

Mewinzha...



Long Ago...

# The Mewinzha Project ~ Long Ago Processes Of Wood

Captured on Glass

For the windows of  
The Buffalo Fort Erie Peace Bridge  
Authority Building

**August 7, 1927 – The Peace Bridge is built**  
Connecting Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada to Buffalo, New York, US and named to honour 100 years of peace  
between Canada and United States

**September 29<sup>th</sup> 2006– The Museum is opened**  
**At this site, prompted by the biggest Archeological dig of flint**  
Commission installation pieces on glass at Buffalo Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority,  
100 Queen Street,  
Fort Erie, Ontario

Original Works are in the Collection of The Fort Erie Historical Museum,  
402 Ridge Road,  
Fort Erie, Ontario



## "Legends of the Falls : SkyWoman and LelaWala"

When I was picking wood for this project, I found this piece which reflected sky and water and at first I wasn't sure where it was going until I found her in the sky portion of the wood. Skywoman was falling in only the way one could fall, she was flailing, until goose saved her. In the sky is Skywoman's angry husband and West Wind. Looking closely at the original reveals many beings for both stories.



*The beginning Raw Spruce*

The tourist industry calls her Maid of the Mist, while the Iroquois call her Lelawala. I found her in a canoe, lower right corner and as the stories unfolded for both Skywoman and Lelawala, so did the images, telling of women who found solutions for their worlds by working together with people, animals and spirits. In the falls are also images of Thunder God Hunin and his sons.



*Midway through process:  
"Legends of the Falls : SkyWoman and LelaWala"  
4 ft x 2 ft, Acrylic on Spruce*

## Legends of the Falls

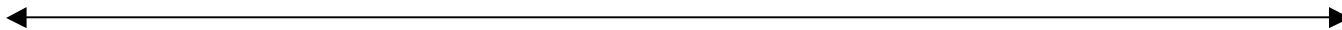


**It was Mewinzha when the world was covered with water and Sky Woman who lived in the sky with the sky people, was pregnant in a place where no one gave birth or died. Her husband was angry, seeing her pregnant, and uprooted a white pine. This created a great hole in the sky and in her fear she fell through. Flailing through the blue, Geese caught her mid descent and glided her down to the shiny blue where the rest of the water animals would swim, and greet then carry her. But she was heavy with her baby growing inside her and they knew they couldn't support her for a long time, so she told them what was needed, to continue on. One by one each animal dove down, to try and grasp some mud to put on turtles back and one by one they failed until lowly muskrat came back and had some in his mouth, he died with this success. Mourning him, they spread the mud of his sacrifice on turtle's back, and she grew and grew becoming Turtle Island, known today as North America. Skywoman stepped on Turtle Island and created the stars and the moon and then lay down on turtles back to give birth to another creation; her daughter. Her daughter**



**grew so pretty so fast, she caught the eye of West Wind, who married her, and she gave him twin sons. She named the first one Sapling because he was kind and good and made things grow. And the other, she named Flint, for he was hard and cold and destroyed the new. He was about death and dying and darkness while Sapling was about life and living and light. They fought to the death of Flint, because he was about death and dying but Sapling lived because he was about God, creating and living. And so Turtle Island prospered with people and had its beginnings with Skywoman, her daughter, West Wind, Sapling and Flint.**

**And then later long ago, the peaceful tribe of the Ongiaras, who were also known as the Neutrals lived beside the Niagara River and one by one, their people were dying so they searched to find the reason why. They would send a canoe laden with fruit and flowers over the falls to satiate the Thunder God Hunin who lived in the caves behind the falls with his two sons. That was until the chief's daughter Lelawala, a beautiful virgin, decided to be the one to satiate the beast. Against her father Chief Eagle Eye's wishes, she mounded her headdress with woodland fruit and flowers and in a white doeskin robe climbed into a birch bark canoe and plunged to her death over the falls. Her father followed in his grief, in his canoe over the falls. But in the spirit world, it would be that both of the Thunder God Hunin's sons caught her. Both desired her. She told them, whichever one could tell her what was killing her people would have her as his own. The youngest told her of a horned snake. So she came to her people as spirit and told them in their dreams to set a trap. The men went out and mortally wounded the snake who escaped back to his lair on the river, but caught his head on one side of the river and his tail on the other, creating a semi-circle and the brink of the Horseshoe Falls. Lelawala returned to the cave of the God Hunin, where she reigns today in the Mist.**



