Plank Road MAGAZINE

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WINTER 2013-2014

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GREEN LAKES GEOLOGY IN PICTURES

TWO ROW RENEWAL A LEGACY OF HOPE

HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA

PLUS: *WHO GIVES?* TEAM RED, WHITE & BLUE SIGNATURE MUSIC IN SYRACUSE LITERACY COALITION OF MADISON COUNTY NY

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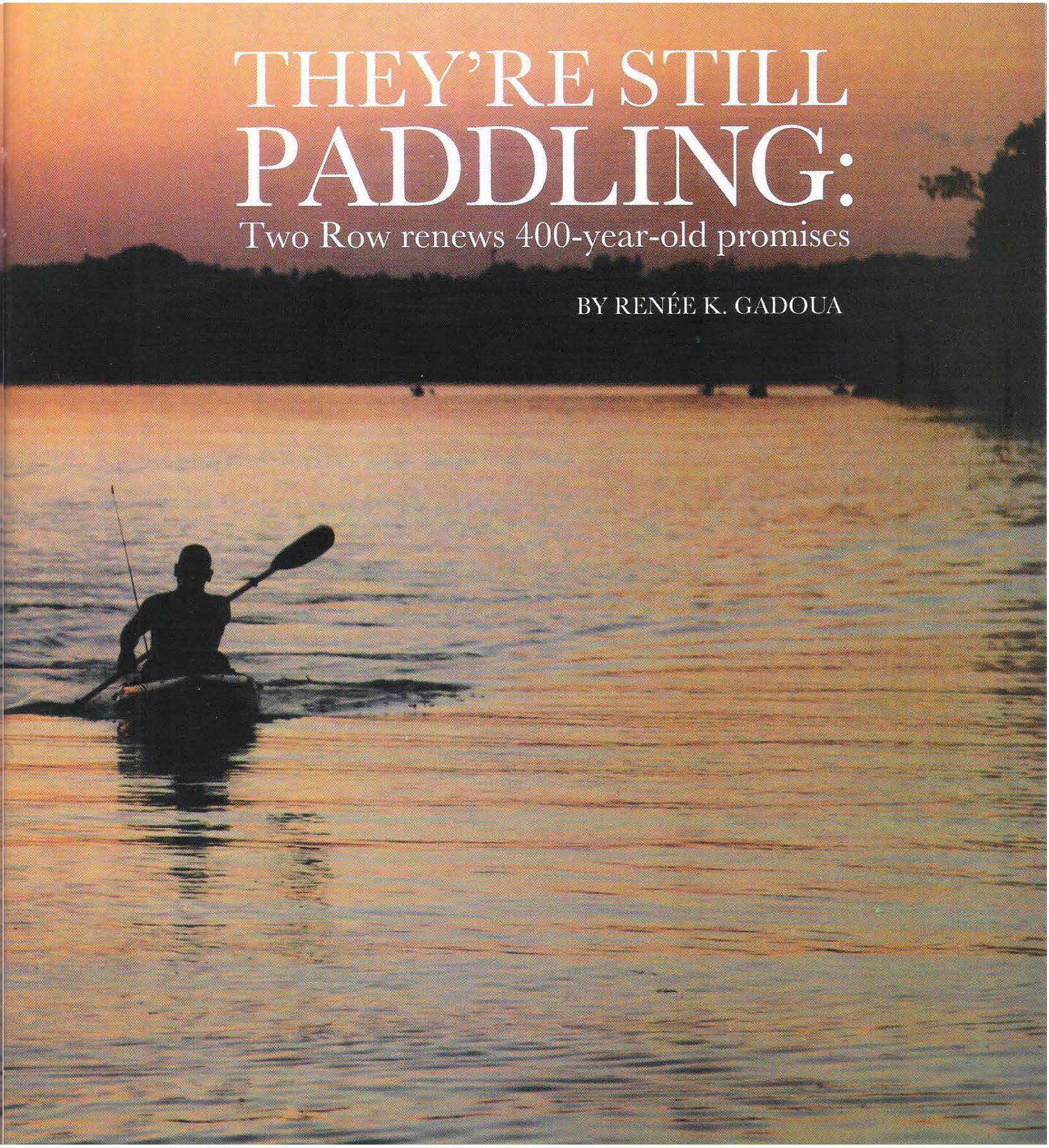
Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as People. Now our minds are one. *Excerpt from Thanksgiving Address, which the Haudenosaunee recite whenever they gather.*



