



# ***The Souharissen Natural Area***

***Waterdown, Ontario***

***On the traditional territory of the Neutral, Haudenosaunee and  
Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations***

***Part of the Grindstone Creek Watershed managed by Conservation Halton***



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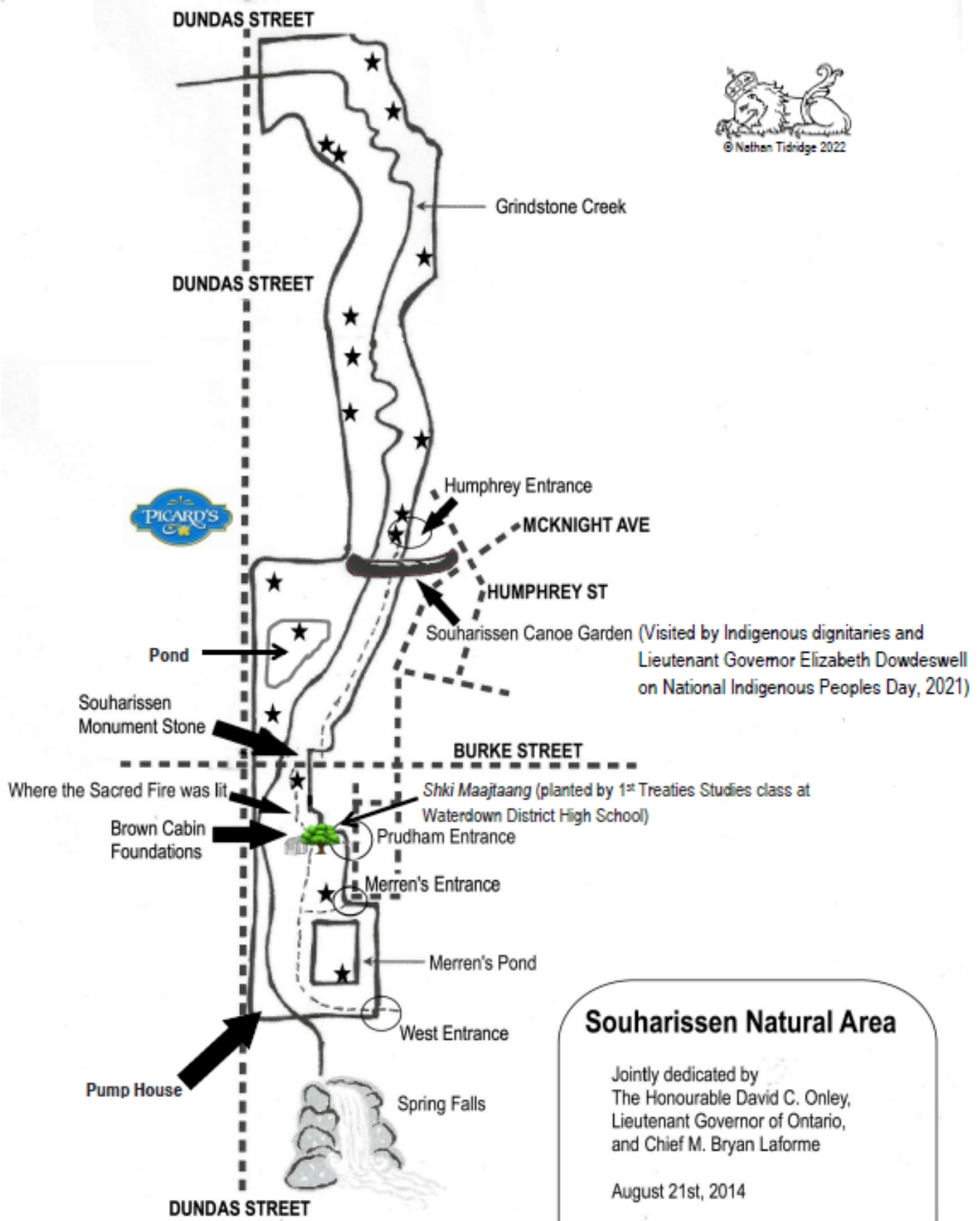




Souharissen Natural Area, 2017.







# ***The Souharissen Natural Area***

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Since 1695, a vast region of Southern Ontario - including Flamborough - has been the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Inspired by the Treaty of Niagara, the Souharissen Natural Area covers 55 acres in the Village of Waterdown, and is the result of years of work following the discovery of 104 Indigenous archeological sites in the Waterdown Bay Development Area in 2005. Councillor Judi Partridge championed the project since its inception, providing unflagging support.

In May 2014, a formal committee was established to create a Natural Area in the Waterdown Bay Development Area (across the street from Connon Nurseries) that would restore the Indigenous identity and heritage to the region. The Committee's members are Holly McCann (WDHS Student, Researcher and Cartographer), Kekoa Reinebold (WDHS Student, Brown Cabin Researcher), Ishkwegiizhig (Eugene Kahgee of the Saugeen First Nation #29), Councillor Judi Partridge (Ward 15 Flamborough) and Nathan Tidridge (Chair). Elder Garry Sault of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation consulted with the committee, providing invaluable teachings and support.

On May 30th, 2014, a report was issued to the City of Hamilton, and from that a formal report to City Council was presented on July 9th. The Souharissen Natural Area Committee, with the support of Elder Garry Sault, presented their plan and history of the area to the Chief and Council of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation on June 23rd, 2014, which was both endorsed and supported.



