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## Current Archaeology of the Huron-Wendat and the St. Lawrence Iroquoians: Introduction

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THE ARTICLES THAT HAVE BEEN brought together in this special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* are expanded and peer-reviewed versions of papers presented during two sessions at the joint annual meetings of the Canadian Archaeological Association and the Association des archéologues du Québec, which took place in Quebec City, in May 2019. One of these sessions, organized by Louis Lesage, Alicia Hawkins, Stéphane Noël, and Allison Bain, concerned Huron-Wendat engagement in their archaeological heritage in present-day Ontario and Quebec. The other session, organized by Christian Gates St-Pierre, brought together papers illustrating recent archaeological research on the St. Lawrence Iroquoians. Unfortunately, the two sessions were scheduled for the same time slot, making it impossible for conference attendees to attend both.

The idea of publishing the papers from the two sessions in the same issue was born, therefore, in part, from this unfortunate situation: everyone will now have access to that which they may have missed. However, the main reason for bringing together these articles in a single issue is the desire to present an overview of current archaeological research on the Iroquoian world that is being carried out in Canada and beyond—a glimpse that is certainly brief and incomplete but also, we believe, rep-

resentative: representative of academic research and contract archaeology, but also, and perhaps mostly, representative of the growing collaboration between archaeologists and the Indigenous communities concerned—in this case the Huron-Wendat and the Kanienkeha:ha (Mohawk). These collaborations evidently arise in the context of decolonization and reconciliation that is influencing current scientific research and society in general. We will not outline the history of these great contemporary movements, nor will we present their theoretical and conceptual foundations; we do not have space here, and others have already done greater justice to this topic than we would be able to do.

However, we should point out that northeastern Iroquoianists have long been in discussion with one another. They share recent discoveries and interpretations in the context of symposia and conferences, through publications, and by means of more direct and informal discussions, which are also essential for the dissemination and advancement of knowledge. Indigenous communities have long been excluded from conversations among non-Indigenous archaeologists, anthropologists, and other researchers. Yet, through their oral traditions, their traditional knowledge, and their personal experience, members of Indigenous communities have always had something to say about the past of

their ancestors, of their cousins, and of their neighbours. But non-Indigenous archaeologists have not often listened to them. The current practice of archaeology is still not ideal in this respect, but it is making more space for Indigenous voices and perspectives, and in the process is becoming more collaborative and decolonized. For example, in this issue, Anishinabe student Jesseca Paquette and her colleagues present a project to create an inventory of the archaeological sites in Quebec from which bones of the ancestors have been excavated. This is an initiative that comes from the Mohawk Council of Kahnawa:ke. This inventory has the potential not only to become a powerful tool that is useful for archaeological research and for the management of this type of collection, but also to facilitate the process of restitution or of repatriation/rematriation of ancestors to the Indigenous communities concerned, thereby supporting a collective healing, re-appropriation of the past, and reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and settlers.

This kind of initiative, like several other collaborative projects, including those presented in this issue, is becoming more and more common and clearly must be encouraged. But there remains much to be done to decolonize science and to reconcile Indigenous peoples and settlers through more collaborative, inclusive, and respectful attitudes toward the methods, knowledge, and aspirations of the Indigenous communities concerned. Of course, this is not always a smooth road: the decolonization of archaeology is a constant process (it may be that it will never be complete), which must still overcome a number of obstacles, some of which are systemic and particularly difficult to eliminate. Some of these obstacles

have been the cause of disagreement in the preparation of this special issue among the three guest co-editors: Louis, Alicia, and myself. We have agreed that it would be beneficial for the readers, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, archaeologist or non-archaeologists if we reveal these disagreements in a transparent yet respectful fashion—because our guiding idea is that there can be no decolonization and reconciliation in the absence of the fundamental condition of mutual respect. This is the linchpin of an endeavour such as this, and with it comes another set of essential conditions: listening, dialogue, frankness, intellectual honesty, and the right to disagree. Arising from this consensual and uncoerced agreement among us, but following several discussions, we determined that the three of us would explain our points of view on this editorial project and on the much greater and more ambitious endeavour of decolonization and reconciliation.

It is up to me, Christian Gates St-Pierre, to get the ball rolling in this introduction, which will take the form of a discussion among the three of us, while at the same time addressing you, the reader. I would like to begin by evoking the feelings of ambiguity and discomfort that I have felt since I began my reflections and efforts toward the decolonization of my archaeological practice; these efforts and reflections are still very recent in origin and are in their infancy, and for me, the feelings they provoke remain very strong. But in order for you, the reader, to fully understand this situation, I first need to explain the context.

