

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

about

All My Relations: A Sculpture by Anishinaabe Artist Jason Quigno
originally intended for installation at the Old Indian Cemetery

What is the current plan for the sculpture *All My Relations* originally planned for installation in the Old Indian Cemetery of Muskegon?

Based on the conversations and recent objections and at the request of Joe Genia, a long-standing elder of the Muskegon Native American community and member of the Grand River Band of Ottawa Indians, and Ron Yob, the Tribal Chief of the Grand River Band of Ottawa Indians headquartered in Grand Rapids, all parties have agreed that the sculpture, *Niikonii Kiinaa*, or *All My Relations*, should be installed in a different location.

When was this decision made?

Joe Genia and Ron Yob first met with Frank Petersen on July 27. Immediately upon hearing objections from Mr. Genia and Mr. Yob, the placement of the sculpture was postponed and discussions about a path forward for the artwork and the cemetery ensued. All parties agreed that the purpose behind the sculpture was valid and welcomed, but that the cemetery should have been left undisturbed. The final decision to not install the sculpture in the Old Indian Cemetery but rather find a more appropriate site for it was made August 7, 2018.

Why was this sculpture proposed for this site?

The sculpture, created by Anishinaabe artist Jason Quigno, was planned for installation in the Old Indian Cemetery as a tribute to the unique history of the Morris Street site that dates as far back as the 1750s, and includes centuries of history of the indigenous people of this community as well as that of the fur trading and the lumbering concerns of the nineteenth century, and on into our early twentieth century history as well.

This sculpture was carved to honor and represent the Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers, the Anishinaabe traditional knowledge that collectively represents what is needed for community: Love, Respect, Honesty, Bravery, Truth, Humility and Wisdom.

What is the history of the cemetery?

This cemetery, used by the Ottawas as early as the 1750s, was here when the first white man came to this area. It was an active burial ground from 1806 to 1854 for both Indians and settlers. From about 1830 to about 1848, the site was part of a much larger site that was purchased in 1839 by French fur trader, Louis Badeau (aka Badeaux), who continued to let the Ottawa Indians of the area use the land as a burial ground. Sometime in the 1840s, Martin L. Ryerson, who originally worked for Badeau at

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the trading post but went on to become an owner of one of many sawmills on Muskegon Lake, purchased title to this cemetery.

Martin Ryerson's first wife, according to the Ryerson family genealogy, was an Ottawa Indian woman who gave birth to his daughter, named Mary, in 1843. He purchased the cemetery some time after that, and although often rumored that the wife may have been buried in this cemetery, it has never been substantiated. Ryerson's second wife, of Canadian Indian descent, died in childbirth, along with the infant, in 1855.

Ryerson's third wife, Mary Ann Campau of Grand Rapids who was the mother of his son, Martin A. Ryerson, was the daughter of Antoine Campau. Antoine Campau was also father, earlier, to a son who became Chief Cobmoosa, also known as the Great Walker, one of the most recognized nineteenth-century Grand River Ottawa leaders

The Old Indian Cemetery was originally said to be an acre of land, according to various reports in the local newspaper over the years. At one time, it is thought that there may have been as many as 200 burials on the site of both Indians and settlers. According to some accounts, some of the remains in the cemetery were moved to the Evergreen Cemetery in or around 1899. Today, it is not known how many souls may be buried on this site.

Who is Jason Quigno?

Jason Quigno, who has been carving stone since he was 14, is a life-long resident of Michigan and is a direct descendant of Chief Cobmoosa, referred to above. Cobmoosa was half-brother to the third Mrs. Ryerson, and an uncle to Martin Ryerson, Jr. Quigno is also a member of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe.

Who owns the cemetery?

The Old Indian Cemetery was deeded to the City of Muskegon in 1926 by Martin A. Ryerson, the son of Martin L. Ryerson and Mary Ann Campau, per his father's wishes, along with a gift of \$5,000, to be used to care for the Cemetery and preserve it as a cemetery into perpetuity. Around the time of the transfer, Ryerson, Jr., brought in large granite boulder from Oceana County, and installed new fencing around the perimeter.

