

The Adirondacks' Best Kept Secret

By Marianne Frontino McCreight (Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa) Follow @marmccr8 or mariannemccr8.wordpress.com

Step into a land out of time and experience America from the eyes of its first peoples



(Photo by McCreight)

Nestled in the trees along County Route 60 near Onchiota, New York, a tiny speck in the beautiful 6-million-acre Adirondack Park, is a place that acts as a time machine, taking visitors back to a time before the invasion of **America's shores** at New York that nearly annihilated a way of life in existence for centuries.

The simple long wooden building mimics the bark house (or longhouse) homes built by the Haudenosaunee (pronounced hoe-dee-nuh-so-nee) or Iroquois Six Nations Confederacy.

The building was built to house the [Six Nations Indian Museum](#), a gift to their People from Ray, Christine, and John Fadden, and opened in 1954. The museum includes realistic outdoor exhibits, vivid reminders of a forgotten, simple, environmentally sustainable way of life. Cooking fires used for stewing, frying, baking or while hunting are on display in one area. There are several types of lodgings like permanent and temporary bark houses and pole frames are built in the yard. Benches for group lessons are gathered around in places where there are examples of trail signs. And there is a garden planted with corn, beans and



(Photo by Six Nations Indian Museum)



(Photo by McCreight)

and squash illustrating the three sisters method of interplanting.

There are many hand-painted and stenciled signs mounted to the wood-stake fence surrounding the side yard where the outdoor exhibits are housed. These signs hold quotes from famous Americans **about the "Real"** Native Americans and information about the six different Iroquois nations in the Confederacy.

People who are lucky enough to visit between July 1 and Labor Day, or by appointment in the spring and fall, can tour

the inside of this privately owned museum which houses over 3,000 artifacts dating from pre-contact times and into the modern century.

Stepping through the doorway of the museum, your attention goes immediately to the sheer volume of artifacts displayed from every surface — roof, walls from rafters to floor, as well as the floor itself. Once a visitor acclimates to the onslaught of visual “bling” rushing at them from every direction, they start to notice some of the



(Photo by McCreight)

details. The entrance room includes a gift shop where you can purchase any number of Native American mementos as well as books teaching about Native Americans.



(Photo by McCreight)

Although there are displays of historical artifacts and labels indicating the origins and significance of most artifacts, the similarity to any modern Western Culture museum ends there.

This museum runs in the traditional Native fashion, using oral tradition passed on by elders reading pictographic stories and using visuals for descriptions. Materials are presented from the Native American point of view.

Fadden family members staff the museum, answering questions and providing lectures and classes for their regular group visitors. They teach Haudenosaunee history, explain their participatory government, and share their **people's** achievements.

Visitors can feel the spirit of the vibrant Native culture while they learn about the traditional values and philosophy of **America's first** democratic society, including the environmental beliefs and sustainable land ethic.

Many of the artifacts were made by the Fadden family for use in teaching in the Native Culture Tradition. There are also many artifacts that have been donated from as far away as Sussex, England.

If a visitor **isn't careful, they might start to think they are** sitting in a longhouse learning tribal history and customs from a tribal elder—oh, wait, they are.



[\[By Northcountryfolklore.org\]](http://Northcountryfolklore.org) Ray Fadden in 1993 in the museum with a beaded storybelt he created as a teaching device for telling ancient stories to museum visitors.

To see photos and video of the Museum, go online to the [Six Nations Indian Museum YouTube video](#) or view the author's photos in a [PDF Slideshow display](#). While the slideshow is not professional quality, hopefully it will help convince viewers they need to make a trip to this Fadden Family gift of History in Northern New York.

Visiting Information:

There is a modest admission fee to tour the museum. It is open July 1 through Labor Day but closed Mondays. For group tours or special appointments, call ahead.

Six Nations Indian Museum

1462 County Route 60, Onchiota, NY 12989

Franklin County, Adirondack Park

(518)891-2299

DIRECTIONS:

Turn toward Onchiota off Route 86 in Gabriels. Follow the Buck Pond Campsite signs. Go past the campsite east ½ mile to Onchiota and continue another mile east to the museum.