## "Legend in a Stone ~ Great Law of Peace"



*The Beginning Raw Fir*

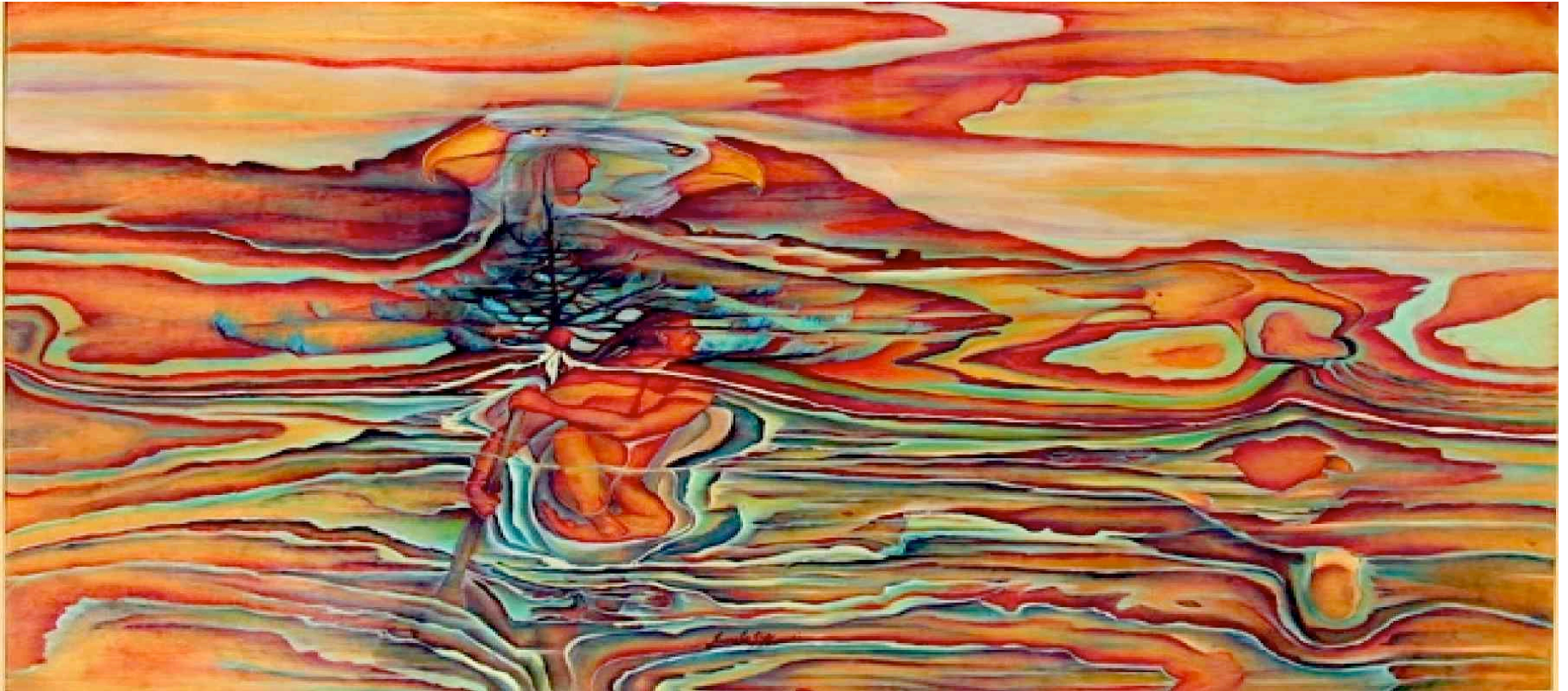
**Water enters into each of these three pieces, meant to respect the spirit of the waters that are a gift of life, a being of the Great Lakes. I also wanted to honour the escarpment, another part of the land which holds great significance, world wide. And most importantly, I wanted to honour in these windows the people and their historical story of peace because the very placement; at the Peace Bridge, marks a symbol of connection.**

