



## Adirondack Diversity Initiative

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Adirondack Diversity Initiative Welcomes First Director

*Nicole Hylton-Patterson will head diversity program*

**SARANAC LAKE, N.Y.** — The Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI) has hired its first director. The Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) announced this week that Nicole Hylton-Patterson of Bronx, N.Y. will take on the leadership position for the Initiative, which aims to make the Adirondack region a more welcoming and inclusive place for residents and visitors.

Hylton-Patterson, acting director of a Westchester County college's social justice center, will begin serving as ADI's diversity director on December 2, 2019. She will be based at ANCA's office in downtown Saranac Lake.

ANCA Executive Director Kate Fish said, "We could not be more excited about this new hire. Nicky possesses the experience and passion for diversity and inclusion work that is critical to achieving the ADI's goals. We all look forward to working with her as she brings fresh ideas and approaches to the Initiative's work."

Hylton-Patterson brings a unique cultural perspective to her new position. Born in Jamaica, she spent her formative years in northern Norway as part of a gifted child program. Hylton-Patterson has 20 years of experience leading activities and programs geared toward advancing diversity, equity and inclusion. In addition to her current role as acting director of the Mary T. Clark Center for Religion and Social Justice at Manhattanville College, she served as program coordinator for the college's Center for Inclusion. She has also instructed and coordinated programs in Arizona; Syracuse, N.Y.; and Elmira, N.Y. that focus on race and gender studies, justice, diversity and advocacy.

Hylton-Patterson holds a master's degree in Pan African Studies from Syracuse University, a master's degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology

University, and a bachelor's degree in African & African American Studies and Philosophy from Mount Holyoke College. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Afro-LGBTQI+ Justice with Arizona State University.

"I am deeply excited to be taking on this role with the Adirondack Diversity Initiative," Hylton-Patterson said. "As someone who understands the challenges facing spaces that are perceived as lacking aspects of human diversity, I look forward to working with Adirondack communities and New York State.

"The opportunity to expand our understanding of the region and the way we welcome and celebrate differences is one that requires a willingness to first make ourselves vulnerable. Yet, it is only when we see ourselves for who we are, that we can ask the same of others. I'm looking forward to putting these principles into action in my new role in the Adirondacks."

Fish said the addition of Hylton-Patterson to the ADI team will help the Initiative achieve its objectives through a research and process-driven effort, bringing social and economic benefits to the region's residents, businesses and visitors. The diversity director will work closely with ADI partners to advance these goals, which are driven by two guiding principles: that the Adirondack region should be welcoming and inclusive to everyone and that the region should be relevant to and supported by an increasingly diverse state and national population.

"We have looked forward to this day since 2014, long before the Adirondack Diversity Initiative held its first major symposium in Newcomb," said Adirondack Council Conservation Director Raul "Rocci" Aguirre. "What was once an all-volunteer effort focusing on local diversity, equity and inclusion challenges will now have the coordination and direction needed to move these important issues forward in the North Country. Nicky is an outstanding person who will make an impact immediately."

Established in 2015, the ADI is a volunteer-run collaboration of organizations and individuals who develop and promote strategies to help the Adirondack Park become more welcoming and inclusive to all New Yorkers, including visitors, seasonal residents and permanent residents. In May 2019, New York State announced that \$250,000 of its 2020 budget would go to the ADI as part of the \$300 million Environmental Protection Fund. The new grant funding has allowed ANCA to hire a director and expand the Initiative's outreach and programming.

Fish said ADI is grateful to Sen. Jose M. Serrano, D-Bronx, who chairs the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, for his leadership in securing the funding for the initiative. She also thanked Environmental Conservation Committee Chairs Assemblyman Steven Englebright, D-Setauket, and Sen. Todd Kaminsky, D-Long Beach, as well as Sen. Elizabeth O'C. Little, R-Queensbury, Assemblymen William Jones, D-Chateaugay, and Daniel Stec, R-Queensbury, for their support. Fish also recognized the legislative and executive staff who understand the need to build a welcoming inclusive Adirondack Park.

"It was an honor to have worked with many legislative and Adirondack partners to secure the \$250,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Fund that made this program possible," said Sen. José M. Serrano, D-Manhattan. "The Adirondack Park's unique natural and cultural character is a proven

attraction that has captivated an increasingly diverse audience. I congratulate ADI on hiring its new diversity director and look forward to its continued work fostering an inclusive, welcoming Adirondack Park."

"For several years, I've had the honor of sponsoring Adirondack Day in Albany," said Sen. Betty Little, R-Queensbury. "Proudly representing this incredible region, I learned I couldn't assume people might know a lot about it, understanding its cultural, historical and natural resources. Opening a dialogue is always beneficial and we all stand to gain more when we listen and learn from those who have different perspectives."

"Long term, the park's economy depends on its ability to attract and retain the affections of a wide range of people," said Pete Nelson of Adirondack Wilderness Advocates. "Encouraging diversity can bring new people, new ideas and new investments to the park's rural communities."

"The Adirondacks attract people from all over the world, which makes it especially important that our communities are welcoming, inclusive and compassionate," said Cali Brooks, President and CEO of Adirondack Foundation. "Because of the rural nature of our towns and villages, this important initiative is needed now more than ever."

"We look forward to welcoming ADI's first diversity director to the Adirondacks and working with her to put the region's rich abolition and Black freedom history to good use today," said Martha Swan, Executive Director of John Brown Lives!

"All of us who live in the Park are formal and informal stewards of this incredible landscape, this exciting mix of human and natural communities. In that role, we are also the 'first impression' visitors have of the Adirondacks," said Paul Hai of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. "We always want that experience to be generous and welcoming for all. Every visitor has the potential to be a repeat visitor, and perhaps one day a resident. We want everyone to feel this unparalleled place could be, or should be, their home."

The [Adirondack Diversity Initiative](#)'s mission is to develop and promote strategies to help the Adirondack Park become more welcoming and inclusive of all New Yorkers, both visitors and permanent residents. A more inclusive Adirondack Park will benefit not only the citizens of New York but the economic and political health of the Park as well.

Adirondack Diversity Advisory Council affiliates are Adirondack Almanack; Adirondack Council; Adirondack Foundation; Adirondack Futures; Adirondack North Country Association; Adirondack Park Institute, Inc.; Adirondack Research Consortium; Adirondack Wild; CAP-21; Common Ground Alliance; Indian Lake Chamber of Commerce; John Brown Lives!; Paul Smith's College; Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism; SUNY-ESF's Northern Forest Institute; and The Wild Center.

**Attached: one (1) PDF document and one (1) photo**

Headshot provided by Nicole Hylton-Patterson

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