

Meeting on the River of Life: Fostering Loyalist and Mohawk Exchange through the Arts

By Bryan Bowers

INTRODUCTION

Early in this century, conflict was brewing between indigenous people and settlers in different locations in the province of Ontario, Canada. While some of these conflicts resulted in violence, an initiative in Ontario's Prince Edward County and a neighbouring indigenous community, the Bay of Quinte Mohawks, was exploring how to use art and artifacts to create conditions for listening, that is, for community members to recognize and hear 'the other' in hopes of contributing to building collectivist engagements for social change by opening up spaces for dialogue across differences. The initiative's working group decided to organize an exhibition to animate a cultural exchange using art, historical artifacts and literature to inform and to engage cultural differences in order to increase cross-cultural understanding and resolve an underlying conflict. It was agreed to call it the *Meeting on the River of Life* as it embodied the original treaty of North America, the Two Row Wampum belt (indigenous expression) and the Silver Covenant Chain (settler expression), between settlers and indigenous Haudenosaunee people, known then as the Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, which included people of the Onondaga, Cayuga, Oneida, Seneca and Mohawk Nations. The reasons for rooting the *Meeting on the River of Life* in these two important and significant treaty artifacts will be explained later in this chapter. Today the Iroquois Confederacy is known as the Six Nations after the inclusion of the Tuscarora Nation in 1722

As Chair of the *Meeting on the River of Life*, I will be discussing how the exhibition was created, how it brought Loyalists (settlers) of Prince Edward County and the Mohawk (indigenous) people of the Bay of Quinte reserve origins together in two separate locations, one on reserve and one off reserve, in Picton, Ontario, and my observations of the outcomes. First and foremost I participated in this exhibition as a community member who had a stake in its outcome. As an advocate for restorative justice and community policing I viewed this exhibition as a test of the practices of restorative justice and the philosophy of community policing. Professionally, I was working as a Kingston City Police officer at the time of the exhibition, having also been a former member of the

Ontario Provincial Police. Personally, I identify as a conflicted indigenous person who struggles to both hold out and live in between two epistemologies. My passion is embodied in my art collection that I call “indigenous Spirit Matters.” The collection, which has been a work in progress for several decades, captures traditional teachings of indigenous ways of knowing, several of which were used in the exhibition.

BACKGROUND

DYING FOR CHANGE – TELLING A STORY

The end of the 20th century went out with a literal *bang* in the province of Ontario, Canada regarding settler and indigenous relations. In 1995, an unarmed indigenous protester, Dudley George, was shot and killed by a member of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) during a protracted land claim dispute involving Ipperwash Provincial Park, lands that were appropriated in 1942 under the War Measures Act and were never returned to the Kettle and Stoney Point indigenous bands as promised. The OPP’s armed response to the land claim conflict set off a flurry of condemnation and led to a lengthy public inquiry. The revelations of the Ipperwash Inquiry, headed by the Honourable Sidney B. Linden, were nothing short of shocking. The public came to learn that Ontario’s Attorney General testified that he had heard the then Premier of Ontario utter, “I want the fucking Indians out of the park.” (*Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry*, 2007, volume 1, p. 360) The Premier denied he said those words or “use guns if you have to.” (*ibid.* p. 361) but Commissioner Linden concluded that the Premier’s words “were made and that they were racist, whether intended or not.” (*ibid.* p. 677.)

A local politician, Mayor Fred Thomas of the town of Bosanquet “exacerbated rather than allayed the concerns of Ipperwash residents” by penning a newspaper article entitled “Reign of terror continues,” (*ibid.* p. 222) which only served to widen the indigenous-settler divide. The Ipperwash Inquiry took three years to complete and led to a series of recommendations, which unfortunately came at a high cost, the death of an indigenous protester and a lot of unnecessary expense for all Ontarians.