*The ceremony included Chief Bryan LaForme, The Hon. David Onley, Councillor Judi Partridge and Eugene Kahgee painting on the sidewalk an image (created by Philip Cote) of an Ojibway moccasin.*



On August 21st, 2014, the Souharissen Natural Area was dedicated in Waterdown by the Honourable David C. Onley, 28th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and Chief M. Bryan Laforme and Council of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Over 50 people attended the dedication including students from Waterdown District High School, David Sweet MP, Councillor Judi Partridge, Carolyn King, United Empire Loyalists, and other members of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

*The Hon. David C. Onley and Chief M. Bryan Laforme jointly dedicate the Souharissen Monument Stone.*



The dedication ceremony began with a formal welcome by Elder Garry Sault, followed by dedication remarks by the Lieutenant Governor and Chief Laforme.

At sunrise that morning, a Sacred Fire was lit by Elder Garry Sault in the Natural Area. Tended by a Firekeeper (Rocky Burnham of the Six Nations on the Grand River), the Sacred Fire was the first in Waterdown/Flamborough for generations (perhaps centuries) and was visited by both the Lieutenant Governor and Chief Laforme after the formal dedication ceremony. The fire burned all day, and many people from the community visited it.



Quotes from Chief M. Bryan Laforme:

*"The Treaty of Niagara Covenant Wampum Belt provided the inspiration for this Moment. May today mark the renewal of those pledges of peace and friendship made over 200 years ago . . . May this mark the beginning of a new partnership between the people of this region and our First Nation"*

*"This is an important event for our Nation. The 104 archeological sites discovered here prove that at one time a flourishing Anishinabe culture existed all along the shores of these Great Lakes. These lakes and rivers fed and sustained us and provided vital transportation routes that allowed for trade. This truly is our homeland and returning home is always a good feeling. It must be remembered however that First Nation concepts of land differ from those of the modern world. We view ourselves not as individual owners but instead as collective caretakers. These lands belong to children yet unborn. Our job is to preserve it for future generations. We invite you to be partners in this mission."*

Quotes from The Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

*"I bring you greetings in the name of Her Majesty The Queen. And I salute everyone who has helped to preserve this Natural Area, for the good of the whole community. Today we have come together, in this very special place, to honour the first peoples to live on this land."*



Along with the Indigenous sites, the foundations of an early-19th century dwelling were uncovered in the area. This dwelling may have been used by the first European settlers of Waterdown, Alexander Brown and Merren Grierson. The Natural Area includes a plaque identifying this important landmark, as well as detailing the histories of Merren Grierson and Alexander Brown, that was unveiled by the Lieutenant Governor, Chief LaForme and student researcher Kekoa Reinebold.

Later that day a community feast was held in Waterdown in honour of the Mississaugas of the Credit First, as well as the visit by both the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario and Chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit. Everyone who was part of the dedication, including the Lieutenant Governor and Chief, attended.





# The Souharissen Canoe Garden

What began as an exploration by the Grade 12 Canadian History, Identity and Culture students at Waterdown District High School turned into a project that continues to educate the community.

The Souharissen Natural Area Canoe Garden (Wiigwaasi-Jiimaan) was inspired by Carolyn King of the Mississaugas of the New Credit Nation, the host nation of the Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games.

Researched, planted and maintained by WDHS students, the garden links Waterdown to the New Credit Reserve and the land's identity within the Mississaugas' Treaty territory. Students filled the garden with Indigenous medicine gifted by September Sault of the Mississaugas of the Credit. On the day that students travelled to New Credit Reserve to receive the plants for the garden a bag of reserve soil was also gifted by Elder Carolyn King to Nathan Tidridge -- a violation of the Indian Act, Section 93, (a)(i) -- to mix into the Souharissen Canoe Garden to highlight ongoing violations of the Treaty relationship. This gifting was witnessed by over 50 WDHS students.

Gifted by Rick W. Hill, a medallion from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (honouring that this land is also their traditional territory) is also contained in its soil.

This canoe was donated by a Waterdown resident who used it to explore the many lakes and islands of his youth.

Dedicated by the community, including Councillor Judi Partridge and Trustee Penny Deathe, on May 29th, 2015. Moved to its present location June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017.



The plants presented to students at New Credit Reserve included:

