

NEWS RELEASE

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INTEREST IN PLACE-BASED EDUCATION CONTINUES TO GROW IN THE NORTHERN FOREST Educators, Others Interested in Developing Sense of Place Share Ideas, Methods, Experiences at Local Conference

Over 150 teachers, practitioners and supporters of place-based education from the Northern Forest states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York will attend *Promise of Place*, a conference that promotes concepts of place-based education in the Northern Forest and beyond.

Place-based education is firmly rooted in what is local: history, economy, literature, art, ethnicity, environment and geography all contribute to curriculum. Rather than learning from traditional textbooks, learners incorporate personal experience and interaction with community members as part of the educational process.

Promise of Place is co-hosted by the Northern Forest Center and Shelburne Farms, in partnership with The Center for Place-based Learning and Community Engagement, a program of the National Park Service Conservation Study Institute. This year's conference takes place at the Eagle Mountain House in Jackson, NH from November 17–19. Greg Smith, author of *Education and Environment: Learning to Live with Limits* is the welcoming presenter. On Thursday evening, storyteller and commentator Willem Lange will share tales from his lifetime observing the land and its people.

“Place-based education holds tremendous promise for improving the way we educate people throughout their lives,” says Lidie Whittier Robbins, education director for the Northern Forest Center. “In the last several years, using students’ home territories as a teaching tool has really taken off. Research shows that place-based education leads to higher levels of student engagement and achievement than conventional textbook approaches do. When learners develop strong bonds with their communities, they are more likely to work to improve them.”

“This is our third *Promise of Place* conference, and each year we get excellent feedback from participants,” says Pat Straughan, program coordinator of Shelburne Farms, “This year’s sessions cover a wide range of topics, including ‘Musical Heritage of the Northern Forest,’ ‘Reading the

Landscape,’ ‘Connecting Schools to People and Place,’ and ‘Get on Board: Community Education in an 18-wheeler.’”

Specifically geared toward people working in the Northern Forest region, *Promise of Place*’s goals include:

- Linking educators from schools, public agencies, community programs and non-profit organizations with other community members and specialists to create a place-based education network for ongoing collaboration;
- Strengthening a shared vision through the presentation of current work and philosophies;
- Building knowledge and skills through concrete teaching ideas and experiences; and
- Developing ideas for realizing the promise of place-based education in the Northern Forest region and beyond.

The Northern Forest—at 26 million acres the largest remaining forest in the East—is an ideal setting for teachers who want to use place-based education to thoroughly engage their students. With Native American and French cultures mingling with traditions of European immigrants and a centuries-old history of working the land, the region offers teachers wonderful living examples for their students: oral history projects rely on elder residents for memories of logging camps and community traditions; rock formations tell stories of how glaciers shaped the land; traditional craftsmen can still teach the arts of basket making, wooden boat building, carving, and weaving; storytellers use humor and drama to sustain legends that are generations old; and musicians bring cultures alive with song and dance.

Along with co-hosts the Northern Forest Center, Shelburne Farms, and the Center for Place-based Learning and Community Engagement, *Promise of Place* is supported by Antioch New England Graduate School, A Forest for Every Classroom, Green Mountain National Forest, National Wildlife Federation’s Northeast Natural Resource Center, New Hampshire State Council on the Arts’ Traditional Arts Program, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation–Upper Valley Region and Willem Lange.

The Northern Forest Center, a nonprofit organization, mobilizes people to build healthy communities, economies and ecosystems by working together across the Northern Forest region.

Shelburne Farms is a 1,400-acre working farm, non-profit environmental education organization and National Historic Landmark whose mission is to cultivate a conservation ethic.

The Conservation Study Institute’s Center for Place-based Learning & Community Engagement was established by the National Park Service to create opportunities for dialogue, inquiry and life-long learning to enhance the stewardship of parks, landscapes and communities. The Center is a partnership with the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park and Shelburne Farms.

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EDITORS NOTE: Reporters are welcome to attend *Promise of Place* at the Eagle Mountain House in Jackson, NH, November 17–19. Conference fees will be waived, and food and lodging will be available at cost. Reporters attending plenary and workshop sessions are asked to observe and hold their questions for interviews after the session is complete.