

# first nations peace monument

decew house heritage park, thorold



*Douglas Cardinal Architects*

a canada 150 project to honour first nations peoples • douglas cardinal, architect



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*In Canada's Centennial year, the official Expo 67 theme of 'Man and his World / Terre des Hommes' celebrated our newly-emerging role on the global stage.*

*Today, Canada's international significance is firmly established, and multiculturalism is a proud and defining element of our national identity. But on the eve of our Sesquicentennial, Canadians are realizing that our national narrative is incomplete.*

*Though we must remain globally engaged, Canadians must also look inwards to understand ourselves, and learn how to recognize and celebrate those whose enormous contributions to the building of our nation have not been properly acknowledged.*

Perhaps most prominent among these  
unacknowledged groups are the First Nations  
within Canada.

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Jo Enaje. The Meeting, 2015. Oil on canvas -121.92 cm x 91.44 cm.  
Commissioned by The Bear's Inn for the architecturally inspired and historically themed  
Second House. Courtesy of Tim and Lisa Johnson and the artist, [joenaje.com](http://joenaje.com).

## introduction and context

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Many are aware that First Nations peoples were present when European settlers arrived, but few recognize the important role that they played in the forging of the nation we now know as Canada. The relationships amongst these groups were often fractious and unfair, but First Nations still made enormous sacrifices alongside the British and their allies, successfully defending our collective borders at huge cost. These battles, often fought in allegiance with First Nations warriors, produced enormous benefits for settlers sympathetic to the Crown.

Though these important partnerships were initially recognized in the form of covenants and treaties, the spirit of these agreements was not always respected in the long term, and the pivotal roles of First Nations in the building of Canada were diminished in our collective conscience. Written narratives and built monuments of the settlers supplanted the oral histories and nature-based symbolism of the native peoples. Economic and political marginalization and misguided attempts at cultural assimilation further diminished our understanding of the enormous contributions that First Nations peoples made to the founding of Canada.

Canadians are starting to realize the vital importance of recognizing, acknowledging, and honouring the contributions of First Nations, and of the critical importance of reconciliation with First Nations communities.

To help accomplish these goals, this project integrates a physical monument encompassing traditional aboriginal motifs and modern architectural symbolism, First Nations oral and visual storytelling traditions, and a state of the art digital interpretive experience within a historically important and beautiful landscape setting.



douglas cardinal architect

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# concept

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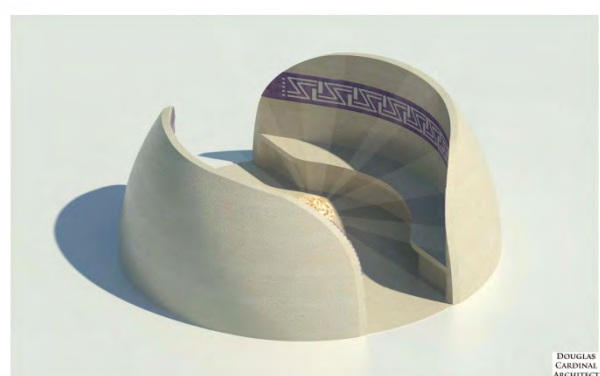
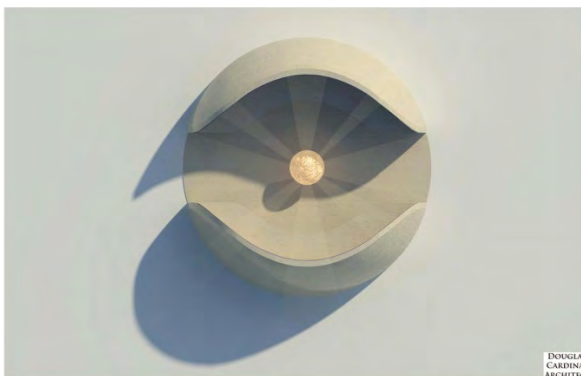
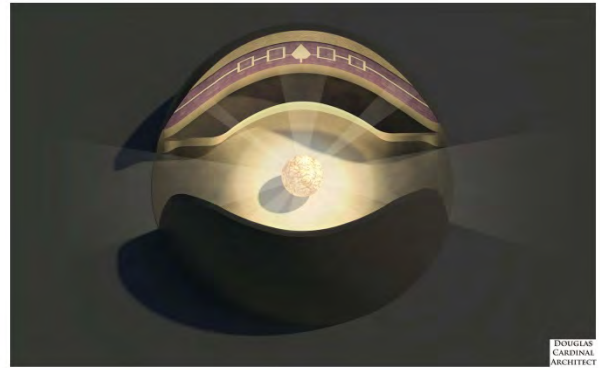
The small but highly symbolic limestone monument will amplify upon a well-known Canadian story to generate a deeper understanding of the important role First Nations played in the building of Canada.

