

Border rights 'turns up volume'

by Scott Smith

NIAGARA FALLS, NY -- Organizers of last weekend's 71st annual Indian Defense League of America's free border crossing celebration got a lot more of what they were looking for when they crossed the busy Rainbow Bridge this year instead of at the smaller Lower Arch bridge, as they have in previous years, and that was profile.

The Rainbow Bridge is located closest to the falls and spans the busy downtown areas in front of Casino Niagara on the Canadian side to the Rainbow Center mall area on the American side.

Traffic was backed up for kilometers on the Canadian side during the noon hour crossing Saturday as about 200 marchers made their way across the Rainbow Bridge from Oaks Garden park on the Canadian side to Prospect Park on the US side of the border.

After a brief tobacco offering ceremony at the base of a monument honouring Clinton Rickard,

founder of the Indian Defense League of America (IDLA), marchers and spectators disembarked for an afternoon of ballgames, speakers, singing and picnicking at nearby Hyde Park.

Jolene Rickard, granddaughter of the late Clinton Rickard, related to Tekawennake the fascinating story behind how and why the IDLA came into being, and the importance of carrying on the tradition of the border crossing to the next generation.

In the 1920s when assimilationist policies on both sides of the border were becoming particularly blatant and harsh, an onerous piece of US legislation called the Immigration Exclusion Act came into law which was primarily to effect Indians and Asians. It required that anyone wishing to come into the US had to be able to read and write in English.

"At that time a lot of our people weren't interested in reading or

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INDIAN DEFENSE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

DEFENDING THE
JAY TREATY OF
1794



A marcher passes through the U.S. Customs booths at last Saturday's border crossing celebration in Niagara Falls. The sign says it all.