

Our History

Iroquois conference engages culture and history

ERIC POULIOT-THISDALE
THE EASTERN DOOR

At the 71st annual Iroquois Conference last weekend in Albany, New York, the New York State Museum organised a special open house for researchers (Archaeology and Ethnology collections) for the conference attendees.

It was an opportunity for researchers to consult with staff on State Archives and State Library/Manuscripts & Special Collections, including several Haudenosaunee dictionaries from the 18th century.

Also, an extended walk of 25 miles and interpretation along the Mohawk River (25 miles) was led by Brian Rice an assistant professor of Education at the University of Winnipeg, from Kahnawake, who guided us through the cultural landscape, including Cohoes Falls.

It happened simultaneously with a guided tour organized by Doug George Kanenttiio; a 20 mile pre-conference walk along the Mohawk River, along the trails of our Mohawk ancestors; along the Cohoes Falls which is the site where Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca Nations were at war, when the Peacemaker canoed from the western shore of Lake Ontario and brought with him a message, which led all our ancestors toward peace and unification.

The organizers:

Francis Scardera, the co-chair organizer of the conference:

"Trips such as the trip to Cohoes Fall, which has been given back to the Haudenosaunee people, is important, making these trips along the Mohawk River, even for Native people is very significant and so, some of us did the walk as researchers, some did it for spiritual reasons and the discussions we had and the sharing was priceless; so it's good to see that people are collaborative as an association. We may be small but we are moving forward as an organism."

Terry Abrams, the other co-chair of the event expressed the outcome of the conference, which officially started last Saturday:

"It was a great success. We had 56 people attending so that's a good number coming from all over, as well as locals from Albany, Akwesasne, and Buffalo.

"Also, several came from outer states and we had a presenter from California who did a good presentation. We tried to be as inclusive as possible and it can be scary sometimes cause we don't always know what were are going to get, and since in the past we had some people whose motives might have been questionable, but this year, I am quite pleased."

Abrams is the administrative coordinator of WNYAHA (The Western New York Association of Historical Agencies), providing field services for historical and archeological entities.

He is also vice-president of the



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Tonawanda Reservation Historical Society, located in Western New York, where he is from.

When I asked him how long it took them to organize the event, he explained: "we are working on it year-round, as soon as one ends, we start working on the next one, so we are constantly updating the agenda, organizing the publications, four times a year, to expose the terms to the participants and for the public," he said.

I then asked Francis Scardera how he pictured the outcome.

"Well the weekend did very well, our number of participants went up and what I think is really important about the conference is that we maintained a mix of Native and non-Native participants, and it's something we've worked on really hard.

"It's also nice to see a lot of young researchers taking advantage of the available scholarships. People are bringing in new observations, new perspectives, and so that's important to sustain the longevity of this conference, because if not, it just becomes another conference for old-time researchers, not thinking about passing on the information to the Haudenosaunee people, the very people we are studying."

He then added: "The last

thing that was probably our biggest contribution in the last two years is that the conference is now a journal. Since we are now publishing, we have a lot of Haudenosaunee scholars in this conference, being a platform to share all their knowledge.

"Not all the history will get lost with them, and even if their researches aren't finished, at least it's recorded," he said.

Ellie McDowell-Loudan, co-chair of the Iroquois Conference, an anthropology teacher at Suny Cortland University in Albany and Ph.D., American University, among other titles, said:

"I am also the co-chair of the Native American Study, a minor program at Cortland University, and it's a Minor program that at least fits in the central New York Haudenosaunee," she said.

"We try to work with a lot of the other nations right in the region and we have a consortium with our university and other First Nations, including Onondaga especially, who have joined with us."

"We've had the program a bit over 10 years now. It's very small because we don't have scholarships, and as a result, most students really need scholarships."

She will present some of her research at the conference next

year in Oswego.

Participants and attendance:

Anthropologist Lloyd William Benedict Jr. from Akwesasne, who got his Bachelor of Arts in the SUNY Potsdam State University in Potsdam, New York, and who's planning his Master's in archeology and Heritage at the University of Leicester in England, was present this weekend and worked in collaboration with Scardera for about 10 years.

His last on the ground research was on the 1830's Cholera Cemetery in St. Regis.

"By combining it with what the elders had to say in order to find the proper perimeter and location of the cemetery, including mapping the church and the burial ground and associating it with the related properties in the area, that was my main research this summer."

He wasn't presenting this year but next year he will expose his research on the cemetery and some buildings surrounding Dundee as well.

On Sunday morning, Christopher Densmore, the curator at the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College presented: Quakers among the Haudenosaunee, 1793-1830: A New Digital Resource.

As he told me: "The presentation mainly concerns archives of documents for New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore - yearly meetings intermingled with a lot of Quaker organisations and individuals," he said.

"My interest is focused on Quaker history, in which I was involved around 25 years or so at the archives of New York City yearly meetings, where I noticed a shelf full of books concerning the Annual Meeting of New York, where I encountered several books concerning the Senecas," he said.

"But then I realized I never heard about the New York Quaker being among the Iroquois, and it turned out that these records were largely unused. There were Quaker-Native American interactions since the 1600s, including the relations with William Penn, the proprietor of Pennsylvania with the Native Americans who actually got the property because his father who was an admiral in the British Navy who was owed money by the king of England, who gave Penn the property," he recounted.

"Penn's position was that they owned land that belonged to Natives. But Penn's ownership gave him certain rights to be able

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Halloween party cakes and other food treats.

