

Building Indigenous Partnerships: Rogers Center and Onondaga Nation Plant Three Sisters Garden



Photo Caption: Representatives from the Onondaga Nation, Oneida Indian Nation, Department of Environmental Conservation, Rogers Center, and Clear Path for Veterans stand by the newly planted Three Sisters Garden.

As the oldest environmental education center in New York State, Rogers Center recognizes the value of the traditional teachings of Indigenous neighbors and their deep history within the Central New York region.

On May 16th, Braiding the Sacred and the Onondaga Nation shared their culture and wisdom as they led the planting of corn, beans, and squash—The Three Sisters, sacred plants from the Haudenosaunee creation story—at Rogers Center.

The Indigenous Seed Stewards brought heritage seeds and, for the second year, the Three Sisters were planted at Rogers in mounds, honoring the four directions. This traditional method of planting ensures the corn, beans, and squash will support and reinforce each other's growth. Representatives from the Oneida Indian Nation, Department of Environmental Conservation, Friends of Rogers, and Clear Path for Veterans all shared in the joy of learning and participating in the process of Rematriation—returning the sacred seeds to their mother communities.

The Three Sisters Garden at Rogers Center is surrounded by native wildflower plots that were prepared by members of the public during the Seeds of Community wildflower planting on April 26th, during the Rogers Center Earth Day celebration. The six plots, where 50 varieties of native wildflowers are beginning to sprout, were created to honor the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

“We’re honored these heritage seeds have found their home in the soil here at Rogers,” said Ariaah Mitchell, Education and Communications Associate for Friends of Rogers. Rogers Center is located on the unceded traditional lands of the Oneida Indian Nation, People of the Upright Stone, as a part of the larger Haudenosaunee Confederacy. “We have so much gratitude for the Indigenous women who brought their bountiful knowledge, outstanding energy, and sacred seeds to this place,” said Mitchell.

As their partnerships with the Shako:wi Cultural Center and Braiding the Sacred build, Friends of Rogers is committed to developing a living land acknowledgment through the continued integration of Indigenous food knowledge and agricultural practices.

The mission of the Friends of Rogers is to provide outstanding educational opportunities that excite, inspire, and motivate people of all ages to enjoy, understand, appreciate, and protect our natural environment. ➡