

**KENNEBEC-CHAUDIERE
INTERNATIONAL CORRIDOR
JUNE 1ST TALK**

By Donna M Loring

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The Kennebec-Chaudiere International Corridor was one of thousands of routes, trails and pathways my ancestors used for thousands of years. What makes this particular pathway special is the history we shared on it with our French brothers and sisters almost four hundred years ago. To understand this relationship that developed we must first understand something of the First Nations that inhabited this area before the arrival of the Europeans on our shores.

Please understand that life, as we knew it was very different from that of Europeans our essential spiritual beliefs and cultural traditions were unknown to them.

We lived in a land that we were an integral part of physically and spiritually. We had communities throughout the Eastern seaboard. Our numbers have been estimated to be anywhere from fifteen to thirty thousand. We had territories we hunted and fished seasonally. The boundaries of these were usually rivers. We knew the land, and everything about it in intimate detail from the location of rivers, lakes, ponds and streams as well as where we could find specific animals, fish, fowl, plants, trees and herbs at certain times of the year. We were one spiritually with all our surroundings. We believed in Kinechewas, the Great Spirit, and that every thing from rocks to humans to plants and rivers even the wind had a spirit and these must be respected. Our very lives depended on our treatment of this sacred environment. We had plenty of resources to sustain our needs. The world as we knew it existed around this way of life and leaders emerged who were the best hunters and who could best care for their families and their extended families. Hunting was not the only requirement of these leaders. To be a great leader a Sakom must be able to speak eloquently and be able to persuade his people to follow his advice and counsel. Native people would follow only if they chose to. If they did not they went their own way and did what pleased them. The paradigms between Native people of this continent and Europeans were vastly different.

When they arrived on our shores they arrived with concepts and beliefs that we could not understand. We felt them to be strange and rather ugly people and felt them inferior to us.

The French and the English put the First Nations of this continent squarely in the middle of their quest for land and resources. They used the Tribal Governments against each other to gain their objectives. My people embraced the French because they lived amongst us and treated us as brothers. They learned our languages and became part of our families. The English on the other hand treated us badly they remained separate from us and thought of us as savages. Their sole interest was to take our lands and resources. We allied ourselves with the French against the English.

During the centuries of war we traveled the Kennebec –Chaudiere Corridor many, many times. The corridor represented a lifeline to us at first for trading purposes and sometimes for religious purposes to meet with a priest to receive sacraments. We traveled it to the Great Council fires where tribes from New York to New Brunswick would gather and strategize for war and finally we traveled it for refuge and safety from the English who wished to take our lands by any means they could even to killing us and taking our scalps for bounty and proof of death. Indian people fled to Quebec and Montreal on various occasions when they were afraid the English would wipe them out. Sometimes they were not so lucky as was the case after the Norridgewock Massacre of 1724.

Some did escape but the English along with some Mohawk scouts killed the majority mostly women and children. Father Rasle who had served as a minister to the tribes for thirty-four years as well as having authored 15 Indian dictionaries was killed and his scalp taken to Boston. The poet John Green leaf Whittier writes about the destroyed village in his poem “Mogg Megone”.

Some did escape and use the corridor to get to safety.

Over the centuries the corridor has been used as a path for various reasons, for trade, for religious purposes, for escape and for various other reasons. It was and is an integral part of Wabanaki history.

Today we see the opening of the corridor as a welcomed event one that will open once again the path to a new era of trade and partnership with our French brothers and sisters.

The Wabanaki people look forward to new possibilities and new beginnings.
Thank you.