

Dignitaries celebrate 200th anniversary of peace declaration

By Donna Duric
Writer

HAMILTON - It's been 200 years since the British Crown and native allies declared peace following the War of 1812.

On Dec. 24, 1814, British and American representatives met in Belgium to sign the Treaty of Ghent, formally ending the War of 1812.

Four months later, Col. William Claus invited native nations who had been British allies to a three-day peace council held at Burlington Heights, from April 24 to 26, 1815.

That gathering was an opportunity to reiterate the Treaty of Ghent's articles to the gathered nations and recognize the contributions each had made to the British campaign during the War of 1812.

Two hundred years later, on Sat. April 25, 2015, hundreds gathered at Hamilton's fabled Dundurn Castle to commemorate the anniversary of the historic peace gathering, and remember the Pledge of the Crown and the messages of

with a parade of nations and Haudenosaunee thanksgiving address before Hamilton Mayor Fred Eisenberger welcomed the large gathering with an appeal for peace among all settlers and indigenous peoples in the 21st century.

"She:koh," he said. "Pleasure to be here. What a great day to be here to celebrate the history that we

tions came together to protect another nation. We thank you for the opportunity to be on your traditional territory." Representatives from about a dozen First Nations allies that participated in the War of 1812 gathered for the commemoration, including the Haudenosaunee, Huron/Wyandot, Delaware, Chippewa,



Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Queen's representative in Ontario places dirt at the tree of peace.

all share. Two hundred years ago today, peace was made here at Burlington

Shawnee, Kickapoo, Munsee, Saukie, Creek, Odawa and Naticoke.

"We appreciate the opportunity to celebrate with you that great effort with you back then and the peace that's happened since then," said Eisenberger. "There's a real need to continue to demonstrate our understanding of that collaboration...the respect that we need to offer to our First Nations people and to share that knowledge with the people that come here to our great city."

Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Queen's representative in Ontario, said she was meeting with First Nations people on Saturday "in a spirit of mutual respect. The reconciliation process (between First Nations and the Crown) will take our collective courage," she said. "Today, I feel honoured to join you, to listen, to observe this re-enactment of the original ceremony. We gather again in this place, not only to reaffirm historic ties, but to look to the future with



Haudenosaunee Mohawk Chief Allen MacNaughton participates in planting of a white pine, a tree of peace at Dundurn Castle Saturday. No First Nations leaders were allowed to speak at the event. (Photos by Donna Duric)

hope and optimism as a new generation of Indigenous leaders share their voice in civic engagement." NDP MP for Hamilton Centre David Christopherson stressed the importance of showing respect to First Nations people for their role as allies in the formation of Canada.

"Today we celebrate the friendship and the alliance of the First Nations people who stood with our predecessors to give us this very land," he said. "The fulfillment of that friendship and that alliance has not yet been met. It is important...that as part of these commemorations, we respect and remember the role of those who were here and laid down their life. There were promises made, important promises, and they were made with the intent of being kept."

"First Nations people have put up with an awful lot," he continued. "We have not forgotten and we are still intending on fulfilling the promises of the treaties. Make no mistake, flaws and

all, mistakes and all, this is the greatest country in the world and we are here to thank those that made up the alliance (in the War of 1812)."

Tuscarora historian Rick Hill explained the history behind the Pledge of the Crown wampum belt which was just recently repatriated from the Smithsonian in 2012 and returned to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy for safekeeping.

The belt, brought to the event under the guardianship of Mohawk Chief Allen MacNaughton, represented a pledge by the Canadian government to never force the Haudenosaunee to change their customs.

"Two hundred years ago, we not only declared peace here, but we set in motion a way of continuing that peace," Hill told the crowd. He explained "It's two rows that go in a meandering fashion. It's like a brotherhood of love. The purple and the white design symbolize that relationship between our ancestors."

Hill said it was fate the belt,

"somehow made its way back to the people in time for the commemoration of the War of 1812."

"This is very important for us to renew. It's a way of putting some of those tensions in the past. Whatever animosities we had...now is the time to continue the peace."

There was a re-enactment of Col. William Claus presenting the belt to Chief Joseph Brant before dignitaries and guests alike participated in a symbolic planting of the White Pine Tree of Peace on the front lawn of Dundurn Castle.



There was a re-enactment of Col. William Claus (played by re-enactor Rob Rennie) superintendent of the Crown's Indian department, with a replica of the wampum belt presenting the belt to Joseph Brant (played by Andrew Martin) before dignitaries and guests at the Peace Council 200th anniversary.

peace that were delivered following the war and to work toward renewing that peace.

Saturday's event began

Heights along Hamilton harbour. We really celebrate the historical connection between the First Nations people and the fact that na-