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CENTRAL NY NEWS

‘Reservation Dogs’ actress and ‘Braiding Sweetgrass’ author on keynote panel at SU symposium

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Renatahsion hosts an annual Rekindling the Fire of Our Sisterhood Gathering with Indigenous women. The group is having a symposium at Syracuse University in 2025. Credit: Brenda Wilson, Seneca

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By Ryann Phillips | Contributing Writer

Syracuse, N.Y. — A local nonprofit group, Renatahsion, will host a three-day academic conference in partnership with Syracuse University from Feb. 28 to March 2.

While tickets have sold out for the conference, Renatahsion invites the public to a keynote panel on March 1 at SU's National Veterans Resource Center.

Since 2016, the Syracuse-based organization has produced podcasts, films and events highlighting Indigenous communities. The upcoming “Matrilineal Pathways: Original Teachings for a Livable Future” event invites everyone to learn about Indigenous peoples' history and explore how their generational knowledge can be applied today.

The keynote address will feature a panel with actress Devery Jacobs from “Reservation Dogs” and New York Times bestselling author, Robin Wall Kimmerer, of “Braiding Sweetgrass.” Kimmerer is a distinguished professor at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and the founder and director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment.

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You can purchase a ticket to see this panel. Prices range from $14.44 to $44.92.

Michelle Schenandoah, a member of the Oneida Nation Wolf Clan of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, founded Renatahsion nearly 10 years ago as an online magazine. She decided to create her own platform where she couldn't see herself or other Indigenous women in mainstream media.

“When we first started, it was a place for us to be able to share stories, share culture, share knowledge, share about things that mattered to us,” Schenandoah said.

During the pandemic, the organization shifted its focus to community engagement. Over the past few years, they've hosted annual gatherings with around 200 Indigenous people each on Haudenosaunee lands in Central New York.

At a gathering of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in 2023, Renatahsion decided that they wanted to share their knowledge on a larger platform, which sparked the idea for this year's academic symposium.

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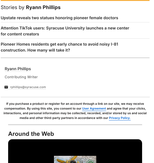
Over 35 speakers will present film screenings, learning sessions and discussions surrounding the idea of multiliteracy and restoration. Renatahsion is a movement started by Indigenous women. It keeps life given such as mothers and the Earth at the center and honors the role of men in that process, Schenandoah said.



Michelle Schenandoah founded Renatahsion in 2016 to create the space for Indigenous people to share their stories. | Credit: Adriana Kate Adriana Kate

“Renatahsion is a process that all peoples…can participate in, because life is at the center,” Schenandoah said. “That's something that we must all uphold as sacred.”

The keynote address will also feature a Haudenosaunee astronomy presentation by Samantha Doxtator, an Oneida woman. Her presentation, featured at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City last year, pairs Haudenosaunee oriental knowledge with research from NASA.

“I have seen her presentation five times, and there has never been a dry eye in the audience like ever that I've seen,” Schenandoah said.

Renatahsion is offering discounted tickets through a partnership with CNY Arts. To purchase half-off tickets, enter the code CNY2025 on the Eventbrite link.

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“All people are welcome. And we are very excited to welcome everyone, because we all live here together,” Schenandoah said. “It's not just a one-way street of sharing education or knowledge. But it's actually, it's a process that we all have to engage in.”

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