

# Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 17, 2012

Contact:

Amy Catania

Executive Director

HISTORIC SARANAC LAKE

(518) 891-4606

amy@historicsaranaclake.org

---

## **“HISTORY MATTERS” TALK TO FOCUS ON HISTORY OF HOMESTEADING IN THE ADIRONDACKS**

Saranac Lake, NY -- On May 24 at 7:00 p.m., Historic Saranac Lake will present the second of three seminars in May. Brett McLeod, professor at Paul Smith's College, will talk on the history of homesteading in the Adirondacks.

For many, the idea of homesteading or going back to the land brings to mind images of hippie communes and Mother Earth News. The reality is that individuals' motivations for going back to the land are far more complex. Whether considering the early homesteads of Timbuctoo or Helen and Scott Nearings quest for the “good life,” one thing is clear, returning to the land has been less about going back, and more about going forward; a way to meet modern challenges.

While virtually all rural communities can point to individuals and families who have chosen to go back to the land, few places offer as rich a homesteading tradition as New York's Adirondack North Country. Beginning in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century as a destination for the exceptionally poor and exceptionally ambitious homesteader, this region continues to reflect the enduring tradition of going back to the land. In a contemporary context, modern homesteaders pursue a life of self and community reliance for a variety of reasons. For some it's about living an environmental ethic, for others it's rugged individualism motivated by disdain for government control. Collectively these individuals offer us unique insight into a lifestyle that falls beyond the norms of modern consumerism and commercial dependence.

Brett McLeod is an Assistant Professor of Natural Resource Management at Paul Smith's College. His professional work focuses on the socio-economic dimensions of natural resource management in the context of promoting more sustainable rural communities. McLeod argues that many of our current environmental and economic problems are ultimately issues of scale. As evidence of this, McLeod contrasts the failures of industrial agriculture against smaller and

arguably more sustainable community-based models. While the place he is most passionate about creating sustainable and durable communities is the Adirondacks, he has worked on community-based resource issues throughout Latin America, Alaska and the North Woods of Wisconsin. McLeod currently lives in Vermontville, New York on a 25 acre farmstead that sports highland cattle, a draft horse, pigs, sheep, chickens and other rural essentials.

The “History Matters” seminars meet three Thursdays in May at 7:00 p.m. in the John Black Room of the Saranac Laboratory, 89 Church Street, Saranac Lake. The series is presented by Historic Saranac Lake in collaboration with Paul Smith’s College. Entrance is \$5 / person, members of Historic Saranac Lake free. Light refreshments will be provided.

#####