

Honouring First Nations

FIRST NATIONS HISTORY IN THE KAWARTHAS

By Glenna Burns

About 12,000 years ago First People's migrated into the Kawarthas, soon after the retreat of the great ice sheet. The presence of these people has been documented by archaeologists on Rice Lake and Stony Lake near Burleigh Falls. These sites are some of the earliest human habitations found in Ontario.

As the ice sheets and water continued to diminish, about 10,000 years ago, the Kawarthas began to look more like it does today. Forests were abundant with many types of deciduous and coniferous species. These changes, in turn, increased the animal and fish populations and encouraged Indigenous people to stay longer in one spot and build small communities.

The evidence archaeologists find at these sites is called 'habitation debris' - manufacturing stone tools and cooked animal bones. Scientists have also found technological innovations like fish weirs (Lovesick Lake).

The Kawarthas landscape held great spiritual and cultural meaning for the Indigenous populations (as it still does today). Ceremonial and burial sites were used for many hundreds of years. Jacob Island in Pigeon Lake is one of these 'special' places and according to Dr. James Conolly, Professor of Archaeology at Trent University, had been used from about 4,500 to 1,000 years ago.

Another important site, available to visitors is the Teaching Rocks, or Petroglyphs. Petroglyphs Provincial Park protects one of the largest concentrations of Native rock carvings in North America.

Early evidence from about 2,500 years ago has been uncovered on Chiminis (Big/Boyd) Island in Pigeon Lake. These sites emphasized the importance of hunting, trapping, fishing and making use of the

wetland resources like Manomin (wild rice).

A more complex ceremonial centre from about 2,000 years ago can be found at Serpent Mounds on Rice Lake. There are also many more places in the Kawartha Lakes where archaeologists have uncovered marine shells, silver jewelry and musical instruments used in ritual and ceremony.

The world of Indigenous people changed dramatically when settlers and traders from Europe began to populate North America. Samuel de Champlain came through the Kawarthas in 1615 when he, along with others over time, contributed to escalating regional warfare between Indigenous groups. Battles were fought along the Otonabee River and in the Rice Lake region. Fox Island on Buckhorn Lake was also an important skirmish site. A musket ball has been found on Jacob Island.

By the late seventeenth century the Michi Saagiig (Ojibwa) had successfully pushed back the Iroquois and colonial powers (French, British). They controlled much of southern Ontario and the Kawarthas for the next 100 years.

The pressures of increased European and post American Revolution migrations pushed the Indigenous populations into unwanted land treaty negotiations. Treaty Number 20, 1818, was signed between the Crown and the 'Principal Men of the Chippewa (Ojibwa) Nation of Indians'.

Treaty Number 20 meant the surrender of Indigenous land but not the loss of hunting, harvesting and propagation rights to crops like Manomin.

As the lumber industry increased, the first dam in the Kawarthas was built between Lower Buckhorn and Buckhorn Lakes. The first lock to improve settler navigation was constructed between Sturgeon and Pigeon Lakes in 1835 at Bobcaygeon. As the eighteenth century rolled out more locks and dams were built to help move out timber.



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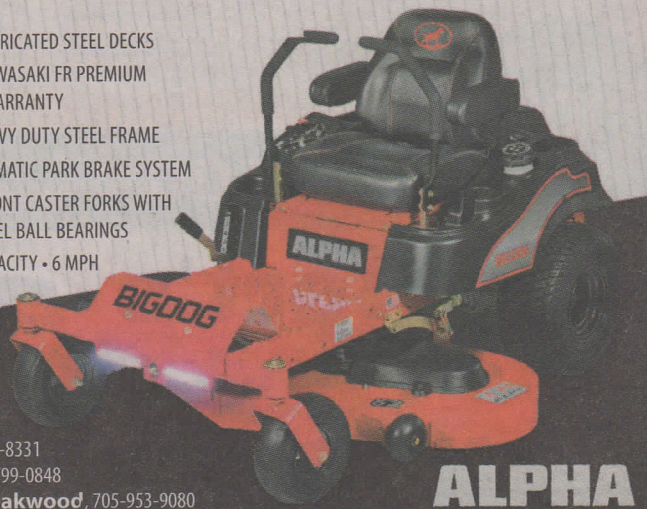
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ALPHA

All of this infrastructure work and lumbering meant increased settler and tourist populations, soil erosion and pronounced changes in the natural features of the water regions. Pressures from this increase in settlement forced the Indigenous people to move together in small family groups.

