

## Mohegan Island Project: teaching science through art Samantha Stevenson, Class of 2026

During my summer internship, I collaborated with the Monhegan Museum of Art and History and the Bowdoin Museum of Art to create enriching content for future exhibits at both museums combining art and ecology. I was so happy to have the opportunity to serve both museums as well as the Monhegan Island community. When I first arrived on the island, my main priority was to open the Monhegan Museum. I learned how exhibits are created and displayed. I handled art, mounted labels, and even wrote a label that will be hung in the Mohegan Wildlands exhibit next summer. In the first week I also made a point of getting to know as many islanders as I could. Jenn Pye, the director of the Mohegan Museum, helped by introducing me to people in town. I also met staff and regular visitors through living at the Trailing Yew Inn.

In early July, I began collecting audio and visual content for Bowdoin's Mohegan Wildlands exhibit, which opens this December. The goal for this project is for visitors to experience the sights and sounds of a Monhegan summer while viewing the exhibit during the cold winter months in Brunswick. I recorded audio all over the island, trying to balance the natural and man-made sounds that one hears – buoy bells and seals, the pump house and birds, or the waves and seagulls with the low hum of the ferry engine. I had never used recording equipment before, so as I continued to collect audio throughout the summer my samples improved. I spent one day taking videos of island landmarks like Blackhead, the Cathedral Woods, and the Trailing Yew for a video montage that last summer's intern created for the Bowdoin exhibit. After many outdoor workdays, I noticed that I was much more aware of what I was hearing when I was walking from place to place. I heard the buoy bells even when they were quiet, and birdsong no longer felt like background noise. Some days I would hear a sound and make a note so I could go back the next day to record it!

I also designed two 45-minute trail walks in the Mohegan Wildlands. I researched the history of the forest's ecology and conservation and used the vegetation on the trails to connect the art that will be on display to the forest that it depicts. I considered timing and the difficulty of the terrain as well as how to best connect the timeline. For example, Monhegan's old growth forest, a natural start to the walk, is a 20-minute walk away from the Museum. After a focus group tour, I transposed the in-person tour to an online version for those unable to walk the trail.

The most gratifying part of the internship was my photography project. I found artworks from various time periods that depicted the lack of trees and forest from when most of the island was sheep pasture and took present-day photos from the same landscape frame. When they are placed side by side (as shown) the viewer can see how much has changed in such a short period of time. While this was fun to do on my own, the island community who came to know me offered to help me with my scavenger hunt. Two granddaughters of Mohegan artist Lucia Miller, daughter of renowned photographer Warner Taylor, went on multiple hikes with me to track down some paintings as well as their great grandfather's photos. Postmaster Jim helped me find a view from the village, and the assistant museum curator, Laura, dressed up as a sheep to pose next to the same rock as an actual sheep from over a century ago. Trail workers and museum visitors asked about my project because they were so excited to see the results. The best part of this for me were the many lovely conversations with islanders from which I learned a lot, but I was also able to teach them a few things about the woods they love. I was excited to further my science communication skills this summer under the guidance of my mentor Barry Logan. I really enjoyed learning more about the field and hope to incorporate art as well as science communication in my future career.



above: Deadman's Cove in 2024  
below: *Deadman's Cove* by Warner Taylor c. 1940

**Faculty Mentor: Barry Logan**

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