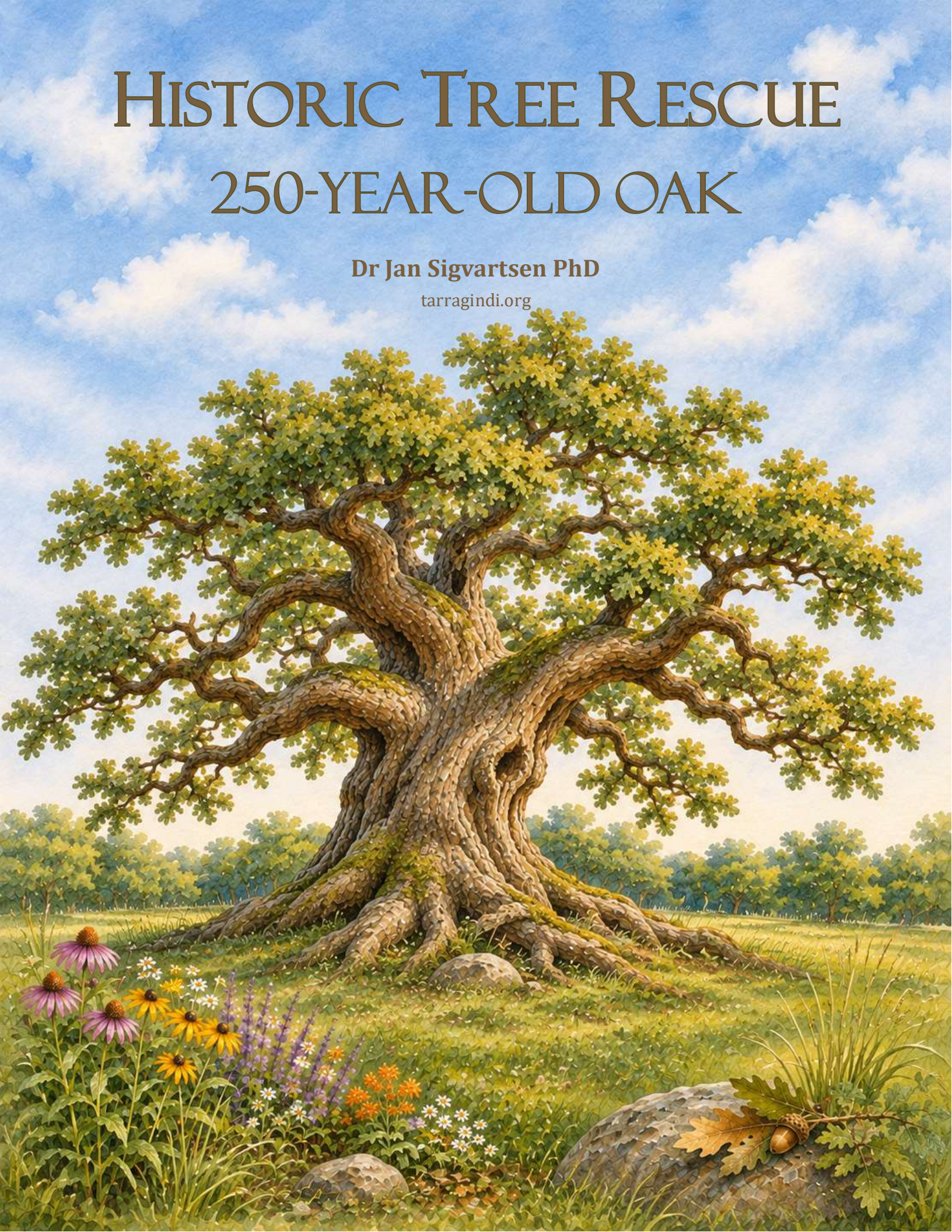
Historic Tree Rescue

250-year-old oak

Dr Jan Sigvartsen PhD

tarragindi.org



Berrien Springs Partnership Syllabus

CLASS TITLE:	HISTORIC TREE RESCUE - 250-YEAR-OLD OAK
TOTAL REQUIRED HRS:	16
ADDITIONAL TIME POSSIBLE:	Yes, if needed
TOTAL SEMESTER HOURS POSSIBLE:	16
LOCATION (address):	6492 Long Lake Road, Berrien Springs, MI 49103
PRIMARY INSTRUCTOR:	Dr Jan A. Sigvartsen PhD (goes by Dr Jan)
SECONDARY INSTRUCTOR:	Leanne M. Sigvartsen (goes by Ms Leanne)
CONTACT INFORMATION:	Jan@tarragindi.org, Leanne@tarragindi.org 269-363-3968, tarragindi.org

INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS:	Dr Jan	BA, MA, PhD
	Ms Leanne	BA Psych, PGD Psych, MCouns

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To allow students to learn about how Berrien County was surveyed in the 1820s and 1830s using "chains" and how surveyors at that time used "witness trees" to mark boundaries. It was believed that Berrien County had no surviving "witness trees" but this tree's discovery by Dr Sigvartsen may change that.
2. To participate in the rescue of an approx. 270-year-old oak tree we believe may be Berrien County's last Witness Tree" described by Surveyor, Lucius Lyon in 1829 in Section 29 of Berrien Township (when its trunk at chest height was only 14 inches in diameter – now it is 54 inches). Berrien County's first European settler, John Johnson, settled in 1827 – 200 years ago – in Section 29. It may also be one of the oldest oak trees in Michigan.
3. Learn historic tree care and rescue and how to identify surviving "Witness Trees" using Lucius Lyon's survey notes held by the State Library of Michigan and available electronically through Michiganology. https://michigan.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_79cb2b3c-c1a2-4efb-b494-00f765052f43/ Learn how to apply for a state historic "green marker."
4. To teach Berrien County history in an engaging, real way with the view of students developing belonging and a sense of place in their local community by connecting with important historic projects in our community.

CLASS TIMES:

Friday 1.30 - 3.30pm

January 7- 17 then we pause and resume on April 9 – May 14 when the weather is warmer.

All our classes are half semester (8 week) programs due to weather constraints.

We can't do tree rescue in the snow or frozen ground! So, we do two required classes in January (January 12-15 and January 18-22). Then six weeks in either the first half or second half of the semester.

Register for one of our other programs in the first half of the semester - then resume this one in the second half and still only be committed to one class each week throughout the semester! Our class list is below.

Our Spring 2026 Classes

First Half of the Semester

- **Arrowhead Making and Ancient Tools** - learn to make stone arrowheads, identify and date them, and make ancient stone and wood tools used by ancient people. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Board Games, Civilization Building** – learn to build strong communities by building small ones in an in-person, interactive, screen-free class. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Genealogy 101** – trace your family tree as far back as you can go (Warning: HIGHLY addictive!!). Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Historic Photography** – learn photography by capturing a new local historic site each week and learning its story. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Historic Court Trials** – bring your acting skills and relive real 1800s court trials that were tried in the Berrien Springs Courthouse – Michigan's oldest courthouse. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Historic Storytelling** – learn the ancient art of telling stories and keeping our history alive. Syllabus at tarragindi.org

Second Half of the Semester

- **Archaeology Dig – Tarragindi** - Excavate one of the Berrien County's oldest settler farms, that is nearly 200 years old, with archaeologist Dr Jan Sigvartsen PhD. We find antique bottles, coins, and so much more! Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Cemetery Restoration Project** - Help save one of Berrien County's oldest cemeteries and learn the life stories of our earliest European settlers who are buried there. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Garden Recreation Project - 1000 Years Ago** - Recreate a real Woodland Native American garden based on Michigan's very own archaeology record. Syllabus at tarragindi.org
- **Gardening Project, 1830s Early Settlers Garden** - Recreate a real Berrien County early settler garden based on historical records.
- **Historic Writing** – hone your writing skills by capturing local historical stories and getting them published. Syllabus at tarragindi.org

SYLLABUS/OUTLINE: Weekly approximate breakdown of activities:

Class 1: (2 hours) January 7

6492 Long Lake Road, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

You will be required to sign a waiver and choose if you want to participate in photographs or not during this program. We will go over expectations and give you some background of how surveyors mapped out Berrien County and the use of the witness tree. You will also meet "Big Lucius," the 250-year-old white oak tree we will be rescuing. ("Big Lucius" is named after our 1800s surveyor, Lucius Lyon, who first described the tree and surveyed Berrien Springs and Berrien Township.

Class 2: (2 hours) January 16, 2.30-4.30pm OR January 17, 2.30-4.30pm (attend 1 only)

1860 County Poor Farm Tour (now Love Creek County Park, 9292 Huckleberry Rd, Berrien Center)

History Tour - Did you know most early settlers couldn't tame the land Lucius Lyon surveyed into a workable farm? Many didn't even have the money to go home. That is why Berrien County set up the

County Poor Farm that became a thriving community of its own and an example of what can be achieved when we work together.