For several decades now, many researchers, including archaeologists, have been interested in documenting the Iroquoian presence in the St. Lawrence Valley. After many analyses, reflec-

tions, and debates, a certain consensus emerged among two generations of researchers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, coming from a range of academic backgrounds, including archaeology, anthropology, history, and linguistics, around the existence of an Iroquoian nation closely related to their Huron-Wendat and Kanien'kehà:ka cousins and neighbours, but nevertheless distinct from them. This distinction rests not only on subtle differences in pottery decoration, as the situation is sometimes coarsely summarized, but also on more fundamental linguistic, geographic, historical, and cultural distinctions, including the material culture. This shows clear differences in the style, frequency, technique of manufacture, composition, or distribution of artifacts of all kinds: pottery, stone tools, bone tools, subsistence remains, and so forth. These distinctions, numerous and varied, are not anecdotal and clearly must signify something. For the majority of archaeologists, including me, the most probable hypothesis is that of a distinct identity, specifically that of St. Lawrence Iroquoians.

This interpretation has been seriously and legitimately questioned for some time now, as much by archaeologists, mainly from Ontario, as by members of Indigenous communities, mainly from Quebec. The first invoke, to start with, the difficulty in tracing the cultural identity of individuals or groups from artifacts found on archaeological sites. We all know that ethnicity is something complex, fluid, and changing. It cannot be summarized in a ceramic style, for example, nor in archaeologically defined cultures: these are too rigid, too abstract, too limited, and frequently of a completely different ontological type (etic as opposed to emic). Indigenous researchers, for their part, make the

very valid point that it is necessary to consider oral tradition as an essential key to understanding identity.

However, data drawn from archaeology and oral tradition sometimes offer perspectives or interpretations that are contradictory, as in the case for the St. Lawrence Iroquoians. It is thus that certain Indigenous researchers claim that St. Lawrence Iroquoians never existed, being a fictional creation on the part of archaeologists, and why others, alternatively, argue that they may have existed but that they are, in fact, the ancestors of present-day Indigenous communities. An additional assertion is that archaeologists who defend the distinct identity of St. Lawrence Iroquoians must be aware that they are taking a position that could damage Indigenous aspirations and claims that are based on the demonstration of ancestry and occupation of territory in a legal and political context.

Archaeologists find themselves in a complex and uncomfortable position, with their ethics being questioned. On the one hand are personal ethics. For archaeologists such as I, who have a progressive tendency, this incites them to undertake a true and deep decolonization of their practice, and to work toward a practice based on social justice, reparation for the injuries of colonialism, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. On the other hand are professional ethics, which require maintaining rigour and transparency in the scientific process. This requirement does not prevent archaeologists from questioning and reflecting—quite the opposite. But archaeologists cannot bear the erasure of approaches, hypotheses, or interpretations with which Indigenous partners disagree. It is one thing to question the existence of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians

as a distinct Indigenous people, but it is another thing to gradually work toward their disappearance from discourse and history. It is therefore with a certain dismay that archaeologists like me observe the tendency of certain researchers to privilege the second option, as expressed in some articles published in this issue of the *Canadian Journal of Archaeology*. One can legitimately feel reluctance to see the complete elimination of an Indigenous nation, one which could very well have existed, even if this is accomplished by simply refusing to name the nation, something that can be considered a highly questionable strategy of erasure. We must, at all costs, avoid proving right the detractors of the decolonization of science, those who naively accuse proponents of decolonization of sinking into dishonourable grovelling, succumbing to censorship, or falling into the trap of “political correctness.” It would be a terrible diversion from the real objective of decolonization, which focuses on inclusion, not exclusion, in our discussions and work.

And so, where is equilibrium to be found? What is the position to take in this situation? How do we bring together such opposing perspectives? Can we progress while there co-exist two or three understandings or interpretations of the same phenomenon, each as legitimate as the other? Can there exist several truths about the same reality? My own approaches and reflections on these questions are still incomplete, so I do not have the answers—and in any case, this would take us into the respectable, but rather removed, fields of epistemology and metaphysics.