THE SIX-MILE DIVIDE – TELLING TRUTHS

The start of the 21st century ushered in another long-standing indigenous-settler land claim dispute in Ontario, which was rapidly becoming combustible in the wake of the Ipperwash Inquiry’s revelations and

recommendations. Once again the OPP found themselves on the frontlines of a protracted indigenous-settler conflict. In 2006 yet another land claim dispute boiled over in the town of Caledonia, in Ontario, which pitted settler town residents against indigenous community members of the adjoining Six Nations, which is the only reserve in North America where all members of the Iroquois Confederacy live together. And once again settler community members resorted to calling indigenous community members terrorists. The OPP again found themselves between two cultures and two worldviews, only this time I believe they were mindful of the pending Ipperwash Inquiry recommendations and decided to take a non-confrontational stance to avoid an armed confrontation that could lead to another Ipperwash. Instead they opted to be peacekeepers and took a position standing between settlers enraged by fear and who taunted their indigenous neighbours who had set up a barricade to stop a housing development being built on disputed lands. The Six Nations indigenous community has historically claimed the land six miles on either side of the Grand River, from its source in central western Ontario to Lake Erie, as granted in the Haldimand Proclamation of 1784. Many settler communities have since built their communities on those disputed lands and thus they only saw this land claim as a battle over a 100-acre housing development, whereas the indigenous community saw it as a battle over their treaty rights. Thus the settler vs. indigenous community question was now not just a divide but a six-mile wide chasm. The OPP for their part found themselves in a very precarious position as they were being criticized by both sides for their inaction while trying to keep the peace, albeit by using a very traditional response i.e. an armed presence. Given the backdrop of the Ipperwash conflict and inquiry, the OPP had come to learn that forceful intervention would not end well for all concerned. Apart from having to purchase the disputed lands in 2006 for over \$1 million, the Province of Ontario also settled a class action lawsuit for \$20 million filed by 440 Caledonia residents and 400 businesses in 2011.

ANOTHER CONFLICT, A NEW APPROACH - ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

In 2007 the OPP were embroiled in yet another land claim dispute, only this time in Eastern Ontario, involving the Mohawks of the Bay of Quite (Tyendinaga) and their neighbouring settler community (Deseronto.) Below is a map showing how close the community of Tyendinaga, is to Six Nations, the site of the Caledonia

conflict. For references purposes, the site of the Ipperwash conflict is located northwest of Six Nations, on the shores of Lake Huron.



Illustration 1: Site Map - Courtesy: Mohawknationnews.com

This time the land involved was known as the Culbertson Land Tract and the Thurlow Aggregates quarry; the 932-acre land claim was initiated in 1995. When indigenous community members saw no resolution in sight they decided to occupy the disputed lands in an attempt to speed up and resolve their claim. In 2008

the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory land claim dispute boiled over just when the Upper Canada Empire Loyalists were going to celebrate the 225th anniversary of their settling in Prince Edward County. The violence had escalated to the point where Canadian National rail line (CN) was shut down and violent confrontations were often the order of the day. In the wake of these tensions, an OPP Aboriginal liaison officer approached me for advice on how best to quell the situation in a non-confrontational manner. Together we decided to form a committee to explore possibilities on how to creatively address this explosive situation. The committee came up with the idea to host a “Meeting on the River of Life” rooted in the indigenous expression of Two Row Wampum belt treaty and the settler expression of that treaty, known as the Silver Covenant Chain.

Having just returned from a course in adult education at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, I had come to learn how powerful the processes of various art forms are for adult learning and community building and how the arts can be used to communicate both individual and collective perspectives by providing engaging ways for necessary exchanges in multicultural and pluralistic societies. Indeed, I had come to learn that the arts can contribute not only to building community specifically but also to a more just society overall. Thus I was ideally positioned to use my newfound knowledge in a creative way.

Fearing yet another protracted confrontational conflict, the OPP had tasked their Aboriginal liaison officers to think anew. To their credit, members of the OPP's Aboriginal liaison teams had decided that if they wanted to move an event from a negative experience to a positive experience they would have to put more energy into positive activities than negative ones. But that was much easier said than done as police officers are mostly seen in negative contexts. Their underlying concern was that if the police were to do something positive, would the "other side" see it as false and self-serving instead of genuine?