**My research of the story took me hunting for a piece of wood that had the symbols of peacemaker for the Peace Bridge situate. I found the Great White Pine, the Eagle with his wings stretched far whose sight was far looking this way and that, where water and sky are connected by the red escarpment in this Fir piece of wood. I worked Peacemaker into the wake and like a totem; Eagle, Peace Tree, Peacemaker, Stone Canoe, and the Water that holds it up, they are as one in the timeline order of the story. On the Left lined up are the original Five Nations: Starting at the top: Mohawk: Eastern Door of the Longhouse, Onandaga: People on the Hill, Cayuga: People of the Great Swamp, Seneca; Keepers of the Western Door, and the Oneida; People of the upright stone, united as one.**



Midway through Process:  
*"Legend In A Stone and The Great Law of Peace", 4 ft x 2 ft, Acrylic on Fir*

## **Legend in a Stone ~ Great Law of PEACE**



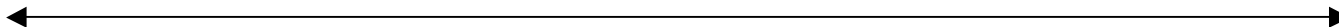
**It was Mewinza...when the Haudensaunee were ruled by warfare, in a time of anarchy, in a time of fear, in a time of terror ~ they were the terrorists of their time. Fighting all who got in their way, adopting and moving and killing, in a cycle of divides, the Iroquois who fought the Hurons, destroyed the Neutrals because they were Neutral with the Hurons, and numbered 4000, who then numbered nothing at all.**

**Across the Onondaga Lake he came, in a white stone canoe he came, floating he came, born of a virgin he came to change the rifts of violence into a spoken wave of peace. He went, one by one, village by village and nation by nation with Hiawatha who gave out the words and joined one by one, village by village and nation by nation together, like drops of water do, collecting into one big lake, no divides, no partitions, no separations, just only waves or ripples from time to time to time. At the first grand council, United Nations heard, The Great Law of Peace and the ways to form a society. It was a government born of freedom, washed in respect, floating in harmony within the ripples of words.**

**Five White Pine needles clasped in a talon, a confederacy of five nations united as one. Peacemaker uprooted a Great White Pine, and told the warriors to cast their weapons deep inside, into its cavern where a river ran, on its underside. And the river carried the tools of war, deep into its Earth and buried them soundly until another time. Peacemaker explained that, the Tree of PEACE had four white roots, pushed out to Earth's four corners, and those that yearn for peace can follow that root to its source and find shelter under The Great Tree of peace. Crowning the Great White Pine sits Eagle-That-Sees-Far. He is to be ever watchful, and to sound an alarm when evil threatens from near or from far. Five Pine Needles were bundled as five nations now become Six:**

**Mohawk, "Kanienkahagen," The People of the Flint, they are Keepers of the Eastern Door of the Symbolic Longhouse; The Onondaga - Keepers of the Central Fire, Wapam Keepers and The People on the Hill; Cayuga, "Guyohkohnyoh," The People of the Great Swamp; The Seneca, "Onondowahgah," The People of the Great Hill - Keepers of the Western Door; The Oneida - "Onayotekaono," The People of the Upright Stone; And later Tuscarora, known as "Ska-Ruh-Reh" the Shirt Wearing People**

**Peacemaker came in a Stone on Water with a message of Peace, to take the higher way and to not sink with the heaviness of the flint stone. His arrival was a dichotomy of stone on water; paddling a stone canoe, he brought with him a new way of living, one based on the art of reason over force of arms, of respect and honour, to bury their weapons and in the end, the weapons of stone were the ones to sink to the bottom of the river. Now those stones have been dug up and sit behind glass and the story of Peacemaker sits on glass with Eagle-That Sees-Far staring out watching in the windows that see both ways.**





## "Legacy of Peacemaker"



The Beginning Raw Fir

**This piece amazingly so, had the Peace Bridge straight across it with the arch underneath. I added the railings and put the Peacemaker moving North. The Peace Bridge here is geographically correct as it runs East to West from Canada.**

