

# UELAC People Behind the Scenes

## David Kanowakeron Hill Morrison UE

Central West Regional Councillor, David Kanowakeron Hill Morrison UE, was born in Rochester, New York in 1954 and has lived in that area all of his life.

Adopted at birth, Dave was able to reunite with his birth mother in 1991 after a ten-year search. He discovered that she was living on the Six Nations of the Grand River reserve near Brantford, Ontario, and that he was a Status Mohawk of that community.

**Dave always felt and appeared a little 'different'**

Raised in a non-Native family in suburban Rochester, Dave always felt and appeared a little 'different' from his peers due to his Mohawk genetics. After graduating from high school, Dave attended SUNY College at Potsdam and, in 1977, earned his BA in Psychology with one course short of a double major in Computer Science.

Dave began his working career in IT as a computer operator back in the early days of IBM mainframes. He became a Database Administrator at Eastman Kodak corporate headquarters. Along with other Kodak Natives, he was an original member of the Native employee diversity group and travelled extensively, representing the Aboriginal faction of his company at national conferences.

**constant tug of Canada was unmistakable**

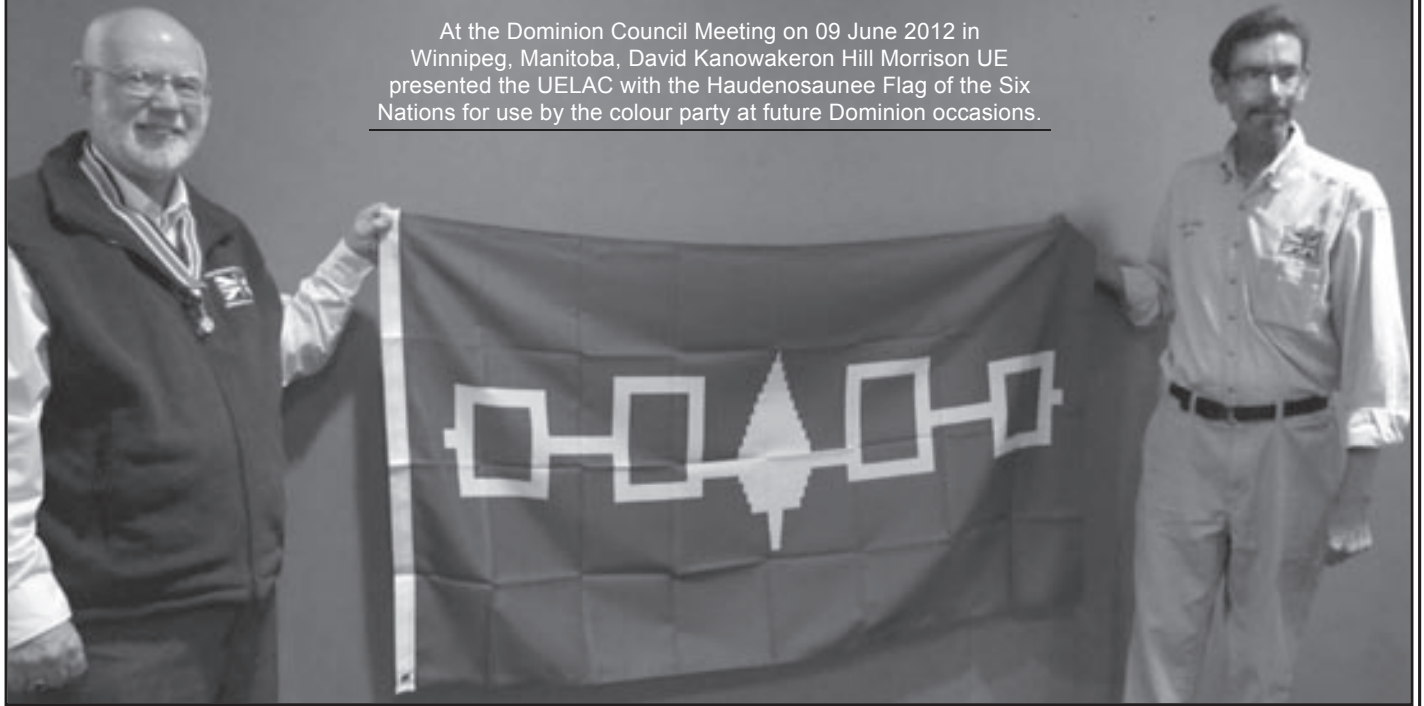
Dave came to know his Loyalist connections purely by accident. While getting to know his birth mother, she happened to mention that he was descended from Joseph Thayendanegea Brant. Being educated in the U.S. public school system meant the United Empire Loyalist version of the American Revolution was either downplayed or ignored altogether and he was never made fully aware of the sacrifices or importance of the Loyalists to Canadian history.



Despite being born in Rochester, since Dave was born to a Mohawk woman from Six Nations, upon learning of the circumstances behind his birth he also discovered that he had dual-citizenship. He had always had an inexplicable draw to Canada, first noticed as a child while vacationing at an annually rented cottage on the Rideau River between Smiths Falls and Merrickville. The constant tug of Canada, however illogical, was also unmistakable.

