′ North Twin Mtn. - North Slide - 1995 - small pine
3800′ Franconia Ridge - Walker Ravine South Slide - late 1800’s - small pine
3700′ South Twin Mtn. - Northeast Slide - 1950’s - pine and tamarack - 118*
3700′ Mt. Moosilauke - Tunnel Ravine North Slide - mid 1980’s - several pines
3500′ Franconia Ridge - Liberty-Haystack Slide - 1995 - small pines
3400′ Mt. Tripyramid - First South Slide - 1869 - mid-sized pine - 121*
3100′ Mount Osceola - Southwest Slide - 1954 - mid-sized pine
2850′ Gale River Slide - 1954 - several mid-sized pines - 116*

** page of photo in this article*



*Blue Jay art by Erik Gillard* - *see p. 150*

Would it be dispersal by birds? Another document notes that blue jays and crossbills are among those birds that favor white pine seeds. Blue Jays have seemed to be omnipresent on slides I’ve been to recently. It would seem very unlikely that wind is the agent, as one source gives the maximum distance for wind dispersal as 700 feet in the open.

Retired USFS forester David Govatski, an authority on White Mountains natural history, notes that white pine seedlings do well on exposed soil. He suspects that Blue Jays are likely the source of seeding for the higher elevation white pines, as it would be easy for them to cache seeds on the bare ground of the slides. Research has shown that they will “scatter-hoard” seeds at distances up to 2.5 miles.

William Nichols of the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau notes that white pine is a species fairly well adapted to cold and that it would be more common in the White Mountains if there were more sites with soil disturbance and if it was less prone to wind-throw. His guess is that the occasional small white pines on the slides at higher elevations are taking advantage of the disturbed habitat and bare mineral soil associated with the slides in more protected settings. He agrees with Govatski that Blue Jays, or perhaps some other forest residents, are the agents for white pine seed dispersal.

Daniel Sperduto, recently retired Botanist for the WMNF, has observed a white pine seedling at about 4,400 feet on Mount Bond in the Pemigewasset Wilderness. He found another pine at about 5,000 feet, in the alpine zone alongside the Mount Washington Auto Road. While not in a slide track, the ground there had been disturbed at various times in the past during construction of the road.

These is further evidence of the cold tolerance of this pine species. The latter is likely the highest elevation white pine in the Northeastern U.S.

This could be an interesting project for a grad student!

*White pine seedling at about 5,000 feet, next to Mount Washington Auto Road (photo by Daniel Sperduto)*

I have come to treasure the presence of these often diminutive white pines on the White Mountain landslides. They soften a stark and desolate mountainscape, where the trees that were once anchored tenuously to the steep slopes have been swept away in a cascade of soil and rock. It's heartening to see an old friend from the lowlands scratching out a home high up in the mountains.

One of my favorite slide-haunting pines is on a steep and narrow strip of gravel on the original South Slide of Mount Tripyramid in the Sandwich Range, which came crashing down the 31-degree slope during a tremendous rainstorm on October 4, 1869. This iconic swath of gravel and rock, once known as the "Great Slide," is easily accessed from Waterville Valley by the Mount Tripyramid Trail and is a frequent hiking destination of mine. I often make a point of visiting this medium-sized pine of unknown age *(in the photo to the right)*, which is located slightly off the main track of the slide and of the trail. Over the years this South Slide pine has deposited a soft bed of needles around its base. On a sunny day it's wonderful to pause here, at 3,400 feet, and savor the scent of white pine in the midst of a boreal forest.

As I continue to explore the landslides of the White Mountains, I will ever be on the lookout for more white pines. It will be interesting to see if, in the years to come, they make appearances on the most recent slides triggered by the Halloween storm in 2017. I'll also keep an eye and ear out for the seemingly ubiquitous Blue Jay. Maybe some day I'll catch one in the act of caching white pine seeds in the scarified surface of a slide, and a mystery will be solved.

*Steven D Smith has authored, co-authored, and co-edited several White Mountain guidebooks including the* AMC White Mountain Guide. *He is a member of the AMC Four Thousand Footer Committee and is a WMNF trail adopter. In recent years he has spent much time researching and exploring landslides in the White Mountains. His treks can be followed on his blog at mountainwandering.blogspot.com. From 1998-2025, Steve operated The Mountain Wanderer in Lincoln NH, a map and book store specializing in White Mountain hiking and New England outdoors.*

*This medium-sized white pine is established at 3,400 feet on a narrow gravelly track of the First South Slide (1869) on Mount Tripyramid.* →

## *From Six Poems for Summer - July 6-7 2021*

*III.*

*Wind rustles through White Pines*
*like Ocean crashing on*
*coral reef. Somewhere*
*in memory, the Blue Jay's call*
*echoes White Terns*
*joyous in flight*
*diving for fish*
*on lazy hot Sundays,*
*at the black sand beach*
*in Arue. Lala served tea*
*and almond biscuits.*

*Whales swam*
*in the distance,*
*and the seahorse*
*danced near the darting*
*baby eel emerging*
*to defend his crevice.*

*I took it all in, one breath*
*at a time. The scene*
*is now forever mine*
*to share.*

*V.*

*Wind in White Pines,*
*pagoda limbs floating*
*on musical air passages,*
*sing a distant song*
*plucked from time past,*
*decades*
*ticking like minutes*
*on the grandfather clock.*

*As the tune turns to*
*lullaby, sounds*
*cradling this*
*seasoned self*
*echo sunny moments*
*and rhythmic night skies*
*spent on the tropical*
*side of the equator,*
*where I once lived.*



*Nicola Marae Allain was born in England and raised in Tahiti, French Polynesia. Nicola's creativity is nurtured by the stories from her Polynesian ancestry which she shares in narrative memoir poems. Her performances and poetry have been featured at arts and cultural festivals in the United States and Mexico. She lives in the foothills of the Adirondacks with her husband Joseph, their two poodles, a red-footed tortoise, and the wildlife that share their nature preserve.*

## Carving and Working With Pine

Patrick Lamphere — *photos by Jane English*

*When I begin carving I do not plan very much—my hands and the material find their way and a carving emerges.*

*white pine canoe cup — the hemp twine and pine toggle attach the cup to the paddler's belt*

*decoys carved from a pine log*

*Pine pitch adhesive* — In addition to white pine being a fine softwood for carving, pine sap or resin can be a great primitive adhesive. I use it for timeline accuracy when making reproductions of archaic Native American weapons and utensils.

I collect fresh pine sap from damaged trees or buy packaged resin. Also needed is charcoal and/or rabbit poo, various oxides for color, and beeswax or tallow for tempering as pure resin can be brittle. I have made yellow, black and red pitch glue. Ingredients must be heated together on a shop woodstove or other heating method using safety techniques as it ignites and splashes easily. There are numerous suggestions and recipes on the internet.

*Pine bark cordage* — The inner bark of several trees such as pine, cedar and willow can be used to make suitably strong cordage. I have used all three of the mentioned species for cordage specific to my application when replicating Archaic weaponry.

*Pine needles* — Long leaf pine needles are often used to make small baskets.

*Pine as a finish tool* — A resinous piece of pine can be an effective tool in finish of objects made from other species. Rubbing hardwood with a piece of resinous pine hardens, seals and aids in preserving the object.

*Pine finishes* — Pine will easily accept color from natural as well as manufactured agents. In my general contractor life we stained it in many ways, since retirement I have used a variety of organic methods to achieve the wanted look. Tea, bloodroot, onion skin, charcoal, metal oxides, blueberry etc. have helped me achieve the goal with pine objects.

*Pine as food* — Pine needles make a good medicinal tea.

*Pine wood as a material* — We all know pine as a building construction material. Good for trim but not structural because it is brittle, first tree to shear off in a storm. But its my go to for large wooden bowls. Its easy to carve, easy to finish, non toxic, fast growing, inexpensive, readily available and familiar to most people.

*white pine pitch helps attach the stone blade to the handle of this knife*

*Patrick Lamphere is an octogenarian citizen of the Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi in Vermont who works with wood, leather, stone, bone, shell, antler, fur, feathers and metal. His nom de couteau is "Blackhand" — abenakiart.org/patrick-lamphere*

## *White Pine: the Tree of EarthWalk*

*story with art and photos by Angella Gibbons*

It was in the early spring of 2005, with the idea of starting a Nature School, that I took off my shoes on the edge of a forest on the Goddard College Campus in Plainfield, Vermont. I walked down a soft pine-needle footpath. My senses were alert—smelling the rich forest, looking up and seeing the towering White Pine trees with the cedars, firs, and birches growing beneath—one bare foot placed in front of another on the soft pine needle forest floor, slowly taking it all in. An unmistakable bird song with hundreds of notes—Winter Wren was welcoming me in.

After a few long mindful minutes, my gaze started up the trunk of a huge white pine, one that was as far around as the out-stretched arms of three people. Up my eyes went to the tree branches, arms of her own—trunk and more branches reaching up, maybe a hundred feet towards the sun! "Well, hello Grandmother!" I may have even said it out loud. "Thank you for being here".

I knew at that moment that Grandmother White Pine would be watching over the many circles of children who would gather at her base those first formative years of EarthWalk. The first circle began with just seven children with two mentors later that Spring. In the Fall of that year, nineteen children showed up on a Thursday morning for their first day of "school". EarthWalk Village School was one full day a week for children ages 6-12, learning, exploring, crafting, playing in the forest, meadows and along the Winooski River, and always returning to the circle to share stories of the land and sing songs to strengthen our community.

*Grandmother White Pine at EarthWalk*

Our village community was growing. By 2007 the Village community of EarthWalk had annually welcomed hundreds of children, teens, mentors, elders, and parents, so we moved our gathering place to the more expansive Hawthorn Meadow. There, the pines of both "White Pine Circle" and "Pine Island" gracefully held and watched over our growing EarthWalk community circles.

One of my favorite stories I learned, and used to tell at EarthWalk, was "The Tree of Peace" or "The Peacemaker." The story has many powerful themes: Hiawatha, peace brought to warring nations, and weapons buried where a white pine seed was planted. Before I created EarthWalk, I heard a story about the Tree of Peace which I was told was falling over, and it would take hundreds of children, working together to lift the "Great White Pine" back up again.

