

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Truth From Falsehood: Visit Museum, See What It Holds

* Continued from page 2

It shows the French involvement in the fur trade, how the French lost the war, the process of the British takeover, and eventually the American conquest.

Throughout all of this are the Native American people, and Native artifacts are distributed throughout these different eras of conquest to show the effect contact had on them.

That is one of the reasons people get the impression that there are few artifacts. Many are interspersed throughout the museum and placed in the French, British, and American eras.

At the end of the museum is a gathering of Native items which are arranged to show the great difference in artistry and culture after so much contact.

On one side, one sees the incredible artistry of a beautiful culture, and on the other it is evident that the culture was broken to bits. There are old rags for dresses, cheap materials, and photos of a people living in horrible poverty. People assume that this section of the museum hous-

es all the Native American artifacts. But only about half of them are in that section. There are many more.

Here are the facts:

1. The City of St. Ignace is the only entity that is to received payments.

2. The Michilimackinac Historical Society is involved only to preserve, interpret, safeguard, and operate the museum. The City of St. Ignace will own it.

3. There are over 2,000 artifacts crammed into a space of 6,700 square feet. Over 1,200 of these are Native American. A minimal amount of these are from tribes that either were enemies or allies of the Chippewa and Ottawa, and are there to show their relations with them. This includes Huron, Dakota Sioux, and Iroquois.

For instance, there is an Iroquois dugout canoe, which expresses the story of how difficult it was for the Iroquois to succeed against the Anishnabe when the Anishnabe had the superior birch bark canoe. A significant part of our history is that, twice,

the Anishnabe people massacred the Iroquois right here in the U.P. when the Iroquois, the most ferocious tribe in America, came to attack us: Once at Grahams Point here in St. Ignace (which was once called Iroquois Point) and once at Iroquois Point near Whitefish Bay. That is a significant part of history. The Iroquois dugout canoe is there for a purpose, and tells a story, just as all the other artifacts do.

4. There are no violations occurring at all. Everything has been done in accordance with the law.

5. There are few items that may be considered as "sacred" and that fit with the Repatriation Act. Most of the items are baskets, beadwork, and tools. There are, of course, no bones in that museum.

6. The Little Bear Arena was also set up in the same manner as Fort de Buade, between the city and the tribe. The Little Bear Arena was not a governmental service, either. It is a hockey rink where children and adults skate and play. The Michigan govern-

ment did not object to Little Bear. The Sault Tribe is a sovereign nation and exercises certain autonomy in making decisions about what is a community service. Little Bear was not illegal, nor is Fort de Buade.

Mr. Adams, I hope you are reading this. You know what the good way is. I will not try to judge how you have come to your conclusions about the manner in which you have chosen to fight for what you believe is right.

I will try to inform you of what is real, and to inform the public of the true facts concerning Fort de Buade because they are being twisted in such a manner that it surely looks like something completely different than what it is. If you must use something for "just the opening salvo of an assault on the current tribal board," it may be a good idea to research your base of opposition so that it has some resemblance to the truth. Otherwise, you appear to be acting in the self-same manner as that which you claim you oppose.

If you can, Mr. Adams, please come to St. Ignace and investigate these truths. I ask you to at least see this museum, find out the facts, discover the truth of what I have said, before you use this very precious thing, and irreplaceable part of your history and past, for a vehicle to appropriate whatever plans you have for your own future.

Again, if anyone has any questions at all about this, or wants to see the appraisals, the inventory, or the museum, the number of the museum is 643-6622 and my home phone is 643-8740 if you cannot reach me at the museum. We are cleaning now, so the museum is closed, but I will be happy to meet you there and talk to you, to answer any questions or concerns that you have.

Judi A. Engle
St. Ignace

Editor's Note: Ms. Engle is president of the Michilimackinac Historical Society and manager of the Fort de Buade Museum.

Mackinac Island By Jeannette Doud

847-3301

Mackinac resembles a budding flower, which burst into full bloom over the weekend. Hustling and bustling appeared on Main Street as shutters were removed from many storefronts, and soon merchandise appeared in windows and the odor of freshly-made fudge permeated the air. Visitors enjoyed spending their first weekend on the Island, even though it was still April. Grand Hotel hosted many guests and will officially open for the 2007 season Thursday, May 3. Taxis were kept busy transporting passengers here and there. Perfect spring weather was enjoyed with warm sunshine.

At 8 a.m. Saturday morning, April 28, the doors of Doud's Market, under the ownership of Andrew Doud, opened for business, celebrating 124 years of service to the community. The attractive store, on the corner of Fort and Main streets, has been completely remodeled and decorated with shelves stocked with many excellent food items. Fresh produce and meat greeted the many visitors Saturday. Behind the meat counter will be longtime employee Leo Krzeminski, who returned to his Mackinac home last week. We wish Andrew and his staff a very successful season.

Jack Landress is busy preparing

his new shop on Market Street for opening Friday, May 4. The Victorian Summer Gallery will be located in the former Michalke House.

Warmest and best wishes to Rena and Victor Callewaert on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary May 1. Enjoy a wonderful celebration.

Happy belated birthday April 22 to Lois Lenaghan. Island friends send special greetings.