MY PART - MARRYING VARIOUS ART-MAKING PRACTICES IN POWERFUL WAYS THAT SUPPORT MARGINALIZED INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

As a former member of the OPP, I had watched the aforementioned disputes unfold with chagrin as I had personally served with a number of the officers involved in the Ipperwash dispute. And I knew of the shooter, as I was also a former member of the OPP's Tactics and Rescue Unit (TRU). As well, I had served with several of the OPP's Ipperwash command staff when the OPP had attempted to adopt and institutionalize the philosophy of community policing. For my part, I did not see a good outcome emerging from the Culbertson land claim dispute as the acrimony between the then Commissioner of the OPP and the lead indigenous protester was toxic at best; and it was being played out in the media on a near-daily basis. Adding to my concern was learning that the Upper Canada Empire Loyalists settlers were planning on celebrating the 225th anniversary of their settlement in Eastern Ontario that same year, 2009.

As a long-standing proponent of restorative justice practices, I was trying to think anew by asking myself how traditional indigenous teachings and ways of knowing might help deescalate this volatile situation. I found myself in a very unique position, being a board member of both Tyendinaga's First Nations Technical Institute (indigenous/FNTI) and the Picton (settler/Upper Canada Loyalist) Archives and Collections Society, now known as the Naval Marine Archive – The Canadian Collection. Thus from my vantage point, I could see that their respective worldviews were definitely set on yet another collision course. Imagine how pleased I was to come across OPP Aboriginal Liaison officer Sgt. Steve Flynn. In the midst of all the turmoil and rumours, here was a friend who seemed to exude positive and creative energy, which are necessary ingredients of effective and restorative conflict resolution. I had known Steve for a number of years while serving with the Kingston City

Police Force (KPF) as he had sought my counsel during the previously mentioned conflicts. Given my interest in restorative policing practices he often referred to me, with affection, as “the wild card.” I liked that name as I had grown up being called nicknames like “Chief,” and the “FBI” which is an acronym for “F___king Big Indian,” and, last but not least, “Wagon Burner.” Thankfully my assignment to court services by the Kingston Police Force, for having exposed their practice of targeting the poor to meet quota, afforded me time to support Sgt. Flynn who had been tasked to endeavour to resolve this conflict creatively. I knew Sgt. Flynn to be the embodiment of intent, integrity and impeccability. Our friendship became strong enough that we could appreciate and verbalize a “put your money where your mouth is” position on our planning table. And if we didn’t, then our idea of moving positive energy forward was false. We made it a condition of our collaboration and friendship that if Sgt. Flynn ever did something to offend me that he had to invite and buy me lunch on “the Crown,” and that did occur at least once. Without knowing it, Sgt. Flynn and I had already started to symbolically polish the Silver Covenant Chain, an artifact that symbolizes peace, respect and friendship.

MEETING ON THE RIVER OF LIFE EXHIBITION

HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS OF TREATIES: TWO ROW WAMPUM BELT AND SILVER COVENANT CHAIN

As a recent graduate of the FNTI’s Indigenous Community Health Approaches Program (ICHAP), I had come to learn of the Two Row Wampum Treaty belt, which was the indigenous Haudenosaunee expression for how the settler culture and the indigenous culture were to conduct themselves post contact.

The two-row wampum belt is comprised of two purple rows and three white rows. The purple rows signify two distinct rivers running side by side, one river for settler people to sail their ships, and the other river



Illustration 2: a Two Row Wampum belt – Courtesy: onondaganation.org

for the indigenous people to paddle their canoes, neither interfering with the other. The three white rows signified a covenant to live side by side in Peace, Respect and Friendship.