Beard-Tongue - *Penstemon digitalis*

Speedwell - *Veronica*

Tickseed - *Coreopsis grandiflora*

Mouse Ear Coreopsis - *Coreopsis auriculata*

Coral Bells - *Heuchera*

Purple Coneflower – *Echinacea purpurea*

Black Eyed Susans - *Rudbeckia*

Creeping Phlox - *Phlox subulata*

Sage - *Salvia officinalis*

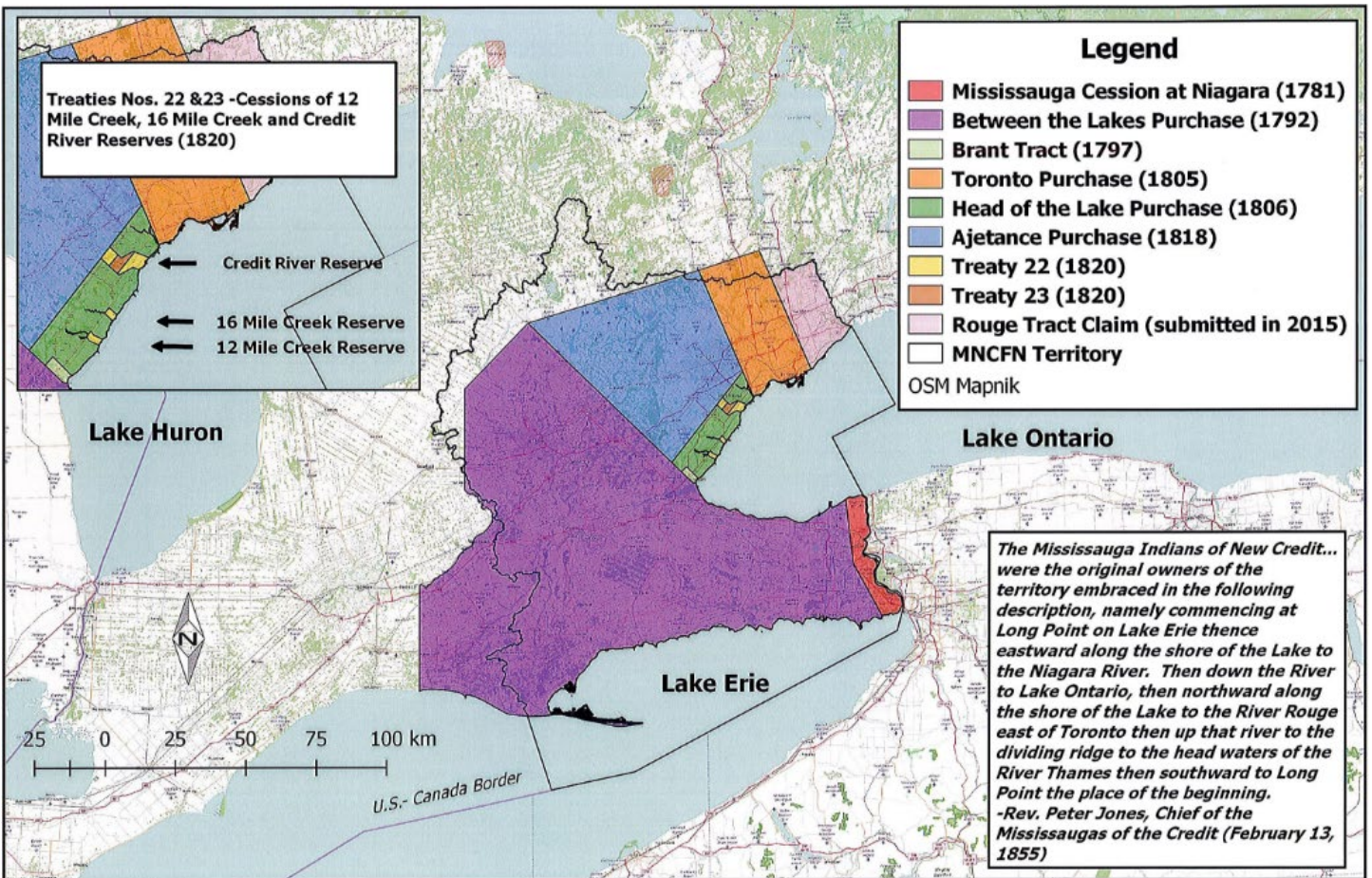
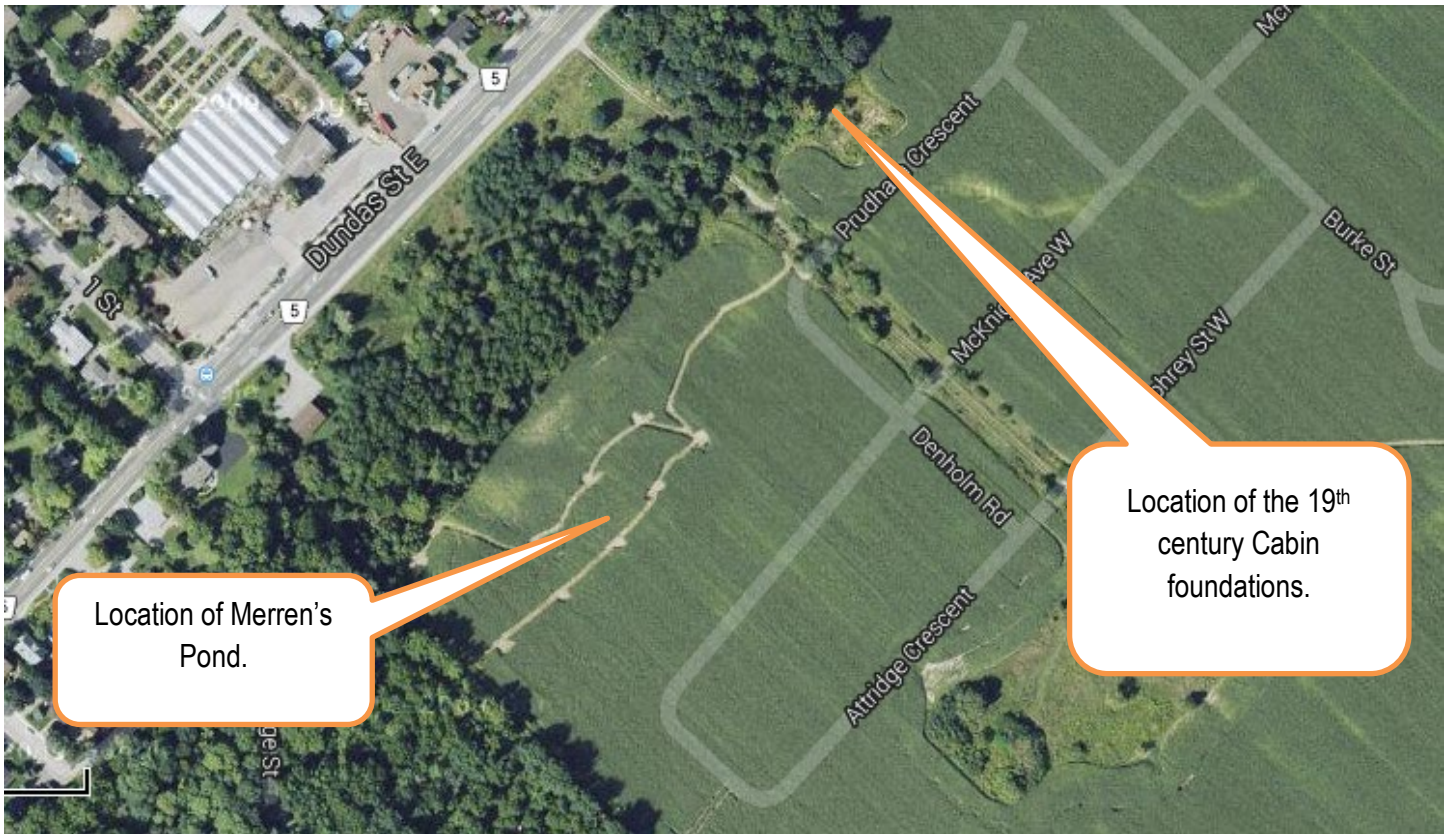


