

Hodadenon/Chestnut Graduate Student Fellowship

"Plant these all over," he said. "Food (Chestnuts) will be shared with everyone from now on."

(*Hodadenon: The Last One Left and the Chestnut Tree*)



The American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) (o-hã-yah'tah, prickly burr in Onondaga) was once a common tree within its natural range in the eastern forests. It was an ecologically, economically, medicinally, and culturally important tree to both eastern Native American Peoples and later, to European settlers who were familiar with European chestnut trees. The chestnuts' abundance in open forest stands, along with oaks, hickories, and other fire tolerant trees were significantly influenced by Indigenous people's traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). The chestnut was all but lost when an invasive fungal pathogen was introduced through world trade, causing a blight that killed over 3 billion of these trees in only 50 years. After over a century of many unsuccessful efforts to restore this cultural and ecological keystone species, there is now a new hope. Researchers at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, using the tools of biotechnology that includes both genetic engineering and breeding techniques, has produced a blight-tolerant American chestnut tree that can now coexist with the blight. These trees hold the promise for the restoration of the chestnut. Following the lesson from the *Hodadenon* story, we hope to share these chestnuts with everyone.

The American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project at ESF (<https://www.esf.edu/chestnut/>) is looking for a graduate student with intimate experience and knowledge of eastern Native American cultures and TEK, as well as a strong foundation in biology and/or ecology. This fellowship's goals are to promote interdisciplinary research which incorporates the intellectual traditions of both western and native science, bridging the two for the restoration of the chestnut tree.

The fellowship will provide a \$20K/yr stipend and tuition waiver for up to three years. Applicants for either a MS or Ph.D. track, depending on qualifications. Underrepresented minorities, women, and non-traditional students are encouraged to apply. To learn more about the chestnut project, please view this recent video produced by the provider of this grant: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mhMdUryolU&feature=youtu.be>

To apply, follow the instructions to apply to the ESF graduate program at <https://www.esf.edu/graduate/admission.htm>. In addition, to be considered for this particular fellowship, write a letter stating your qualifications for this fellowship and why you would like to work on the chestnut project, and email a PDF copy to Dr. William Powell at wapowell@esf.edu. This fellowship could start between June and August of 2020.

To learn about other programs that focus on the TEK, visit the ESF Center for Native Peoples and the Environment at <https://www.esf.edu/nativepeoples/>.