For more than 15 years, just up the well-worn foot path from Grandmother White Pine, EarthWalk Vermont lifted the fallen "Great White Pine," rooted her back in the earth, cast out many new seeds, planted new seedlings and nurtured learning and new growth—of hundreds of children! All deeply connecting to white pines and ravens, building shelters, playing Coyote Deer, weaving spruce-root baskets, making many bow-drill fires, whittling spoons, bundling up in layers, tracking gray fox, building Quinzhee snow-shelters, sharing stories, tapping Maple Trees, eating fiddleheads, walking barefoot, playing in the river, catching crayfish, laughing with friends, following fisher, having a Sit Spot, making dandelion fritters, listening to songs of thrushes ,and singing songs of hope and healing.

I am truly grateful for the land, the community and all the children, teens, mentors, and elders, who continue to lift the Great White Pine Tree for future generations.

May there be peace on earth.

*Angella (Ange) Gibbons, nature educator, tracker and EarthWalk founder, has been mentoring groups of people of all ages to reconnect with and care for one another and the earth for over 35 years.*

*Ange is still very inspired by the EarthWalk vision, and carries this work forward in partnerships with families, libraries, schools, and other organizations.*

*Her website is letsearthwalk.org*

photo by Angella Gibbons

*A white pine at EarthWalk decorated with edibles for our bird friends*

*PIne Island at EarthWalk*

photo by Angella Gibbons

photo by Angella Gibbons

## *The Fallen Giant* - *Creation out of Destruction*

*Yasi Zeichner - 2014*

Cathedral Grove is a stand of great Eastern White Pines, interspersed with younger cedars, spruces, and a few hardwoods. Most of the pines are so big I can't wrap my arms all the way around them. They reach high into the sky, offering shade and shelter for any passing through. The ground in the grove is covered thickly with their rusty orange needles.

Walking through the grove in the warmer seasons, I can hardly hear my own footfalls on the bed of pine needles. Above me, I can hear the chattering of chickadees, sparrows, phoebes, and the rasping call of the resident ravens. Occasionally, I hear the long, lyrical song of a winter wren, or even the woosh of a raven's wing just above the treetops. I see squirrels scurrying up into the trees at my approach, and if I walk quietly enough and I'm lucky, I might glimpse a deer or a fox silently wending their way through the trees. In the winter, the snow abounds with the tracks of the animals that make the Grove and surrounding forest their home. Coyote and fox hunting trails lead through here, raccoons wander through, squirrels and chipmunks bound between the tree trunks, and deer bed under the shelter of the great pines.

Cathedral Grove is located on the Goddard College Campus in central Vermont, on land used by EarthWalk Vermont, an outdoor education center for kids. Year round, children and teens cross the swampy stream separating the Grove from the rest of the woods, and go through Cathedral Grove on wanders and scavenger hunts; they build debris huts to camp out in, play hide and seek, collect wild edibles, and track local wildlife. As well as being a natural habitat, these woods are part of a learning experience that brings children closer to nature; some have their quiet "sit spot" among these trees. I have gotten to know and love these woods as a participant and a camp mentor in this program; Cathedral Grove is part of a whole tract of land that has become almost a second home to me.



Occasionally, storms sweep through the woods, taking some trees down, usually small insignificant trees, soon forgotten. The wood will rot into the ground or get reused by the animals or us. The great pines stand strong in the winds, and remain, as if nothing could bring them down. In fact, I'd never seen significant destruction in those woods, protected as they are by the huge trees. Not until this summer, that is.

In a wind storm earlier in the year, one of the Cathedral Pines came down. When I think of destruction in the woods, I immediately think of that tree. It took several other trees with it, either tearing them up by the roots, or crashing down on top of them as it fell. Where its roots once were buried, there is now a swampy crater filling with water, and where its spreading branches once provided shade, there is now a great hole ripped in the canopy. The huge tree itself lies on the ground, an interruption in the original flow of the land.

At first glance, the deadfall site seems like a complete mess. The once 100+ foot high tree is lying there on its side, its branches sticking up every which way, and the giant root ball creating a wall with more trees stuck horizontally to it. Behind the towering root ball, there's a large watery area, which smells swampy and looks like a black buggy bog. My first thought on seeing this spot was one of sorrow, because of the wreckage of the place; also, it's as if a presence in the forest has been lost.

Despite the obvious destruction, there are actually many redeeming aspects. When this tree fell, it opened the forest canopy, allowing more light through onto the forest floor. New growth will spring up; younger trees, and smaller plants and shrubs will not struggle as hard to find light, and will flourish under the patch of open sky. Crevices under the tree trunk and the root ball and between the branches will provide temporary shelter or a cozy home for some animal. There is now easy access to the whole tree trunk, making it easier for animals such as porcupines to feed on the bark and the smaller branches. More

insects will inhabit the wood, now that the tree is dead, in turn providing more food for birds and mammals that will feed on those insects. Over some years, the wood will break down and put carbon and minerals back into the soil. The swampy area that formed where the roots used to be will become a new little habitat: a breeding ground for frogs, toads, salamanders, and insects. It will also be a mini watering hole for passing animals. And every animal that is affected will in turn affect another place or another animal, continuing the cycle of life in the forest.

The first time I visited the fallen tree, I was taking a group of young summer camp EarthWalkers on a nature wander. The kids enthusiastically climbed all over the huge fallen tree trunk, crawling between the branches, leaning up on the roots, exploring the nooks and crannies created there. To them it was like a giant ready-made fort and jungle gym. We talked about what made the tree fall, how old it must have been, where all that wood actually came from, how long it would take for it to decompose, and more. We spent the good part of an hour there, and nobody wanted to leave at the end of the day.

What made the biggest impression on me, other than the sheer size of the tree, was the part of the tree that could not be seen when it was alive. The flat side of the root ball, where it towered up like a wall, showed an intricate winding pattern of roots. I could see the whole network that the tree had used to supply itself with water and nutrients from the ground.

I've discovered from my experience this summer that destruction in nature can bring benefits to its surroundings; create new habitats, provide more food or shelter. And above practical benefits, it can bring understanding, and also beauty. These last two things I believe will bring us closer to the natural world, and can make us feel more a part of it in today's busy world of technology.

*added in 2023*—Before writing this Cathedral Pine essay, I'd never thought I could find so much good in the destruction of a fallen tree. Whenever I see a huge deadfall like that Cathedral Pine, I am in awe of its size when seen on the ground, and of the incredible force it must have taken to tear those roots out of the Earth. But until now, I have mostly seen the surface value of the destruction, and not the deeper and long-term benefits that can occur.



The most beautiful thing to me about the Cathedral Pine is that it keeps giving, through its destruction. It continues to provide for the needs of the resident wildlife. And the kids on the land at the EarthWalk nature program love that tree; not a week goes by that they don't visit it. I am now in awe of the hidden beauty in this fallen pine; the intricate root pattern that was hidden below the ground, and the new value that it brings to that place in the woods for both animals and people.

Isn't this how all life should be? A cycle; a continuation of giving, even after death.

*by 2023 the bark on the trunk was gone and new life had emerged there*

photo by Angella Gibbons

*An EarthWalk mentor and children up on the roots*

*I've grown up in, and still live in, the woods and hills of central Vermont. I have been shaped by the land, and I find peace, joy, and reflection in sitting with trees, wandering through forests, watching birds and other wildlife, and rock-hopping along woodland brooks.*

*Years ago during my time at EarthWalk, I wrote this piece about a huge fallen White Pine, which gives to life even after death.* —
*Yasi Zeichner*

photo by Neal Maker

*Large and interestingly-formed trees always make me stop to wonder about their histories. I came across this one on the far side of a remote pond. The forest structure suggests the area was once a partially wooded pasture, where early European-American settlers left scattered trees standing. When one of the old trees was uprooted—probably by a summer thunderstorm—this pine germinated on the mound of soil it left behind. As the soil settled, the pine grew burly buttress roots to stabilize itself. Hollows among the roots reveal the contours of the original 'tip-up mound' which has since worn down. —Neal Maker*



## *A New Order*

*Neal Maker*

White pines have flourished in coastal New England and the Adirondacks for millennia. They prospered in the managed forests of the Wampanoag and the Narraganset, raising their young trees on fire-scoured seedbeds. For generations, the white pine communities graced the sandy deltas and dry western slopes of Lake Champlain.

In contrast, most pines are relative newcomers among Vermont's northern hardwoods. Before the land clearing of the early American Republic, they were a minority, confined to sandy river bottoms and dry ridges. As the agricultural boom waned and fields were abandoned, pines spread from these retreats into the open land. Well-adapted to the trampled, impoverished soils, they quickly gained dominance.

But the ranks of white pine are now thinning. Unable to compete with the patient, shade-tolerant maples or the vigorous spruces that thrive in the acidic pine duff, young pines struggle to replace their elders, Once-uniform pine stands are transforming into beautifully complex mixed forests, where scattered old pines rise above a colorful sea of other species. Ravens still call from the lofty crowns of pines, but now wood thrushes join their chorus. A new order is emerging.