Happily, compromises and, better still, certain consensuses, are emerging. The Tiohtià:ke Project offers an example of this. This joint project of the Mohawk

Council of Kahnawa:ke; the Université de Montréal; and Pointe-à-Caillière, Cité d’archéologie et d’histoire de Montréal aims to document the Indigenous presence in the region of Montréal (Tiohtià:ke, in the Mohawk language) using a combination of archaeological data and oral tradition. The three partners in this project are not only accorded equal status, but also use an Indigenous governance model based on consensus (as compared to taking votes with a simple majority win), while also maintaining the right to dissent. This means that over the term of the project, it could emerge that there are several hypotheses, several interpretations, several “truths” on the Indigenous history of Montréal, and that all of these could be respectfully, transparently, and freely acknowledged, without any form of erasure.

Moreover, it seems that in Quebec, another, possibly even more consensual option, is now emerging. Because, after inter-tribal conflicts at the end of the sixteenth century, the St. Lawrence Iroquoians appear to have found refuge with several neighbouring groups, specifically the Huron-Wendat, the Mohawk, the Anishinabe, and the Wabanaki, each of these nations could legitimately claim partial descent from the ancient occupants of the St. Lawrence Valley, whose distinct identity is now subsumed by other identities. St. Lawrence Iroquoian captives and refugees certainly continued to express their identity in the heart of their welcoming groups for some time (and archaeology appears to support this), until the forces of enculturation prevailed and led to the dissolution of this identity in favour of another. All of these nations share with one another a partial St. Lawrence Iroquoian ancestry, having all welcomed at least some St. Lawrence

Iroquoians. Such an interpretation does not violate, on the one hand, oral traditions and Indigenous perceptions or, on the other hand, data, rigour, and academic freedom. It encompasses multiple voices and constructs from them what is common and consensual, without sweeping under the carpet that which separates them and merits further investigation. I promise to return to this question in an upcoming and more in-depth publication, thought out and written, I hope, with Indigenous partners.

The Mohawk tell us that Tiohtià:ke means “there where we separate.” But in order to separate, it is necessary first

to be together. And so, we separate so that later we may once again come together. It is in this spirit of meeting through divergence that the Tiohtià:ke Project was born, and in which appears to emerge a common understanding of the long history of encounters in Tiohtià:ke/Montréal, a history that spans millennia. I hope that the authors who have contributed to this issue will also be able to engage in this common path, possibly as a first step toward a true reconciliation between non-Indigenous archaeologists and Indigenous peoples.

**Christian Gates St-Pierre**

**L**IKE MANY WORTHWHILE THINGS, this issue and its editing have been both challenging and uncomfortable—not because of the papers themselves, which bring together many different views on the lives of the Iroquoian peoples who lived in the St. Lawrence Valley and Lower Great Lakes, but because of the differences in interpretation and viewpoints among the three of us, which became clear in the course of editing the issue. Christian and Louis are valued colleagues and collaborators, with whom I feel I share a commitment to a transformed archaeological practice, one that does not privilege “science” over Indigenous knowledge. Earlier in this introduction, Christian alluded to his progressive tendencies and to a commitment to reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and settler archaeologists. I believe we all share these tendencies and this commitment. In this year of revelation to non-Indigenous people, one in which settlers finally had to acknowledge the terrible legacy of the residential school

system, we have heard time and again that before reconciliation comes truth. So I, too, believe that we should speak freely and honestly, even if we may not agree.

I think it is important, when considering reconciliation in the context of archaeology, that we recognize the colonial and exclusionary foundations of our discipline. We are aware that, historically, settler archaeologists often failed to consult with Indigenous peoples about their own history. One concrete legacy of this is that in Ontario and Quebec, archaeological heritage is managed by colonial governments and knowledge production about the Indigenous archaeological past still lies largely in the hands of settler archaeologists. For me, changing this—working toward “decolonization”—means that Indigenous communities must lead future archaeological endeavours. By this I mean that in the future, the framing of research questions, the selected methodologies for investigation, and

the interpretations will come from Indigenous communities. This means that sometimes we must face the possibility that some archaeological ways of understanding the past will be questioned. Further, questions of interest to community may be quite different from those of interest to academic archaeologists. Which brings us to some of the difficult areas of discussion during the editing of this issue.

