

A royal and loyal heritage



Chief R. Don Maracle



Beautiful stained glass adorns church windows.

A crisp breeze blows up off the bay at the bottom of the hill. Flags snap in the wind, the Maple Leaf, the Mohawk Eagle, the Union Jack — all three brightly coloured reminders of the area's ancestry. What may be the oldest church bell in Ontario rings out over the fields surrounding Christ Church on the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. The limestone church stands alone, a place of worship, refuge, celebration, mourning and life.

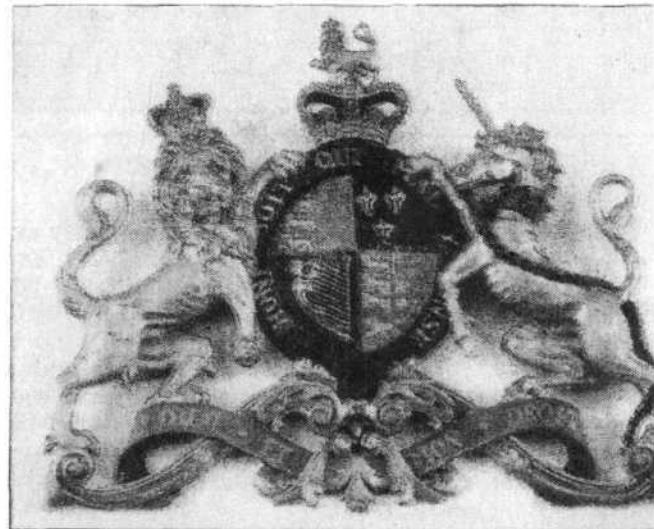
Inside it's mysterious — beautiful stained glass, an awe-inspiring triptych in the Mohawk language and a Royal coat of arms decorate the walls. Deep red velvet covers the seats of wooden pews, providing some measure of comfort for the reverent old bones in attendance that day. A fragile light filters through tall arched windows, gently washing through parishioners' hair, brushing against caramel skin and resting on carefully pressed collars and lapels, illuminating and inviting them to an exalted place.

This is a house of God.

It's been used as such by Mohawks since they built it in 1843. A national historic site, Christ Church, Her Majesty's Royal Chapel of the Mohawks, is one of two Royal Chapels in Canada. It's home to a number of gifts given to the Mohawks by the Royal Family in commemoration of Mohawk loyalty to the British Crown, including the triptych and bell given by King George III, the coat of arms from King George V, a Bible given by Queen Victoria, a communion chalice from Queen Elizabeth, and communion silver given to the Four Kings by Queen Anne in 1710.



Sarah MacWhirter
The Intelligence



Royal Coat of Arms given to the church by King George V.

Photograph by S. MacWhirter