

Dom Starsia, Michael Kennedy, and Mike Kanatakeron Mitchell Named 2026 Recipients of the Alfie Jacques Ambassador Award

The award honoring the legacy of legendary Onondaga stickmaker Alfie Jacques will be presented on September 11 in Syracuse

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- SYRACUSE, N.Y. — August 12, 2026 —
The American Indian Law Alliance (AILA) today announced the 2026 recipients of the Alfie Jacques Ambassador Award: championship college coach Dom Starsia, Ireland Lacrosse founder Michael Kennedy, and Akwesasne Mohawk lacrosse builder and Faithkeeper Mike Kanatakeron Mitchell. The award will be presented at a dinner on Friday, September 11, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. at Bellevue Country Club, 1901 Glenwood Ave., Syracuse — the opening event of the 11th Annual Haudenosaunee Wooden Stick Festival weekend at Onondaga Lake.

The Alfie Jacques Ambassador Award honors the legacy of Alfie Jacques, the renowned Onondaga stickmaker who crafted tens of thousands of traditional wooden lacrosse sticks over more than five decades and spent his life teaching the world about the sacred Haudenosaunee origins of the Creator's Game. The award recognizes leaders who have shown selfless dedication to growing the game while honoring its Indigenous heritage. Past recipients include Sid Jamieson, Roy Simmons Jr., and Oren Lyons.

Dom Starsia is one of the winningest coaches in the history of NCAA Division I men's lacrosse. Over 34 seasons at Brown University and the University of Virginia, Starsia won four NCAA national championships (1999, 2003, 2006, 2011), including an undefeated 17-0 season in 2006 — a first in NCAA history — along with two Ivy League titles and six ACC titles. A member of the National Lacrosse Hall of Fame, Starsia shaped generations of players and has long used his platform to point the sport back to its Haudenosaunee roots.



Alfie Jacques Ambassador Award Dinner

SEPTEMBER
FRIDAY 11 AT 6 PM
BELLEVUE COUNTRY CLUB
1901 GLENWOOD AVE.
SYRACUSE, NY 13207
DINNER & PROGRAM 6-9 PM
ALFIEAWARD.COM

Alfie Jacques making wooden sticks in his workshop

Michael Kennedy is the founder and CEO of Ireland Lacrosse, which he built from the ground up after moving to Ireland in 1997, captaining the Irish national team for six years and establishing the sport's national governing body in 2009. In 2022, Kennedy led Ireland's decision to voluntarily give up its qualification spot at the World Games so that the Haudenosaunee Nationals — the people who gave the world the game — could compete. That act of sportsmanship earned Ireland Lacrosse the Musial Award and stands as a model of what it means to grow the game with integrity.

Mike Kanatakeron Mitchell, a Faithkeeper of the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation and former Grand Chief of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, is recognized as one of the great builders in lacrosse history. Raised in a stick-making family, Mitchell served thirty years as a First Nation representative to Lacrosse Canada, co-founded the North American Indian Traveling College, established the Akwesasne Lacrosse Hall of Fame, authored two books on the Creator's Game, and served as a longtime board member of the Haudenosaunee Nationals. A member of the Canadian and Ontario Lacrosse Halls of Fame, Mitchell has taught players at every level that lacrosse did not originate as a sport, but as a medicine.

"Alfie was also a coach, speaker, educator, and Ambassador for the game. Alfie loved lacrosse and he loved the people who played it, from all walks of life. He created a traveling roadshow with the different sticks from different regions, and he would speak to any audience about the rich history of the Creator's Game."

Each recipient is honored with a soapstone sculpture carved by artist Ryan Sandy of Six Nations. Proceeds from the dinner support the Alfie Jacques college scholarship for Native American youth who demonstrate outstanding sportsmanship, educational commitment, community service, and citizenship, administered through Native Vision.

Tickets and sponsorship information for the September 11 dinner are available at alfieaward.com.

The dinner opens the 11th Annual Haudenosaunee Wooden Stick Festival weekend, September 12 & 13 at Onondaga Lake, featuring the Randy Hall Memorial Tournament, Smoke Dancing, traditional stick-making demonstrations, and the Restore Our Sacred Lake 5K. The public can register for the run at aila.li/run and learn more about the weekend at aila.li/wsf.

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