We stumbled over the use and meaning of the term “St. Lawrence Iroquoian” and how this pertains to a people or “nation” who lived in the past. As archaeologists, we spend a significant amount of time and effort describing material culture—from artifacts to the remains of houses and settlements. And we see patterns, patterns that have spatial distributions. As Christian has mentioned above, decades of work describes constellations of archaeological traits that existed in the St. Lawrence Valley and which differ from material found to the west, in Ontario. At the same time, there are also many traits that are shared between the archaeological sites and artifacts in the St. Lawrence Valley, on the one hand, and those in Ontario, on the other. Research also demonstrates change over time—change that is similar to that observed on sites in Ontario. But what do these differences and similarities signify? Christian describes “St. Lawrence Iroquoians” as a nation and fears that avoidance of the term will result in its erasure. This idea of erasure is alarming, evoking, as it does, the spectre of assertion of *terra nullius*. Certainly, none of us would wish that the deep history of Indigenous peoples on the land of the St. Lawrence Valley and beyond be obliterated, nor that the distinctive nature of any archaeological manifestation be glossed over.

Is it possible to know what a “nation” is based on the archaeological record, and in the absence of oral traditions or historical records to assist us? In Ontario, in the seventeenth century, the Wendat confederacy consisted of at least four self-identified, distinct nations. However, their material culture is identical, despite the different nations having joined the confederacy at different times and having come from different places. Time and again, in our discussions, we have touched on the question of ethnicity and how this relates to the archaeological record in our region. The topic is both beyond the scope of this introduction and, at the same time, at the heart of our different viewpoints. If ethnicity is self-defined and its expression is socially contingent, is it possible to connect archaeological traits to ethnic groups or “nations,” particularly as we move deeper and deeper into the past? How might these identities have changed over time? Was change or difference in identity expressed using material culture? Possibly some of our differences as editors come from our separate archaeological traditions. In Ontario, we use a number of different terms to refer to earlier Iroquoian archaeological entities: Uren, Middleport, and Lalonde being just some examples, whereas in Quebec, St. Lawrence Iroquoian appears to have a long duration, with phases being defined within it (the Saguenay phase, for example). I think that today, many archaeologists would be reticent to equate Uren or Middleport with ethnic groups or nations, and when some Ontario archaeologists use terms that refer to current self-identified peoples, such as Huron-Wendat, it is in circumstances where ethnohistoric documents and oral history support that distinctive

identification and connection to a living people.

Since I first began travelling to Wendake to meet with people there, more than 15 years ago, I have been asked by Huron-Wendat people about their relationship or possible relationship to “St. Lawrence Iroquoians.” Repeatedly, people told me that their ancestors came *back* to Quebec in the seventeenth century. The disconnect between this understanding and archaeological narratives inspired me to try to listen harder to Huron-Wendat understandings of their own past, and to question why archaeologists appear so married to the frameworks they have constructed. Putting aside the worry that archaeologists may bend to political correctness and self-censorship, we must ask: Who do these frameworks and narratives serve? Does reticence by archaeologists to affirm connections between the past occupants of the St. Lawrence Valley and living Indigenous peoples reinforce the idea that the Indigenous peoples of the St. Lawrence Valley are

no longer? Similarly, by invoking the idea that particular Indigenous nations may want to claim a St. Lawrence Iroquoian legacy for themselves alone, and by insinuating conflict between current nations, do settler archaeologists not risk playing into the hands of colonial governments in a divide-and-conquer strategy?

The examples of collaboration and consensus building that Christian presents at the end of his section, above, fill me with hope that this is not actually the case. While settler archaeologists might find that we need to rethink some of our understandings of the past, I am convinced that this uncomfortable place is one that, ultimately, will lead to work that for many, particularly those with the progressive tendency that Christian describes, will be much more fulfilling. And while we may need to debate terminology and interpretation, I believe we can do this without compromising our archaeological practice.

**Alicia L. Hawkins**

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**A**S WE KNOW, THE STORY OF THE first contact between Indigenous people and Europeans in what is now eastern North America is usually told to us by the first observers who put down on paper their interpretation of these encounters. First the explorers and then the men of faith used their quills and inkwells to immortalize in words and texts these stories of the past. These events were observed, interpreted, and judged according to the perspective of the authors and their respective agendas. In fact, only one party, the Europeans, left written documents of these first

meetings. What is the interpretation of this period by the Indigenous people involved? Historical truth is always subject to the power structures in place. Always. Thus, the stories of the past usually include certain events and certain people yet exclude others, and thus define the meaning of these stories in a specific way.