*Neal Maker is a practicing forester and forest researcher who serves on the Conservation Commission for the town of Calais, Vermont.*

## *The Pine at Terra Optima Farm*

*poems and photo by Cheryl Denz*

***5:00 am Farm Report - March 25, 2024***

*She's not that old*
*But she's a big tree*
*The only tree*
*Front of the farm house property*
*I left standing*
*After moving here*
*A few decades ago*
*She was about eight*
*Maybe ten feet tall*

*When the gnarly pasture pine*
*Was forced by the*
*Weight of snow turned ice*
*Thicker than she could bear*
*Began to shed her branches*
*One Two Four*
*At a time*
*The sound of her*
*Splitting cracking falling*
*Limbs heard by*
*My neighbor across the road*
*The damage great*



*Her stand out presence*
*Only pine front view*
*Behind the farm stand*
*Will be sorely missed*
*She is after all*
*The only source of shade*
*No classic beauty*

*Her long reaching limbs*
*Have shielded many a*
*Seedling tray while they*
*Awaited planting*

*Quite a few dogs have*
*Lounged in her shade*
*Waiting for master*
*Or mistress*
*To stop talking*
*Continue their walk*
*Along the road*

*I always call her*
*The Old Pine*
*Though she is*
*Younger than me*

*We were very lucky*
*This storm round*
*The farm stand*
*Did not get crushed*
*Beneath her heavy limbs*
*The tractor parked*
*Behind her*
*Missed damage*
*By a few inches*
*And no one*
*Was trapped inside*

*Surviving on*
*Victoria's delicious pies*
*If they had been*
*Wouldn't have been*
*End of the world*

*Her time has come*
*We cleaned up*
*The fallen limbs*
*Cut off all*
*Hangers from the*
*Farm stand roof*
*Dragged everything*
*Away from the road edge*
*Stacked neatly for chipping*

*Most likely we will finish*
*That process*
*It will be*
*A long day of work*
*For my colleagues*
*And me*
*Lay her down*

*The power of*
*The latest storm*
*Finally forced*
*Me to make the*
*Decision*

*Carry on*
*We shall*
*We are farmers*
*Dealing with*
*Climate change.*
*I'm off to the barn*
*I'll be back later*

***3:45 am Farm Report - June 1, 2024***

*There's a hole in the sky*

*We laid the Big Old Pine*
*Down*
*The last day of May*

*A day when the breeze brushed*
*Her boughs lightly*
*Sun lit her with glowing radiance*
*Even clouds came floating by*
*Saying their goodbyes*

*There's a hole in the sky*
*Left by her absence*
*Will I miss her presence*
*How could I not*
*She was the only large tree*
*Front of the farm*

*Passersby remarks varied*
*"Different"*
*"Looks nice"*
*"You're going to miss the shade"*
*Cars slowed*
*One person gave us a*
*Thumbs up*
*I saw the extended arm*
*As he drove by*
*Wondered if it's the man*
*Who took the job*
*Sweeping snow laden*
*Boughs every storm*
*Releasing her arms*
*Off the mailboxes set along*
*The roadside*

*Sixty feet wide*
*All those untamed branches*
*Snapped under*
*Any pressure*
*Even my light weight*
*Friend's feet*
*As he set the pull lines*
*Before lunch*
*Remarkable in mass*

*When he walked away*
*He took for scale*
*A photo of me in yellow*

*There's a hole in the sky*
*Behind the farm stand*
*Asked if I thought*
*About planting*
*Another tree*
*It won't be a pine*
*That I know*

*The relief of knowing*
*The farm stand won't be crushed*
*Next snow storm*
*Or*
*That branches won't land*
*On truck or tractor*
*As they have every year*
*Or*
*The worry waking in the night*
*As the wind kicks*
*Into high blow mode*
*Wondering where I parked*

*Not to mention*
*The gummy sap hard to*
*Get off paint finishes*
*And clothes*
*Won't miss that*

*I will miss the Big Old Pine*
*Not that old*

*When asked how large she was*
*When we bought the farm*
*I recollected she*
*Was eight -10 feet tall*
*The rings we counted*
*Bore this as truth*
*No more than forty years old*
*Forty five if I missed*
*A few growth marks*

*There's a hole in the sky*
*Behind the farm stand*
*The landscape*
*Suddenly sunnier*
*Rather ordinary and plain*

*Amazing how one tree*
*Even an untamed pasture pine*
*Branches criss crossed*
*Half of them broken*
*Somewhere in the middle*
*Dressed up the place*
*She did*
*What ever will I plant*
*That could possibly*
*Take over the job*
*I'm not sure yet*
*The list is endless*
*Climate shifting the way*
*It is*
*I need to give her*
*Replacement a lot of thought*

*That hole in the sky*
*Every day*
*A reminder*
*Sometimes we need to*
*Make a change*
*Seems really difficult*
*But in the end*
*It'll be okay.*

*I'm off to the barn*
*I'll be back later*

—from "Farm Report" at facebook.com/TerraOptimaFarm
Cheryl Denz is a livestock farmer, poet, and owner of Terra Optima Farm in Appleton, Maine.

## *from White Pine Tree to Art Barn*

*text and photos by Erik Gillard*

In August 2022 we decided to do some logging on the hillside behind our home to make way for a new building—a barn, art-studio, workshop—a multi functional space to support creativity and community. There will be a printing press, an art studio, a root cellar and food processing space, work benches for puppet making, crafts, conversations and general tinkering, space for painting banners and signs, meeting, office and living space upstairs, and cozy nooks to share tea and watch the sunset.

To make way for the art barn we needed to fell a few bigger white pines—one over 28" diameter and almost 80 years old. My friend Al Lundberg bartered his tree climbing arborist services and helped fell the trees—piece by piece in a safe manner in a tight spot on a breezy day—so as not to damage surrounding trees, buildings, powerlines, and road!

We kept the log-length pieces to mill into boards and timbers using the portable sawmill brought by another friend, Gordon. We did our best to honor every bit of the pine.

Andrew Purdy and Alex Utevsky of Ardeya Timberworks cut a fine post and beam timber frame from the pines we didn't saw into boards, and they now stand proud as the main supports for this art barn.

On the next two pages are five poems I wrote in honor of the Pines, their ultimate gift of life, body, beauty and structure. They will live on for a long time in this building and I look forward to carrying on their magnificent legacy.

*Erik Gillard AKA Uncle E-rok is an artist, activist, printmaker, poet, wilderness guide and youth mentor living in Western Abenaki territory/ North Central Vermont. See some of his art at earthshinestudio.bigcartel.com or on Instagram @uncle.erok*

← *Erik on the stump of his pine*

## *Honoring the Pine*

*Poems by Erik Gillard — photos by Jane English*

*Sunlight, soil, rain, wind*
*Decades building Pine body*
*Thankful for this life*

*Inside the tree rings*
*Echo a thousand different storms*
*Strength of survival*

*Growing on the hill*
*Reaching for a hundred feet*
*Remembering the sky*

*Made a studio*
*Boards, posts, beams, Pine, Cedar and Spruce*
*Forest art will grow*

*Branches soft and green*
*Shine golden in the afternoon*
*Let us share tea here*

## *From White Pines to Their Pine Cousins and The Forest*

*story and photos by Scott Bailey*

I am not sure I fully understand my relationship with white pines, but it is certain that they have always been an important part of my life, leading me to a quest to meet all 41 species of Pine in the United States, and on a career in forest research. Everywhere I have ever lived, white pines lived within tens of feet of our house, usually as the tallest tree around. Their closely spaced whorls of branches made them the most easily climbed trees in my childhood neighborhood. And as they were usually the tallest, climbing them gave the greatest reward in revealing new perspectives.

Despite growing up in a suburban area with closely spaced houses, plentiful white pines remained on the sandy soils of the Chicopee glacial delta. Whether in my backyard, or in the swamps in the only undeveloped areas between subdivisions, I spent much of my early years looking for frogs and turtles and could often be found climbing white pines to take in the view and scope out new areas for exploration. When I was old enough to ride a bicycle, my sphere of exploration expanded to the Connecticut River (Kweniteqw in the indigenous Abenaki language), where the meadows and floodplain forests (Massakwsek) were the main wild areas in the extended neighborhood, and where I continued to spend as much of my free time as I could in the outdoors.

Often for school vacations, I was sent to visit my grandparents who lived in a much more wooded, rural area than anything I knew at home. From the patio at the edge of their lawn, a bedrock outcrop, something unknown in my hometown, beckoned. Scrambling up the ledges, one arrived at a grove of white pines. After climbing to the upper portions of one of the trees, one had an expansive view of the Ware River valley (Menimesit), and across to the ridge at the opposite side. This was a magical place to a young boy escaping suburbia. There were few toys at my grandparents' house, and no other children to play with. Instead, when I was headed there for a visit, I would borrow A Golden Guide to Trees (or Birds, or Wildflowers…) from the Wolf Swamp Road School library to see who I could find in my grandparents' forest. It seems that the white pines at the top of the ledge had acted as my guide leading me deeper into the forest, with a desire to learn who else was living there.


*White Pine from my pine notebook, started when I was in college.*

Other vacations were usually spent at our extended family's camp on an island on Little Sebago Lake. The cabin there was quite small, so I made my camp in a tent under a grove of towering white pines. Besides more tree climbing to scope out the extended scene, and identify coves to explore via canoe, this grove was the tallest on the six-mile-long lake, providing a homing beacon, guiding the return path after a long paddling excursion. It was perhaps camping in this grove where I was still and idle long enough to first notice other features of white pines, such as the sound of the wind passing through their branches, or the pungent aroma of the grove on a calm, dry summer day.

In college, I spent a good portion of one summer at geology field camp in the Tobacco Root Mountains of Montana, the first time I had been west of New York. Carrying on with habits I had developed visiting my grandparents, I had purchased a copy of Rocky Mountain Trees by Richard Preston at the college bookstore, to enhance explorations during breaks from studying rocks. While there were no white pines in this area, there were several new species of pine to meet. Around this time, I developed a goal of meeting as many species of pine as I could find and began a notebook to record my acquaintances. The most elusive and unusual pine in the area, as well as the one most closely related to the white pines of home, was the whitebark pine. It took most of the summer, and a long trailless climb up the highest nearby mountain to find the whitebark. They are the only stone pine in North America. Stone pines, including the whitebark, require animals to disperse them. The seeds are very large, with no

*Clark's Nutcracker - woodcut by Claire Emery*
*www.emeryart.com*

wing, and the cones don't open when they are ripe. The Clark's Nutcracker, Blue Jay's cousin, co-evolved with them to break open the cones and disperse the seeds, planting them in wide ranging caches. Visiting the subalpine zone where they lived was fascinating, an opportunity I might have missed without the desire to meet this pine. And this experience crystallized my determination to visit all of the pine species in the United States.

Over the years, pines have continued to inspire my wanderings and lead me to amazing places. On our honeymoon, my wife and I took a hike to see the foxtail pines in the shadow of the volcanic cone of Mount Shasta. Most recently, the

*Visiting with foxtail pine, on our honeymoon, on Mount Eddy, Siskiyou County, CA, June 1994*

climax of my pine quest was visiting with the five thousand plus year old bristlecone pines, another trailless hike, this time one of the longest, and the highest elevation hikes I had ever done. Among other things, I was grateful to the bristlecones for inspiring me to stay in good enough shape to accomplish this. And it was a humbling experience to be in the presence of such wise elders.

