

# *The Emergence of the Chief*

*by Dave McGary*

*A donation of an outdoor sculpture  
for the Loyola Campus*



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In the thirty years since the colleges of Loyola and Sir George Williams joined forces, Concordia University has become a major engine in Montreal's intellectual and cultural growth. Internationally recognized for its innovative programs and commitment to accessibility, the University draws strength from more than forty thousand dynamic students, faculty and staff.

Their diversity and creativity are Concordia hallmarks, visible in all aspects of University life, including a program to integrate the arts into architecture. For the design of the Richard J. Renaud Science Complex, a selection of sculptures by first cultures of the world was drawn from one of the University's art collections and figured into the plans.

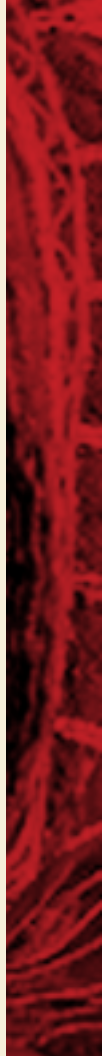
As part of the inauguration ceremonies of the Complex in the fall of 2003, Concordia invited members of the Mohawk Nation to perform a blessing and tree planting on the Loyola campus, symbolizing our rich social history.

Deeply moved by these gestures acknowledging the contributions of first cultures, community leaders in Montreal and Kahnawake agreed to work together to strengthen the bonds between native peoples and the University. The most recent result is the establishment of a scholarship endowment for students of the Aboriginal Nations.

To mark the creation of this unprecedented fund and to perpetuate the powerful visual memory forged during the Science Complex inaugural events, a group of dedicated individuals has commissioned a bronze outdoor sculpture depicting a special Mohawk ceremony.

*The Emergence of the Chief* is by the acclaimed sculptor of Native American subjects, Dave McGary. It is particularly interesting to note that for the execution of the University's cast of the work, the artist will be assisted by select students from the Faculty of Fine Arts.

Slated for installation in the fall of 2005, the monument will be positioned at a key intersection on the Loyola campus where the historic meets the contemporary, affirming the links between native peoples and the Concordia community—past, present and future.



**A**t age 44, Dave McGary is becoming a living legend among contemporary artists of the American West. Considered a master of realism, his depictions of Native American Indians capture the human spirit all the while paying great attention to detail and historic content. His work is found in public and private collections throughout North America including the White House.

Dave was born into a ranching family in Cody, Wyoming. As a teenager he was one of four students in the United States awarded a grant to study anatomy and the bronze-making process with master craftsmen in Italy. By 1981 he opened his own foundry and finishing facility in the southern mountains of New Mexico.

His numerous commissions and awards in the last two decades more than attest to his popularity among collectors and fellow artists. In 1997, he released a limited edition book titled *Dave McGary, American Realism in Bronze: A Twenty Year Retrospective*.

Two years later he was selected to render the Shoshone warrior and peacemaker, Chief Washakie. Casts of this monument have been placed in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda in Washington, the Wyoming State Capitol and Fort Washakie in Wyoming.

*The Emergence of the Chief* is the artist's first work situated in a new geographical locale and part of the Eastern Woodland Series. The primary focus will be the nations comprising the Iroquois Confederation of the mid-nineteenth century—a unified group holding over twenty-four million acres of beautiful and resource-wealthy lands.





The remarkable Confederation of the Iroquois was founded some time before the arrival of Europeans, typically dated to 1451 but believed to have actually occurred as early as 1142. Depending on how democracy is defined, the earlier date would rank the Iroquois League with the government of Iceland and the Swiss cantons as the oldest continuously functioning democracies on earth.

The people of the Six Nations, also known by the French term, Iroquois Confederacy, refer to themselves as the *Haudenosaunee*, meaning *People of the Long House*. Located in the north-eastern region of North America, originally the Six Nations was composed of five groups: the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas. The Tuscaroras—expelled by the English from North Carolina in the middle of the eighteenth century—took refuge with the Iroquois and became the sixth nation in the League.

*The Emergence of the Chief* will rest on a six-sided stone base comprised of one title panel with every other side representing each of the five original nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. The tribes will be represented in English, French and the respective language of each of their nations.