The monument will stand in DeCew House Heritage Park in Thorold, Ontario, close to the site Canadian heroine Laura Secord first encountered First Nations warriors in DeCew's Field late in her fateful journey. They escorted her the final kilometer of her courageous trek to DeCew House to warn the British forces of an impending American invasion. Following her warning, British and First Nations forces were able to mount an offensive that resulted in a definitive defeat of the American invaders in the Battle of Beaverdams, arguably changing the course of Canadian history.

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But instead of merely re-telling the familiar but very incomplete Eurocentric narrative of Laura Secord's famous trek, this monument helps reveal the central role of the Haudenosaunee and other allies in the pivotal Battle of Beaverdams. The battle was fought almost entirely by First Nations forces from Kahnawà:ke and the Grand River who took on the numerically dominant and better-armed American opponents in defence of Canadian territory. These intertwined narratives dramatically illustrate how the often uneasy relationship between First Nations peoples and European settlers could be galvanized, under common threat, into a powerful and genuine allegiance to defend their collective national boundaries.

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*Photo courtesy Blair Gable, Toronto Star*

## design

We are proud and honoured to announce that the monument has been designed by renowned Canadian architect **Douglas Cardinal**.

Douglas Cardinal (Siksika [Blackfoot]), is celebrated for his signature architectural style comprised of curvaceous lines, organic forms, and nature-inspired aesthetics. He has generously donated his detailed design concept to this project, and will oversee the development of the monument to completion.

Cardinal's design is a distinctive and highly symbolic circular monument made of solid limestone. The circle is a powerful symbol of welcoming, inclusion, and protection in many Native cultures. The protective curved walls are abstract symbols of Haudenosaunee longhouses that open to the East and West, with a central hearth. The fire, a translucent sphere, also represents the sun. The glowing orb that symbolizes the fire will emit rays of light in all directions reminiscent of the campfires of the Haudenosaunee and First Nations allies and the energy of the sun.