With a childhood and formative years getting to know white pine and my other forest neighbors, I developed a desire to continue learning about forests and to do my part to promote responsible stewardship. I was fortunate to be able to turn an undergraduate degree in geology into a research career in forest ecology by specializing in the study of how rocks break down to create soil, and in turn, support forests. Studies of acid rain impacts on forest soils contributed to the justification for policies that cleaned up the air pollution that had led to acid rain. Studies of sugar maple decline disease led to a better understanding of the nutritional requirements of this iconic species and suggested management strategies to promote their health and resilience.

I am told that my ancestors came to North America from Europe. Some were prisoners of war who came as indentured servants and had to work years to earn their freedom. Others came on their own free will, seeking religious freedom, while being oblivious to the rights of the Indigenous Peoples to similar freedoms. Although my heritage is not that of an indigenous person, growing up with the white pines and other forest neighbors, I have tried to live in a naturalized rather than a colonial fashion, learning from the natives – human, pine, and others, who have lived for millennia on the land that is my home. Whether this takes the form of observing and listening to the trees or studying the indigenous language of the region (as evidenced by my use of Abenaki place names above), this is an ongoing process. I am grateful to the white pines, my neighbors still, who continue to inspire explorations of the natural world, and whose sights, sounds, and smells evoke many treasured memories.

*Scott Bailey went from a childhood climbing and camping in the white pines to a professional career as a research scientist with the USDA Forest Service.*

*Now retired, he continues his quest to visit all of the pine species of the United States and to never stop learning. Recently he has been learning the Western Abenaki language.*

*Visiting with an elder bristlecone pine, White Pine County, Nevada, October 2023*

# LOGGING

***the transformation of beautiful trees***
***into beautiful and useful homes, furniture and paper***

*Jane English with Kyle Foster*

*"I love white pines."*

That is what logger Kyle Foster said when I first met him at the foot of my driveway and told him I am working on a book about white pines. I was pleasantly surprised to hear a logger speak of his love for white pines. His logging operation was on a neighbor's land was right across the dirt road from my home in Vermont.

*View down the driveway and across the dirt road*

Many of us love white pines, and many of us love pine furniture and cozy knotty-pine-paneled rooms. On the other hand, many people have misgivings about logging, about "chopping down the trees" and "tearing up the land." But logging is a necessary phase in the transformation of the beautiful trees into beautiful furniture, floors, walls and paper. As a subscriber to Northern Woodlands magazine, and primarily interested in its nature stories, I had also become somewhat acquainted with modern mechanized logging through the magazine articles about that. I was delighted with this opportunity to see it first hand, almost literally on my doorstep.

I asked Kyle if he talks to the trees he is about to cut. His reply was, *"I give them a pat, and ask them not to kill me as they come down."*

During our further conversations he said:

*When I was a kid my sandbox was in the pines. I played there by myself. I was out there since I was two. I would climb up in the pines. It was a big sand hill with huge white pines. I had good toy equipment—trucks, excavator, etc. not little ones but big ones, like Tonka toys—real steel, not plastic. I would brush away the pine needles to get down to the sand. I made logging roads. I used sticks for culverts.*



*When we drove to my Grandpa's camp up at Rangeley in Maine, I looked at all the equipment we passed along the way. I would correct my grandmother about the difference between a backhoe and an excavator. The backhoe has rubber wheels, not tracks.*

*I played with my sandbox toys all the way up until I was 16. Then when I wanted to get my driver's license my Mom said I had to stop playing with my toys and get real equipment. So I stopped playing in my sandbox.*

*When I bought a house just before I got married my Mom brought me back all my toy trucks and equipment, that I will eventually share with my daughters and son.*

*I like walking in the woods. When I go hunting I'm really just taking a gun for a walk in the woods while I admire Mother Nature's garden*

*People "consume" trees so loggers are necessary. Trees will fall down eventually and rot into the ground. All I take is the trunk and the rest rots as it would do eventually anyhow.*

*I've seen owls and eagles and deer while out in the woods. Once I worked in an area where there were 22 deer. They were bedded down and we could drive our equipment right between them.*

*There was one tree I cut down and a tiny baby squirrel fell out on the ground. I saw that the log had a squirrel nest in a hollow place where the tree split. The mother was up on the hillside running back and forth and chattering. "Now what do I do?" I thought. So I cut the log above and below the nest, then with gloves on put the baby that fell out back in the nest. Then I took the chunk of wood with the nest up on the hillside. Came back the next day and the babies were all gone, and there were lots of tracks where the mother had carried them away.*

*For logging there is a sequence:*

- *First a use plan, a land use plan that sets out what use can be made of the land, and what kind of logging. The plan is based on what is best for the forest*
- *Then a forester goes through and marks the trees to be cut, marks them in a way that conforms to the use plan.*
- *The logger cuts the marked trees and pulls the logs out to a landing. This is done in winter with snow and frozen ground to minimize disturbance. Be out of the woods before mud season.*
- *Then a trucker takes the logs to a mill -- about 9000 board feet per truckload. Some go to local mills and some over to Maine.*


My living room window gave me a fine view of Kyle's work with the loader - a big truck-mounted machine that includes a hefty crane with claws dangling off the end, a five-foot diameter chop saw, a cradle for holding the logs to saw, and an attached rig for removing limbs. There was such quick precision in his work—grabbing then swinging through the air the heavy, long pine, fir, and spruce logs, sorting them into piles of lumber logs and pulp logs of various sizes, then loading them into trucks for the trip to the sawmill or paper mill—the next step in the journey to becoming furniture, houses, and paper.



Walking with a friend up into the woods on his skid road, I was impressed at how the disturbance of the land was minimal, especially where he crossed a small stream. Big poplar logs that are not useful for lumber were laid in the stream and mid-sized branches covered the road before and after the stream, protecting the land and stream from the big chain-covered tires of his skidder. When these logs were removed after he completed the logging, the stream, other than having somewhat muddy banks in a few places, looked relatively undisturbed. Logging is best done in winter while the ground is frozen.

*Stream crossing with branches and poplar logs to protect the ground, then cleaned up afterwards*

Watching all this happen just across the road from my home had brought me appreciation for the process of the transformation of the bodies of my friends the white pines into beautiful and useful houses, furniture, and paper that serve humans so well.

I thank the trees for their gifts.


*Over 100 years ago, the area selectively cut in 2024 was totally open - probably a sheep pasture*

*photo courtesy of Earlene Leonard*


*photo courtesy of Dorothy Singleton*

*This aerial image from the 1970's shows young trees in the area that had been open. These are what Kyle cut in 2024. There are 86 rings in the largest pine he cut, so it started to grow in the mid-1930's.*

*Transformation*

1
Trees

2
Logs

3
Lumber

4
Furniture

***Returning*** *- Joseph Bruchac*

A hurricane wind came through this grove of all white pines by the edge of the creek almost five years ago. The big trees which were uprooted then have grown smaller since their fall. Limbs have rotted away in the moist woods and the massive trunks have settled further each year into the soil. Climbing over them, I see the bone yellow wood flake away beneath my fingers. The scent of pine stays on my hands and there are bits of crumbled wood tissue under my fingernails. Crawling over the last of the toppled giants, I have reached the junction of the Kayaderosseras and the little feeder brook. A trout whips out of the ripple before I can drop in my line, escaping into the deeper water of the Kayaderosseras.



***Fallen***

The heavy pine branch
thudded down in front of me
The air smells so good

Chain saw in my hand
heavy snow tripped me and I fell
Laughing up at sky

Clattering crystals
of ice falling on my hood
Music from the Pine

Hands too cold to grip
The saw slides out of my grasp
Time to go inside

*—Joseph Bruchac*
*February 14, 2025*

photo by Joseph Bruchac

## The Tamworth Big Pines Natural Area

story and photos by David Govatski

One of the finest places in New England to see towering Eastern white pine trees is in Tamworth, New Hampshire, at the Big Pines Natural Area of Hemenway State Forest. This 170-acre natural area is also a designated Old-growth Forest Network site. One champion white pine, called the Tamworth Big Pine, is 158 feet tall and has a circumference of over 15 feet! You risk straining your neck to look at the tops of these giant trees. Some trees in this forest are estimated to be over 250 years old.

Walking in a cathedral-like forest with numerous white pine and hemlock over 130 feet tall is a star attraction. On the north side of Great Hill, the forest at Big Pines is a mixture of white pine, hemlock, red spruce, yellow birch, and maples. Some of the white pines are what foresters call super-canopy trees, where a tree crown is almost entirely above the main canopy and receives light from all sides. The forest here is protected from strong winds by its location surrounded by tall hills.

Some might ask if Big Pines Natural Area is an old-growth forest. Forest ecologists differentiate two types of old-growth forests. A primary or virgin forest is a forest that was never logged or significantly disturbed by human activity. The second type is a secondary or second-growth forest that has reached an age and structural composition that gives it old-growth forest characteristics. Big Pines is likely the latter. We found barbed wire embedded in some trees on the edge of the natural area, indicating that these pines and hemlock had some human disturbance in the distant past. Barbed wire has been around since 1874, although the dates of this wire are unknown. I consider the Big Pines Natural Area an old-growth forest.

### *Big Pines Natural Area and Hemenway State Forest History*

While walking among these forest giants is quite inspirational, the donor couple's history behind this forest is equally impressive. Augustus and Harriet Hemenway of Boston donated Hemenway State Forest in 1931. Augustus Hemenway (1853-1931) was born into wealth and practiced great philanthropy. Augustus graduated from Harvard in 1875 and worked in the commercial shipping industry. Augustus married Harriet Lawrence in 1881, started purchasing land in Tamworth in 1898, and purchased nearly 2,000 acres of land and a country estate within five years.

Harriet Lawrence Hemenway (1858-1960) was a prominent Boston socialite and a legendary advocate for wildlife conservation. She and her cousin Minnie Hall founded the Massachusetts Audubon Society in 1896. Hemenway and Hall deserve credit for

stopping the slaughter of wild birds for feathers for the hat trade. This conservation victory was 24 years before women were even allowed to vote! Harriet went on to help establish the National Audubon Society and continued to take an active role in wildlife conservation and philanthropy.

Augustus Hemenway died in 1931, and his heirs donated nearly 2,000 acres to the State of NH. Hemenway State Forest is one of 218 State Reservations totaling over 170,000 acres that the New Hampshire Department of Forest and Lands manages. Hemenway State Forest is among the finest gems in the New Hampshire State Forest system.