For the Huron-Wendat Nation, knowing where we come from involves making reference, unfortunately all too often, to the many texts left by these authors of the past. To some historians, we are immigrants from Ontario. In

1651, war and famine is said to have pushed my ancestors to seek refuge in Quebec City, under the good rule of the Jesuits. According to these historians, my people were lost, wandering, the survivors dressed in rags and totally disoriented. So, according to this narrative, I should thank God's representatives for having saved us, the lost sheep. Doesn't that remind you of another, similar story? Also written by representatives of God, more than 2,000 years ago?

Let's return to this quest for information about the Huron-Wendat's distant past. In fact, Indigenous people know best who they are, where they come from, and how they lived their history. Generally, who better to talk about the history of a people than the people themselves? Imagine a history book about the province of Quebec written by a "specialist" researcher from Poland on the history of Quebec, without having consulted Quebec historians. This incident would shock any Quebecer, however nationalistic they might be.

For the Huron-Wendat Nation, our growing involvement in archaeology and the interpretation of our ancestors' past; planning and participating in archaeological excavations; guiding future research projects; and analyzing, writing, and publishing revised versions of our history are eloquent examples of the redefinition of our past. It is in this context that the Huron-Wendat Nation decided, about a decade ago, to "speak for itself" about its history. The thousands of archival documents, the more than 125 recordings of elders accumulated over more than 50 years, and recent research by the Nionwentsio Office have documented, refined, and explained much of our history.

While already-illustrious Huron-Wendat, such as Nicolas "Tsawenhohi"

Vincent, Stanislas Koska, and even Kondiaronk, have seen their historical contributions increase with this recent research, other, forgotten Huron-Wendat people, such as Petit Étienne and Jean-Baptiste Atironta, have come back to life. More specifically, Jean-Baptiste Atironta may have played a decisive role as "ambassador" of the Nation for having negotiated the terms and participated in the choice of Quebec City as the place of settlement of the Huron-Wendat in 1651. Thus, this gives us another version of this so-called "migration" of my ancestors to evoke, as being a "displacement" or a "return" to Quebec.

Why did my ancestors choose Quebec City? Brébeuf, Sagard, Champlain, Vimont, Le Jeune, and many other observers of the early seventeenth century confirm that the Huron-Wendat moved regularly between Huronia and Quebec to strengthen commercial and military alliances, to trade, and to spend the winter. At contact, did my ancestors consider the St. Lawrence Valley as an extension of their territory or did they see themselves as visitors there? Nicolas "Tsawenhohi" Vincent reminded us at the beginning of the nineteenth century that the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat extended "autrefois du Saguenay jusqu'aux Grands Lacs" (formerly from the Saguenay to the Great Lakes), an assertion of links to this territory that is still well-rooted, 200 years after the "displacement" to Quebec City. Here again, we are referring to the not-so-distant past, the one for which writings have come down to us. But what about the distant past, the one before contact? The one without the biased texts?

This sense of natural belonging to the St. Lawrence Valley, and particularly to the Quebec City region, motivated the



Huron-Wendat Nation to initiate the process of “speaking for itself,” through the seeking of alliances and multidisciplinary partnerships. The examples of our Nation’s participation in the joint symposium of the Ontario Archaeological Society and the Eastern States Archaeological Federation, held in Midland, Ontario, in 2015, and the joint symposium of the Canadian Archaeological Association and the Association des archéologues du Québec cited by Christian earlier in this introduction are eloquent examples of the wish for exchanges, sharing, collaboration, and reconstruction. Curiously, this desire just preceded the movement of reconciliation and decolonization that we are experiencing today. I will return to this below.

At the 2015 symposium, the Huron-Wendat Nation hosted a full-day session to revisit an important question for us: What was the relationship between the Huron-Wendat and the people known as the “St. Lawrence Iroquoians”? The texts written in recent decades about the latter did not necessarily represent the traditional Huron-Wendat understanding of this term or its definition. For this event, the Huron-Wendat Nation invited specialists in archaeology, linguistics, history, and anthropology to present on this question. At the end of this splendid day, during which new interpretations and conclusions were offered, the results of studies in archaeology, linguistics, history, and anthropology highlighted similarities and close relations between the Huron-Wendat and the St. Lawrence Iroquoians. Many of the presentations were published in 2016, in a special issue of the journal *Ontario Archaeology*, guest edited by Neha Gupta and Louis Lesage and entitled *Multidisciplinary Investigations into Huron-Wendat and St. Lawrence*

*Iroquoian Connections*. The French version, edited by Louis Lesage, Jean-François Richard, Alexandra Bédard-Daigle, and Neha Gupta, was published as *Études multidisciplinaires sur les liens entre Hurons-Wendat et Iroquoiens du Saint-Laurent*, by Les Presses de l’Université Laval, in 2018.