The Old Indian Cemetery, which is located at 298 Morris Ave., is now about four-tenths of an acre. In 1961, the front property line of the cemetery was moved, after a thorough testing of the site for remains, none of which were found, to make room for the extension of Morris Avenue, which previous to this action ended at the cross street of First.

Muskegon area Native Americans have long been the spiritual caretakers of this historic site, passing on this responsibility from one generation to the next and holding regular ceremonies here every year.

In 2009, Indian remains estimated to be “pre-contact” (older than 1600) unearthed elsewhere by unknown individuals were repatriated to this Cemetery. The remains had been in the possession of the Lakeshore Museum Center since the 1940’s. John McGarry, the Director of Museum, successfully organized the repatriation of the remains to this sacred hallowed ground, as authorized under the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Joseph Genia, Muskegon resident and member of the Grand River Band of Ottawa Indians, led the sacred ceremony.

Were sacred cemetery grounds disturbed or desecrated for this project?

Footings for the sculpture, requiring a five foot square, four foot deep excavation, were dug on July 9. Those present that day included city staff, Jason Quigno the artist, Larry Romanelli, Ogema of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians (LRBOI), Jay Sam, Historic Preservation Director of the LRBOI, Annoesjka Soler and Melissa Horton of the Lakeshore Museum Center, Deb Gutowski, and Judith Hayner. Prior to the commencement of the work, a ceremony of blessing and recognition was conducted by the Ogema.

Months before the work began at the Cemetery, the Ogema of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians (LRBOI), a federally recognized tribe with over 600 Muskegon county residents on its tribal listings, was consulted about the feasibility and appropriateness of installing a sculpture to be done by Anishinaabe artist Jason Quigno. Also consulted was Jay Sam, the Historic Preservation Director of the LRBOI. Both gentlemen were supportive of the project. Romanelli also informed his constituents of this project in April, 2018.

At the recommendation of Jay Sam of the LRBOI, who is also the Tribe’s representative to the Michigan Anishinaabek Cultural Preservation and Repatriation Alliance (MACPRA), a comprehensive Inadvertent Discovery Plan was developed based on a model from the Department of Ecology of the State of Washington and customized for this application. The plan was circulated to all persons to be involved and was thoroughly reviewed by City staff charged with the excavation.

All persons present, including Ogema Romanelli and Historic Preservation Director Sam of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians remained present during the entire excavation of the 5’ X 5’ square. which resulted in 3.66 yards of soil being removed cautiously and reverently and inspected with each small dig prior to placing the soil in the truck, to ensure that the process for laying down footings for the sculpture would not be in violation of tribal burial ground acts.

There was no evidence of any remains or sacred artifacts found in the excavation process. By visual inspection, it was evident that the soil on the sides of the opening all the way down had never been disturbed based on the visible layering of the soil, and the site was determined to be a sterile zone.

The footings for the sculpture were poured Tuesday, July 10. The handicapped-accessible walkway and the 16-inch square by 4-inch deep bases for the benches were poured later that week. Both the walkway and the bases did not require excavation beyond the depth of the sod that was in place.

All of the soil that was removed by the City was preserved.

What will happen now at the Old Indian Cemetery?

The footings for the sculpture, the small bases put in to hold the hand-carved benches, and the handicapped-accessible walkway will be removed as soon as feasible. The soil originally excavated from the site was secured in an offsite location, and will be utilized to return the cemetery site to its natural state. The artist has asked to be able to assist with this effort.

The City is continuing with the clean-up of the borders, removing weeds and scrub growth. Moderate cleaning and pruning of the historic shrubs and trees, which date primarily from the improvements established in the 1920's, necessary to support the health of the plant material has been completed. The border beds are being finished with bark.