


Building a New Future Reconciliation Garden,

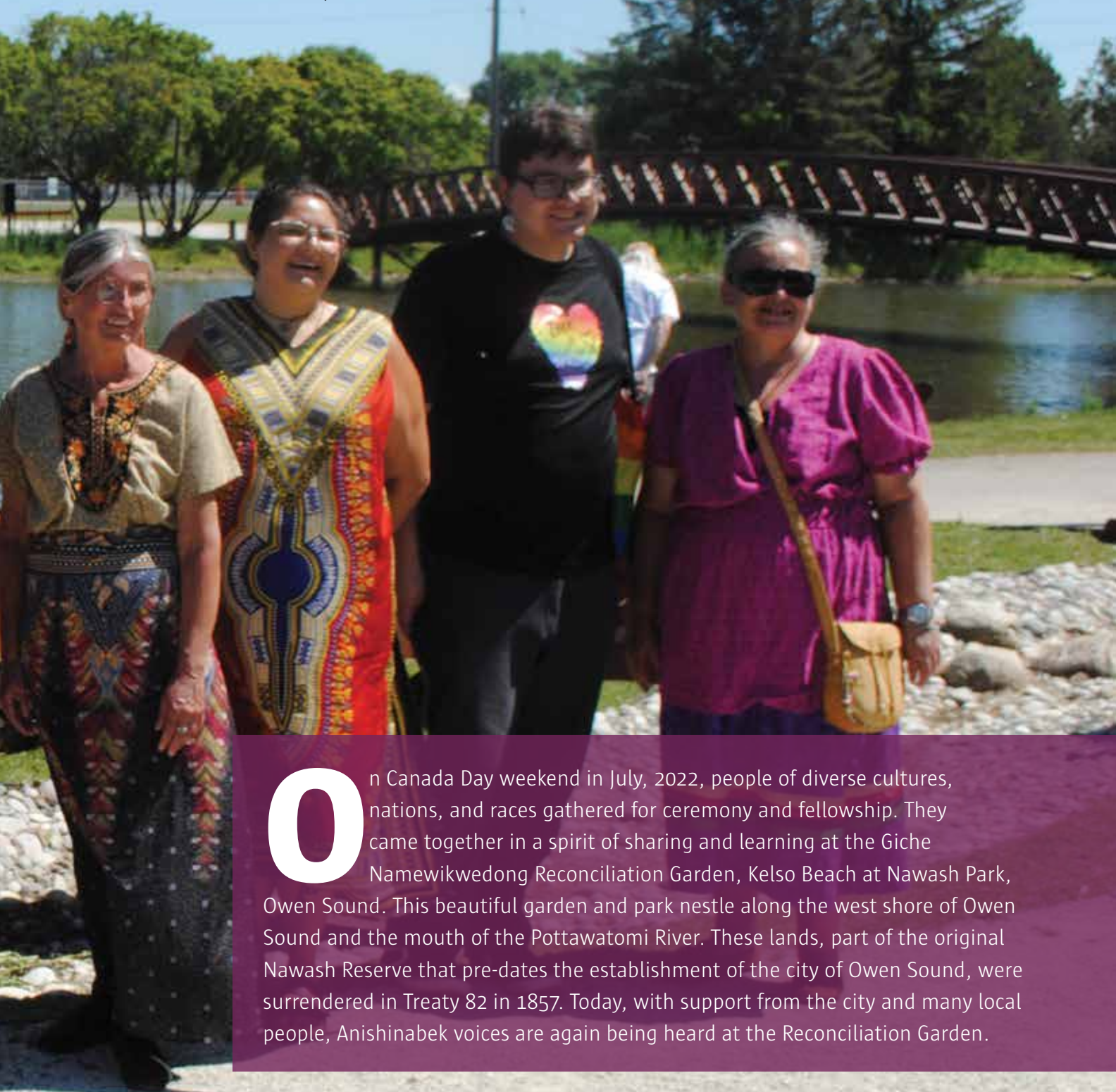
WRITTEN BY SANDRA J. HOWE AND SUSAN STAVES

A photograph of three women standing outdoors near a body of water. The woman on the left is wearing a patterned vest and a long, colorful skirt with a rainbow stripe at the bottom, and is holding a large fish. The woman in the middle is wearing a purple jacket and a similar colorful skirt. The woman on the right is wearing a black top with a floral design and a black skirt with a rainbow stripe. In the background, there is a large, abstract sculpture of a sturgeon, a body of water, and some industrial structures under a clear blue sky.