The London Square gift shop on Market Street is open for the season, displaying windows of fine merchandise. Pots of pink geraniums greet the customer who stop by.

R. D. Musser Jr., chairman of Grand Hotel, celebrated his birthday April 29 at a dinner party at The Gate House. Island friends send special birthday wishes.

Nice to welcome Phyllis Dunham back to her cottage on French Lane. Joining her is her friend, Wayne Youngman. The cottage dates back many years, as it belonged to Phyllis's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Frank King. Many happy memories.

Karen Lennard celebrated her birthday May 1. Have a wonderful day.

Long time friends of many
* Please turn to page 16

Is Confusion of Fort Purchase Intentional?

* Continued from page 2

\$210,388. One specific question among several reasonable ones: Are any proponents of the Fort de Buade purchase expecting to gain financially from the distribution of Tribal 2 percent monies and, if so, who and how? To date and to my knowledge, no member has received a response to any of the questions. It is difficult to attribute the non-responsiveness to our questions to anything but total disdain on the part of those involved in the proposed transaction for the right of Tribal members to know the purposes for which their monetary resources are being expended.

It is worthwhile to note that in early 2006, a member of the Sault Tribe board of directors publicly recommended an outright purchase of Fort de Buade and its contents, citing an unsubstantiated value for the contents in the millions of dollars. It is rather telling to note also that the recommendation received no significant support from the Tribal board.

The question of title to the property to be purchased is especially confusing. It appears that the city has entered into a number of verbal agreements with the MHS, one of which assigns responsibility for the operation of Fort de Buade and for the maintenance and care of the included artifacts, and appears to confer de facto ownership to the MHS.

However, MHS member Cheryl Schlehuber has explained "...that a second agreement between the city and the historical society would have to be established to give the historical society legal responsibility for operating the museum and its staff."

Ownership question aside, it is incomprehensible that an agreement would be made through which a sum of money in excess of \$700,000 exchanges hands without some written understanding of the use of the money, and the responsibility for its proper disposition and accountability. Further, it is even more incomprehensible that the Sault Tribe board of directors would authorize such an exchange of monies for which they have ultimate fiduciary responsibility.

In another agreement: "The city and historical society have verbally agreed that items from

the collection will not be sold. Any item to be sold would have to be agreed on by all parties involved." These two sentences clearly are contradictory. It is unclear how two parties can agree on items to be sold after first agreeing that those items will not be sold. However, if even one item of the collection is sold, or otherwise disposed of, the purpose of this undertaking, i.e., "to keep the unique collection of area artifacts and guns in the area..." will have been defeated.

And finally, "Also under the verbal agreement at this time, if the historical society ever disbands, any collections would become property of the City of St. Ignace." This agreement is additional evidence of MHS ownership of Fort de Buade property. Further, the City has agreed, "the artifacts will be turned over to the tribe in the event the City is no longer willing or able to display them." The City-Tribe agreement has a rather hollow ring to it. It is possible to visualize a scenario in which the City and the MHS will agree to sell artifacts that they have agreed not to sell until, at some point, they will have sold them all and there are no artifacts left, authentic or not. When and if that happens, the Sault Tribe will then be the one left "holding the bag."

Clearly, the evolution of the Fort de Buade purchase process and the various activities that

drive the process are confusing. It is difficult to know if the confusion is the result of careless execution of questionable practices, or the skillful execution of unacceptable ones, or perhaps something else altogether. An explanation by those responsible would go a long way toward helping to clear up the confusion. I know of a relatively large segment of the tribe whose recent efforts to overturn the resolution that authorized this questionable allocation might have succeeded except for procedural omissions in the authorizing petition.

It is essential to emphasize the fact that knowledgeable Native Americans within and without the Sault Tribe are aware that valuable and authentic Anishnabe artifacts, some with strong cultural and spiritual significance, represent a small percentage of the Fort de Buade collection.

In the near future, we will begin to explore mechanisms whereby those artifacts can be identified and ultimately transferred to the Sault Tribe for perpetual enshrinement.

As this effort progresses, we will seek guidance from traditional Sault Tribe members who possess the knowledge, background, and experience essential to the success of this culturally sensitive endeavor.

Charles E. Adams Jr.
Laughlin, Nevada

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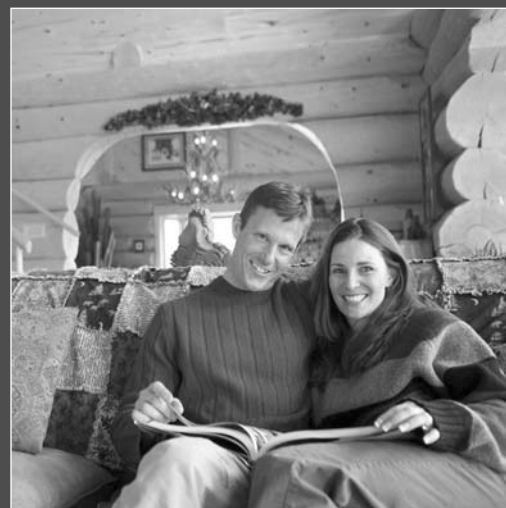
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