Early settlers also made their own expression of the Two Row Wampum Treaty Belt and called it the Silver Covenant Chain. In 1608 the Dutch were the first to express it by using two pieces of rope made from the bark of a tree or its roots. In 1632, the English reaffirmed this expression by using three links of a ship's iron anchor chain until the 1680s when the British coated those three links of the covenant chain with silver (illustrations 3 and 4) so that they could be polished from time to time to reassert peaceful relations, resolve disputes, and renew peace, respect and friendship between all of North America's (Turtle Island's) forefathers, including the Haudenosaunee, Dutch, British and French.



Illustrations 3 and 4: Bryan Bowers and the Silver Covenant Chain. Personal photo collection.

In the first photograph, I am presenting the teachings of the Silver Covenant Chain at a sunrise ceremony at Ontario's Petroglyphs Provincial Park for the

United Church's "Dancing the Circle of Right Relationships" canoe outing. In the second photograph, I am showing how the Silver Covenant Chain is polished using a red "treaty" cloth. The British even took it one step further by figuratively tying the Silver Covenant Chain to the Iroquois Confederacies' Tree of Peace. Today there is a Haudenosaunee teaching that says, "should any one follow the Tree of Peace's white roots to their source, they are welcome to sit with them in its shade. For it is their law of the land." Thus historically the Silver Covenant Chain served as a tool to establish dialogue between indigenous and settler peoples. Indeed, it became the root of their negotiations. Its brilliance was not only in its simplicity but also in its inherent collaborative nature. People had to become personal with "the other" by putting their hand on the chain to polish it, while sitting across from "the other." The question for Sgt. Flynn and myself then became how to resurrect the Silver Covenant Chain as a possible tool to resolve this dispute peacefully. Should we not be looking back to the lessons

of history? Could the Silver Covenant Chain be used to break the isolation of each side? And if history had anything to teach us it was about the importance of good relationships, so why would we not try to resurrect it?

THE OPP – PROVIDING ENGAGING WAYS FOR NECESSARY EXCHANGES

The OPP were quickly discovering that they needed to develop a new plan. They seemed keen to implement the Ipperwash recommendations and were leading the way for other police agencies by being open to the idea that some conflict and unrest could indeed be mitigated if approached creatively. Their Aboriginal liaison officer's concerns were that their collective corporate memory would likely forget their progress after things settled down; great tactically but not so good strategically. To their credit they realized they were dealing with an indigenous culture with huge respect for symbolisms that recall stories of historical treaties with the Crown as though they happened yesterday and who consider seven generations as a standard of time. The OPP's challenge then became how to engage this culture in a strategic project and a partnership. Helping to resurrect the Silver Covenant Chain seemed to meet those strategic and symbolic requirements.

Sgt. Flynn's challenge was to convince the Chief Superintendent of the OPP's East Region that he should finance half of the cost of resurrecting the Silver Covenant Chain. Sgt. Flynn subsequently wrote the business case as though he was writing information for an application to obtain a search warrant by listing all the facts supporting the proposal and what was to be gained. Ultimately he received approval and the OPP's financial commitment; thus the OPP became a silent partner in the reproduction and resurrection of the Silver Covenant Chain. At the time there were very few people within Tyendinaga that would have ever considered the police to be a partner in such a project. Sgt. Flynn knew it needed to be a delicate silent partnership otherwise the naysayers would discredit any input from the police and the upcoming *Meeting on the River of Life* would suffer. Sgt. Flynn was subsequently included in all our planning meetings where he reported meeting wonderful people, all with the same vision. It was in those meetings that Sgt. Flynn learned that the relationship between the indigenous Haudenosaunee and Loyalist settlers was still good, that there were some difficulties, the same as there had always been, but, more importantly, it renewed his faith that once again mutual peace, respect and friendship could be realized. Our planning meetings for the *Meeting on the River of Life* exhibition were in

themselves symbolic exercises in polishing the Silver Covenant Chain and an opportunity for socializing to renew friendships. Sgt. Flynn was convinced very early on that it was worthwhile for the police to be a partner.

