

Culture & Identity

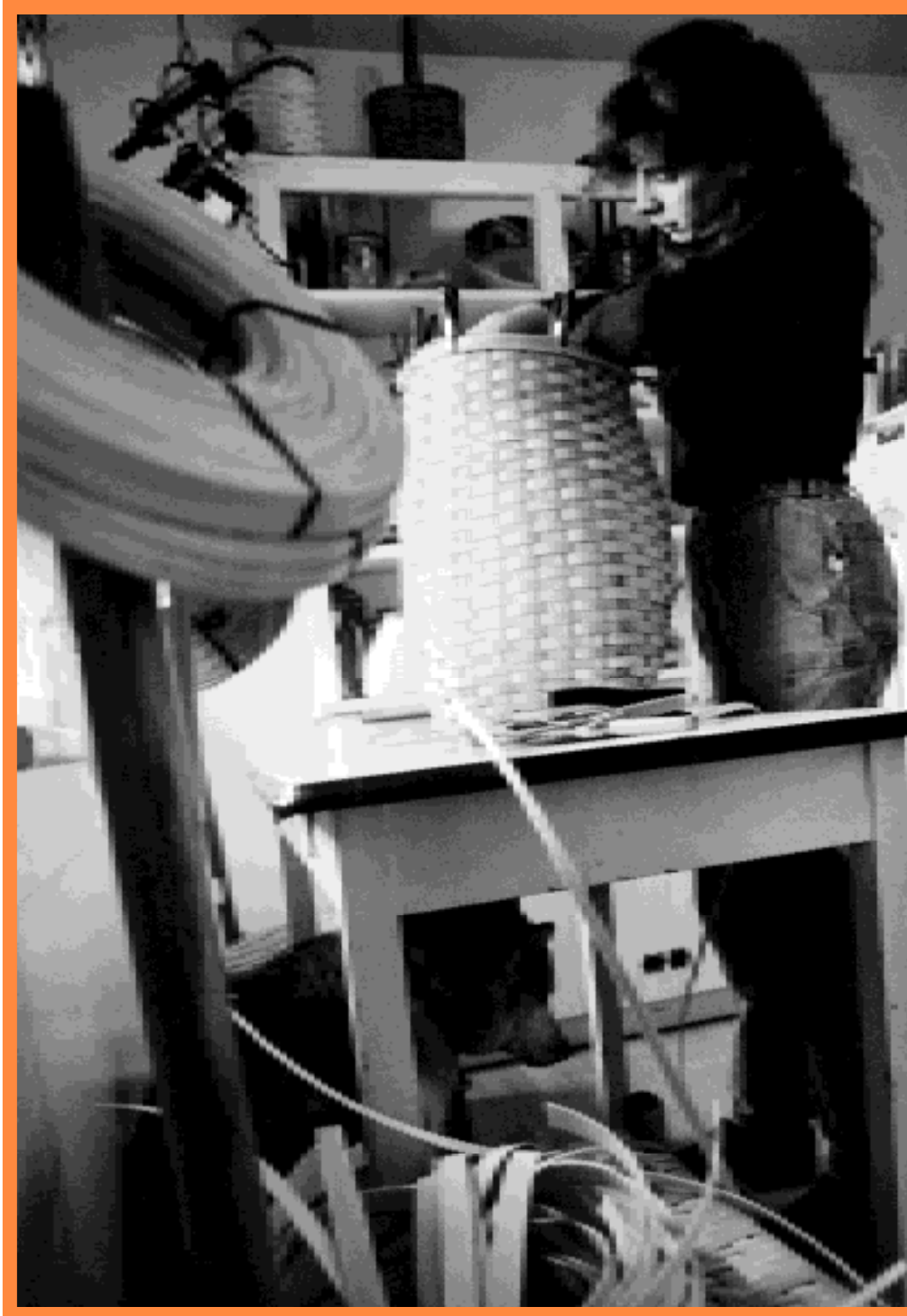


Mike Trivieri, Tupper Lake, New York

IN THIS CHAPTER:

- Cultural & historical cohesion
- Traditional arts, crafts & folklore
- Canadian ties
- Ecosystem ties
- Political history
- Political identity
- Economic ties
- Economic change
- The recreation economy
- Farming
- The international economy
- Economic stability
- Regional Identity
- Connectedness

Culture includes the relationships people feel to their own histories, the characteristics that help define how communities work, and how people experience and share the traditions that have evolved in the Northern Forest. Traditions and folkways related to the landscape, historic and current economic uses of the region, and the political nature of the Northern Forest all contribute to people's personal connectedness with the place as well. Many people say they do not know much about the heritage of their communities or of the region - but these same people can often point to certain crafts or traditional arts to illustrate specific histories of their communities. Celebrating aspects of regional culture - the landscape, French-Canadian heritage, or traditional arts—is popular in many communities. At a broader scale of identity, the concept of the “Northern Forest” has a great diversity of meanings for its residents, ranging from the political and economic to the biological, historical, and cultural. Some people's definitions of the Northern Forest do not coincide at all with its recent political understanding; still others say they are not familiar with the term, or believe that the Northern Forest holds an identity more as an issue than as a place. Nonetheless, residents seemed to sense that, in part because of its similar cultural threads, the Northern Forest is a distinct region, separate from the more urban, populated southern portions of the states. A sense of disconnection from the state power structure and sources of economic opportunity is balanced by the many things people do feel a strong connection to, such as family and friends, the natural world, and specific knowledge of places in the local woods.



Cammy
Sheridan,
Lake Placid,
New York

TALKING ABOUT cultural & historical cohesion

Many people I talked with said their communities treat traditions and folkways as important legacies that merit education, awareness-building, and stewardship. I sensed that residents could often describe the cultural histories of their particular communities, but had a more limited knowledge of Northern Forest heritage on a broad scale. Even so, many recognize a common spirit, work ethic, and ties to the forest.

∞ Cultural & Historical Cohesion ∞

*T*he Northern Forest is defined by hard work and commonality. Here, and north of us, the whole lifestyle, ecosystem—they're all hard-working folks.

—fly rod maker, Maine

*F*or me, the Northern Forest is more of an emotion than anything else. A rural feeling, outside of cities where you have so much congestion. And cutting trees is part of the process. People come to experience nostalgia here. You could look right across the whole Northern Forest, and this is true throughout.

—wooden toy maker, Maine

*W*hen I think of the Northern Forest, I think of people who know how to fend for themselves, who live in small towns, and strive to hold on to what's good.

—special education teacher, New York

*T*he Northern Forest is defined as a place by the kind of people who live there: people who didn't like civilization, law, regulation. People have fled to the Northern Forest for the same reasons. We have a common connection across the top of the states with French Canadian influence and heritage.

—retired park ranger,
New York