

Traces of Seneca, Cayuga and Earlier Cultures in the Finger Lakes

Jack Rossen

Attending an illustrated talk by Professor Rossen a few years ago was a ground-shifting moment for me. His enthusiasm, unique approach to archaeology and fascinating archaeological finds from our area shed new light on rich connections of people to this place that go further back than I imagined. Images of ornate combs carved with animal effigies in bone still haunt me after first learning of them in that talk. They were left behind by other people who called this place home.

Jack Rossen is an Ithaca College archaeologist who has worked and taught throughout South America and the U.S. For the past 15 years he has been working primarily near Cayuga Lake on Cayuga sites and his work has come to focus on archaeological evidence of the origins of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy. He works within a framework known as indigenous archaeology. This approach strives to work with Native people, make archaeology more of a positive force for them, and challenge dominant narratives of the past that have oppressed and denied their rights. This is a growing reform movement within the profession and a reorientation of the discipline's ethics. His specializations include archaeobotany, the study of archaeological plant remains, and lithic technology, the study of stone tools. He also runs the Landon Hall Archaeology Lab at Ithaca College.