



Meeting on the River of Life Mohawk and Loyalist Exchanges

An Exhibition to be held from

May 22 to May 30, 2009

**The Tyendinaga Economic Development Centre, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory
and**

June 6 to July 6, 2009

The Archives and Collections Society, "The Victory", 205 Main Street, Picton

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This exhibition traces the 11,000 year history of human occupation along the Bay of Quinte and re-examines the relationship of the Mohawk and Loyalists neighbours who settled here 225 years ago. The exhibition will feature an extraordinary collection of Aboriginal art from this region, dating back to the earliest occupations and providing an overview of the First Nations relationship to this place as reflected by stone, ceramic and bone artifacts.

The secondary theme of this exhibition is to commemorate the special relationship between the Mohawk Nation, which settled at Tyendinaga, and the Loyalists who sought a new life in the County and the surrounding region. The two very different peoples were joined together in common interest in the original Mohawk homeland in the Mohawk Valley. United as allies, the Mohawk and Loyalists also shared the Silver Covenant of Peace, an alliance that cemented their friendship together.

We will use historic illustrations, quotes by Mohawk and Loyalist leaders, as well as contemporary art that reflects upon that Covenant Chain relations to recall the social, cultural, economic and political ties between the two. These ties helped to shape the early history of this region and the anniversary of the arrival of the Loyalists gives us cause to reflect upon historic relationships and to re-imagine future prospects.

Importantly, this exhibition will provide a view of the centuries long relationship held by the original people to this place reflected in the James Heffernan collection of antiquities. In many ways the arrival of the Mohawks was a return to this place, as their ancestors have ties to the mighty St. Lawrence River that dates back prior to the arrival of Jacques Cartier.

The Mohawks made an agreement with the Dutch in 1613 that envisioned a relationship between the natives and the colonists as being symbolized by two vessels travelling together on the river of life. The native canoe became tied to the colonial ship. The rope that tied them together was later replaced with a chain by the British when they took over the fur trade in North America.

That chain was transformed into the Silver Covenant Chain in 1677 and was incorporated into sacred wampum belt designs that linked the King of England to the Mohawk and their brother nations, collectively known as the Haudenosaunee, or Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. The protocols around the use of wampum for diplomatic purposes was firmly entrenched in both Mohawk and Loyalist tradition.

In the past, the Silver Chain was "polished" from time to time to reaffirm peaceful relations, resolve disputes and renew respect and friendship. It is in that spirit of polishing the chain that we present this exhibition to honour the ongoing relationship between the First Nations and the County, as the descendants of Loyalists represented by the Crown.