These alliances with archaeologists, linguists, and historians in the 2000s allowed us to make our voice better known and to “speak for ourselves” about our history.

Today we are seeing a period of change, a period of unprecedented reconciliation with First Nations. First Nations have more space to speak about their past, their interpretations, their issues, and their realities. In brief, we want to hear First Nations’ perspectives so that they are present in, and participate more in, current discourses. To get there, we may head into some choppy water; we may need to improvise and hope that we can stay the course in the face of these conditions.

In the context of reconciliation and in the awareness that there was the potential for disagreement, Christian, Alicia, and I initiated, in a respectful way, this laborious process of writing an introduction ... in an atypical way. Indeed, the form of this introduction itself sparked some debate among us, but in this collaborative process, an agreement quickly emerged: namely, to present our perspectives while retaining the right to assert our differences of opinion and interpretation.

From the start, there was an elephant in the room. What meaning should we give to the term St. Lawrence Iroquoians? Even after quoting it, describing it, and dissecting it in all sorts of ways, in the end, the elephant remained in the room!

For the Huron-Wendat, the archaeological entity or construction of “St. Lawrence Iroquoians” remains a fundamental issue of the identity of these people. Here is a brief historical summary. When Cartier arrived in the Gaspé peninsula in 1534, he met a group of Iroquoian-speaking people led by Chief Donnacona, who later came to be referred to as the St. Lawrence Iroquoians. Cartier later frequented the area of present-day Quebec City where Donnacona’s people lived, in the village of Stadacona. In Montréal, the Iroquoian cousins of Donnacona occupied a large, palisaded village called Hochelaga. Cartier documented about five other Iroquoian villages between Stadacona and Hochelaga. Thereafter, and until 1543, the French tried, unsuccessfully, to establish a colony in the Quebec City region at what is now known as the Cartier-Roberval site. The last French observations of the region and its Iroquoian occupants culminate around 1585. When the French returned to the area in 1603, these Iroquoian villages no longer existed. Archaeologists have traditionally formulated this as the Iroquoians of the St. Lawrence Valley having “disappeared” and have sought explanations to unravel this “mystery.” Possible causes for this “disappearance” include diseases introduced by Europeans, wars, environmental change, and/or trade route changes. Archaeologists have described a set of types of artifacts common at sites in the St. Lawrence Valley, including pottery of distinctive styles. In the 1960s, an archaeological construction of “St. Lawrence Iroquoians” came to define the people whom Cartier met. In addition, the attributes of these materials differ in some respects from similar attributes found at Ontario sites and from characteristics of

the Huron-Wendat. Thus, archaeologists have concluded that the Huron-Wendat were a different ethnic group from the people Cartier met in the St. Lawrence Valley in the sixteenth century.

Recent research brings nuances to this division between the two groups and suggests there was a familiarity between them. One example is the “St. Lawrence Iroquoian” artifacts found in a high proportion of Huron-Wendat villages in Ontario, and over a period of more than 350 years. Another example is the mass arrival of a few hundred St. Lawrence Iroquoians in Huron-Wendat villages (for example, the Benson site). Between you and me, we would not welcome hundreds of people totally foreign to our way of life just like that! We welcome family, we welcome loved ones who need a roof over their heads during catastrophic events, we let them participate in the activities of the village, and then, weeks, months, or even years later, this results in the living together of people who look alike. In the end, these people do what they know best: They make babies! Those who are called St. Lawrence Iroquoians and those who are called Huron-Wendat will later be one, and this will pass from generation to generation.