You can find evidence of this period of Kawarthas history in many local museums and pioneer villages around the region. You should also visit the Curve Lake First Nation Cultural Centre and immerse yourself in the diverse culture of Curve Lake First Nation.

BORROWED, APPROPRIATED OR STOLEN?

Submitted by Brenda Wall

I grew up in rural Australia in the 1950s and now find myself living in the Kawartha Lakes area (Ontario). During the past month, much has been written and debated in the press and in conversations among friends about these two words, "cultural appropriation". Here are my thoughts:

The Cambridge Dictionary defines Cultural Appropriation as "the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture". Andray Domise puts forth a stronger definition in a Macleans' article dated May 22, 2017: "Cultural appropriation amounts to theft ... the lifting of cultural aspects from underrepresented groups of people, and not only offering nothing in return, but expecting their gratitude for the promotion."

I am personally stating that I abhor blatant acts of cultural appropriation. In saying that, however, I am also aware that as a member of the Settler community, I know that I have myself been guilty of cultural appropriation during my lifetime.

My main point is that we have to constantly question ourselves and our upbringing, especially those of us who grew up in my generation (baby boomer) and in my case because I grew up in a country steeped in racism (the White Australia policy, the treatment of Indigenous Australians, etc.) and still recovering.

What thought did we give to Aboriginal Australians as we carved out boomerangs in our woodworking classes in high school? (Actually, only the boys carved them as we girls were probably sewing our names on our cooking class aprons!). Boomerangs, didgeridoos, dream catchers, ceremonial headdresses – we've stolen these and many more "cultural artifacts" without a second thought as to their meaning in Indigenous cultures.

This current debate began with a recent issue of Write magazine, the publication of The Writers Union of Canada (TWUC).

Indigenous writers had been invited to contribute pieces but were soon upset to find that the magazine's editor declared that he did not believe in cultural appropriation. This was in an opinion piece that ran at the front of the issue (Hal Niedzviecki's column, "Winning the Appropriation Prize"!): Niedzviecki resigned shortly afterwards and recently TWUC has hired a full-time Equity staff person, a small victory for those opposed to cultural appropriation. Just days before the TWUC incident, a Toronto art gallery cancelled a show by non-Indigenous artist, Amanda PL because she had been accused of appropriating Indigenous culture and art. It was argued that PL blatantly copied the work of acclaimed Indigenous artist, Norval Morrisseau.

During this debacle, Chippewa artist Jay Soule pointed to the fact that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms full protection over Indigenous Peoples' intellectual property – ranging from oral stories to artwork. Interestingly, Canada only officially removed its objector status to the UN Declaration in August, 2016 – almost a decade after it had been adopted by the UN General Assembly.

Now comes the challenge of adopting and implementing the Declaration in accordance with the Canadian Constitution.

In my view, it is time we put these recent incidents behind us – not to ignore or forget the pain that they caused, but to move forward in a positive direction. It is a good reminder that we always need to be questioning ourselves about our attitudes and opinions. How to move forward? Let's begin by celebrating Canada's Indigenous writers.

TRC HOSTS OUTREACH

By Glenna Burns

Truth and Reconciliation Bobcaygeon presents four community outreach opportunities at Kawartha Settlers' Village this summer.

On Monday, July 3 at 7pm, there will be a showing of the film "Secret Path", created by Gord Downie and Jeff Lemire. It's the story of Chanie Wenjack, a young boy who, on October 22, 1966, escaped from Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School to walk home.

Like so many children, he never made it home. Chanie died alone. Thousands of children, beginning in the late 1800's and moving into the present were taken from their parents and moved far away by churches and governments. This is a story of Canada that needs to be told and understood.

More information can be found at trcbob.wordpress.com.

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