**This painting speaks to a sunset and the evening and the good night when day meets night and east meets west and two sides speak as the clouds do where the sky crosses. The clouds form animals speaking but also form eyes, his wake is the nose but also birds**

**speaking and the opening of the bridge a mouth symbolizing; voice and speaking out. The bridge is relevant to the present meeting the past, as Peacemaker and the Peace Bridge juxtapose one another, as east to west is our red road and south to north, our spirit road and they are together here meeting, crossing paths and Peacemaker moves into the sky where it crosses. Peacemaker travels North into the Spirit world, and he has the North Star to guide him. On the East Side of the Bridge is Raven guiding someone from the present, east, to learn about the past, about the Legacy of Peacemaker. And as he looks back to continue the story, the sun sets and Peacemaker looks West telling the good night about today.**



Midway through the Process: "Legacy of Peacemaker",  
4 ft x 2 ft, Acrylic on Fir

## Legacy of Peacemaker



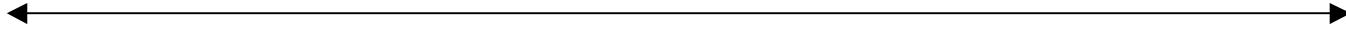
**He passes under the Peace Bridge, and leaves in his wake those talking, and as East meets West across a bridge our red road connects our walk, and south to north our blue road connects water to sky, our spirit walk and they are together here meeting, crossing paths and Peacemaker moves into the sky, where it crosses. He leaves and in his passing, tells The West Wind in the good night about today, how the present met his past, he travels North into the Spirit world, and leaves his legacy in his wake with the North Star to guide him.**

**But as Peacemaker leaves, someone on the bridge looks back to thank him and say good bye beside Raven who guides the young one into learning about that past with an East beginning, to continue the story the way Peace should be continued. And so uniting good words becomes the bridge to Peace,**



**unearthed stone and flint would reconnect us to our past, as it is reflected into our present all the way into the future. The lesson of Peace and up from this Mother unEarthed, were tools of war, buried long ago, now return behind glass. Weapons that were thrown under a White Pine of Peace and carried by the river into the earth deep are brought back up to surface behind glass, to remind us that stories are not myths but truths.**

**And though those flints were buried long ago, the flints of stone are found again along the Niagara along with those who lived here before and brought back to the ones who live here now, who mourn again the bones who were mourned before, is to tell this story of the Bridge that joins the two ages, and the two places, and two peoples together on one Great Turtle Island, under a Great Tree, which is mounted onto glass, and reflects the North light, the place of spirit, wisdom, winter, our last age and the colour white.**



**1992-1996 - Legacy of Stone: In the book "Legacy of Stone", the writers and archeologists of this dig in Fort Erie, wonder where all these weapons of flint came from and ponder a business of trade, but it is truly the Legacy of Peacemaker who buried all the flint of the Five Nations. Five hundred and forty two years later, these tools of war are dug up and placed behind glass, a reminder of PeaceMaker's teaching, reminding us of PEACE and Unity, at a time when we need to remember his message when he arrived in his Stone Canoe.**

## FORT ERIE PEACE BRIDGE AUTHORITY MUSEUM

### **PROJECT STATEMENT:** “The Mewinzha PEACE” or “The Long Ago Peace”

← From The Inside of a Tree To the Way of Glass: Windows Looking Inside and Out →

The bridge that connects us to the coming and going over the river divide, where the flint was buried and histories collide, remind us that today we can honour peace by joining minds, seek understanding through respect, with an ear to the ground of that long ago time when it was the tools of war that were buried. I seek to reaffirm Canada’s focus on Peace and what the Peace Bridge means to bordered countries, remembering Peacemaker’s teaching of strength in unity and the art of communication using reason, in the paintings “Legend In a Stone ~ The Great Law of Peace”, and “The Legacy of Peacemaker”: stories which live in this land but can also live in us all. We have the ability to communicate and seek a logical discourse in resolving conflict.