The Medallion buried in the soil of the Souharissen Canoe Garden





Some of the archeological sites before the survey was built:





## Welcome to the Souharissen Natural Area

The Waterdown-Flamborough region was home to the Chonnonton Nation (called the "Neutral Nation" by the French and the "Attiouindaron" by the surrounding Aboriginal nations). The name Chonnonton means "the people who tend or manage deer," and they had a powerful leader with the hereditary name "Souharissen." Before the construction of the nearby survey, 104 Aboriginal sites were discovered revealing the lives of the Chonnonton people ultimately destroyed by the Wendat-Haudenosaunee Wars of the mid-17th century.

Peace was established between the Haudenosaunee (also called the Naadwe) and Anishinaabe Peoples with the exchange of the "Dish With One Spoon" wampum in the late 17th century.

Around 1695 the Eagle was recognized as the leading dodeam of the Mississauga/Anishinaabe People whose territory commenced "at Long Point on Lake Erie thence eastward along the shore of the Lake to the Niagara River. Then down the River to Lake Ontario, then northward along the shore of the Lake to the River Rouge east of Toronto then up that river to the dividing ridge between Lakes Ontario and Simcoe then along the dividing ridges to the head waters of the River Thames then southward to Long Point the place of the beginning" (Kahkewaquaonaby, Reverend Peter Jones, February 13, 1855).

These lands, including the City of Hamilton, remain the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

This Natural Area and monument were created thanks to the generous support of Councillor Judi Partridge, counsel of Elder Garry Sault, and support of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

Natural Area Committee: Holly McCann (cartographer), Kekoa Reinebold, Ishkwegizhig (Eugene Edison Kahgee, Saugeen First Nation #29) and Nathan Tidridge (Chairperson).

Presented to the Chief and Council of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation on June 23rd, 2014. Unveiled on August 21st, 2014 (250 years since the Great Council and Treaty at Niagara). The Natural Area was given its name by Ishkwegizhig.

Dedicated on August 21st, 2014, by the Honourable David C. Onley, 28th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and Chief Bryan Laforme and Council of the Mississaugas of the New Credit Nation.



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ALL LETTERING AND DESIGN LASER ETCHED  
RENDERING BY: MIKE R.**





# Souharissen Natural Area Timeline

- July 1764      The Mississauga Nation attends the Council of Niagara convened by Sir William Johnson (representing King George III). At the conclusion of the Great Council Sir William crosses the Niagara River and presents the gathered nations the Covenant Chain Wampum along with the 24 Nations Wampum.
- December 7th, 1792      The Mississauga Nation formally enters into Treaty No.3 with the Crown.
- 1992      Flamborough Town Council adopts Official Plan Amendment No. 28 (OPA 28) in 1992 to allow an expansion of the urban area within three areas known as Upcountry Estates (54 ha), Waterdown North (133 ha) and Waterdown South (180 ha). This amendment was appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board.
- 1996      A hearing was conducted by the Ontario Municipal Board in 1996, and a decision was issued on March 10, 1997 that allowed the urban expansion, subject to the three expansion areas having a holding-type designation that would prevent development until certain issues were resolved.
- June 19, 2002      The Ontario Municipal Board's decision was appealed to the Ontario Cabinet by various landowners in the expansion area. The Executive Council of the Provincial Government of Ontario rescinded the Board's decision, approving a modified OPA 28 and the Memorandum of Agreement, by an Order of Council allowing around 6,500 homes and 15,000 residents to be added to Waterdown.<sup>1</sup>
- November 2005      New Directions Archaeology Ltd. submits an archaeological assessment of the Waterdown Bay Development Property to Waterdown Bay Inc. The assessment identified 105 (104 of which were Indigenous) sites of historic significance.
- May 2014      A committee styled the "Souharissen Natural Area Committee" is established to create a natural area in the Waterdown Bay Development Area. The Committee's members are Holly McCann (WDHS Student, Researcher and Cartographer), Kekoa Reinebold (WDHS Student, Brown Cabin Researcher), Ishkwegiizhig (Eugene Kahgee of the Saugeen First Nation #29), Councillor Judi Partridge (Ward 15 Flamborough) and Nathan Tidridge (Chair). Elder Garry Sault of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation consulted with the committee, providing invaluable teachings and support.
- June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014      The Souharissen Natural Area Committee, with the support of Elder Garry Sault, presented their plan and history of the area to the Chief and Council of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. The Council endorsed and supported the created of the Souharissen Natural Area.
- July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014      Moved by Councillor Judi Partridge, the City Council of Hamilton formally renames the area "The Souharissen Natural Area."
- August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014      The Souharissen Natural Area is dedicated by the Honourable David C. Onley, 28th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and Chief M. Bryan Laforme and Council of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Over 50 people attend the dedication including David Sweet MP, Councillor Judi Partridge, Elder Carolyn King, United Empire Loyalists, and other members of the Mississaugas of the New Credit. This event marks the formal return of the Mississaugas to Waterdown after over two centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> The first section of this timeline is taken from City of Burlington report PL-112 /06 published November 29, 2006, by Greg Simon.  
Link: <http://cms.burlington.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=4636>.