November/December 2016 CHILDREN'S AFTER-SCHOOL BOOK CLUB INFO!

MONDAY AFTER-SCHOOL BOOK CLUB FULL

TUESDAY (ages 6-9) - November 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, December 6, 13
Heidi Heckelbeck and the Christmas Surprise
By Wanda Coven

WEDNESDAY (ages 8-11) - November 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, December 7, 14
Superfudge
By Judy Blume

THURSDAY (ages 7-11) - November 3, 10, 17, 24, December 1, 8, 15
The Year of the Fortune Cookie
By Andrea Cheng

COST: \$20.00 per Book Club (Includes snacks, activities, and a book to keep.)

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3:30-4:00: Reading & Snack Time,
4:00-4:30: Activity & Clean-up

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Iroquois

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to negotiate purchase of land."

He concluded by saying: "The Quakers in the 1790s voluntarily taught Iroquois how to develop an industrial type of agriculture since the hunting grounds were being developed, collaborations were shared in these matters."

Timothy Abel, an independent researcher and consultant archeologist presented "The Sanford Corners Site: A "Destroyed" 14th Century Iroquoian Village in Jefferson County, NY."

He brought his observations made in 2013, when Section 106- mandated archaeological survey of a sewer project in the Town of Leray, Jefferson County, documented the presence of an Iroquoian village component within the project's potential area.

Cultural, historic and archaeological resources are regulated under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and in the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980.

Section 106 requires federal agencies to avoid unnecessary harm to cultural resources as a result of projects that utilize federal funding. After consultation with the Onondaga and Oneida nations, monitoring of the construction as it crossed the site revealed that it was not so completely destroyed, suggesting a 14th century occupation.

Abel said: "The project started off as a routine Section 106 compliance project the town or Laras was going to put in a sewer line, and because they had several streams crossing they required a corps of engineer permit to do that."

"It triggered Section 106, so the project started off with a routine phase or archeological survey and doing the background research they "learned," or actually already knew, that there was the potential for the site within the project area.

"So when we did the phase-one survey we actually did extra work to try to relocate this site and were able to do so, and once we did it was apparent that they were going to put the sewer line straight to the village," he said.

"Now the couple of things that started mitigating this was that, number one, as early as the 1920s, archeologists were saying this site was destroyed, that there was nothing left of it."

"But I've learned over the years never to take those things so seriously, so I recommended that we either move the project to phase two or we look for another route for the sewer line that would avoid disturbance," he said.

"So what they decided to do was to put the sewer line into the nearest road bed."

Onondaga and Oneida collaboration:

"The Onondaga and the Oneida nations were allowed to consult on the project because of the Section 106 process," he said.

"So they were able to use their position in the review process to request that the project be monitored during the construction and it's a good thing they did, because, about as soon as we started getting in the village we encountered the remains of two human burials.

"The first one we did not find until it ended up out under the vactor (cleaning truck) unfortunately, but apparently the burial ground that was found in the earlier 20th century during road grating that they had just sort of buried in back on the road, covered with this big slap of stones and the remains were just thrown in there; so I don't think it was a bundle burial from that period - I think it was found when the grating the road and

they just left it back into the road bed," he said.

"So that momentarily stopped the project.

Then the nations, as well as the town and the co-organizer and myself, got together and tried to figure out what we were going to do about this.

"It was considered that as far as this burial ground was concerned there wasn't really much we could do about it now since it was already out, but we agreed that going forward with the project was going to move from a monitoring phase into a data recovery phase, meaning that we were now going to be peeling down the ground carefully before we dig.

"We recovered a post-mode site out of the trenches. At that point we knew we were going to have to spend some time with so we basically told the construction crew to find something else to do for a few days.

We then proceeded in a pre-data recovery on the site and we ended up finding about 30 different features, most of them turned out to be historic or non-cultural features, and about seven of them turned out to be cultural features and another one turned out to be a burial, and this one, however, was completely intact," he said.

"So that stopped the project again since it was right in the middle of the way we were heading through with the sewer line."

I asked him if it created any stress and he answered:

"Yes everybody was like oh now what? And so we started weighing our options. It was clear from the nations that they wished to preserve the sites, and that if we wanted to pursue moving the burial is was going to be a lengthy process," he said.

He concluded by explaining that they finished the sewer project under time and without busting the budget:

"Even with the delay and the archaeology, we still finished the sewer line under the time that they thought they were going to do it, and the burial ground is still there to this day, and the other remains that were recovered were repatriated to the Oneidas," he said.

"In the later days of the project, the property owner told me that if I ever wanted to come back to do some more research on this site that their property was open to me.

"So this past summer, with the help of the local chapter of the archeological association, we uncovered some features; one was a roasting pit, one was of earth which produced more raw materials and ceramics which we were able to carbon date, and we are still waiting on those dates. It's like Christmas, it could be any time now," he said.

"It's peculiarly obvious that this site is not as destroyed as the literature portrayed it to be and that's probably a good thing cause we know virtually nothing about this site.

"It doesn't have any collection in any museums. The data recovered from the site are the first data that we were ever able to get is going to tell us about the group of people that lived in that area around the 15th century."

I, Eric Pouliot-Thisdale, from the Faculty of Human Sciences of University of Quebec in Montreal, researcher for several Band councils of Eastern Canada and voluntary chronicler for *The Eastern Door*, shared my historical and demographical analysis from Akwesasne, Kahnawake and Kanesatake, as well as my several publications and research concerning the Wikwemikong and Spanish residential Schools.