

TV movie marred by major errors

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OHSWEKEN — Last month, the movie *Divided Loyalties* was shown on CBC television. It cost several million dollars to make and it had many memorable scenes. However it had some glaring errors which were apparently put in strictly for dramatic effect. It is too bad that filmmakers feel that such things have to be done. To me it verges on dishonesty.

In the very first scene, Chief Pontiac, the great Ottawa Indian leader, was murdered in New York State. In real life he was murdered in Cahokia, Illinois, almost 1,000 miles away. Also, he was killed in 1769, not 1768, when the treaty of Fort Stanwix was signed by the Six Nations Iroquois.

Another historical error was the episode depicting how Isaac Brant, Joseph's son, met his end. It showed a teenaged Isaac being fatally stabbed in the body as he and his father struggle in a forest somewhere in Ohio. It didn't really happen that way at all.

First of all, Isaac was almost 30 years old when the fateful exchange took place. He had had too much to drink at a local hotel when he spotted his father in an adjoining room. His loud threats were heard by Joseph Brant. When he saw that his son was inebriated and was brandishing a knife he went in to take it away from him. Although the war chief was now in his 50s, he was not one to back away from trouble. Age may have taken away some of his youthful strength but not his courage. In the ensuing struggle his son Isaac was accidentally cut on the head.

A doctor was called and Isaac's head was bandaged. Later Isaac again got angry and ripped off the bandages. He died a few days later.

Torn by guilt, Joseph Brant tried to have himself arrested. The authorities ruled that Isaac's death was accidental. When he went to the Confederacy chiefs' council they too examined the evidence and pronounced it an accident. He tried to resign his army commission but that was also refused. According to the movie,

he went into self exile at Burlington, Ont., after the death of his son. This part of the movie was plausible, as his other actions show his clear remorse.

The unfortunate Isaac had not had an easy life. His mother, Joseph's first wife, had died of one of the new diseases circulating at the time. As was the custom among the Iroquois, the young lad was brought up by his grandparents and aunts on his mother's side. He was probably spoiled. The events just before the American Revolution took his father away to important meetings and conferences for months at a time. Isaac fell into bad company and grew to love drinking and partying.

The event during and after the war made some enemies for Joseph Brant, especially among the Americans. Since they couldn't do anything to Captain Brant directly they undoubtedly tried to use Isaac as a pawn. The unfortunate Isaac probably never even realized this during his short life time.

The moviemakers did show Joseph Brant trying to unite the western tribes in a great gathering in Ohio. This part of the story was true. Thirty years later Tecumseh attempted the very same thing in the same area.

In doing my homework about Paris and district, I had come across the fact that it was on April 5, 1793, that Augustus Jones, the surveyor for Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe, arrived at the Grand River, having blazed a trail from King's Landing, near Dundas. Next day, having constructed a raft, he and his party crossed the Grand at a spot just downstream from the present high level bridge.

Jones noted the deposits of gypsum, useful in fertilizer, and the site's potential for a settlement. He would later acquire some 1,200 acres there from Joseph Brant, in one of Brant's generous and perhaps not entirely legal disposals of Six Nations land. In 1809, the band testified that it had no record of any such transaction. Brant's terms were certainly not exacting; the land would be held for 999 years, with a rental, if demanded, of one peppercorn per year.

In any event, the arrival of Augustus Jones led to the later settlement and development of the town of Paris, which is something that should be observed, and celebrated.