May 29th, 2015 Beginning as a class exploration of the Indian Act and Canada's residential school program, the Souharissen Natural Area Canoe Garden (Wiigwaasi-Jiimaan) is dedicated by over 50 Waterdown District High School students, as well as Councillor Judi Partridge and Trustee Penny Deathe. The garden is featured on CBC News.

June 2015 Student Tyler Alexis helps create an information stone (funded by the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation) with the help of Elder Carolyn King, Elder Garry Sault and Rick. W. Hill). The Waterdown Student Parliament donates four stone entrance markers to the Natural Area. They are located at the Humphrey, Burke, Prudham & West entrances.

June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016 A wiishkobi-mitigomizh (White Oak Tree) is planted near the Brown Cabin foundations by Waterdown District High School's first Indigenous Studies students, beginning a reforestation program within the Souharissen Natural Area. The tree is named *Shki Maajtaang* (meaning "New Beginning" in Anishinaabemowin) by Elder Carolyn King of the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

Mixed in the roots of this White Oak is a bead from a replica of the Covenant Chain Wampum (one of the wampum exchanged at the Treaty of Niagara in 1764). The replica wampum is now housed in the Chapel Royal at Massey College.

October 2016 The 3<sup>rd</sup> Waterdown Venturers begin maintaining Souharissen's trails as part of their community outreach.



October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016 A Hickory Sapling from the grounds of [Her Majesty's Royal Chapel of The Mohawks](#) gifted to Nathan Tidridge by the Friends and Neighbours of the Woodland Cultural Centre is planted on one of the largest archaeological sites within the Souharissen Natural Area.

February 2017 As a Canada150 project, *The Extraordinary History of Flamboroug: East Flamborough, West Flamborough & Waterdown* is published by The Waterdown-East Flamborough Heritage Society as a general history text for the community (including students at Waterdown District High School). The book includes a section detailing the Souharissen Natural Area (77-82).

May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 Tobacco plants, grown from seeds gifted by Leah Hogan of the Onieda Nation, are planted throughout the Souharissen Natural Area, including the Canoe Garden.

June 2017 Keith and Trevor Young plant four White Oaks as part of the reforestation program. The trees were funded by #RBC150 (after an application by the 2016-2017 Active History class) and Waterdown District High School. Trevor helped plant *Shki Maajtaang* the previous year.





June 2017 The Souharissen Natural Area is cited by a group of concerned citizens in an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board as a reason for denying a specific redevelopment of 383 Dundas Street East. Nathan Tidridge was given presenter status to address the OMB.

Ref: OMB Case No. PL160498: 383 Dundas Street East Hamilton (Connon Nurseries Property)  
City of Hamilton Municipal File No: ZAC – 15 -055

June 2017 Award-winning photographer Mark Zelinski publishes *Heart Of Turtle Island: The Niagara Escarpment* which features the Souharissen Natural Area.

June 19<sup>th</sup>,  
2017



June 21<sup>st</sup>,  
2017 Queen Elizabeth II creates Canada's third Chapel Royal at Massey College, Toronto. The Royal Chapel, Massey College, is given the Anishinaabek name Gi-Chi-Twaa Gimaa Kwe, Mississauga Anishinaabek AName Gimak ("The Queen's Anishinaabek Sacred Place"). The sage used in the Queen's tobacco bundles presented by the Chapel Royal to visitors is harvested from the Souharissen Canoe Garden. The chapel was co-founded by Massey College and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Learn more [here](#).

July 1-2,  
2017 An educational booth describing the Souharissen Natural Area is included in Waterdown District High School's #Loop150 event at the 2017 Waterdown Ribfest. The event was part of the community's commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation.

February  
14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 The Souharissen Natural Area is featured at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Historical Gathering of the Mississaugas of the New Credit.





April 13<sup>th</sup>,  
2018

Chief R. Stacey Laforme of the Mississaugas of the New Credit visits Waterdown, Waterdown District High School and the Souharissen Natural Area.



July 18<sup>th</sup>,  
2018

As part of their 2017-2018 Community Service Project, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Waterdown Scouts installed two picnic tables in the Souharissen Natural Area (one near the Sacred Fire and the other by the western entrance).