According to Iroquois tradition, there was once a time when all tribes in the region were locked in bloody battle and endless wars. Deganawidah—a holy man of Mohawk lineage said to have mystical powers—had a vision in which he saw the five nations drawn together, unified. A noble Mohawk named Aionwantha (or Hiawatha) was so moved by the words of Deganawidah that he began spreading the message himself, moving from one tribe to another traversing the area that is today New York State.

Since the societies were matriarchal, a third person, a woman and first clan mother, Tsikonshase, insisted on gender balance in the formulation of the constitution. A council of the five nations was called at which time the laws of the confederacy and the customs that were to be maintained, were stated and accepted. Hence, the birth of the Iroquois Great Law of Peace which has endured and ruled their political landscape for centuries.

As was the custom, elaborately beaded Wampum Belts were exchanged by the tribes and within clans to finalize treaties and solemnize agreements. The Great Law of Peace was finalized with such a mnemonic aid. All the tenets of the Great Law were contained in the pattern of the beads and they act as the guide during the oral recitation of the Great Law. The white beads were made from the inner spine of the Atlantic whelk shell and the deep purple beads were cut from the quahog (clam) shell.

In *The Emergence of the Chief* it is the Two Row Wampum Belt being given to the newly elected chief. The two dark rows of the belt represent the canoe and the sailing ship, a metaphor for the relationship between the Dutch settlers and the First Nation peoples. The belt tells the story of how the two peoples sailed the same waters and existed in harmony; they never interfered with each other and always treated each other with respect.

Under Haudenosaunee law, clan mothers choose male candidates as chiefs. The women also maintain ownership of the land and homes, and exercise a veto power over any council action that may result in war as well as the power to remove a chief from office for due cause. It also rests with the women to continue the oral traditions and instruct the children.

The ceremony depicted in the sculpture echoes the Mohawk *Creation Story* which begins with the first woman falling from the skyworld and landing on a turtle's back. Skywoman grabbed at the roots from the tree of the heavens as she fell, and with these she created earth. Given soil from under the water by one of the water dwellers (beaver, muskrat, otter), she planted the roots on the back of the turtle and sang the planting songs as she walked around the shell. Each time she walked around it, the shell and its plantings grew until it became the land we know today, North America or Turtle Island.

The base of the sculpture is a stylized representation of the turtle shell. Echoing the Skywoman's circling movements, the clan mother strides around the chief and is instructing him in his lifelong duties and responsibilities. The chief is an appointed official who speaks as a representative of the nation and is said to hold the responsibility of the position, not the power





over the confederacy. When selecting a new chief, the clan mothers look for a man who is of the Good Mind and is married and has children so he will care for his people and his country, like he does his own children.

This Mohawk chief from the Turtle clan wears the feathered and deer antlered *gus-to-weh* head-dress designating him as the head chief of the Mohawk Nation. He is seated holding a pictograph carved, wooden Condolence Cane also known as the Stick of Enlistment. A Condolence Cane is used as a mnemonic device in the ritual recollection of the names of the preceding chiefs and their grouping by nation.

This will be an important chief as is shown through his silver arm bands, white colonial period linen shirt (circa 1830-1850), beaded cuffs and yoke signifying his Turtle clan within the Mohawk Nation. The chief's leggings, breechcloth, moccasins and tobacco pouch show the elaborate raised floral beading style of the Eastern Woodland tribes. His leggings are beaded with the delicate, pierce-work beading, which resembles a blanket stitch, symbolic of the men protecting their village.

Appropriate to her position, the head-piece of the chief clan mother is beaded in the raised floral pattern, almost bas-relief style of her nation. The red skirt is edged in the *Celestial Sky* motif, a scalloped inward-facing border of inverted domes signifying the twelve months of the year, as well as the trinities of Earth, Moon, Sun; Fire, Water, Air; Corn, Beans and Squash. The same pattern edges the chief's blanket. Sacred tobacco appears as the five-blossom flowering plant on the skirt. The smallest white seed beads, signifying purity, were used in the beading, resulting in a lace-like appearance. The silver medallions on the tan tunic are typical trade items added after contact with the Europeans.

Paying homage to the traditions of First Nations cultures in all their richness and complexity, the sculpture invites us to delve further into our own personal notions of what we were, what we are, and what we may become.