

BACKGROUNDER: A NEW CARVING IN THE LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER – THE SEVEN GRANDFATHER TEACHINGS

On November 18th, 2021, a new wood carving showcasing the Seven Grandfather Teachings guiding principles was unveiled in the Legislative Chamber. The carving is located above the interior Chamber entrance.

The carving serves as a permanent reminder of the ongoing role played by Indigenous peoples in the creation of Ontario, and symbolizes the continuing renewal of Ontario's relationship and connections with Indigenous peoples living in the province today.

TIMELINE

The process of bringing Indigenous artwork into the Chamber began after Indigenous community leaders joined party leaders in addressing the Legislature in recognition of the findings of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* at an event in May 2016.

Following this event, consultation with MPPs from all parties and Indigenous leaders took place and it was decided to add a carving by an Indigenous artist in the Chamber. In April 2018, a call for submissions was put out to invite Indigenous artists to submit a carving proposal.

After careful consideration, an all-party panel and then-Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald (now the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations) chose Garrett Nahdee as the successful artist in November 2020. Mr. Nahdee completed his carving in June 2021, and it was then transported to the Legislative Building and prepared for installation in the Chamber.

ALL-PARTY PANEL

The Indigenous artwork all-party panel was created in 2017 to assist in the process of bringing a carving created by an Indigenous artist into the Chamber. Many Members of Provincial Parliament have contributed to its work since its inception, assisting former Speaker Dave Levac and current Speaker Ted Arnott in the submission and selection process. They are:

- MPP Gilles Bisson (NDP)
- MPP Paul Calandra (PC)
- MPP Nathalie Des Rosiers (LIB)
- MPP John Fraser (LIB)
- MPP Sophie Kiwala (LIB)
- MPP Sol Mamakwa (NDP)
- MPP Ross Romano (PC)
- MPP Mike Schreiner (Green)
- MPP Lisa Thompson (PC)

WHAT ARE THE SEVEN GRANDFATHER TEACHINGS?

The Seven Grandfather Teachings are a set of guiding principles that give people the tools for how to live a good life. They have been passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years through stories and ceremonies.

THE SEVEN GRANDFATHERS STORY

There were Seven Grandfathers who were given the responsibility by the Creator to watch over the Earth's people. They saw that life was not good, so they sent a helper, the Oshkabaywis, to walk among the people and bring them someone who could be taught how to live in harmony with Creation. It took seven tries but eventually the Oshkabaywis brought them a baby and they were happy. They instructed the Oshkabaywis to take the baby to every corner of the earth to see all of Creation. This took seven years and when they returned, each of the Grandfathers gave the child a gift – a teaching – to share with all the Earth's people.

WHAT ARE THE SEVEN TEACHINGS?

- Zaagi'idiwin – Love, represented by the eagle.
- Nibwaakaawin – Wisdom, represented by the beaver.
- Debwewin – Truth, represented by the turtle.
- Dabaadendiziwin – Humility, represented by the wolf.
- Minwaadendamowin – Respect, represented by the bison.
- Aakode'ewin – Courage, represented by the bear.
- Gwayakwaadiziwin – Honesty, represented by the raven.

Source: The Mishomis Book - Voice of the Ojibway by Edward Bentin

WHO IS ARTIST GARRETT NAHDEE?

Garrett Nahdee is a self-taught artist from Walpole Island First Nation. He served as an active-duty United States Marine for four years, participating in humanitarian missions. After his honourable discharge from the Marines, he spent five years as a truck driver, travelling all across Canada and the United States. It was in his truck that he first started drawing. Realizing he had a passion for art, he soon started painting and carving. He began getting requests to create custom pieces, and is now a full-time professional artist.

About the Seven Grandfather Teachings, Garrett says they are “great leadership traits, and when they are practiced in everyday life, you will see changes in your life. Burdens will be lifted, and bitterness will deplete. Uplifting your spirit to soar to another level of progress. I truly believe in the Seven Grandfather Teachings, and teach them when I can.”

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