THEY'RE STILL PADDLING:

Two Row renews 400-year-old promises

BY RENÉE K. GADOUA

It was hot and muggy

on August 9, 2013, and Onondaga Chief Oren Lyons was wearing a long-sleeved tunic over a T-shirt and jeans, his long gray hair pulled back in a ponytail. He looked a bit tired as he waited on the dock at Pier 96 in New York City for a group of paddlers to conclude their thirteen-day, 140-mile trek down the Hudson River. But Lyons was patient, mingling with dozens of people, shaking hands with dignitaries, and giving seemingly endless interviews about the Haudenosaunee, the Native Americans who have lived in what is now New York State since long before Europeans arrived here 400 years ago.

Lyons, eighty-three, has been telling these stories since the 1960s, and he has become one of the world's most visible advocates for indigenous rights, serving on United Nations committees and speaking at international conferences about sovereignty, environmental stewardship, and Native American cultural identity and history. He speaks passionately about the ways Europeans and Americans have wronged the indigenous: taking their land; massacring indigenous peoples; squelching their culture, language, and beliefs. On this day, he, other Native American leaders, and their enthusiastic non-Native supporters hoped their story would make a difference.

Eventually the paddlers came into view—about ninety minutes late, thanks to waves and wind that held them back. About 500 people cheered as the vessels glided into the shore, with the boats' occupants triumphantly raising their paddles. The landing marked victory—the completion of a symbolic journey celebrating the 400th anniversary of the 1613 agreement between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch, the first European settlers in the area that is now Central New York.

The Haudenosaunee marked the 1613 agreement with the Two Row Wampum, a belt of rows of purple and of white beads. The purple rows represented the parallel, separate lives of the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans. The white rows represented the river of life, the world we all inhabit together forever. The Haudenosaunee consider forever to be "as long as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, as long as riv-

Smoking the peace pipe is the traditional way of polishing the chain of friendship, peace, and "foreverness" that the Two Row treaty represents. From left, Andy Mager, project coordinator of the Two Row Renewal Campaign; Chief Jake Edwards of the Onondaga Nation; and Oren Lyons, Onondaga chief and faith keeper, prepare to smoke the pipe at the landing of the Two Row paddle in New York City. Dutch Consul General Rob de Vos is behind Mager.

"We arrived at the entrance to a little lake in a great basin that is half dried up, and taste the water from a spring of which these people dare not drink as they say there is sea, and are carrying a sample of it to Quebec. This lake is very rich in salmon, trout and other fish." *August 16, 1654, journal entry of Simon Le Moyne, French Jesuit p*
and industrial development of Syracuse; the industry, in turn, contributed to the environmental degradation of Onondaga Lake. "The Expedition you are appointed and devastation of their settlements, and the capture of as many prisoners of every age and sex as possible. It will be essential to ruin their crops now in the ground and *declared neutrality, some members sided with the British.* "Indians have been so often deceived by White people that White Man is, among many of them, but anothe some white men who are incapable of deceiving." *Timothy Pickering, U.S. commissioner and negotiator at the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua, writing to President Washi*

and enjoyment thereof." "If the Iroquois ... want to become citizens of the United States they must renounce allegiance to their own people." *Thomas Donaldson,* ... Now more than two centuries later, we continue to build on this relationship, living side by side, learning from one another, appreciating one another's culture, and have never violated this treaty ... We have never passed a law telling you how to live ... You and your ancestors, on the other hand, have passed laws that continually *Row Wampum* "In this Land Rights Action we seek justice. Justice for the waters. Justice for the four leggeds and the wingeds, whose habitats have been taken *the Onondaga Nation was suing New York State, Onondaga County, the City of Syracuse, and five companies, arguing that the state illegally took land from the Ca*

SKARUIANEWAH LOGAN

an evil spirit in it that renders it foul. Upon tasting of it, I find it to be a spring of salt water; and indeed we made some salt from it, as natural as that which comes from the *est and missionary, documenting his first visit to Onondaga Lake. Syracuse's LeMoyne College is named for the missionary. The salt springs were crucial to the economic* to command is to be directed against the hostile tribes of the Six Nations of Indians, with their associates and adherents. The immediate objects are the total destruction *prevent their planting more." General George Washington, to General John Sullivan, May 31, 1779, during the American Revolution. Although Haudenosaunee leaders* name for Liar. Really, Sir I am unwilling to be subjected to this infamy. … Sir, for your honour & the honour & interest of the United States, I wish them to know that there are *ton in 1792. The treaty, signed by Pickering as a representative of Washington, and Haudenosaunee chiefs, guaranteed the Haudenosaunee their land and "the free use*