“Legends Of The Falls”, are two stories of two brave women who fall; one from the Sky called Skywoman, who goes on to Create the world and the other, Lelawala who falls off the escarpment edge of water; Niagara Falls and goes on to protect her people. Skywoman and Lelawala do not remain victims of their falls but do what is required to help their world survive. All three stories are about helping the world to survive and are based on the Iroquois triumph of Reason over war, reason over suffering and tragedy. A political system was founded on reason, logic and survival, not on mere power and aggression, because as they found, the aggressive route is a cyclically never ending retaliation of burying lives. Power was obtained through uniting and the two way exchange of views, and like these windows and this bridge, they are empowered by sharing views and ways, not just one way, but both ways of seeing and moving. The US constitution was adopted from the Iroquois model that united five Nations to Peace, with respect of the rights of its peoples. Some of the same symbols they used remain today in the US rights to freedoms: clasped arrows or pine needles, eagle, and the Tree of Peace or Liberty. It is here that I engage Peacemaker’s teaching and message again especially since the enormous amount of flint that was buried has been unearthed, his message is alive again too, in this place.

I am a First Nation’s Artist, but wanted to honour this Six Nation’s story, as they were the ones who began here in this place, who instituted this relevant wisdom and history and so respectfully asked the Six Nations permission, to tell these stories, ensuring they were the correct ones looking in and out of these windows. I wanted to honour in these windows this profound historical teaching of Peace that happened in this place. It was very important to me to honour the Iroquois, their bones found underneath the land, broken, then woken, respectfully moved and reburied, that their stories remained prominent today. That those who have lost life through war due to the aggressive world we live in today, those who arm themselves with new tools of war might remember to bury the hatchet instead of bodies, and find the appropriate words and ears instead.