November  
7<sup>th</sup>, 2018

A Sacred Fire Marker was dedicated by Eugene, Cindy and Angel Kahgee, as well as Councillor Judi Partridge and Mississaugas of the Credit Councillor Erma Ferrell. The unveiling is witnessed by nearly 50 students from Waterdown District High School



February -  
June 2019

Working with Ms. R. Urfe's Grade 4 students, Waterdown District High School students from the Indigenous Studies Program create bat houses along with Eugene and Cindy Kahgee. Inspired by the Seven Grandfather Teachings, the bat houses are installed throughout the Souharissen Natural Area.

At the same time, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Waterdown Scouts also installed five bat boxes in various places around the natural area.





June 21<sup>st</sup>,  
2021

Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Elder Carolyn King, Elder Garry Sault, James K. Bird and members of the community visit the Souharissen Canoe Garden on National Indigenous Peoples Day. The Lieutenant Governor top-dresses the garden and then marks the canoe with an image of an Ojibwe moccasin (part of Elder Carolyn King's Moccasin Identifier Project). The canoe was also filled with 215 specially decorated stones created by Waterdown resident Sabine Atkins, representing the children found at Kamloops.





Canoes were traditionally used for transportation, to allow movement and to connect people. The canoe gardens linking New Credit to Toronto need to be seen in the same light; They are a symbol for all peoples; a symbol of progress and equality that will move the conversation forward. As a community we need to address our relationships with Indigenous Peoples with the utmost dignity and respect, searching for truth in an effort to reconcile the mistakes of the past.

-Tyler Alexis, WDHS student

### Wiigwaasi-Jiimaan

In the Two Row Wampum imagery, the Indigenous canoe holds the beliefs, laws, and traditions of the Native People of this land. This canoe holds Mother earth, from which much of the Indigenous beliefs, laws, and traditions spring forth.

This is living soil of the New Credit reserve, gifted to the community by the Mississaugas of the New Credit Nation. Does this precious gift violate Canada's Indian Act which prohibits the removal of materials from reserves? If so, this is but one of the many inequities Indigenous Peoples face in their relationships with Canada.

This canoe, one of twenty, links the New Credit Reserve to their traditional territory. Inspired by Carolyn King, it is also filled with Indigenous medicine gifted by the Mississaugas, and was planted by students from Waterdown District High School. A Haudenosaunee medallion, designed by Rick Hill of the Tuscarora Nation, is also contained in its soil.

This is also a Truth and Reconciliation Heart Garden, honouring the children lost to Canada's Indian Residential School Program. Before planting this garden on May 29th, 2015, Waterdown District High School students toured Brantford's Mohawk Institute (the "Mush Hole"). Paper hearts, representing some of the thousands of children who died in these schools, are mixed into the soil.



This monument stone was generously funded by the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation and the canoe was donated by a Waterdown resident who used it to explore the many lakes and islands of his youth.

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The monument stone co-created with WDHS Student Tyler Alexis and installed at the Souharissen Canoe Garden. The stone was funded by the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.



© MARKZELINSKI.COM  
Will Rowe, Brady Fidler, Tanner Hirsch, Harrison Burt, Liam Shea, Tyler Alexis, Genevieve LeClair-Gull, Adam Ribson, Jordan Geerts, Ashley Hodgins, Emma Lokhorst, Trevor Young, Noah Thorn, Fatima Hamid & Mike Lee pose with Shki Maajtaang on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016.



Aug 22, 2014

# Natural area dedicated to settlers, Mississaugas

Hamilton Spectator

By Carmela Fragomeni

Lieutenant-governor David Onley and Mississaugas of the New Credit Chief Bryan Laforme spoke of appreciation of each other's peoples as they dedicated land to the Souharissen Natural Area in southeast Waterdown, part of a region where 104 Aboriginal archeological sites have been discovered.

"The two of us are performing this dedication jointly to help foster an appreciation of those who lived here long ago," Onley said Thursday of honouring both First Nations who first lived there, and Waterdown's first settlers who followed. "This is a community that clearly celebrates its roots."

Laforme said the Treaty of Niagara signed 250 years ago this summer was the inspiration for the dedication of this traditional Mississauga territory and the unveiling of a carved stone marker outlining the early history of the area, now flanked by a subdivision under construction at Burke and Dundas streets. Some of the dedicated property incorporates land along Spring Creek and Merren's pond, running parallel to Dundas Street, where many of the archeological sites were found.

"The Treaty of Niagara was the result of a wampum exchange between the British and over 200 First Nations chiefs from 24 First Nations," Laforme said. "May today mark the renewal of those pledges of peace and friendship made over 200 years ago."

Laforme called the dedication an important event.

"The 104 archeological sites discovered here prove that at one time a flourishing Anishinabe culture existed all along the shores of these Great Lakes. This truly is our homeland and returning home is always a good feeling."

He talked of the First Nations concept of land, saying they view themselves as collective caretakers and invited others to be partners in this.

"These lands belong to children yet unborn. Our job is to preserve it for future generations," he said.

The history on the stone marker reads in part: "These lands, including the City of Hamilton remain the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations."

Calling these exciting times for the Ojibwa First Nation, Laforme noted that "All throughout our traditional territory, events like these are taking place recognizing and affirming our connection with our traditional territory."

The connection was formally recognized when the Mississaugas were named host First Nation for the Pan Am Games in Toronto next year, he said.