Fate, serendipity, or perhaps some innate urge to 'return' to his origins, would compel him to pursue Canadian citizenship in the years immediately prior to his adoption revelation, not realizing that he'd had Canadian citizenship all his life.

At the Dominion Council Meeting on 09 June 2012 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, David Kanowakeron Hill Morrison UE presented the UELAC with the Haudenosaunee Flag of the Six Nations for use by the colour party at future Dominion occasions.



While attending the Canadian National Exhibition in 1992, he happened to visit a UELAC exhibit at a Heritage Day display on the grounds. Curious about the oddly-appearing British flag, he mentioned that he'd been told he was a descendant of Joseph Brant to a member staffing the display. The UELAC member's eyes lit up at mention of the name.

Not knowing the historical relevance of the prominent Native Loyalist, he naïvely asked if this was significant and, within minutes, was being given a crash course on the influence his ancestor had on the development of Canada as well as who and what the UELAC was.

As fortune would have it, Bay of Quinte Branch Genealogist, Eleanor Carleton Moulton UE, was the generous

educator and would become his guiding mentor in exploring the necessary proofs to document his UEL application. Living in the Rochester area, however, presented a bit of a quandary to research, and raised the question of which Branch he should join. Dave wanted to be involved with Branch activities but the logistics of his residence posed a problem.

Eleanor suggested it might be appropriate to join the Branch that included his Six Nations family roots and, considering the amount of time he was spending on the reserve getting to know his newly-found family, Grand River Branch became his choice.

#### connected him to Joseph Brant

Preponderance of evidence became the key factor in Dave proving his Loyalist ancestry. A signed statement from his birth mother, attesting that he was indeed her biological son, became the sole link which connected him to Joseph Brant. The Brant ancestry is well documented with proofs and sourcing but, minus necessary legal documentation, adopted individuals are often at a loss in their ability to prove their relationship to their Loyalist identity.

In Native culture, oral traditions are considered as immutable facts not to be contested or questioned. As such, it became a delicate and sensitive matter for Dave to ask his birth mother to look beyond her traditions and accept that much of the non-Native world requires empirical facts. Upon seeing the importance of what this meant to Dave, and somewhat grudgingly, she relented and signed a



... the sole link which connected him to Joseph Brant ...

statement attesting to the fact that he was her son.

Thanks to the tremendous assistance of Eleanor Carleton Moulton UE, Grand River Branch Genealogist Eleanor Chapin UE and the Dominion Office staff, on a hot July day in 1993 at the Brantford Military Heritage Museum, Dave was presented with his UELAC certification, marking yet another milestone in his life.

Since his reunification with his birth-family at the age of 37, Dave has enthusiastically immersed himself in Haudenosaunee culture as well as extensively studied all aspects of Canadian history and society. Thanks in great part to his attendance at UELAC Dominion conferences, his Canadian travels have extended from the tip of Prince Edward Island to the waters of Victoria, British Columbia.

Dave has also travelled widely in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec and, during his marriage, owned a year-round home in Crystal Beach in the town of Fort Erie. He maintains an address in St. Catharines and has been familiar with the Niagara Region for well over fifty years.

Dave lives in two distinctly different worlds. Straddling the border of two countries, he also lives in two different cultures of Native and non-Native alike and, while that can sometimes pose a challenge, he finds that perspectives and priorities are guiding principles to seeking a balanced life.

As one might imagine, the American sense of patriotism and nationalism can often take a dim view of a resolutely held belief of a Canadian Loyalist and monarchist. Nevertheless, Dave follows his conscience and ideals, quietly devoted

to an ethic his ancestors may have felt as they firmly supported their beliefs amid a sea of critics.

Determined to establish an even greater connection, Dave installed a Canadian satellite TV system at his residence in the Rochester area and enjoys all-Canadian programming, keeping him informed of the news, events and culture of Canada.

Today, residing in the Rochester area, ironically in a town called Ontario, New York, Dave is physically challenged due to serious health issues; yet he tries to contribute to his Loyalist heritage by serving as Grand River Branch webmaster. He attends as many Branch meetings as he's able, even though the 500+ mile round-trip can be daunting.

Fortunately, the internet allows him to stay in touch and gives him an opportunity to support an allegiance he holds deeply and with a firm conviction.

#### a New York car license plate of UELAC

Jokingly referring to his home as being within *Rebel territory* he felt compelled to promote his pride with a New York car license plate of *UELAC*, a feature often noted as he passes back into the States through Customs.

As a further statement of his fidelity, Dave is also a Lifetime Member of the Monarchist League of Canada and is in solid agreement to the spirit of conviction of his illustrious Loyalist ancestor.

For many adoptees, a sense of natural place, identity and commonality with their birth-heritage is a strongly compelling motivation to reach out and seek knowledge. To a Native adoptee in search of becoming a wholly-formed adult, it becomes almost an imperative.

In a bid to claim his rightful ownership in his Haudenosaunee identity, he also celebrates his Native heritage by embracing his Loyalist history that is a pivotal part of the story of the Six Nations of the Grand River. He believes no history of the Haudenosaunee is complete without including the contributions made by the Loyalist factions of these unique First Nations.

Dave feels he's come full circle and has returned to his rightful status as a proud Native Canadian Loyalist; not only a part of whom he has become, it is a bold definition of who he is.

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