

# Treehuggers and cold warriors unite at Earth Day celebration

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*Barb Curtis, left, and Sarah Curtis cover an Iron and Wine song at the Tri-Lakes 350's Earth Day event at the Harrietstown Town Hall. (Enterprise photo Aaron Cerbone)*

SARANAC LAKE —In spite of a beautiful, sunny day calling Saranac Lakers to go outdoors, at least 200 people walked in to the indoor Earth Day event at the Harrietstown town hall.

People milled around looking at explanatory displays from many of the environmentally-focused nonprofits in the area, checked out Slow Fashion models and heard several speakers. Musicians provided entertainment and several booths offered kids interesting things to do and make.

Cris Winters, owner of Art at the Pink House, introduced the Slow Fashion models, who were all wearing handmade clothing of repurposed cloth, or recycled clothes.

*"I'm very interested in reducing waste and I'm kind of a thrift store girl,"* said Winters, who was wearing an *"I Make My Own Clothes"* tag. She's starting a slow fashion email list for people who are into it, and also collecting names of people who would attend a class in creative mending. The Slow Fashion movement encourages people to make ethical and environmentally sound choices when they buy clothing. According to Regeneration International, the apparel industry is the second-largest industrial polluter on the planet.

As Winters was talking, Lindy Ellis walked up to the table. *"I make my own clothes,"* said Ellis. *"Not this shirt, but others."*



*Ryan Bartholomew and Caleb Tuttle are taught how to plant pollinating flowers by Carrie Crowningshield from the Lake Placid Land Conservancy on Earth Day. (Enterprise photo © Aaron Cerbone)*

Winters immediately gave her an *"I Make My Own Clothes"* tag.

Near the entry, a volunteer from the Lake Placid Land Conservancy was talking to a boy who wanted to plant a seedling. The LPLC had provided plant pots and soil. Another worktable set up for children taught how to make things from plastic bags by twisting them into fiber and working with the fiber.

On stage, Diane Minutilli of Tri-Lakes 350.org introduced speaker Dan Plumley, who helped establish Adirondack Wild. Plumley, however, cut his remarks short so he could give the stage to Dan Brant, a Mohawk man of the Wolf Clan.

Plumley introduced Brant by walking to each of the four directions and giving a resounding thump to a skin drum. He explained that this is a tradition among Siberian indigenous people he's worked with, and it's called "*clearing the road*." It certainly quieted the crowd.

Brant addressed the crowd thoughtfully. "*Who am I speaking to? I can't tell you what you already know,*" he said. Instead of giving a speech, he gave thanks.

*"I want to encourage everyone to keep doing what you're doing,"* said Brant. *"I want to ask Creator to look after everyone and their family and make sure everyone keeps doing the jobs they are doing in a good way, with a good heart."*

Brant thanked Mother Earth, the plants that grow for food, the plants that provide medicine. His speech brought Mohawk theology and worldview into the gathering: *"I thank the four-leggeds of the world, the deer being the leader for this [area], the wolf and the bear. The turtle can live in both worlds — water and earth — but we also include them in the four-leggeds."*

He thanked the birds, insects, and trees, describing the Sugar Maple as a local leader as well as the Great White Pine, known as the Tree of Peace.

Lance Clark, a former Ambassador and United Nations official, spoke next about the national security aspects of climate change. Clark emphasized that the military has been dealing with climate change for many years. In addition to immediate concerns like rising sea levels at the Naval base in Norfolk, Virginia and the base on Diego Garcia island in the Indian Ocean, U.S. military planners see climate change as a factor in "*threat multipliers*" – drought, floods, famines, people being driven from their homes.

*"Climate change adds fuel to the fire and is sometimes the spark that causes the conflict,"* said Clark. He noted that the melting Arctic ice is making that region a potential zone of conflict between Russia and the United States, as Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered the creation of a strategic command in the north, including reopening naval bases closed since the end of the Cold War. Russia, he said, is planning to extract oil and mineral wealth that was previously under cover of the ice.

*"Our military intelligence experts put climate change in the same category as global terrorism,"* said Clark. "If you think the world is a dangerous place today, wait until climate change kicks in."

*"Some politicians in Washington have been very effective in muzzling the voice of our military commanders. Powerful leaders like Senators Inhoff and Cruz have made these into political issues rather than matters of science and security."*

Clark noted that the military base at Fort Drum makes this issue especially personal. *"There is a human cost to this; the lives of our sons and daughters right here at home."*

During the interval between speakers, Partridge in the Pines played string music. The Lake Placid Environmental Club sold bamboo toothbrushes along with lip gloss and lip scrub.

People hung around chatting with each other, perusing the tables and displays. Many stayed to hear ecologist Curt Stager speak, and to hear from the Youth Climate Summit's young student environmental teams. Still others headed outdoors to bask in the beautiful weather and enjoy the late arriving spring.