During the Great Depression, a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp worked in Hemenway State Forest. The 117th Company of the CCC established a tent camp on June 5th, 1933. The CCC built the Great Hill Fire Tower, a ski trail on Great Hill, and completed numerous conservation and improvement projects here and at Crawford Notch State Park. The camp was marked by a tragedy in December 1933 when a hit-and-run driver struck a CCC truck, and four CCC enrollees died due to their injuries. The site of the CCC camp is used today by the Boy Scouts, something that the Hemenways stipulated in their will when they donated the land to the State of NH.


In 1966, the Tamworth Conservation Commission worked with the NH Department of Forest Lands to preserve the Big Pines Natural Area. The Conservation Commission's volunteers also needed a footbridge to cross the Swift River, and they succeeded in raising the funds to design and build the bridge that hikers use today to access Big Pines. A sign was built that marks the start of the trails to Big Pines. The Tamworth Conservation Commission and the NH Department of Forests and Lands work together to manage this forest gem. In 2023, forest ecologists from the NH Natural Heritage Bureau surveyed the forest to determine the old-growth characteristics and boundaries and mapped 170 acres. Also, in 2023, the Old-Growth Forest Network organization worked with the NH Department of Forest and Lands to designate Big Pines Natural Area as an "old-growth forest network" site.

Visiting Big Pines Natural Area in Tamworth is an inspiring way to spend a day with your family or yourself. Listening to the wind whispering through the pines is calming. Did you know there is a name for this? It is called Psithurism, a word of Greek origin meaning whispering. You can also experience what the Japanese call Shinrin-yoku by absorbing the forest atmosphere from the fragrance of the pines. We often use the term recreation, whose origin means restoring or creating again. Spending time in nature helps restore one's physical and mental well-being.

> *"A walk in Big Pines Natural Area is an indescribable pleasure. The towering treetops seem to touch the heavens, and the massive girth of their trunks boggles the mind. But something else special here goes beyond the sheer size of the pines and hemlocks. It is something intangible yet palpable: a wild and untamed feeling, a different quality of the air, a sense of ease with the living and dying of all things, and the magic that is born from that cycle. If you wonder why people go to such great lengths to protect old-growth forests, I urge you to walk in Big Pines."*
>
> *– Sarah RobbGrieco, Old-Growth Forest Network.*

### *The Tamworth Big Pine Carbon Study*

One of the highlights of the Big Pines Natural Area is the 158-foot-tall Tamworth Big Pine. This tree was the focus of a volume and carbon storage study. On September 23, 2023, Erik Danielsen, Jared Lockwood, Dale Luthringer, and Bob Leverett volume-modeled the trunk of the Tamworth Big Pine. The purpose of the modeling was to estimate the volume of this giant white pine, the amount of carbon held within the pine, and its $CO_2$ equivalent. The debate over how much carbon big and old trees sequester and store is a continuing debate. The team members were all experienced National Champion Tree Measurement cadre.

The team used sophisticated measuring instruments and compared the measurements with twelve statistical volume models. The measurement was conducted as part of the 2023 Old-Growth Forest Conference, and the team consisted of members of the Native Tree Society and American Forests Champion Tree Certification Cadre. The findings compare the measured volume to statistical volume-biomass models for white pine.

*Key Points:*

* The Tamworth Big Pine measures 15.2 feet in circumference at 4.5 feet above mean base level and has a height of 158.8 feet.
* The team used a method that divides the trunk into sections, models each section as a regular geometric solid, and adjusts for non-circular cross-sections.
* The total trunk volume measured for the Big Pine is 792 $ft^3$, with an above-ground dry biomass of approximately 20,387.3 pound.
* The carbon deposited in the tree is 10,621.8 pounds, and the $CO_2$ equivalent is 44,780 pounds.
* The team compared the direct trunk volume measurement to 12 statistical models for white pine and found that the measured volume is much less than the predicted volume.
* The team observed unusual taper in the trunk between 7 and 28 feet and plans to return to the site to focus on trunk taper for the first 50 feet.
* The study demonstrates the importance of measuring individual trees and the limitations of statistical models in predicting the volume and carbon storage of large, old trees.

*Main Message:*

The main message is that large, old trees such as the Tamworth Big Pine are critical in carbon storage and mitigating climate change. However, the findings also highlight the limitations of statistical models in accurately predicting these trees' volume and carbon storage. The study emphasizes the importance of directly measuring big old trees to understand better their carbon storage potential and contributions to climate change mitigation.



## *The Trails at Big Pines Natural Area*

Big Pines Natural Area has three hiking trails to explore. The Tamworth Conservation Commission expertly maintains these trails and has a downloadable map of the three trails on its website.

1. The Easy Walker Nature Trail is a third of a mile long, starts at the parking area, and parallels the Swift River. A downloadable interpretive guide is available on the Tamworth Conservation Commission website:
http://www.tamworthconservationcommission.org/managed-lands-trails

2. The Betty Steele Trail starts after crossing the Swift River Gorge on a rugged bridge with railings. Betty Steele was one of the founders of the Tamworth Conservation Commission and was a well-known botanist. We suggest you follow the trail uphill, passing by many giant hemlocks and the enormous Tamworth white pine on the right side of the trail. Take a left at the junction with the Peg King trail and follow the loop back to the bridge, a little over a mile distance. You will see several large tip-up mounds from trees that have fallen over. Check out the fine, silty soil that these trees were growing on. This pit and mound topography and large woody material on the forest floor are characteristics of an old-growth forest.

3. The Peg King Spur Trail ascends Great Hill to a 35-foot tall steel fire tower built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1934. The view of the Sandwich Range and Mt Chocorua from the tower's cab, open to the public, is marvelous, especially in Autumn. The Peg King Spur Trail starts at a sharp right turn at the junction of the Betty Steele Trail, about a half-mile uphill from the bridge. The trail quickly ascends the north side of Great Hill and passes through more large hemlocks and red oaks near the top. The Peg King Spur Trail is only 0.6 miles long but does climb nearly 400 feet to the 1,270-foot high summit. The combined hiking distance of all three trails is about 2.5 miles and is well worth the hike.

### *Getting There*

The Big Pines Natural Area (135 acres) is part of the 2,106-acre Hemenway State Forest. Parking for the Big Pines Natural Area is along a pull-off of N.H. 113A (Chinook Trail), marked by a large sign on the south side of the road. This location is 2.8 miles west of the junction of NH 113 and NH 113A in Tamworth Village.

For more information on the Big Pines Natural Area go to the Old-growth Forest Network link for Big Pines Natural Area:

https://www.oldgrowthforest.net/nh-big-pines-natural-area-hemenway-state-forest

*David Govatski is a retired silviculturist with the US Forest Service and an advocate for preserving old-growth forests.*

## *White Pine - Standing There*

*Story and photo by Amy Suzanne Heneveld*

In the fall before the covid virus stopped the world, I was living in an old house by a wood, at the end of dead-end road in a rural part of northern Vermont. I was communing with the land, working spiritually with the different plants that called my name and feeling into the land's memory of indigenous stewardship.

On a forested ridge of conserved land behind the house, where the paths of animals twined as they had for centuries, the White Pines remembered something of what had come before. I learned that White Pine was a tree sacred to the Abenaki. I learned its name, Koa, and called it by that. I caught glimpses of their long memory, of what life was like before the white men came, and of the change that had come after, a change from reverence and nourishment to use value and detached exploitation. I had just returned to Vermont after living in Europe for many years, a place that has known western civilization and occupation for so long that even undeveloped land does not feel wild. I wondered at the silence of the woods now around me, so wild and strange, and used to another type of human. I wanted to be more like the type of human that White Pine wanted me to be. I wanted to forge relationships with them like they had known before.

One day, during a windstorm, sitting at my kitchen table and staring out the window at the pines on the edge of the forest behind my house, I saw one suddenly fall towards me, missing the roof by mere feet. The tree, split and covered in snow, stared at me, wanting me to use it, an immense and abundant gift. Each day I drank a tea of the needles and pungent branch ends and meditated on its lessons. I received messages about clarity and joy, support and safety. I put pine needles in my bath salts and in vinegar and I made an oil. When the snow stopped, I went and stood by it, listening.

White Pine, standing there, gave me life. What good models our plant friends are. All that winter White Pine soothed me, cleared me, gave me wisdom, inspired poems, and provided a home to the small red squirrels. The pines made me feel connected my old-world ancestors too. I knew that my Scottish grandmothers read the land and heard the land and knew the ways to use the plants for health and wisdom. I felt I was following in their footsteps. I remembered that the trees told me they are our ancestors too. So, communing with White Pine, I was following in the footsteps of footsteps. This felt good. I felt less alone. I could do the work I came here to do.



*Amy Suzanne Heneveld is a writer and teacher with a PhD in Medieval French Literature from the University of Geneva. She is also a flower essence practitioner who offers creative coaching through plant connection.*

# *White Pine Becomes a Canoe*

I went to Swanton, Vermont three times in September 2024 to participate in making a dugout canoe at the Missisquoi Abenaki canoe burn. I was invited there by Brian Chenevert who with Dan Shears directed the project. On launch day I was fortunate to be in the last load of passengers. Many thanks to all who included this long-ago summer camp canoe instructor in this whole amazing and ancient process. The following pages contain stories and images of this transformation of a big, old White Pine into a traditional canoe.

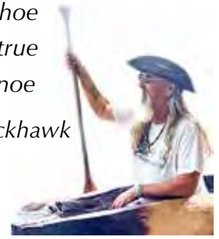
*—Jane English*

photo by Brian Chenevert

### *White Pine Dreams*

*Dream, a dream*
*Dreams come true*
*Dreamt a Canoe*
*White Pine knew*
*Burned it too*
*Like a hollow shoe*
*Dreams come true*
*White Pine Canoe*

*—Arthur Blackhawk*



### *A New Longboat*

Alnôbaiwi (in the Abenaki Way) is an organization whose mission is to preserve, practice and educate people about Abenaki tradition. When we found an already-down, still-green White Pine tree asking to become a Longboat—in the traditional way, by hollowing out through burning—we found the funding to get her done. We got her cut and transported to the Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge. We organized the 6-day-and-night burn, launched her in the Missisquoi River and then we trucked her to our Center in Burlington on the Winooski River Intervale to rest for the winter until we relaunch her in the Spring.