Class 3: (2 hours) April 9

6492 Long Lake Road, Berrien Springs, MI 49103
We will commence our restoration of "Big Lucius" focusing on clearing the surrounding brush. We will also learn how to read Michigan survey notes from the 1800s.

Class 4: (2 hours) April 16

6492 Long Lake Road, Berrien Springs, MI 49103
We will continue our restoration of "Lucius" focusing on removing the vines that have invaded his lower branches.

Class 5: (2 hours) April 23

6492 Long Lake Road, Berrien Springs, MI 49103
We will have an arborist come in and cut his dead branches. We will cut them into cookies, and oil them for you to keep and for the Tarragindi Initiative to give away to landowners in Section 29.

Class 6: (2 hours) April 30

6492 Long Lake Road, Berrien Springs, MI 49103
We will landscape a garden around the base of Old Lucius and put in some seating, so residents in the area can use his shade as a rest stop during their evening power walk or Saturday afternoon stroll.

Class 7: (2 hours) May 7

6492 Long Lake Road, Berrien Springs, MI 49103
Beside "Old Lucius" is an old abandoned apple orchard. We will clear some of this orchard too, to limit invasive weeds returning to the space occupied by Old Lucius.

Class 8: (2 hours) May 14

6492 Long Lake Road, Berrien Springs, MI 49103
We will finish our project, and erect a sign so passers by can read Old Lucius' story

STUDENT ASSESSMENT - In addition to the 2 items below, what will be used to evaluate student progress and/or end of semester pass/fail status?

1) Students agree to attend at least 80% of class sessions/lessons offered. Attendance is kept online and tracked by Partnership staff. Unexcused absences resulting in failure to meet 80% threshold may result in program discontinuation.

2) The Partnership Student Assessment is filled out by the teacher and turned in to Partnership staff. The rubric is found on the teacher's online attendance sheet. Failing marks for lack of participation, behavior issues, excessive absences, etc. may result in program discontinuation.

3) Other class-specific assessment: Engagement in the program, follow through with instruction, and participation in research for of the class.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: (online, books, video, etc.):

www.tarragindi.org/resources - page on our website giving links to local history resources.
Link to Old Lucius' description. https://michigan.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_79cb2b3c-c1a2-4efb-b494-00f765052f43/

CLASS-SPECIFIC POLICIES:

Attendance: Students are to attend each week. If they cannot make it one week, or if we have to cancel due to weather, we are happy to reschedule or have student's attend one of our other 12 archaeology or history classes that has some crossover content.

Behavior: To be careful, listen to instructions, identify everything you like about others (not what you don't like about them – ancient and settler communities succeeded through team work), zero tolerance of bullying, report bullying, have fun!

Weather: This is an outdoor class, but will be canceled if there is significant snow forecast. All students will be emailed. Dr Sigvartsen will still go down to the Old Lucius property to ensure everyone got his email message.

Other: Be kind to the neighbors by parking in the designated areas, being courteous, and keeping the noise down.

ZERO BULLYING – we have a zero bullying policy. We want to be a space were people build one another up, not tear each other down. Please report bullying to Ms Leanne immediately. Do not attempt to deal with it yourself or have your parent deal with it.

We believe in grace, and work on a compassionate three-warning system. A child engaging in anti-social behaviors will be given a first and a second warning, along with compassionate and clear expectations of future behavior and examples of that behavior. We have only ever needed to give one first warning, due to the efficacy of this compassionate system. However, if a child requires a third warning, they will be removed from all Tarragindi Initiative programming.

ZERO Sexual harassment, profanity, sexually explicit, or crude behavior or speech – we have a strict zero-acceptance policy for anti-social behaviors. Again, we are a space that makes people feel welcome and accepted, not uncomfortable. Please report these behaviors to Ms Leanne immediately. She will deal with it and these behaviors were the topic of her Masters research thesis. Again, grace will be offered along with the same compassionate three warning protocol outlined above.

Withdrawal from the class: If you wish to withdraw from the class, you must do so following Class 1 or prior to Class 2. Otherwise, very significant investment will be made in you/your child and their participation in the class that you may be financially responsible for. We are happy to do make up classes if you have to miss a class for whatever reason or miss the first class. Parent Partnership staff have been advised of our deadlines. If your schedule changes after the Tarragini Initiative withdrawal deadline, please talk to Ms Leanne, as she may be able to work something out for you or schedule another class time for you.