Drummers and singers from Saugeen Ojibway Nation in front of the Great Grandmother Sturgeon art installation in the Reconciliation Garden, Owen Sound.

Through Owen Sound's Giche Namewikwedong

PHOTOGRAPHED BY SANDRA J. HOWE



On Canada Day weekend in July, 2022, people of diverse cultures, nations, and races gathered for ceremony and fellowship. They came together in a spirit of sharing and learning at the Giche Namewikwedong Reconciliation Garden, Kelso Beach at Nawash Park, Owen Sound. This beautiful garden and park nestle along the west shore of Owen Sound and the mouth of the Pottawatomi River. These lands, part of the original Nawash Reserve that pre-dates the establishment of the city of Owen Sound, were surrendered in Treaty 82 in 1857. Today, with support from the city and many local people, Anishinabek voices are again being heard at the Reconciliation Garden.

Welcome to the Gitche Namewikwedong Reconciliation Garden

Written by Susan Staves, Naaniibawikwe

(Upright Standing Woman), a member of the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation

Since 2010, the Gitche Namewikwedong Reconciliation Garden Committee, and our supporters, have worked with the City of Owen Sound and Indigenous elders who are knowledge holders in our region. Using their input and cultural knowledge we developed a detailed plan for an art and historical installation and garden at Kelso Beach in Nawash Park, formerly and historically the site of the original Newash Village, once home to the Saugeen Ojibwa Nation (SON). Saugeen Ojibwa Nation territory extends from the Nottawasaga River, across to Goderich, including the Maitland valley river system, and north to Tobermory.

The garden helps all cultures within the SON territory move forward with shared understanding and respect, to walk softly and to be mindful. The art pieces share Indigenous culture and healing practices. The installation of the Great Grandmother Sturgeon sculpture brings with it the seven dodem or totem teachings which are built around the seven natural laws, or sacred teachings. Each teaching honours a path for a full and healthy life.

The indigenous plants in the gardens represent stories and legends of the history of the location. The project reclaims place, culture, ecology and wellness. Several interpreter plaques will be placed to educate, inspire and encourage further research by visitors.

In the spirit of reconciliation, the garden is a contemplative place where our community can pause, reflect and learn about the past legacy of residential schools and the intergenerational trauma that still exist today.

The word “reconciliation” means “to renew or restore a friendship.” The injustices of the past cannot be changed. But here, in the present, we have the opportunity and responsibility to come



▲ Firekeepers tending the sacred fire.



▲ Reconciliation Garden, Owen Sound, with newly-planted White Birch and Tamarack, both culturally-important tree species.



▲ Susan Staves, right, drumming.



► Garden designer Thomas Dean installing support stakes for new tree plantings in the garden.

together and build a new future.

Through traditional stories and Indigenous knowledge, we will honour and remember our Indigenous ancestors. Having the history of local Indigenous peoples made public and accessible in the garden, establishes common ground and starts conversations and a place for people of all nations to gather. We make the current “invisible” presence and history of Indigenous people “visible” to people walking through the garden, increasing the awareness and respect for long-ignored history. Sharing the culture and traditions of our local Indigenous peoples helps our community address ongoing racism and colonialism.

Youth involvement is an investment in reconciliation in our community. Whenever there are committee events at the garden with a Sacred Fire and/or Pipe Ceremony, youth are invited to help and learn from the Fire Keeper and Knowledge Keepers. In this way youth will hear stories and learn about their connection to the land and plants under the guidance of the committee. An Indigenous way of life is based in spirituality, plant-based medicine, dance, music and art, and a belief that we are all a part of creation, nurtured by the gifts of Mother Earth who is a powerful healer and mother to all our relations.