It was tradition, it was theater, and it was collective. It brought many people together—Abenaki and friends—to solve one problem after another. Much spirit, wisdom and creativity came together to help the Spirit of the White Pine transition to become the Spirit of the Longboat.

*— David Schein,*
*former Administrative Coordinator, Alnôbaiwi.org*

photo courtesy of David Schein

*David with the finished canoe on launch day*



### *Dugout Canoe of Missisquoi*

*Brian Chenevert - Tribal Historian*
*Dan Shears – Material Culture Advisor*
*Nulhegan Abenaki Cultural and*
*Historic Preservation Dept. © 2024*

The Vermont Abenaki community of Missisquoi had not created a dugout canoe in hundreds of years. So the Nulhegan Abenaki Historical Department was asked by the non-profit organization of Alnôbaiwi and the Missisquoi community to assist them in creating one in September of 2024.

### *Some history*

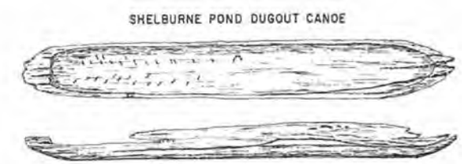
For the Abenaki people, a large majority of our travel was done on the water. The rivers, lakes and waterways of N'dakinna served as highways connecting our communities and other tribes throughout New England. We used primarily two forms of canoe. One is the birch bark canoe, a *maskwaiolagw,* which was mostly used for river travel, as it was lighter and easier to portage. The other, which is what we are focusing on today, is the dugout canoe, which we call a *Wôleskaolagw*.

Dugouts have been used throughout the Americas for at least eight thousand years. In 1613, explorer Samuel de Champlain provided the first written description of a dugout in New England. Champlain wrote:

*"The canoes of those who live there are made of a single piece, and are very liable to turn over if one is not skillful in managing them. We had not before seen any of this kind. They are made in the following manner. After cutting down, at a cost of much labor and time, the largest and tallest tree they can find, by means of stone hatchets… they remove the bark, and round off the tree except on one side, where they apply fire gradually along its entire length; and sometimes they put red-hot pebble-stones on top. When the fire is too fierce, they extinguish it with a little water, not entirely, but so that the edge of the boat may not be burned. It being hollowed out as they wish, they scrape it all over with stones, which they use instead of knives. These stones resemble our musket flints."*

Dugouts have been found at the bottom of various lakes and ponds throughout New England. When not in use, dugouts were intentionally sunk by filling them with rocks. This would allow the wood to remain wet and prevent drying and cracking as well as keep the canoe out of the freeze/thaw cycle. The oldest known existing dugout here in the Northeast is dated to 1275-1380. Dugouts throughout New England were made from Pine, Oak and Chestnut. The overwhelming majority of dugouts recovered from lakes and ponds in Vermont and New Hampshire are made from White Pine.

With indigenous cultural revival on the rise throughout New England, there has become greater interest in dugouts and creating them.




*Shelburne, VT. Recovered in June 1984. 15 feet 9 inches long, 1 foot 11 inches wide 1 foot 2 inches deep made from white pine.*

Dan Shears and Brian Chenevert of the Nulhegan Abenaki Cultural and Historic Preservation Department have created close to twenty dugout canoes. It was this experience that let Alnôbaiwi and the Missisquoi Abenaki to reach out and ask for assistance in creating one for them in the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge.

### *Making a dugout*

Traditionally, this process was mainly all done with fire, from cutting the tree down to the finished canoe. It could take anywhere from a week to 10 days (plus or minus) depending on the length you needed and weather conditions. It would be burning around the clock the entire time, so it would be a group of men working on it in shifts day and night until it was completed.

To begin, you would select a pine tree near the water that was very straight and went up a good distance before it started to branch out. Once a tree was chosen, you would peel the bark off the base, and about as high as you could reach, put wet clay. Then you would start a fire 3/4 of the way around the base of the tree.

What you're doing is not only cutting the tree down, but also shaping one end of the canoe. The wet clay would prevent the fire from climbing all the way up the tree. You let the fire burn for a little while, pull it away, and scrape the coals and repeat the process until the tree weakened and fell over. When the tree fell over, you would determine the length that you needed, start a fire that burned through the trunk at the other end. Then you peel the remaining bark off this log, and you start a fire directly on top the whole length of the log. Once you've burned away about a quarter of the log off the top, you then concentrate the fire in the center of the log for most of its length, except the ends, and you begin to hollow it out. This entire time would be spent burning and scraping.

When the canoe was finished, you pushed it in the water and left it there. In the fall, before moving further inland to the winter village, you would sink the canoe to the bottom of the lake, pond or river. Doing so keeps it away from the ice that forms on the water. Ice expands and contracts and would crack the canoe. Also, at the bottom of the river, there is less oxygen which also helps to preserve it. By leaving it in the water, it will be kept water logged so that it would not dry out and crack. A canoe made this way could last 15 - 20 years or so.

photo courtesy of Brian Chenevert

*the log ready to be de-barked and then burned*



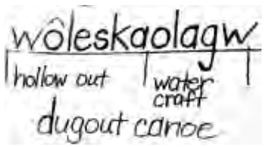



photo courtesy of David Schein

## *Grandmother Pine's Story*

*as told through Tatjana Cady*

Tall standing Grandmother Pine—a bit of life I still hold, life force energy to be carried through all time. Some 90 years old am I.

A loosening of roots within a mighty wind storm, I lay my standing bones against my Mother's breast and am cradled in her lap. I lie beside a road.

As I lie here with Mother, I feel the pulse to move. I whisper to the tall ones standing near to me. I want to be something more, to move, to in service be. Please call the wind, be its voice and call the ones who listen, to help me live this dream of mine.

I had watched these two-legged ones move by, day and night for all the time I stood. A man with a beard of white, plaid upon his vest, and a woman alert and listening heard my dream and heard the dream of the people, and a bridge they came to be.

The woman came to visit, a song she sang of love, encouragement and healing. I thought just to me. Well yes, she said, for me, and also for all the ones around me who brought me to this place—the cone and pollen parents that made me, my brothers and my sister trees, all the families near and far, the sky, the earth, the waters, the winds, the creatures all untold and always there.

She told me good folks would come to take a part of me; she thanked me for the life I lived and the service that I give and will give. She spoke of transformation of my still, upright way to something that would move across the land and across the water. She must have heard my heart sing in the delight of dreams come true. She thanked me wholeheartedly.

She often did return to sing and speak of things to come. She spoke of the ones who help and make things happen. She assured me their hearts and actions would be full of kindness, caring and love—the dreams of unity among the two-leggeds of Ndakinna, the land where we all live.

Other visitors came, getting to know me. Am I right for the job? Heads nod yes, hearts connect. White beard came and released me from my body. Now I can run. A journey I did take from here to there, and there to there. More two-leggeds did come, more than I have ever seen at once. The woman who sings and talks to me sang and shared with me many more times—gifts she gave woven all along the way. I am not alone.

My belly burned aglow with the warmth of fire and the tender care of new friends. They worked together and made it happen. The canoe was ready, and with ceremony and prayers was moved to water

Unity and harmony, egos neutralized, teachings for all, new friendships made. Lots of folks had canoe rides. Then the canoe/tree was moved to a pond to be sunk for winter rest.

I hear the woman with the song; it lives with me. Love, encouragement and healing I carry.

My dream of movement became more than movement across the land or in the water. I have moved in the hearts of Alnôbak.

Lift our hearts; always be in the movement in the flow of the rivers of life.

*—Tatjana Cady opens up her home to all that need a place to be in Community. Laughs and sings a lot. Loves to listen to the trees. Respects all that Creator has given us and enjoys life to the fullest.*



*the stump and the top still lie beside the road*

## *White Pine Trees save a Human from the Freeze*

*Arthur Blackhawk*

*All things are Sacred, even Story, and should start with a Prayer—*

*To the Spirits of the East, as I see You, You see Me, and We are One.*
*To the Spirits of the South, as I see You, You see Me, and We are One.*
*To the Spirits of the West, as I see You, You see Me, and We are One.*
*To the Spirits of the North, as I see You, You see Me, and We are One.*
*To Father Sky, as I see You, You see Me, and We are One.*
*To Mother Earth, as I see You, You see Me, and We are One.*
*To All Creation, as I see You, You see Me, and We are One.*

Some Stories can be about Great Things, achievements, a child birth, and can be referred to as the mountain top, or the high point in one's life. While other stories can be about Trials, Tribulations, the loss of a Loved One, and these can be referred to, as the Valley, or the low point in one's life. One cannot exist without the other, One implies the Other, the Mountain Top and the Valley exist together, in balance, and both have value and purpose.

*"The White Pine Trees save a Human from the Freeze"* is part of my Story and happens at one of the lowest points, or Valleys, I had encountered in a life walk by then of 42 years. I had just exited a sad and painful breakup of a marriage and relationship of 16 years. I felt as if I had failed my two beautiful sons, my former wife, my family, and myself. I was in a Dark place. This was the only time I ever considered self-destruction.

A terrible Northeastern Snowstorm blew into Vermont late in the day, as I decided to hike toward Thunder Bay and the White Pine Forest. I was tormented with guilt over my life choice to leave my marriage. I was abandoning all those that depended on me, I was worthless, and no one needed me around. I was the obstacle to everyone's wellbeing.

These thoughts and feeling surged through me, as the Storm raged all around. Snow was accumulating fast and in a mere hour had dropped almost three inches. The Wind blew, like the feelings inside me—my body was raging from the storm within. Another two inches of snow fell as I finally made my way into the White Pine Tree stand.

I was defeated, and in that moment, I thought, "What if I lie down here in this forest, and let the snow cover me up. I could just move on, away from the pain, away from the sorrow. Just allow the snow to fall over me, like a blanket. Someone could find me in the Spring thaw."

As I lay there in the White Pine Forest with the Storm raging inside and outside, I was moved by the sounds of fury and stillness. Snow was now 2-3 inches of cover over my body, but there was a sound…. No… it was a song …….and it was coming from the forest itself.

No matter how I focused on my demise, the song grew louder, almost beckoning to me. This was upsetting my plan to freeze to death, and now I began to hear someone calling me.

