

Meet Us at the Head of Lake Ontario – Hamilton Branch UELAC Conference

May 30 – June 2nd 2013 – a Wrap-up

After nearly four years of planning the best possible experiences for Loyalist friends and members across the country, it arrived and passed in a flash and it all went well. A large conference committee and a cast of volunteers met our every need happily and with generosity.



Following registration in the Holidome on Thursday afternoon, workshops for membership and genealogists offered a great opportunity to share information and new directions. There was also time to visit the Pearson Room to view displays by A Different Drummer Book Store, the Promotions Committee, Doug Adams and other heritage groups or simply socialize.

The opening night was astounding. We wanted to honour the land we were on as First Nations land and to recognize that Joseph Brant received over 3 000 acres very close to our conference centre for his loyalty to the Crown during the Revolutionary War. David Hill Morrison UE, a Joseph Brant descendant, officially welcomed everyone and opened our conference. Zig Misiak, an Honorary Dominion Vice-President addressed the audience, telling them about the important role of the First Nations people during the War of 1812 and particularly at the Battle of Stoney Creek.

Dominion Past President Fred Hayward welcomed two representatives from the Six Nations, Janis Monture and Don Monture. Janis, Executive Director of Woodland Cultural Centre, received a cheque for \$5000.00 that was raised as a Dominion initiative for the Four Directions Youth Project in 2009. The donation will go for programming at the Woodland Cultural Centre to foster self-esteem and interest in Canadian history and heritage. Don Monture, as hereditary elder of the Six Nations Legacy Consortium received a specially designed wampum belt from Fred Hayward that symbolized peace, pride and co-existence, recognizing the shared history of the United Empire Loyalists and the First Nations peoples.



Designed by Ken Maracle of Manitoulin Island, the wampum depicted the four directions of the great roots of the great tree of the long leaves. Don left us with a beautiful message of gratitude and thanks. Lots of finger food and beverages were enjoyed at this reception.

Friday was full of activities. The coach bus left early for the Niagara trip. It included visits to Fort George, the Laura Secord House and Queenston Heights. Each location had excellent guides, all in period clothing. The guide at Queenston was an active re-enactment officer and he was especially spirited and interesting. Lunch was held at Ravine Winery in St. David's: its tasting room is the beautifully preserved Loyalist home of David Secord. Everyone enjoyed sample tastes of various wines and then had an opportunity to return with some truly organic wine, produced through lots of hand labour.

James Elliott, author of Strange Fatality – the Battle of Stoney Creek started the morning off with a brief description of the local battle that was celebrating its 200th anniversary this weekend. Those who chose to stay at the Holiday Inn listened to two marvelous speakers. Doug Adams, from Temagami, discussed the fur trade of the past and the present. He had lots of furs and traps and had people come up and actively participate with him. Jim Taggart discussed early medicines and cures. He had wonderful images to illustrate his talk.

Meanwhile the local tour drove past Union Cemetery, where Hamilton Branch plaqued the resting place of first Loyalists in this area. The first stop was at St. Luke's Anglican Church, Burlington's oldest church, built in 1834. Joseph Brant gave the land for this church and his daughter Elizabeth Kerr, supported the founding of it. After that, the Joseph Brant Museum was toured where they have Joseph Brant's carved powder horn and the Gospel of Mark that he translated into the Mohawk language. Lunch was at one of Hamilton's castles, the Scottish Rite, former home of George Elias Tuckett, owner of the Tuckett Tobacco Company that became the Imperial Tobacco Company.

After lunch both of these groups were taken to Battlefield Park, Stoney Creek, where there were massive encampments of re-enactment people of all ages. The Gage home was ready for touring and the 100 year old tower was open for those who wished to climb up to the first level. Native First Nations dancers and a British military drum band performed. Westfield Heritage Park presented a period clothing fashion show. There were lots of early clothing, toys and other items to purchase from the sutlers.

Friday evening was our off-site dinner at the stunning Burlington Golf and Country Club, with a view of Burlington Bay, the Skyway Bridge and over to Stoney Creek. Prior to the musical entertainment, the Membership Challenge was recognized by Doug Grant, and the 2014 conference was promoted by Martha Hemphill. Then the heritage folk music group, *Tamarack* performed. They were lively and interesting with songs about the Battle of Stoney Creek and the local hero, Billy Green.

Saturday morning was the annual general meeting, the core purpose for all conferences. All presenters were well prepared and President Robert McBride led the meeting well. Towards the end of the meeting, the new executive was established with Bonnie Schepers as president. After the luncheon, the Dominion Council also met to approve appointments, dates and other business.

The Saturday evening gala continued the theme of “Battle at Stoney Creek” with tables adorned with fresh red, white and blue flowers. After dinner, President Bonnie Schepers addressed the guests with an introduction to her perceived role in the next two years. The evening’s highlight was an illustrated talk by Nathan Tidridge on the Duke of Kent, the father of Queen Victoria. The brass quintet, *Cottonwood Brass*, performed heritage music on mainly antique instruments. While each piece of music had an entertaining and educational story, the enthusiastic participation in the singing of *The Maple Leaf Forever* will be what is best remembered. All left with the gift of 1812 coins that commemorated the actions of the HMS Shannon that defeated the U.S. Chesapeake in 1813 and individuals remembered for their actions, Sir Isaac Brock, Tecumseh and Charles-Michel de Salaberry. The Laura Secord coins complete the set and were not available until June 22nd.

Sunday morning we headed off for a very special service at Christ’s Church Anglican Cathedral, in Hamilton with a stop at the beautiful United Empire Loyalist monument, given to the city in 1929 by Stanley Mills. [A large group photo was taken.](#) At the cathedral, we were led to our seats by a piper. The interior of this building is exceptional, all carved wood, very intricate in detail and vast in space. It was also the day of the Queen’s coronation 60 years ago. A journalist interviewed some of us after the service. A catered lunch was enjoyed after the service and then everyone headed back to the Holiday Inn to go our various ways as all headed home.

Since then we have sent out a two part survey in order to receive feedback that can be passed on to future conferences. We have met as a group to celebrate with a BBQ and to go through all aspects of the conferences, hoping to distill some valuable advice for those hosting future conferences.

It was a great networking time. We truly did enjoy hosting the Dominion conference this year and we trust that everyone returned home safely with some new information, knowledge or an experience that enriched your lives. Do set the time aside to attend the Toronto conference next year, June 5 – 8, as we prepare to celebrate the 100th anniversary of our association.

Loyally,
Ruth Nicholson UE
Hamilton Branch UELAC Conference Chair 2013