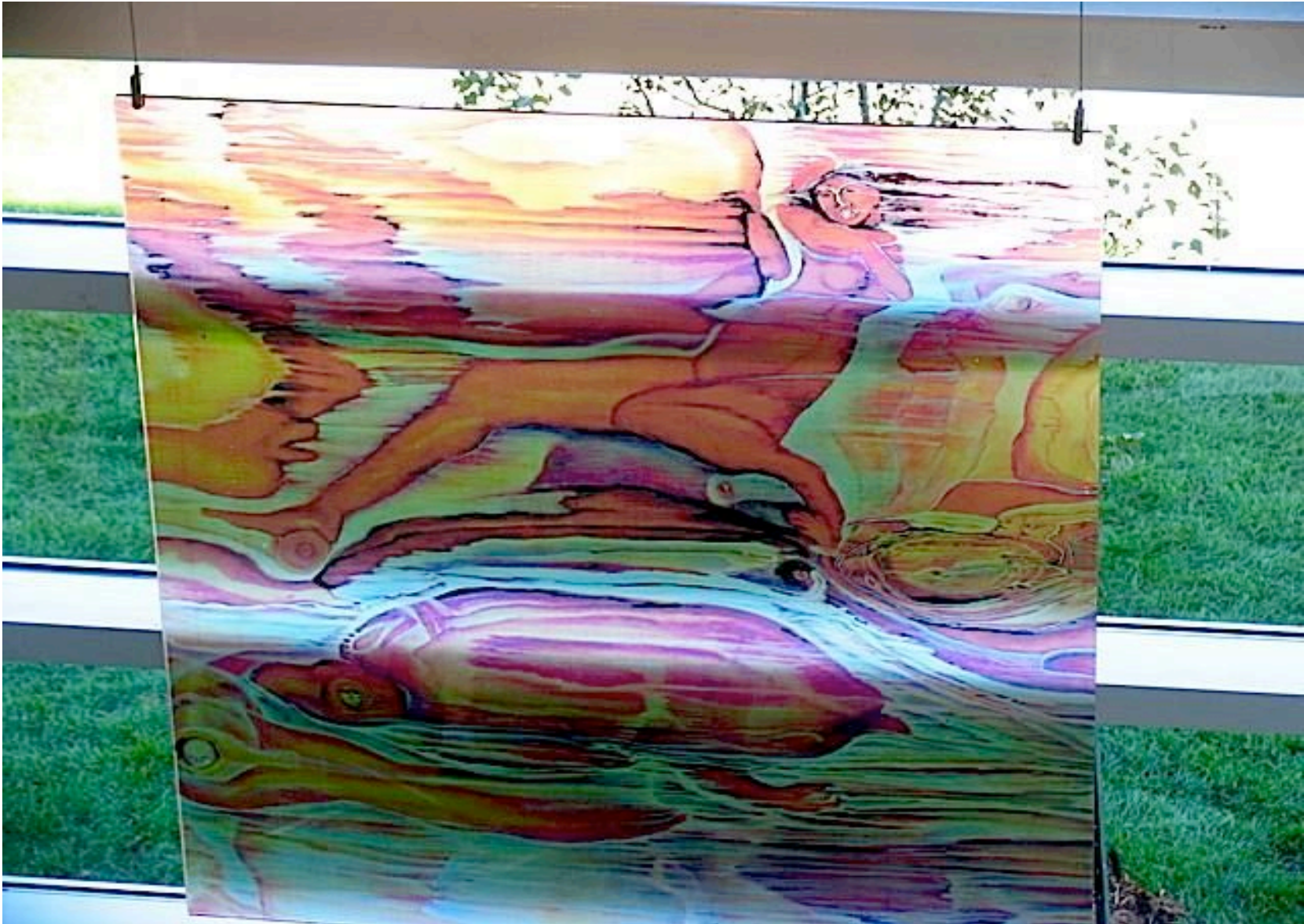


# THE GLASS PANALS

THE IMAGES FOR THE GLASS PANALS AT THE FORT ERIE PEACE BRIDGE AUTHORITY BUILDING WERE CROPPED TO FIT AS SQUARES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE WINDOWS



# LEGENDS OF THE FALLS





# LEGEND IN A STONE ~ THE GREAT LAW OF PEACE



# THE LEGACY OF PEACEMAKER





# ARTIST STATEMENT:

I search the inside of God's creation; the trees, and look for answers, and find the Earth's contribution to story telling, is the give and take of its life.

I find, my contribution to story telling, to be the give and take of my life and work. I work with the tree's spirit and spent life, in washes of acrylic paint, and write the life and spirit of my stories and culture in poetry from the images of its growth. It is in this circle of continuation, in this indigenous connection to the living that I find meaning.



*"Searching inside the vastness of the Great Mystery"*

My process is similar to that of a burnt field that accepts a wind blown seed, growing a life that seemingly has meandered aimlessly into a fertile deathbed, but as Mother Earth shows us; complex in her breadth, mysterious in her form, beautiful in her outcome, she purposely creates in her own time from a plan that is intrinsically intuitive. My intent is that the viewer engage my work on all levels: physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually, and that they would take away a bigger vision of themselves, as imagery and meanings unfold from this hybrid give and take of life. I am a mixedblood; Sioux, Cree, Chipewyan, Ojibwe, Montagnaise, Assiniboine, Saulteaux, French (Red River, Manitoba), Irish and English and I learn from my Ojibwe ancestry that *'there are many roads to the high place'*.

## **Bibliography**

- **1600 The Neutrals** were the First peoples to occupy this land, named by the French because of their peace keeping ways during the time when the Iroquois were fighting the Huron, they remained neutral. The peaceful neutrals called the area "onghiar" pronounced 'on ge ara' meaning "thunder of waters" or "the great throat" (1)

### **neu·tral - adjective**

Not belonging to, favoring, or assisting any side in a war, dispute, contest, or controversy (4)

### **neu·tral - noun**

Somebody who or a country that remains neutral in a war, dispute, contest, or controversy (4)

### **The Iroquois or Haudensaunee**

**Iroquois** [rattlesnakes, real adders, they called themselves the "Haudenosaunee" (People of the Longhouse)]: This formidable, highly organized tribe controlled the two lower lakes (Erie and Ontario) and the portages between them. There was no nation or combination of tribes in the Ohio or Lake Erie country comparable to the organized Iroquois between the Niagara and Hudson rivers.(3)

