



Photograph taken on December 26th, 2023, at the site of the Sacred Fire lit during the 2014 dedication of the Souharissen Natural Area.

*“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”*

– Chief Bryan Laforme, August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

Established in 2014 by members of the Waterdown District High School community, the *Souharissen Natural Area* is an important natural space dedicated to Treaty education in Flamborough. Inspired by the 1764 Treaty of Niagara, the *Souharissen Natural Area* covers 55 acres in East Waterdown (the Waterdown Bay Development Area), including 104 Indigenous archeological sites, and has been developed and maintained through a partnership between local residents and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. [Click here to visit the website of the Souharissen Natural Area.](#)

From its joint dedication 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, the *Souharissen Natural Area* has been the site of numerous projects by students and other members of the Waterdown community and their Treaty partners including:

- The installation and maintenance of the *Souharissen Natural Area Canoe Garden* as part of the 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games. Established with the help of Elder Carolyn King CM, the garden was planted and dedicated by members of the community, including Councillor Judi Partridge and Trustee Penny Deathe. On June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021, the Canoe Garden was visited and top-dressed by the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, 29<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, who viewed 205 stones left in the garden to commemorate the unmarked graves discovered on the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

This project was approved by the Ogiima kwa and Council of the Mississaugas of the Credit (January 2024)

- In the soil of the Canoe Garden is a medallion gifted by Rick Hill OC (Tuscarora Nation, Haudenosaunee Confederacy). Mr. Hill advised students on the creation of the monument stone located next to the garden.
- In 2016, a wiishkobi-mitigomizh (White Oak Tree) is planted near the Brown Cabin foundations by Waterdown District High School's first Treaty Studies students, beginning a reforestation program within the natural area. The tree is named *Shki Maajtaang* (meaning "New Beginning" in Anishinaabemowin) by Elder Carolyn King of the Mississaugas of the Credit. Mixed in the roots of this White Oak is a bead from a replica of the 1764 Covenant Chain Wampum (one of the wampum exchanged at the Treaty of Niagara in 1764). That same replica wampum was gifted by a delegation of the Mississauga Nation to King Charles III during a historic meeting at the Palace of Holyroodhouse on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
- In 2018, the 3rd Waterdown Scouts installed *two picnic tables* in the Souharissen Natural Area (one near the Sacred Fire and the other by the western entrance). The Scouts have been a big part of the area since 2016 (clean-ups, hikes and other activities).
- In 2018, a *Sacred Fire Marker* was gifted by the Kahgee Family to mark the site of the sacred fire lit in 2014. The stone was dedicated by Eugene, Cindy and Angel Kahgee, as well as Councillor Judi Partridge and Mississaugas of the Credit Councillor Erma Ferrell. The ceremony was witnessed by nearly 50 students from Waterdown District High School.
- Working with Ms. R. Urfey's Grade 4 students from Allen Greenleaf Public School, in 2019 Waterdown District High School Treaty Studies students created *bat houses* along with Eugene and Cindy Kahgee. Inspired by the Seven Grandfather Teachings, the bat houses have been installed throughout the Souharissen Natural Area. A local community member has been maintaining these bat houses since 2022.

Since its creation in 2014, the *Souharissen Natural Area* has been embraced by the community, including East Waterdown's growing South Asian community. With the construction of the *Trend Condo Towers*, new members of our community are beginning to use the space in different ways providing new opportunities to educate folks about the Treaty relationships that exist on this land.

### **10<sup>th</sup> anniversary Project**

To celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this important space, the WDHS Treaty Studies students are being asked to support "The Ponds" area of the *Souharissen Natural Area*. "The Ponds" are located west of the *Trend Condo Towers* and are heavily used by residents for walks. Currently, there is no signage identifying this 7.05-acre space as part of the *Souharissen Natural Area*, nor the Treaty relationships meant to be highlighted.

Here are the parameters:

- The plan must align with the Silver Covenant Chain relationship extended into this land by the 1764 Treaty of Niagara. This plan should include:
  - A name for the space (that honours the Neutral Confederacy – the archeological sites in the region come from the Neutral Confederacy). Rick Hill would be a good person to consult with.
  - A monument stone at the entrance to the space used by residents of the *Trend Condo Towers*.
  - Signage throughout the space.

This project was approved by the Ogiima kwa and Council of the Mississaugas of the Credit (January 2024)

- Funding to meet the needs of the required budget.
- As with 2014, Elder Garry Sault and Elder Carolyn King must be consulted on all aspects of this project, as well as the Mississaugas of the Credit Ojima-Kwe and Council.
- Students need to involve Ward 15 Councillor Ted McMeekin.
- Students will need to create a new map of the *Souharissen Natural Area* (highlighting all of its landmarks) that can be distributed both physically, and electronically, to the community.
- A dedication ceremony must be created for the space that honours the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Souharissen Natural Area* and its purpose.
  - The dedication date is set for **Friday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024.**



"The Ponds" - part of the Souharissen Natural Area located west of the Trend Condo Towers. Picture from 2021.

[Click here to see a view of the space using Google Street View.](#)