Human…….Human…….
Wake up Human….Wake up Human……it is not your time to die……

Wait a minute? Who is calling me?

As I rose to a sitting position and the snow cover slid off my upper body, I was struck by how active the Storm had become—the tops of the trees seemed to be flying back and forth, like cartoon bird wings in flight, very surreal. As I tried to focus my vision thru the driving snow, it became clear to me, that the White Pine Trees were dancing in this Windstorm. They were Singing a Song.

The largest White Pine nearest me asked me to get up and dance with them.

I was dumb-struck. The White Pine kept asking me to get up, insisting I could learn something from them that would help. The White Pine told me, how rooted they were in the healing balance within all life. How learning to dance and sing could bring healing for one who had lost his Roots, his Path, his Balance. These trees were showing me that they were not limited or inhibited by their roots and could dance. I was humbled.

The White Pines danced in time together, pushed by the elements all around them, and they made a noise…. not a noise, but a song, that was as clear as a bell. The White Pines were singing in harmony with each other, White Pines were dancing as One—a White Pine was actually reaching out to me, and connecting to me in my despair.

Again, I was humbled.

While I was not feeling confident in my dancing or in how I was moving through life, the White Pine encouraged me to let go, release what no longer served me, and move as my Spirit directed me.



Now moving with the Pines in Dance, I begin to hear the words, or should I say lyrics, to the song that the trees are singing. It is a Sacred Song, it is a Powerful Song, it is a song of Healing, and it goes like this:

*I Sew myself together*
*We Sow ourselves together*
*I Sew myself together*
*We Sow ourselves together*

I dance and sing with the White Pines for about 40 minutes. Suddenly I realize everything around me has gone silent. The storm had ebbed—the snow had stopped.

All I can tell you for sure, from that point forward, is that when I left that Wintery Forest, I was changed. My Faith and my Hope restored, because I'd learned from the White Pines about how to heal a broken Heart. We sew ourselves together, We sow ourselves together.

And that's how *White Pine Trees saved a Human from the Freeze*.

*Arthur Blackhawk, Earth-based faith practitioner since childhood, environmental activist, singer song-writer and storyteller, weaves new worlds in Vermont. He is a descendant of the Lenni-Lenape Indigenous People.*

*The White Pine Forest he visited is at Thunder Bay on Indian Brook Reservoir in Essex, Vermont.*

photo by Rhonda Besaw

*white pine cone beaded moccasin tops by Rhonda Besaw*

*Rhonda Besaw (Bisson) is a master beadworker of Abenaki descent who resides in Ndakinna, Coos County, New Hampshire.* *www.RhondaBesaw.com*

## *Pasture Pine - Sacred Space*

*story and photos by Richard Maizell*

A resplendent singular figure in our back field, surrounded by 30 acres of wildflowers, is our treasured white pine—alone but not evoking loneliness. Wide and full, the pine has pushed back against the howling winds down-sloping from the Worcester Range and withstood torrential rains. It survived a near miss of burning down when trespassers built a campfire at its base, and has been a silent observer of coyotes, moose, voles, and hawks, and perhaps a Yeti that some insist lives in the forests surrounding our field.

With no safety in numbers, the pine has stood year on year, dusting off snow loads. Damage has been done. Last year, a large lower limb was severed off. I was tempted to offer medicinal care, but was advised to just leave it be, and the tree healed itself.

I fret about vulnerability—the absence of a tap root to hold the tree safely grounded. I wonder how the field will look without the pine. All of these ruminations are worrisome and of no help to anyone, least of all the tree. I wish there were ways to protect it, but thus far, the pine has managed quite well on its own. Perhaps this is a lesson in abandoning the hubris we feel about controlling events, managing and forestalling loss, and the value of letting go and moving on.

Beneath the tree lie remnants of the past. The first owners of our home were also deeply connected to this tree. Their horse, "Dazzle Em'," lies buried beneath it with a simply elegant stone marking the grave. It was carved by a local granite artist, Eric Oberg, a talented and gentle man. I imagine the horse lying in a long, relaxed repose, sheltered by the shifting needles of the pine swaying above. A few years after we moved in, that family returned—the husband, his kids, and grandkids—to scatter his wife's ashes. In a moving ceremony, they were sprinkled beneath the tree.


This stoic, elegant, white pine is a sacred space for them, and as our love for this family took hold in our hearts, a sacred space for us, as well.

*Richard Maizell, Psy.D., is a semi-retired educational administrator and psychologist. He currently teaches at the University of New Hampshire, founded Full Value Communities, www.fullvaluecommunities.org - a company specializing in social-emotional learning and is the co-author of two books. Richard is an active volunteer in the Calais, Vermont, community and a devoted lover of Golden Retrievers.*



## *COOSUK*[1]

*Coosuk,*
*the little pines,*
*that ancient name*
*made new again*
*as we stand up*
*hold out our arms*
*wide branches*
*protecting, sheltering*
*those small seeds*
*of generations*
*following.*

*No longer claimed*
*with colonial arrows,*[2]
*reaching up strong*
*to Ktsi Kisos*
*Great Sun,*
*once again*
*fed by light*
*and hidden roots*
*never gone*
*from our land*
*connecting again*
*the sacred directions*
*of sunrise, summer,*
*sunset and night,*
*a pine tree nation*
*not reborn*
*but always,*
*always alive.*

*—Joseph Bruchac*

[1]*Coosuk is also the name of one of the bands of the Western Abenaki people.*

[2]*From 1691 to the American Revolution the biggest white pines in New England were marked with the shape of a broad arrow, claiming them as masts for the ships of the Royal Navy. Penalties for cutting them were severe.*

## *TUTUWAS*

*I know the names*
*on this land*
*have been changed,*
*printed on maps*
*made by those*
*who claim their ownership.*

*Some say nothing survives.*

*But the wind*
*still sings*
*the same song*
*of our breath.*

*The hilltop trees*
*still bend like dancers*
*in ceremonies*
*that never ended.*

*And the little pines,*
*tutuwas, tutuwas,*[1]
*lift up, protected*
*from the weight of snow*
*by the held-out arms*
*of their elders.*

*—Joseph Bruchac*

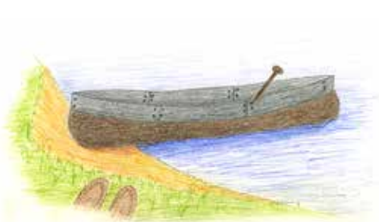
[1] *Tutuwas is a song found in all five of the Wabanaki communities—Western Abenaki, Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet and Mi'kmaq. Traditionally it was sung by the children while their mothers danced. The symbolic reference is to the big pines extending their branches to protect the little trees beneath as does the older generation of people, by holding out their arms, protect the little children. The literal meaning of "tutuwas" is something like "little babies," or "babies at the breast."*

# An Afterword — on the making of this book - *Jane English*

*November 2024* — After taking a nap, nestled in the lap of the biggest white pine in Hemenway Forest in Tamworth, New Hampshire, I lean my head back and look up. Grandmother Pine stretches up far above me—rugged old bark leading to distant branches. I talk with her, thanking her for all that White Pine has brought to me over the past year and a half since I wrote those first words of my own white pines story, “A smooth carpet of pine needles - warm - brown - sunlit - sweet-smelling . . .“

So much has happened—many photographs made, new friends found, heart-felt stories gathered. There are many communities who have been part of this journey—old friends of mine, woodworkers, foresters, a farmer, Indigenous friends, and, of course, the many pines.

In my Introduction I speak of the dream that inspired this book. eheart.com/pdf/relatives.pdf Wood, most likely white pine, was a big part of the dream—the dugout canoe, the weathered modern boards on that canoe, the logs big and small, the platform on the far shore, the small building on that platform, and the broken-down walkway.





White Pine engaged me again when intuitively I chose this photograph for the cover of the booklet I made about that dream, and I soon realized I have indeed had a life-long relationship with White Pine, and that I would enjoy creating a book with my relative.

Works of art—books, photographs, and stories—about our other-than-human relatives can invite us to know as them as kin. We offer the stories and images of White Pines in this book as your invitation to become better acquainted with your own kin of many kinds and to know the deep satisfaction of being in community with them.

May this book serve you well in bringing balance to your life. Enjoy the best our modern world offers, while remembering that you are also embedded in the ancient community of “All Our Relatives.”



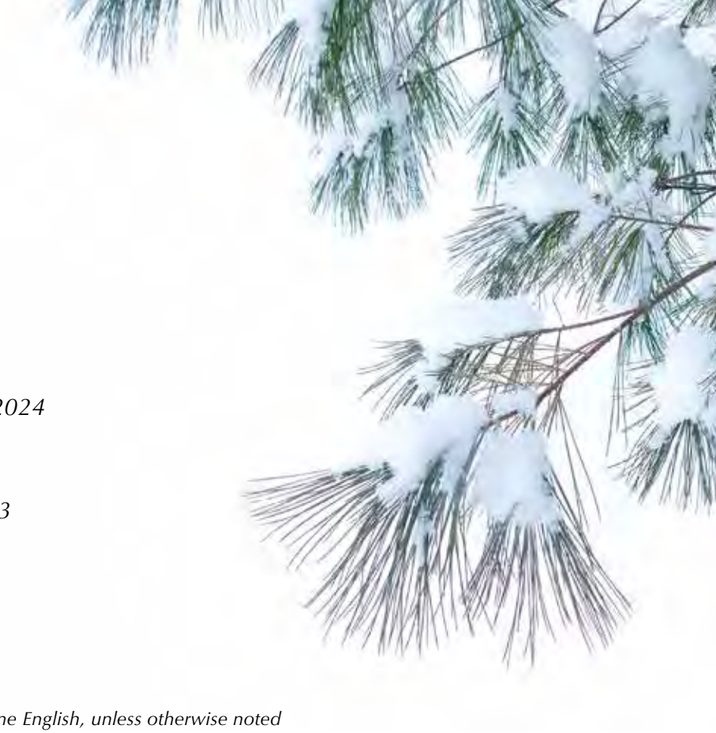
# a map of some of the locations mentioned in this book

## page - location - year — for some of the Jane English's photographs

*EW = in the woods at EarthWalk - Plainfield, Vermont*
*JNH = Jackson, New Hampshire*
*NC = near my home in North Calais, Vermont*
*NDK = Ndakinna Education Center, Greenfield Center, New York*