In our opinion, that is, the opinion of the Huron-Wendat, toward the end of the sixteenth century, a large number of St. Lawrence Iroquoians left the St. Lawrence Valley to move into Huron-Wendat territory. The latter welcomed them like siblings, as they had in previous centuries. At the beginning of the following century, the Huron-Wendat joined forces with Champlain. Historical accounts certainly place the Huron-Wendat in the St. Lawrence Valley in 1609. As for their settling there, some Huron-Wendat families had already established residences as early as 1637

in the new Sillery Mission, near Quebec City, and even in Trois-Rivières, around 1634. Then the Iroquoians were brought their own upheaval. A rereading of the Jesuit relations and new documentary sources have brought to light forgotten people, as well as facts in need of interpretation. Around 1630, the first documented epidemics decimated the Huron-Wendat population, and then attacks combined with droughts forced the Huron-Wendat who had come together on Christian Island, in Georgian Bay of Lake Huron, to evaluate the options available to them at this critical period in their history. We have recently discovered that historical accounts have preserved the traces of emissaries, such as Jean-Baptiste Atironta, who lived through the talks and negotiations that preceded this movement eastward—to Montréal and Trois-Rivières in 1648 and to Quebec City in 1649. The fact that there were negotiations contradicts the commonly held idea that the Wendat “followed” the French to Quebec City. In fact, it was they, and not the French, who were the instigators of the move eastward and they stipulated many conditions for their establishment in Quebec City. Did the Iroquoian elders of the St. Lawrence Valley or their children influence this desire to “return” to the St. Lawrence Valley, specifically to Quebec City? Maybe one day we’ll confirm this possibility....

That is our story. This idea of a return to the Quebec City region is not completely new, and it can be cross-checked with multiple historical documents and oral traditions. However, it does present a major, although not insurmountable, challenge to archaeologists’ understanding of the past, mainly because they have come to confuse ethnic identity and archaeological constructs. Mate-

rial culture and ethnic identity should not be expected to align perfectly. It is important to decouple the Huron-Wendat identity or ethnicity from the seventeenth-century Huron-Wendat political entity as recorded by French explorers and missionaries. Archaeology can make significant contributions to interpretations of technology, economics, and historical change. However, archaeologists are not the best qualified to make statements about the ethnic identity of peoples of the past.

This concept of the “St. Lawrence Iroquoians” as a distinct nation is one around which we were unable to find a consensus as co-editors. As Christian and Alicia mentioned above, even with the best intentions, which have motivated listening, dialogue, frankness, intellectual honesty, and our right to dissent, the use of the term has persevered. Therefore, if the use of the term is not unanimous, if it shocks or hurts some or does not mean anything to others, is it perhaps ill-defined, incorrectly interpreted, inappropriately used, or unpopular? In fact, what is a St. Lawrence Iroquoian? As I often say to Christian, “I consider myself a descendant of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians. Take my DNA; it contains their traces.” I know I’m only complicating things now by opening up the question of genetics....

Today, at the time of writing of this issue of the *Canadian Journal of Archaeology*, we are all experiencing a moment of change in this country. This time is characterized by an openness toward Indigenous peoples induced by significant events that have followed one another in recent years, months, and weeks. The new millennium has accelerated the tragedies and actions that have taken place and been inflicted on Indigenous peoples of this country. Just

think of the Idle No More movement, of 2012; the national mobilization behind the Wet'suwet'en, in 2020; the discovery of hundreds of children's bodies in the grounds of various former residential schools across the country; and the death of Joyce Echaquan in a hospital in Joliette, to name but a few examples. Never have the First Nations been so talked about. Never has the sensitivity of non-Indigenous people been so tested. For some First Nations, these events have only confirmed the existence of tragedies and disadvantageous socio-economic conditions or have reopened wounds that are impossible to heal. For others, especially for non-Indigenous people, they have been the trigger for enlightenment, for an awakening to a inglorious aspect of the history of the First Nations of Canada and the continuing lack of access to basic necessities that persists in some First Nations communities today.

Fortunately, this collaborative process between the three of us, the co-editors, has seen the emergence of another consensus, a very topical one. The aim is to give greater importance to Indigenous

representatives concerned about archaeology in general and with their heritage in particular. All the lively, respectful, and constructive debate between the three of us around the term "St. Lawrence Iroquoian" has been aimed at its erasure from the discourse of history. Let us clarify and redefine its scope.

The fundamental aspect of this approach remains dialogue. No dialogue, no collaboration, no forgiveness, no reconciliation. We have demonstrated that it is possible to work together, even with our disagreements and our right to dissent, as my friend Christian likes to remind me!

To conclude, for me, the Iroquoians of the St. Lawrence Valley are my ancestors from the east. As for my friends Christian and Alicia, who are of "rather European" descent, their ancestors also "came from the east." I hope that, in a few years, some will reread this "atypical" introduction and have a smile on their faces that says, "We have come a long way together since these identity debates; we are now in a different place!"

**Louis Lesage**