PLANNING AND HOLDING THE EXHIBITION

Others who joined the planning group included Rick Hill, a professor at the First Nations Technical Institute, who initially posited the idea of the inherent spiritual power contained within wampum-recorded treaties. Indeed, the creators of these wampum belts were said to have actually breathed their life's breath into them before tying them off. The next key player was James Heffernan who was the chair of FNTI. James had been collecting local artifacts for decades in an effort to make his children proud of their heritage. When I initially saw his collection I felt it needed a public space. My thoughts turned to people who could help us achieve our objective, and immediately thought of Dr. Paul Adamthwaite and Betty Anne Anderson of the Picton Archives and Collections Society. When they saw James' collection they immediately called upon the services of Ken Swaze, an archaeologist and consultant with the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa for assistance. Last but not least was Janice Brant, a Mohawk cultural carrier and a purveyor of rigorous First Nations literature and research as well as a recent graduate of the St. Francis Xavier University's Master of Adult Education program. Our plan called for getting the neighbouring indigenous Mohawks and the settler Loyalists, descendants of the Upper Canada Empire Loyalists together by hosting an exhibition that would feature James Heffernan's collection of local artifacts, Janice Brant's collection of relevant indigenous literature, and my indigenous Spirit Matters art collection. The OPP dearly wanted the resurrected Silver Covenant Chain to be part of the art exhibit alongside the artifacts, arrow points and pottery.

At our initial meeting I was appointed chair of the committee. We immediately began working with the Museum of Civilization to carbon date James' artifacts, all of which were from Prince Edward County specifically: some items dated back almost 12,000 years! After six months of planning and hard work the exhibition was ready for its first visitors. One of the key attractions, aside from the artifacts, was the replica of the Silver Covenant Chain, which came from a seventeenth century ship on Lake Ontario, which the OPP had sponsored to have coated with real silver. The exhibition was first featured on reserve in Tyendinaga Mohawk

Territory from 22-29 May 2009 before it was moved off reserve to the town of Picton, Ontario for a month long engagement from 6 June to 6 July, 2009. Over 1,000 people viewed it in Tyendinaga and over 7,000 people viewed it in Picton. When the exhibition opened the the dialogue began, neighbour-to-neighbour, community-to-community. The varied nature of the displays created a built-in reflection mechanism. Activities included fundraising activities, cabinet making and collaboration with the Museum of Civilization, not to mention media relations and many other related tasks.

Mohawk advisors and committee members ensured that indigenous ways of knowing were incorporated into this endeavour by being present and participating at every step in the planning processes. Some of the indigenous ways of knowing include *use only what you need and leave the land as you found it'* and *human beings only have one mother, mother earth; by damning Her veins we are only ensuring our mutual destruction*. Unity was the underlying theme of the exhibits that were tied to place and people. The exhibition honoured the primacy of direct experience by getting people to see how incredibly rich their collective and shared history really was. Respect and reciprocity, reflecting a relational worldview were evident when the Chief of the Mohawks of



Illustration 5: L-R, Betty Ann Anderson (Naval Marine Archive (NMA)–the Canadian Collection), Picton Mayor Leo Finnegan, Bay of Quinte Chief R Donald Maracle and NMA Executive Director Dr. Paul Adamthwaite. Courtesy of the Picton Gazette, Rick Fralick, 9 July 2009.

the Bay of Quinte and the Mayor of Picton greeted each other and posed for a picture with the Silver Covenant Chain in the background.

One of the indigenous ways of knowing, the principle of responsibility, was evident in the exhibition and did indeed help all partners, including the OPP, achieve their stated objective of fostering dialogue and obtaining peace between the indigenous

Mohawks and settler Loyalists. This exhibition was one of historical proportions because much of the art, artifacts and literature people saw, were seen for the very first time. A slide show illustrated the span of time, the early implements, the travel and way of life of the people who lived in Prince Edward County since time immemorial. The attendance was very good and there was almost a sense of awe in learning this history. For a number of years after the exhibition members of the public would still come in and ask about the exhibition. The Silver Covenant Chain has taken a message of Peace, Respect and Friendship to many venues. Sgt. Flynn found it heart wrenching when young children said, “I wish we had that at our school.” The Chain has an important influence.

ARTWORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

The paintings by Onondaga artist Arnold Jacobs, “Comes the Peacemaker” and “Discussing the Environment,” were center pieces of the exhibition as they embody indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world. “Comes the Peacemaker” depicts the legend of the Peacemaker paddling his stone canoe from what is now Deseronto, Ontario, to what is now Oshwego, New York, to bring a message of peace and unity to the then



Illustration 6: Comes the Peacemaker by Arnold Jacobs.

warring Five Nations, over a thousand years ago. The Five Nations of the indigenous Onondaga, Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida and Seneca peoples would go on to form an alliance so powerful that it would eventually help shape North America, post contact. The Peacemaker’s teachings were so powerful that they were borrowed and incorporated into the constitution of the United States and the United Nations. Today the Five Nations are also known as the Iroquois Confederacy or Six Nations after inclusion of the Tuscarora.

The painting titled “Queenstown Landing – Fall 1811” by Ontario artist, Peter Rindlisbacher, CSMA, depicts what the war of 1812 looked like from indigenous Leader Tecumseh’s



Illustration 7: Queenstown Landing – Fall 1811 by Peter Rindlisbacher, CSMA.

eyes. indigenous canoes working alongside settler ships, readying for a heated battle known as the Battle of Queenstown Heights with the United States, which resulted in the loss of General Brock but Canada’s settlers and their indigenous allies prevailed and in doing so, repelled the American invasion.

Onondaga artist Arnold Jacobs painted “Caledonia 2008” after visiting the front lines of the Caledonia protest and recounts asking people why they were there and they responded, “for our Ancestors.” Of note, almost without exception, everyone on the protest’s front line (foreground) have closed mouths and in stark contrast, without exception,

all those in the Spirit world (background) mouths are open. Closed mouths are symbolic of the lack of dialogue between two worldviews, settler and indigenous, whereas the open mouths of the ancestors are symbolic of a time when everyone’s voice was both heard and valued. We know these are North American indigenous ancestors in the



Illustration 8: Caledonia 2008 by Arnold Jacobs.

background because of the *paradise found* or the *garden of eden* settlers found in the *New World* upon contact in 1492 where ancestral Elders instinctively knew how to survive on this earth without using anything that did not go back into the earth to Her benefit.

CONCLUSION

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES

While Sgt. Flynn was working, he toured schools and other social groups and even visited a few Mohawk friends while using the Silver Covenant Chain as a speaking point to represent what a healthy relationship should be. The Silver Covenant Chain was on display for a period of time in the exhibition case at the Moira Secondary School where Mohawk (indigenous) children from Tyendinaga go to school with Belleville (settler) children. Steve often referred to the Chain's weight, as it is considerable, which exemplifies the weight of a friendship's responsibility; indeed it is the weight of our collective history. He once spoke of a person who was supposedly connected to Six Nations (Haudenosaunee), whom he referred to as "tobacco people," who reportedly had an underworld cigarette sales connection and who was trying to find some good in his dealings with police, but was still very, very suspicious of police officers. Sgt. Flynn recounts making a few connections with him and that the person had hinted that he had heard that the OPP had had some input into the Silver Covenant Chain's resurrection. While he had lots of doubts, it got him to thinking that maybe, just maybe, the police really did mean it when they said they were trying to keep the peace. The tobacco person Sgt. Flynn spoke of had a son that had been arrested by the OPP at one of the Tyendinaga protests, and he recounted that he was not too pleased that his son had associated himself with the protest's spokesperson and his followers. Sgt. Flynn decided to bring the Silver Covenant Chain with him the next time they met, and he told me that the tobacco person got quite a kick out of the police, of all people, actually putting their hands on it, not to mention that they had an understanding of its meaning and significance. That left Sgt. Flynn with a very nice feeling and wondering if he had shown too much pride in showing it off. In a way, it proved that the OPP's involvement was real and that Sgt. Flynn had indeed spoken the truth. As Sgt Flynn told me on 19 August 2015 "I'm thankful no one was killed. It sure came close."