*cover — NDK - 2023*
*frontpiece — JNH - 2024*
*1 — NC - 2025*
*2 — Crawford Notch, NH - 2023*
*4-5 — NC - 2023*
*6 — NC - 2025*
*8 — NC - 2022*
*10-11 — NDK - 2023*
*12-13 — Tamworth, NH - 2024*
*14 — NC - 2011*
*15 — NDK & NC - 2023*
*16 — EW - 2017*
*17 — EW - 2023*
*18, 19 upper — NC - 2023*
*19 lower — East Calais, VT - 2025*
*20 — EW - 2023*
*21 — NDK - 2023*
*22 — Conway, NH - 2007*
*23 — NC - 2020*
*24 — NC - 2016*
*25 — Calais, VT town forest - 2024*
*26 — NC - 2019*
*27 — EW - 2023*
*28-29 — EW - 2014 and 2020*
*30-31 — EW - 2023*
*32 — EW - 2021*
*33 — NC- 2024*
*34 — JNH - 2003*
*35 — NC - 2023*
*36-37 — NC - 2024*
*38-40 — JNH - 2023*
*41 — NC - 2023*
*42 — NC - 2025*
*43 — Hardwick, VT - 2024*
*72 — JNH - 2024*
*73 — NC - 2024*
*74 — NC - 2019*
*75 — Tamworth, NH - 1998*
*76 — NC - 2018*
*77 — NC - 2023*
*78 — NC - 2009*
*79-80 — NC - 2024*
*81— NC - 2019*
*82 — NC - 2021*
*83 — NC - 2013*
*84 — Crawford Notch, NH - 2013*
*85 — JNH - 2024*
*86 — NC - 2014*
*87 — EW - 2010*
*88 — NC - 2016*
*89 — NC - 2013*
*90-91 — Abenaki Camp, Intervale, NH - 2024*
*92-93 — NC - 2008-2009*
*94-95 — NC - 2023-2024*
*96 — location forgotten - about 1973*
*97 — NC- 2014*
*98-99 — NC - 2025*
*100-102 — NC - 2023*
*103,106 — JNH - 2024*
*107 — Abenaki Camp, Intervale, NH - 2024*
*110 — Calais, VT town forest - 2024*
*112-113 — JNH - 2024*





*122-123 — NC - 2022*
*124 — Marshfield, VT - 2010*
*128 — NC - 2025*
*135 — EW - 2014*
*138-139 — EW - 2014*
*141— NC - 2024*
*146-147— NC - 2012*
*148-149 — Calais, VT town forest - 2024*
*154-155 — NC - 2023*
*160-161 — NC - 2024*
*168-169 — Greenfield Ctr, NY - 2023*
*172 — NDK - 2023*
*181 — JNH - 2003*
*182-183 — JNH - about 2017*
*186 — NC - 2023*
*187 — JNH - 2024*
*186-191 — Swanton, VT - photos by Jane English, unless otherwise noted*
*194 — NC - 2016*
*195, 196 — JNH - 2024*
*195 — NC - 2024*
*198-199 — NC - 2015*
*200— Calais, VT town forest - 2024*
*204 — NC - 2024*
*205 — EW - 2023*
*206 — Crawford Notch, NH - 2013*
*207 — NC - 2025*
*208-209 — NC - 2024*
*210 — Tamworth, NH - 2024*
*211 — NC - 2012*
*212 — East Calais, VT - 2025*
*215 — JNH - 2024*
*217 — Abenaki Camp, Intervale, NH - 2024*
*218 — NC - 2023*
*220 — JNH - 2024*
*back cover — NC - 2015*

# resources . . .

## books

For additional copies of ***White Pines,*** and **prints of some of the photographs** in this book, as well as other books written and illustrated by Jane English see her website **eheart.com**

***White Pine: The Natural and Human History of a Foundational American Tree***,
John Pastor, Island Press, Washington/Covelo, 2023.

When I found this book I felt relieved of needing to include in this current work some scientific, cultural and historic background on white pine trees. John Pastor covers all that in a very readable way. Like me, he grew up surrounded by white pines and with pine furniture made in a family woodworking shop, and like me he did his graduate work at the University of Wisconsin.

***Thirty-Eight: the Hurricane that Transformed New England***,
Stephen Long, Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 2016.

Complementing the story told in John Pastor's book, the first chapter in Stephen Long's book describes what happened to white pines after the old growth trees had mostly been removed from New England. The white pines colonized abandoned fields as people moved to the more fertile and plowable land in the midwest in the 1800's. In subsequent chapters he tells in detail the story of how in 1938 these new pine trees, many then over 50 years old, were devastated by the 1938 hurricane, followed by how the forests have recovered since then.

***Reading the Forested Landscape: A Natural History of New England,***
Tom Wessels, The Countryman Press, New York, 1997.

While this whole book is a delight, of particular interest is the concise history of white pines in central New England on pages 71-77.

***Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants***,
Robin Wall Kimmerer, Milkweed Editions, Canada, 2013
***The Serviceberry,*** Robin Wall Kimmerer, Simon & Schuster, New York 2024

Both books are best-selling explorations of indigenous wisdom, and have helped me to put words to what I knew intuitively—that we are surrounded by relatives, kin of many kinds.

***Books by Joseph Bruchac*** - Enjoy any of the 180 delightful books for all ages that he has made in a variety of genres on many aspects of Native American culture. **joebruchac.com**

***Our Mountain Trips, volumes I and II***, edited by Ben English, Jr. and Jane English, Bondcliff Books, Littleton, NH, 2005 and 2007 — *available at* **eheart.com** *and at* **bondcliffbooks.com**

These books contain delightfully told and profusely illustrated stories of Jane and Ben Jr's grandparents' camping trips to the White Mountains of New Hampshire between 1899 and about 1925. While not specifically about white pines, there are stories and photographs of the forest and of the logging that happened in the early part of the 20th century.



## nature programs

There are many nature programs that are not limited to scientific study of the natural world but where awareness of our participation with nature in a community of living beings, both human and other than human, is encouraged.

***Ndakinna Education Center*** — ndakinnacenter.org

***EarthWalk*** — letsearthwalk.org

***Vermont Wilderness School*** — vermontwildernessschool.org

***for similar programs,*** do an online search for "nature mentoring programs"

## Abenaki language

***Abenaki Online*** — abenakionline.com
Lots of information plus online Abenaki language courses taught by Jesse Bruchac

***School of Abenaki at Middlebury College*** —
middlebury.edu/language-schools/languages/abenaki

Learn to speak Abenaki—and also learn the history, art, music, crafts, food, and dance—because language carries culture.

## Abenaki culture and places

***Vermont Abenaki Tribes*** — abenakialliance.org

***Abenaki camp, Intervale, New Hampshire*** —
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abenaki_Indian_Shop_and_Camp

***Mount Kearsarge Indian Museum*** — indianmuseum.org

In Warner, New Hampshire, serves as a living center for artistic expression, traditional values, and contributions from past and contemporary Native life. The Museum embraces cultural diversity and encourages environmental action based upon respect for nature and a deeper understanding of Native cultures."

***Alnôbaiwi 'In the Abenaki Way'*** — alnobaiwi.org

In the Burlington Intervale of Vermont, this is a remarkable blossoming of Vermont Abenaki cultural and environmental heritage, a collection of clothing, tools and sacraments that are routinely used by Alnôbaiwi in their ceremonies, and in their studies in understanding past Indigenous life in the Champlain Valley.

It is a unique Abenaki village, styled to the 1850's the period when Vermonters thought that the Abenakis had disappeared—ceremonial dance ground and demonstration and medicine wood gardens—indoor educational programming, outdoor ceremonies, and living history events.

# about the author . . .

Jane English grew up in a small town in New England, and did undergraduate work at Mount Holyoke College. She began photographing while completing a Ph.D. in physics in 1970 at the University of Wisconsin. She decided to not continue in a science career but to do photography. Her black-and-white photographs of nature illustrate numerous books, including a best-selling translation of the Chinese classic, *Tao Te Ching,* published in 1972 by Random House. Her other interests include gardening, skiing, amateur radio, and hot-air ballooning.

She founded her own publishing business, Earth Heart eheart.com, in 1985, to publish *Different Doorway*, her book on the implications of being born non-labor cesarean. Her 1999 book *Fingers Pointing to the Moon* is a collection of writings, photographs, and art that has some autobiographical chapters. After living in Mount Shasta, California for 15 years, Jane moved back to her native New England in 2002.

Since 2007 she has volunteered at EarthWalk Vermont and similar programs where children go to school out in the woods one day a week.

*Jane with a pine crown given to her at an EarthWalk celebration in 2011 and among the big pines in 2023*

photos courtesy of EarthWalk Vermont and Angella Gibbons

THE END . . .
of this book

and the beginning
of your continuing journey
with a community
of relatives
of many kinds . . .

*wlipamkanni* . . .
travel well

stories and images by Jane English
and
Nicola Marae Allain ~ Scott Bailey ~ Rhonda Besaw ~ Arthur Blackhawk
Joseph Bruchac ~ Tatjana Cady ~ Brian Chenevert ~ Cheryl Denz
Kyle Foster ~ Angella Gibbons ~ Erik Gillard ~ David Govatski
Amy Suzanne Heneveld ~ Francine Poitras Jones ~ Patrick Lamphere
Richard Maizell ~ Neal Maker ~ John Pastor ~ David Schein
Steven D. Smith ~ Esther Thompson ~ Yasi Zeichner

***an invitation to know the deep satisfaction***

***of understanding that we are part of the living community of All Our Relatives —***

***clouds, plants, rivers, humans, rocks, animals, birds, trees, wind, and more***

**This magnificent book is** a testament to what white pine means to many different people. The author draws the writers and readers together into a human community, much as white pine draws the wild occupants of the North Woods together into a natural community.

Some photographs celebrate the awe of old growth white pine forests; you almost smell the scent of pine needles and hear the wind high overhead as it flows through the crowns. Other images bring our gaze to the forest floor, where delicate baby white pines begin their lives. Pictures of the room in Jane's childhood home, whose walls and furniture are all crafted from those trees, speak to the relationship between humans and pines —*John Pastor, PhD* - author of *White Pine: The Natural and Human History of a Foundational American Tree*

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