an 1892 report on the 1890 U.S. Census. 〓 "This historic treaty, signed by President Washington, recognized the Six Nations and the United States as sovereign entities. elebrating the gift of democracy that we all cherish." *President Bill Clinton to the Onondaga Nation regarding the Canandaigua Treaty, 1999* 〓 "The Haudenosaunee to change who I am, what I am, and how I shall conduct my spiritual, political and everyday life." *Onondaga elder, Chief Irving Powless, Jr., 1994 lecture about the Two* Ve seek justice, not just for ourselves, but justice for the whole creation." *The late Audrey Shenandoah, Onondaga clan mother, at 2005 news conference announcing dian to the Pennsylvania borders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A federal judge dismissed the suit in September 2010. A 2012 appeal was also dismissed.*

ers run downhill, as long as the grass grows green." In 2013, about 200 people rowed canoes and kayaks in a living metaphor, with Natives and non-Natives paddling side by side on the Hudson River, the ancient waterway the Haudenosaunee call Muhhea-kon-ne-tuh, "the river that flows both ways."

The paddlers arrived in New York City to a party. People sang, drummers played, and purple and white Haudenosaunee flags waved high, as triumphant paddlers dressed in shorts and sneakers shook hands with Native leaders and dignitaries in suits. Hickory Edwards, who trained and led the paddlers down the Hudson River, was one of the first to land. He wore a traditional Onondaga headdress with eagle feathers, and quickly unwrapped a replica of the Two Row Wampum, which he had carried from the Onondaga Nation to New York City.

Now thirty-three, Edwards grew up on the Onondaga Nation, and water has always been central in his life. He has a teenage daughter whom he has taught to kayak, and he also has an infant daughter. His goal for the Two Row campaign was to stress the value of a safe and sustainable ecosystem. "Four hundred years ago, our ancestors kept this in mind for us," he said in July. "We have to think about our generations 400 years from now."

Edwards also displayed a bottle of water that he had collected from a natural spring on the Onondaga Nation and carried to New York City. "It's clear. It's clean. It's life. It's what we're fighting for," he said to an attentive crowd.

Dutch Consul General Rob de Vos met the paddlers as a sign of his country's recognition of the bond between the Dutch and the Haudenosaunee. He acknowledged the role the Haudenosaunee played in helping the early settlers to survive. "We can learn so much from you," he said. "Especially we can learn how to live with nature, the Earth. ... Let's stay together, listen to each other, and find solutions for future generations."

Later, hundreds marched across town to the United Nations on the east side of Manhattan, where many observed a program celebrating the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. There Chief Lyons took the call to honor sovereignty and environmental stewardship to an international stage. "The Two Row prevails," he said, while more than 300 people watched, transfixed. "We're here. We're friends. We must now put our attention to the future of our children and their children and their children. If we do that, we ensure the safety of our future."

The celebration began on July 2, when about ten boats left the Onondaga Nation, the capital, or central fire, of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Paddlers headed north on Onondaga Creek, ending the day with a festival at Onondaga Lake, known to the Haudenosaunee as Lake Gannentaa. (The original members of the confederacy were the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawks. The Tuscarora joined the confederacy in the 1720s.) Later that night, a group of paddlers headed to Albany, and arrived July 14. Two weeks later, on July 28, at least 150 paddlers left Albany for the 140-mile journey down the Hudson River.

Onondaga Lake is central to the history of the Onondaga—both as the source of the Great Law of Peace and the site of an especially personal violation of the Two Row Wampum. More than a thousand years ago, the Iroquois Confederacy was formed along the shores of Onondaga Lake. According to Native history, the Creator sent the Peacemaker to end years of warring among the nations and to remind the groups to live together

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Adock Shenandoah (Oneida Nation) first in line, followed by Regis Cook (Mohawk Nation) and Awenhaeyon Powless (Onondaga Nation).