We are proud to acknowledge and celebrate the history and culture of the First Nations and Métis peoples of the Grey-Bruce area.

A version of this article was first published in Escape to Grey Bruce, 2022.

Celebrating the Reconciliation Garden

Written by Sandra J. Howe

Giche Namewikwedong means Great Sturgeon Bay in Anishinaabemowin, the Ojibwe language, and acknowledges the original name of Owen Sound. The Reconciliation Garden is being developed as a place of healing, reflection, and learning to bring indigenous, settler, and all peoples together in community. The Canada Day celebrations were called the first annual Sound Waterfront Festival. The celebrations spanned four days to honour the contributions of Indigenous, youth, white settler, and Black peoples to the past,



▲ People of many nations gathered for a Walking Together Tour.



▲ The sculpture called Nookomis Gitche Name Kwe, or Great Grandmother Sturgeon, was created by Kathryn Corbiere of One KWE, from M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island. The piece of art is positioned as if swimming toward the Pottawtomi River in Owen Sound. The garden's name, Giche Namewikwedong, is the original Ojibway name for Owen Sound.

► This detail from the belly of Great Grandmother Sturgeon has river stones suggesting fish eggs and decorative features honouring the beauty of nature.

THE SEVEN DODEM TEACHINGS

Each law represents an animal which teaches how to live close to the earth. The connection between the animal world and that of humans instills a respect for all life for those who follow the traditional ways.

- The Eagle teaches us Love.
- The Buffalo teaches us Respect.
- The Bear teaches us Courage.
- The Sabe (a mythical giant) teaches us Honesty.
- The Beaver teaches us Wisdom.
- The Wolf teaches us Humility.
- The Turtle teaches us Truth.



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present, and future of Owen Sound and Canada. It was a great privilege to witness and participate in ceremony with Saugeen Ojibway Nation members and friends.

The Truth and Reconciliation Day began with the lighting of the sacred fire at the centre of the garden and gathering. Indigenous and white men worked together under the leadership of Saugeen elder Ken Albert to light the fire in a traditional way and offer teachings to the gathering. Sheila Albert led the drumming and singing.

“These songs,” Sheila Albert explained, “are prayers. We call in the ancestors to help us in our healing work. If you notice the air around you, you will feel a breeze come to cool and refresh us. The ancestors are here now!”

Elder Shirley John, Strong White Buffalo Woman, led the Water Ceremony, and shared many beautiful teachings. “We are all equal and God put us all here together. We must accept all people of all nations and all the creatures that share the world. We must pray, pray, pray, and give thanks for everything. We must walk softly on Mother Earth. Don’t be in a hurry, walk slowly!”

Owen Sound Mayor Ian Boddy spoke about the importance of diversity and inclusivity, and offered tobacco in a respectful, traditional way to the sacred fire. Drumming, singing, storytelling, and teaching continued throughout the day. People came, went, shared food and ideas, developed friendships, and made plans for further gatherings at the garden.

Thomas Dean, who prepared the landscape design for the Reconciliation Garden, noted, “This needs to be a living, breathing space that inspires experiences of reconciliation. It is not a theme park. Ongoing plantings and signage will provide education on medicinal plants, plant lore, and how to live lightly on the Earth. The first White Birch and Tamarack trees will be planted soon. The garden will grow and change over time as our human relationships deepen.”

The Giche Namewikwedong Reconciliation Garden is an evolving centre for personal and community reflection and connection. At present, it includes a council fire circle, gardens, paths, tree plantings, grandmother and grandfather stones, and a spectacular metal sturgeon art installation.

For more information about events and activities at the garden, follow on Facebook and visit in person. **NEV**

Sandra J. Howe is a frequent contributor to Niagara Escarpment Views.

Her last piece was “Family Skiing at Highlands Nordic,” Winter 2022-23.





◀ Artist Virginia Gail Smith introducing Canoe Sculpture on a Walking Together Tour.



◀ First United Church of Owen Sound has a historic plaque about the Newash Village, and a Walking Together Tour sign and sculpture. The church is a partner in the development of the Walking Together Tour.



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