When Iroquois warriors encountered people already living in a region, they invariably killed the men and "adopted" the women and children, thus increasing the size of their band and assimilating some characteristics of the conquered culture. Iroquois or the Haudensaunee wiped out the Neutrals in a battle. The Huron, Neutral, Susquehannock, Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida and Mohawk are all descendants of these Iroquois bands. The Oneidas and the Mohawks lived in the Mohawk Valley. (2) Seneca, "Onondowahgah," meaning The People of the Great Hill, also referred to as the Large Dark Door. Cayuga, "Guyohkohnyoh," meaning The People of the Great Swamp. Onondaga, "Onundagaono," meaning The People of the Hills. Oneida, "Onayotekaono," meaning The People of the Upright Stone. Mohawk, "Kanienkahagen," meaning The People of the Flint. Tuscarora, known as "Ska-Ruh-Reh" meaning the Shirt Wearing People. (2)

**1776 – US Government** - On June 11, 1776, John Hancock welcomed as "brothers" the Haudenosaunee, the "forest diplomats", recognizing a long and friendly channel of communication between the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and the colonists on freedom, law, democracy and government. John Hancock was bestowed the name "Karandowan" meaning great tree. For decades the Iroquois concealed the colonists in the Art of Union, urging them to unite. Three weeks later the Declaration of Independence was signed and a new democracy was born. The Tree of Peace became a symbol of an emerging United States government. White Pine became the Liberty Tree displayed on colonial flags and Eagle-that-sees-far became a symbol of American Government. And today, on the U.S. Great Seal, the American Eagle clutches a bundle of 13 arrows, representing the original colonies. American Government was patterned after the Haudenosaunee where all people, are represented and control their government. (1)

**1992 -96 Legacy of Stone** – *"Largest prehistoric aboriginal discoveries in North East North America along banks of Niagara in Fort Erie, Ont and adjacent to the International Peace Bridge, 300,000 artifacts consisting of 4800 museum quality arrowheads, spearheads, knives...Major source of onadaga flint"*

### **LEGACY OF STONE: ANCIENT LIFE ON THE NIAGARA FRONTIER**

Co-authored by Ron Williamson and Rob MacDonald, and published in association with the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority and Eastendbooks. Legacy of Stone was the winner of the Ontario Archaeological Society (OAS) Public Archaeology Award. "A guidebook to the past that goes back four thousand years ... highly readable ... stories of trade and warfare, thunderbirds, layers of human bone ... potsherds, pictures, and context: what people ate and how the weather was ... more adventurous readers will be encouraged to visit the site ... and gaze out at a great waterway ... a powerful past brought imaginately to life." (M.T. Kelly, Books in Canada).

With the Free Trade Act in the late 1980s came increased traffic across the river between Buffalo, New York, and Fort Erie, Ontario. Canadian customs facilities needed to be expanded and as construction began in Fort Erie in the early '90s, bulldozers uncovered an area rich in human remains and artifacts, eventually determined to be from a range of cultures dating back as far as 2,000 BC. The unfolding story of the region's history is compelling, but equally revealing is the story of cooperation between town officials, archaeologists, contractors and native peoples representatives as decisions were made about the burial site and its contents

"Around 1800 BC, the Niagara Frontier was the site of one of the largest stone-tool workshops and trading centres in the Great Lakes region, and many traces of this prehistoric activity, and the people who pursued it, are still left below the streets of Fort Erie, Ont. ... profusely illustrated with photos and maps."  
(*'New and Noted,'* Globe and Mail)

### **flint n**

- A. a very hard grayish-black fine-grained form of quartz that occurs widely as nodules and bands in chalk.
- B. a piece of fine-grained quartz shaped into a tool by prehistoric people (4)

### Sources

1. <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/Iroquioi/neutralhist.htm>
2. <http://www.paulkeeslerbooks.com/Chap5Iroquois.html>
3. [http://www.great-lakes.net/teach/history/native/native\\_3.html](http://www.great-lakes.net/teach/history/native/native_3.html)
4. Encarta® World English Dictionary © 1999 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Developed for Microsoft by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.  
<http://www.championtrees.org/yarrow/greatlaw.htm>