The restored Souharissen Natural Area, named after a mid-1600s Aboriginal leader, covers 27 acres in Waterdown.

Officials at the dedication struggled to be heard over the roar of a stream of dump trucks driving to and from the subdivision construction, but the roughly 50 people present listened attentively.

Emcee Nathan Tidridge, a member of the Souharissen Natural Area committee who is also a Waterdown District High School history teacher, said the event restores aboriginal heritage to Flamborough and marks the formal return of the Mississaugas to their traditional territory.

The discoveries there include the foundation of an early 19th century cabin believed to belong to the first European settlers of Waterdown: Alexander Brown and Merren Grierson. A plaque in the natural area and its trails identifies the cabin site — close to where the Mississaugas lit a sacred fire at sunrise Thursday to mark the dedication.

Honourable David Onley, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, watches Elder Garry Sault of the Mississaugas of the New Credit performing a welcoming song during a dedication ceremony for the Souharissen Natural Area in Waterdown.



© Nathan Tidridge 2022



# Once a weapon, education is now key to reconciliation

**Stories of Canada's native people need to be centre of education curriculum, Waterdown teacher says**

By Nathan Tidridge, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 07, 2015 11:26 AM ET Last Updated: Jun 07, 2015 11:26 AM ET



Students from Waterdown District High School, in Waterdown, Ontario, created a Canoe Garden filled with native plants. It serves as a tangible reminder of the indigenous identity of the land. (Nathan Tidridge)

Everything changed for me the moment I walked into the entrance of Brantford's Mohawk Institute Residential School — called the "Mush Hole" by its survivors.

It was the smell that got to me. Thick and musty — a heaviness that clung to you even after you left. I remember looking into a cupboard where young children had been locked for days on end as a form of punishment. I could still smell the sweat and urine, see the scratches made on the inside.

As I listened in horror to the testimonies told by survivors I realized that as an educator I had a responsibility to take as many students as possible to bare witness to that place, as well as explore with my students what had happened in this country to allow such a program to exist.

- [Education 'only way forward,' says Gov. Gen. David Johnston as TRC ends](#)
- [Truth and reconciliation: Looking back on a landmark week for Canada](#)



The residential school program demonstrates how education was used as a tool to destroy culture. Now we must reverse this process and use the school system to integrate indigenous stories and our foundational treaty relationships into the everyday lives of non-indigenous Canadians.

When I became a teacher of Canadian history, I was very tentative about exploring the place of indigenous peoples in that history with my students. Resources were scarce and the curriculum did not ask us to dwell too much on the subject (fortunately, that has changed in Ontario).

For me, the history of the indigenous peoples was filled with names that were difficult to pronounce and an oral tradition that didn't fit well with my profession's book-centred and Euro-centric focus.

It wasn't until I learned from elders and knowledge keepers that a treaty was all about being in and respecting a relationship that my perspective changed. Quite simply, I needed to understand that "treaty" was not a noun, but rather a verb.

## **Illegal soil**

Last week the latest group of students from Waterdown District High School walked into the main entrance of the Mush Hole.

Their eyes lingered on the old wood paneling and copy of Stephen Harper's 2008 apology that hangs near where the office was once located.

As always, my friend and colleague Eugene Kahgee, from Saugeen First Nation, was there. His father was sent to the Mush Hole and could never bring himself to go back. My students were quiet as they walked through the rooms and saw the places where countless abuses occurred over the generations.

Leaving Brantford, we travelled to the New Credit Reserve to meet with Carolyn King. As part of the Mississaugas of the New Credit Nation's celebrations of the 2015 Toronto PanAm Parapan Games, Carolyn created the idea to establish canoe gardens that would link the reserve to the events across the golden horseshoe.

The gardens are filled with native plants, serving as tangible reminders of the indigenous identity of the land. My school had asked to host one of these gardens, and the students arrived in New Credit to collect the different plants that they would carry back home.

I was also given a bag of soil from the reserve — an illegal act under the Trading with Indians section of the Indian Act. We did it to highlight that while outside companies strip resources from indigenous territories across the country, it remains illegal for a native person to gift me soil from their garden.

## **Canoe garden an education piece**

Back in Waterdown, we stirred the illegal soil into our canoe garden, burying paper hearts in its earth, linking it to the hundreds of heart gardens created for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that are dedicated to the thousands of children lost to the residential school program.

The garden will be maintained by the community as an active education piece, reminding people that they live in a treaty relationship with others.





'Today we begin to change the history of Canada.' - Justice Murray Sinclair

Our students lived their treaty relationship that day. Future generations of students will visit and tend to the garden planted on the eve of the TRC final report, learning about their partners on the land.

As I think about that day, watching my students planting and watering the plants gifted to them by the Mississaugas of the New Credit, Justice Murray Sinclair's words fill my heart: "Today we begin to change the history of Canada."

"Canoes were traditionally used for transportation, to allow movement and to connect people," explained Tyler Alexis, a student tasked with creating a description of the garden.

"This canoe needs to be seen in the same light. It is a symbol for all peoples. A symbol of progress that moves the conversation forward."

The relationships between Canada and indigenous peoples must be placed at the very centre of our provincial curricula. It is the key to reconciliation.






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Nathan Tidridge is a history teacher at Waterdown District High School and the author of *The Queen at the Council Fire: The Treaty of Niagara, Reconciliation and the Dignified Crown in Canada* (Dundurn Press, 2015). He lives in Waterdown, Ontario.