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

This exhibition was without a doubt the highlight of my policing practices, bolstering my spirit immensely.

The *Meeting on the River of Life* committee worked collaboratively with the descendants of the settler Upper Canada Empire Loyalists and their neighbouring indigenous Mohawks in a slow, methodical and constructive way to ensure intercultural exchange and dialogue. The OPP had a problem that called for a unique approach. All needs were listened to: those of the OPP, the holder of the artifacts, the curatorial cultural carriers, and the management of the exhibition site in Picton. It was a diverse group that had its challenges but the principles of sound relationships, respect, safety, and listening were used. We achieved a balance between advocacy and inquiry by giving each party plenty of freedom and autonomy for how the exhibition was hosted in their respective communities. Due to being involved in a near fatal bicycle/transport accident just prior to the openings of the exhibitions, I was not able to attend the Tyendinaga exhibition and just made it to the Picton exhibition on its final day. As fate would have it, I was scheduled to be at a committee meeting on the same day of my accident. Reportedly I was so concerned about missing it that I mentioned it to the attending physicians in the emergency ward. Obviously my practice was top of mind even when confronted with the most severe near death crises of my life. When I did finally make it to the exhibit I heard about one response that really touched me. It was from a Tyendinaga elder who, while viewing the exhibition, remarked with tears in her eyes that she always knew how beautiful her culture was but when she saw, for the first time, how intricate the designs were on a 500 year old piece of pottery, it confirmed her long held belief.

My assumption in initiating the exhibition planning process was that if nothing proactive was done the violence would only escalate between the indigenous Mohawks and the settler Loyalists. There is no way of proving that these two exhibitions did indeed deescalate the violence between these two differing, yet neighbour, cultures but the fact remains that the violence did indeed cease between them shortly after the exhibitions concluded. Significant reflections include the generosity of the human spirit and the lack of it in institutional settings. People really do appreciate the primacy of direct experience as evidenced in the elder's comments on seeing the piece of pottery and seeing people's eyes light up when they hold a 5,000 year old axe head. The artifact that gets the most response is the Silver Covenant Chain, when its taken off its presentation board and passed around. As previously mentioned, those three links weigh upwards of 50 pounds and learners are faced

with the notion that its weight is symbolic of the collective history between Canada's indigenous and settler cultures. The question people are left with is, how can we reclaim all our forefathers' covenant of peace, respect and friendship?

The *Meeting on the River of Life* exhibitions undoubtedly expanded attendees' vision by encouraging critical thinking and broadening their worldviews. At this time in Canada we face many serious settler and indigenous challenges. It is my hope that our art practice stimulated hope, openness, and individual and collective imaginations for preferred futures. It was an honour to work alongside so many inspired people who possessed both good minds and energy while working at the edges of their respective communities, and in so doing were able to effectively communicate their shared knowledge for the benefit of the seventh generation.

Meegwetch. All my relations.

AFTERWORDS

Naval Marine Archive – The Canadian Collection summer student Natalie Anderson's reflections on the Meeting on the River of Life

From June 6 to July 6, 2009, the Archives and Collections Society held the *Meeting on the River of Life*, an exhibition that commemorated the 225th anniversary of the Mohawk and Loyalist landings on the Bay of Quinte and celebrated the shared history and longstanding relationship between these two communities. The exhibition was previewed in part at the Tyendinaga Economic Development Centre with portions travelling to Ottawa and possibly Kingston. Initiated by the Archives and Collections Society (ACS) in Picton and greatly aided by James Heffernan, whose large collection of stone artifacts from the Quinte area provides a major focus to the exhibit, the project was headed by Bryan Bowers, director at both ACS and the First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI) in Tyendinaga, and Paul Adamthwaite, ACS executive director, with Rick Hill and Ken Swayze as cultural and archaeological consultants.