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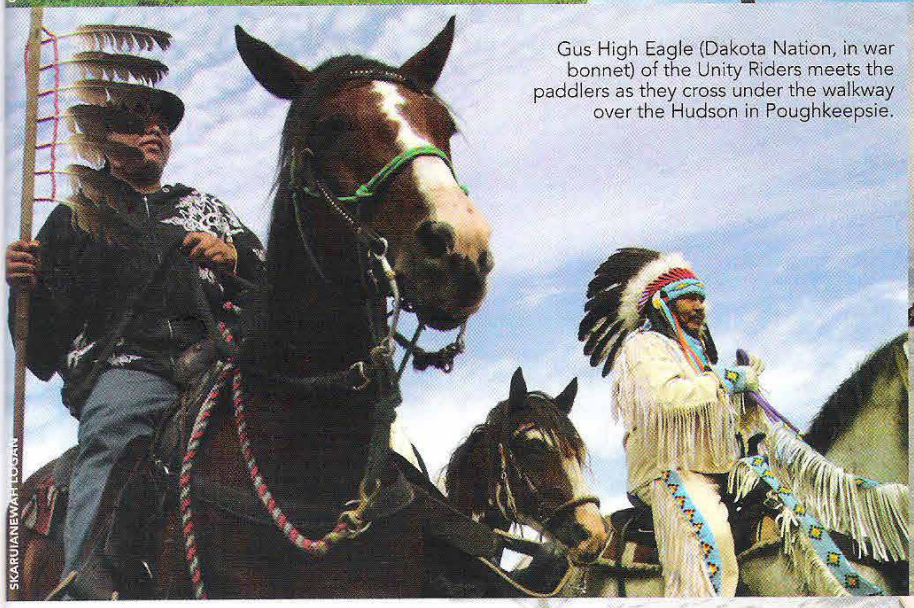

Gus High Eagle (Dakota Nation, in war bonnet) of the Unity Riders meets the paddlers as they cross under the walkway over the Hudson in Poughkeepsie.

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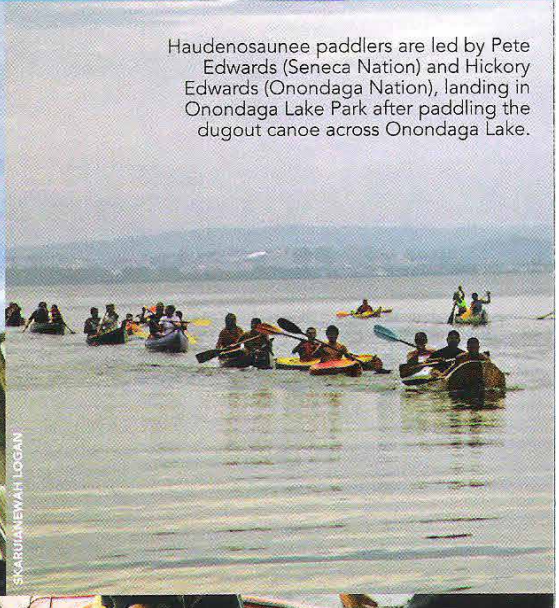

Haudenosaunee paddlers are led by Pete Edwards (Seneca Nation) and Hickory Edwards (Onondaga Nation), landing in Onondaga Lake Park after paddling the dugout canoe across Onondaga Lake.

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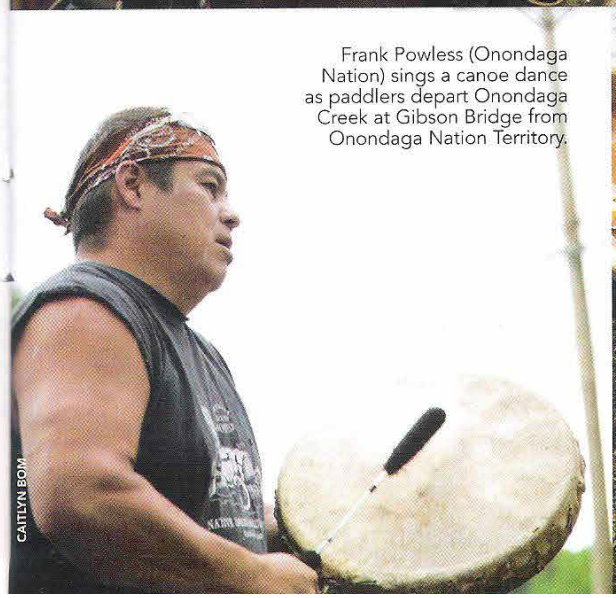

Frank Powless (Onondaga Nation) sings a canoe dance as paddlers depart Onondaga Creek at Gibson Bridge from Onondaga Nation Territory.

