TEIAKWANAHSTAHSONTÉHRHA | WE EXTEND THE RAFTERS

The bilingual title of the exhibition—in Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) and in English—refers to the action of "extending the rafters" of a longhouse. These traditional Indigenous structures would be lengthened to make room for new generations or even other families. The title chosen by the artist therefore encompasses the broader notion of acceptance and inclusion of differences, in the spirit of Respect, Unity and Peace.

Crawford Lake Iroquois Village. Photo: Shean Marshall / Flickr.

Skawennati. Photo: Roger Lemoyne.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Territory, just South of the Island of Montreal, **Skawennati** holds a BFA from Concordia University in Montreal, where she is based. She is Co-Director of Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace (AbTeC), a research network on Indigenous virtual environments. Skawennati makes art that addresses history, the future, and change. Her pioneering new media projects include the online gallery/chat-space and mixed-reality event, *CyberPowWow* (1997-2004); a paper doll/time-travel journal, *Imagining Indians in the 25th Century* (2001); and *TimeTraveller™* (2008-2013), a multi-platform project featuring nine machinima episodes. These have been presented in New Zealand, Hawaii, Ireland and across North America. Skawennati is represented by ELLEPHANT and her award-winning work is included in both public and private collections.

WORDS ARE IMPORTANT

Today, many of the terms that have been used throughout history to designate the first peoples to inhabit North America are to be avoided: "Savages", "Redskins", Indians, American Indians, etc. Depending on the context and the specific communities to be named, we can use *Native American* (increasingly common since the 1960s and preferred in the United States, although it does not typically refer to the Indigenous people of Alaska) or *First Nations* (first appeared in the 1970s and preferred in Canada, although it does not include Inuit and Métis people).

We suggest using:

Indigenous: This means all peoples who were present in what is now Canada before the arrival of Europeans, and their descendants. The *Constitution Act* of 1982 refers to "Aboriginal" peoples ("Autochtones" in French) to describes the three groups we will essentially refer to: *Indians* (the term still used in a legal context to designate more than 600 nations speaking more than 50 distinct languages), *Inuit* (peoples of the Arctic regions, including eight primary ethnic groups in Canada) and *Métis* (people who have both Aboriginal and European ancestors, the majority of whom come from Western Canada). In French, the term "Autochtone" is used.

Any person who does not belong to an Indigenous nation, no matter their descent or origin, will be referred to as **Non-Indigenous**.

Source: *Terminology Guidelines* of the National Aboriginal Health Organization (online version).

The 11 Indigenous nations of Québec recognized by the National Assembly belong to three broad linguistic and cultural groups:

Algonquian family

- Abénaki
- Atikamekw
- Mi'kmaq
- Nehiyawak (Cree)
- Algonquin
- Innu
- Naskapi
- Wolastoqiyik (Malecite)

Iroquoian family

- Huron-Wendat
- Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk)

Eskaleut family

- Inuit

Sources: *Amérindiens et Inuits, portrait des nations autochtones du Québec*, document produced by the Government of Québec (2nd edition, 2011) and *Canadian Encyclopedia* (online).

Preparatory document

THE PEACEMAKER RETURNS

Skawennati, *Becoming the Peacemaker (Tekanawí:ta)*, machinimagraph from *The Peacemaker Returns*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

Skawennati has designed with VOX an original installation especially created for children. The exhibition includes a new machinima (animation-style movie produced on the virtual reality platform Second Life) inspired by the story of Tekanawí:ta the Peacemaker, a founding myth of Iroquois culture. This legend comes from oral tradition, with somewhere between 20 and 40 variations in existence! The summary provided below is based on, among other sources, *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker*, a book for young readers by Robbie Robertson and David Shannon (Abrams, 2015).

The story tells of the five nations living south of what is now called the St. Lawrence River, who had been at war for so long that they no longer knew what peace was like. These were the **Onondaga**, **Cayuga**, **Mohawk**, **Seneca** and **Oneida** nations.

One day a Mohawk Warrior named **Hiawatha** became consumed by sadness and anger when he lost his wife and three daughters in a raid led by **Tadodaho**, Chief of the Onondaga. So deep was Hiawatha's sadness that he went to hide in the woodlands and along river shores. So intense was his anger that all he could think of was to take revenge.

At dawn some days later, Hiawatha saw a man in a white stone canoe paddling toward him. Hiawatha asked who he was, and why he had come. The man smiled and gave him a string of white and purple shells: a **wampum belt**. It was a peace offering. The stranger began to speak: "I know that you are angry and you want revenge. But the fighting must stop. The peoples must come together as one body, one mind and one heart, to be stronger together." The man said his name was **Tekanawí:ta**, and that he was known as The Peacemaker. They were to journey together to meet the chiefs of the five warring nations, and foster the Great Peace.

They began with the Mohawk, Hiawatha's people, who welcomed them with joy. They talked at length, but all feared Tadodaho. The Peacemaker promised them that he and Hiawatha would visit the other nations and return from their journey with proof that a confederacy was possible.

So Tekanawí:ta and Hiawatha went to see the Cayuga, the Seneca and finally the Oneida. Despite some misgivings, all the chiefs embraced their cause. The pair returned to the Mohawk, who then understood that by choosing peace, they would be joining an extended family: "Alone, we would swiftly be broken by war, but together, we will be stronger than the strongest of warriors!" Filled with hope, the Mohawk Chief joined the delegation headed to meet the leader of the Onondaga, the tyrant Tadodaho.

Tadodaho lived alone in a fearsome lair deep in the woods. In his hair crawled a myriad snakes. Tekanawí:ta, who understood that Tadodaho was ill, prepared a remedy and cared for the Chief for three days… and the evil snakes vanished! Tadodaho, cured of his sickness and grateful, was at last ready to listen.

Tekanawí:ta explained that the Great Peace was necessary for the peoples to live in happiness. He asked that all weapons be buried beneath a great tree—the Tree of Peace—and said that a strong, proud guardian would be needed to safeguard the new alliance. Tadodaho was given this role of "Firekeeper," protector of the **League of Five Nations**, henceforth united in one body, one mind and one heart: the **Haudenosaunee Confederacy**.

KANIEN'KEHA (THE MOHAWK LANGUAGE)

Languages are at the heart of cultures. They allow us to name and understand things in the world, and to establish relations with others. Kanien'kéha is the language of the Kanien'kehà:ka nation, the "People of the Flint" (more commonly known as the Mohawk). Here are some words that might be used in the visit to the exhibition:

KANIEN'KÉHA	ENGLISH
Haudenosaunee	Iroquois, "People of the Longhouse"
Kanón:ses	Longhouse
Kaswén:tha	Wampum (belt)
Shé:kon	Hello
Niá:wen	Thank you

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