Both County Mayor Leo Finnegan and Tyendinaga Chief Donald Maracle were in attendance at the opening reception, along with council members from Tyendinaga, Prince Edward County, and

Deseronto. Speeches by Adamthwaite, Finnegan, and Maracle preceded a cake-cutting ceremony with refreshments. As Chief Maracle said in his speech, “Our people are no strangers to this area.” Indeed, the First Nations connection to the Quinte region did not begin with the Mohawk landing in 1784; human habitation in Prince Edward County dates back thousands of years, as the stone, pottery, and bone artifacts found in Consecon, Milford, South Bay, and Waupoos reveal. First Nations history enthusiast Janice Brant of Tyendinaga felt “honoured that the artifacts are on display in a public, interactive form,” and enjoyed the stimulating experience comparing notes with others interested in local history and archaeology at the opening.

While some locals found familiar elements in the exhibit, having discovered similar artifacts buried in their own farm fields and backyards, many were in awe of the enormous time span that the artifacts cover and amazed that human habitation in the County began so early. As Waupoos resident Doug McMMain remarked, “the exhibit places the First Nations presence into perspective around here.” Among the earliest pieces on display is a fluted chert arrowhead dating back 14,000 years to the Paleo-Indian period. Other notable artifacts include a 9,000 year-old axe, 5,000 year-old copper beads, and a 700 year-old bear tooth pendant, along with a dugout canoe from the Mariners’ Park Museum, various prehistoric stone tools and weapons, and a substantial collection of early Iroquoian pottery. Betty Ann Anderson of Picton was fascinated with the copper artifacts, astounded that the introduction of copper to North America occurred so long ago, and also that First Nations peoples used it before Europeans. Deseronto resident and former municipal archivist Kenneth Brown was particularly impressed with the artistry of the pottery pieces, saying “to think they were able to produce these things under such primitive conditions is a marvel!” Judy Cole, a County artist who loaned much of the pottery on display, pointed out to visitors the fascinating geometric connections between patterns in the pottery and designs engraved on a Late Woodland period bone awl.

Along with tracing the early habitation of the Quinte region through artifact displays and timeline presentations, modern indigenous paintings and loyalist artwork decorated the walls. Loyalist

memorabilia, including a British army uniform from the Royal Military College, woven wool quilt, clay pipe, communion set, land allotment map, flintlock musket, and various guns, swords, and tools were also showcased. Randy Pitt of FNTI felt the combined exhibition of Loyalist and Mohawk artifacts to be very significant, stressing that it is “important to be reminded of our history.” Forming the focal point of the exhibition was the three link Silver Covenant Chain that symbolically links the First Nations canoe to the colonial ship in a relationship embodying friendship, peace, and respect. Sun Worshippers, a vibrant nineteenth-century oil by Canadian artist Ira. A. Barton depicting First Nations peoples and European missionaries coexisting peacefully in the Canadian wilderness, exemplifies the themes of cultural tolerance and cooperation that underscore the entire exhibition.

***Naval Marie Archives – The Canadian Collection reflections on the Meeting on the River of Life
2009***

This exhibition was a visual experience through artifacts, art and photography to show the local history of the area going back on a timeline to 14,000 years ago when the glaciers receded and up to the period when the Loyalists with the Mohawks arrived here, 225 years before today.

The staff and volunteers learned an immense amount about the artifacts from K. Swayze who helped by documenting the items with a description and time period for each one. A sense of respect for the achievements of the past came out. The public had a sense of wonder and especially for the First Nations a sense of pride. When a First Nation lady of middle age saw the timeline, there were tears in her eyes when she said, “I knew that we had a history”. This has made it real for her.

The Silver Covenant Chain was a focal point, showing the importance of interpersonal relationships and how important they have been through the years. The Chain was beside the Two Row Wampum belt and spoke to the early history of the settlers arriving in North America and symbolism used between the two peoples. The artwork showed the beliefs of the First Nations and the movement of the Loyalists coming to the area.

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