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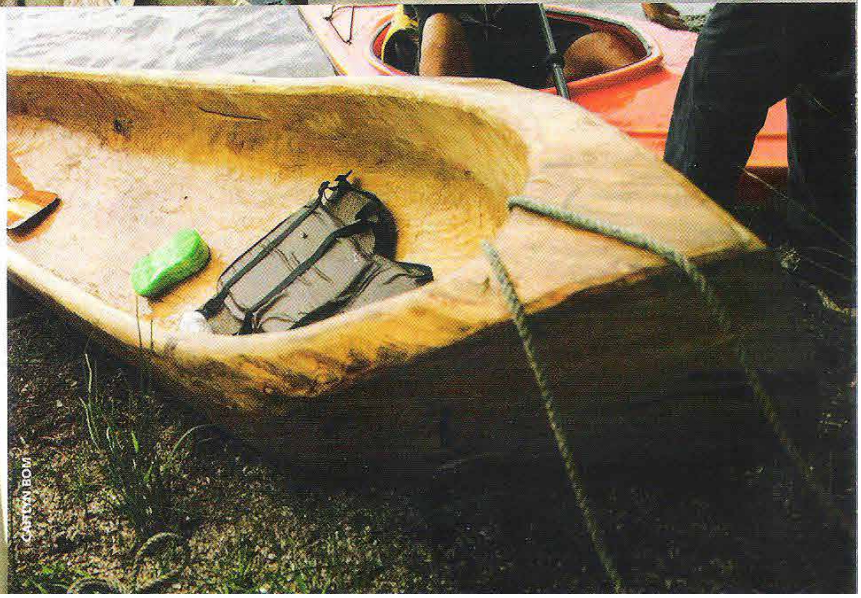

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in peace. The leaders of the five nations formalized their vow of peace by pulling a great white pine from the ground and throwing their weapons into the hole. They replanted the tree, and the Peacemaker placed an eagle on top to warn the leaders of threats to the Great Law of Peace, an enduring message of the universal law.

But by the 1790s, commercial salt production along Onondaga Lake caused deforestation nearby. In the late 1880s, various industries that helped fuel the growth of this region were dumping industrial waste into the lake, and for at least 100 years, untreated industrial and municipal waste was dumped into the lake, leading to the shameful description of Onondaga Lake as one of the United States's most polluted lakes.

The despoiling of the lake breaks Freida Jacques's heart. "Water is sacred, like all parts of creation," she said during a festival in Troy before the paddlers left the Albany area. "All life relies on it. It has a sacred duty, given to it by the Creator, to give all creation clean, fresh water." Jacques, an Onondaga clan mother, took a break from sitting with her mother, Asa Jacques, eighty-three, who was selling her acclaimed pottery at the festival.

"It's an insult to creation," she said of environmental damage. Nevertheless, Jacques said, "Despite all of this damage, we still have fresh water; we still have fresh air. We feel it's our duty to give that thanksgiving. If we didn't do that, things would be much worse."

The mood at the dock and at the United Nations last August was celebratory. The group had accomplished an ambitious summer-long program, and despite the many logistical details, to observers it looked seamless. Organizers said they'll keep educating people about the Haudenosaunee and their treaties, but the long-term impact of the campaign might not be clear for years, or for centuries.

The campaign spurred dozens of news articles and television stories, but some Onondaga elders quietly said they were disappointed the campaign had not made a bigger international splash. They attributed that lack of interest to a long pattern of racism. Still, paddlers—Native and non-Native—described numerous acts of kindness as they and their crew stopped along the way.

Robin Kimmerer, who teaches environmental biology and directs SUNY ESF's Center for Native Peoples and the Environment *[See book review next page.]*, paddled down the Hudson with other Natives. Kimmerer, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, said every day she paddled, an eagle flew overhead. "There was a powerful symbol watching over us," she said. Along the way, groups of allies stood and cheered the paddlers on. One group of paddlers would call out, "Honor the treaties," and the other group would respond, "Protect the Earth." A woman and two children stood on the shore, Kimmerer recalled. "When that call went out, she put her hand over her heart and said, 'We will. We promise.'"

By fall, Two Row participants were involved in efforts to end hydrofracking and to close Indian Point Nuclear Plant; and they were participating in a campaign to oppose a proposed high-pressure gas transmission pipeline that would run from Endicott to Syracuse. In mid-September, Chief Lyons and two Mohawk leaders traveled to The Hague, the Netherlands, for a ceremony marking the 400-year anniversary of the Two Row. The Haudenosaunee show no signs of stopping their work. PRM