This was the lead story, as well as the most viewed, of CBC Aboriginal during the week of June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

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### Most Viewed in the Past 7 Days

- [Once a weapon, education is now key to reconciliation](#) June 07, 11:26 AM ET
- [Indian status: 5 things you need to know](#) August 23, 1:36 PM ET  372
- [Truth and reconciliation: Looking back on a landmark week for Canada](#) June 06, 6:26 PM ET 
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission: By the numbers](#) June 03, 9:11 AM ET  609  
- [Some residential school survivors still waiting to tell their stories](#) June 06, 8:00 AM ET



# Tree planting signifies a new beginning in Souharissen Natural Area

Story and photos by Julia Lovett  
FLAMBOROUGH REVIEW STAFF

With a new tree, a new beginning. The Indigenous Studies program at Waterdown District High School came to a poetic end with a ceremonial tree planting at the Souharissen Natural Area in east Waterdown.

"It's a really important part of reconciliation, in light of everything that's happened with residential schools, and I think it's the most important thing for these students to learn about," said Nathan Tidridge, who teaches the course alongside Leah Hogan from Mohawk College.

The tree, a white oak named Shki Maajlaang (New Beginning), was named by Elder Carolyn King of the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation. The oak is the first to be established in a reforestation program in the area that is traditional territory of the Chonnonon, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nations. Once more trees are planted it will be akin to the oak line near Council House on the reserve.

"Here you see a classic example of the different uses of land. Whereas we see land as - we call it development - but we see land as something that can be manipulated and transformed and owned," Tidridge said, referring to the natural area that is directly opposite a suburban development, separated only by a chain link fence.

"The indigenous perspective is very different. We are part of the land, part of the environment and so that's what this place is all about. It's to preserve that perspective," he added.



Students from Waterdown District High School's first Indigenous Studies class gather around Shki Maajlaang (New Beginning). The white oak was named by Elder Carolyn King of the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation. At night, Leini Shea and Tanner Hirsch pass a bead from the Covenant Chain wampum.

What's special about the area is the communal in direct violation of Section 93 (a) (i) which aspect it provides. Along with the walking paths, states "a person without the written permission there is a canoe filled with traditional medicine sion of the minister or his duly authorized representative, (a) removes or permits anyone to remove from a reserve and (i) minerals, stone, sand, gravel, clay or soil" can be charged up to \$500 and or serve jail time of three months.

It was done on purpose, Tidridge explained, "to highlight inequities."

According to Hogan, the students were open to learning about the indigenous people of the

Since it contains soil from the reserve, it is to learning about the indigenous people of the



area. "They've been very respectful and kind with their appreciation and patience for the Canadian history of our indigenous people," she said, noting not all of it was pleasant.

She said the students were surprised by how oppressive the Indian Act is, as well as by the residential schools - the last only closing 20 years ago. "I think that was really emotional. We had a residential school survivor come in share her story and I think they were shocked and saddened by her experience," Hogan said.

As the tree was put in the ground and covered with dirt, a replica of the Covenant Chain wampum was placed around its branches.

"This is a European diplomatic tool, it's not indigenous so it highlights the fact that we used to understand each other and get along," Tidridge said.

## Belt depicts unity, birth of Canada

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ridge said.

The belt, made of purple and white beads, depicts two people joined hand in hand while the number 17 is stitched on one end of the belt and 64 on the other end. According to Tidridge, the year 1764 is seen as the true date of Canada's birth.

Indigenous people from this area... my dad was very big with the out-... Kangee is getting back to his Ojibwe... see that document as the founding of... 66ors, he took me fishing, he took me... hunting... my father was very in touch... with the land," he said.

After years of growing up around... He is happy knowing that this tree... will be around for years to come... "This is like the mother of this land... wouldn't be caught by a truant officer... pray, they're going to come here."







*Students in a Waterdown District High School Grade 10 History class are gearing up for Canada's 150th birthday, after receiving a \$150 boost from RBC. (Front row) Aiden Reynolds, Alexander Dicks, Travis Kitchen, Nolan Fetter, Reilly Meehan, (back row) Jason Cookson, Keiran Rudzick, teacher Nathan Tidridge, Eric Curran, A.J. Andree, Jordan Kenyon, William Maciulis, RBC Waterdown branch manager Amanda De Groote and Samantha Camp gathered before the Christmas break to celebrate the grant. T - Julia Lovett/Metroland*

Flamborough Review, January 5th, 2017



## Learn more

It is important, whenever possible, to engage with members of the Indigenous Community. Knowledge, including stories, should only be used with permission from respected elders or knowledge keepers.

Remember to listen. When in doubt, always be prepared to ask for help.

### Websites:

Anishinabek Nation - [www.anishinabek.ca](http://www.anishinabek.ca)

Her Majesty's Royal Chapel of the Mohawks – [www.mohawkchapel.ca](http://www.mohawkchapel.ca)

Massey College (home of Gi-Chi-Twaa Gimaa Kwe, Mississauga Anishinaabek AName Gimak – or “The Queen’s Sacred Anishinaabek Place”) – [www.masseycollege.ca](http://www.masseycollege.ca)

The Mississaugas of the New Credit Nation - <http://mncfn.ca/>

Six Nations of the Grand River - [www.sixnations.ca](http://www.sixnations.ca)

Souharissen Natural Area - [www.tidridge.com/souharissen-natural-area-waterdown.html](http://www.tidridge.com/souharissen-natural-area-waterdown.html)