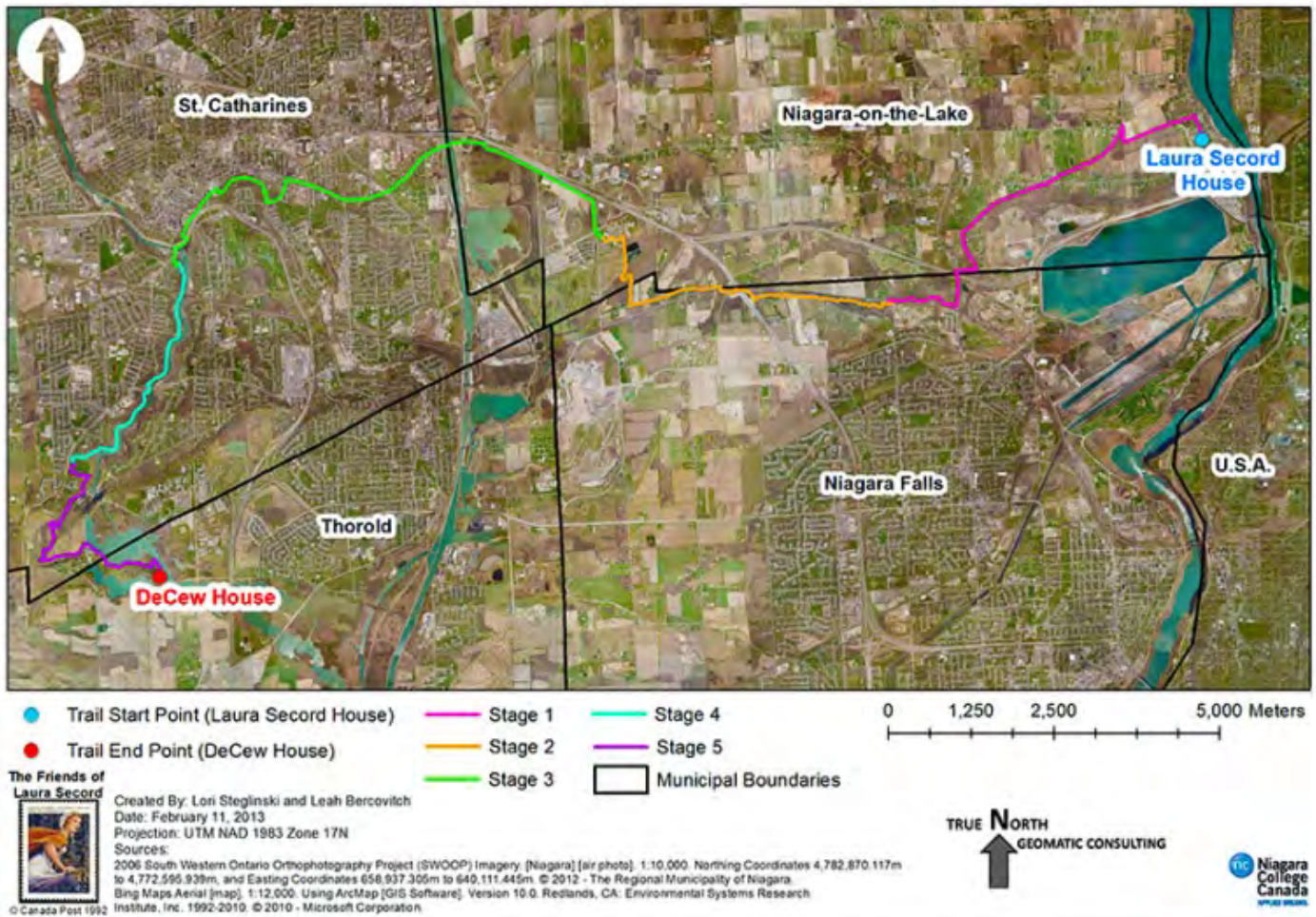
DOUGLAS  
CARDINAL  
ARCHITECT



DOUGLAS  
CARDINAL  
ARCHITECT

Embedded within the walls of the monument will be two graphic wampum belt symbols - the Hiawatha Wampum Belt (above left), which expresses the Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace, and the William Claus Pledge of the Crown Wampum Belt (above right) which symbolizes the restoration of peace and relations among Native allies and the British following the War of 1812.

## Overview of the Five Stages of the Laura Secord Legacy Trail in the Niagara Region, Ontario



The **Laura Secord Legacy Trail** (top) is 32 km long, and extends from the **Laura Secord Homestead** in Queenston (above left) to **DeCew House Heritage Park** in Thorold (above right).

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# location

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The monument will stand in DeCew House Heritage Park in the City of Thorold, Ontario, where First Nations warriors escorted Canadian heroine Laura Secord to warn the British forces of an impending American invasion. The park marks the terminus of the Laura Secord Legacy Trail, which follows everything from ancient Indian footpaths to modern city sidewalks on its 32 km - long journey from Queenston to Thorold.



*The monument is located in the eastern section of DeCew House Heritage Park, between the waters of Lake Moodie and the foundations of the historic DeCew House, where Laura Secord was escorted by First Nations warriors to meet British commander Lt. James Fitzgibbon.*

Approximately one kilometer before the Laura Secord Legacy Trail reaches the monument, a stone marker will be erected to symbolically mark the spot where Laura Secord encountered the First Nations warriors. This site is located in the City of St. Catharines. The final kilometer of trail and the monument site will be interpreted using the *interpretours* digital interpretive platform, providing a compelling interactive user experience (details follow).

# digital interpretation and education

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Visitors to the monument will use modern mobile digital technology to learn about the traditional First Nations symbols built into the monument, and their significance to the project's mandate.

The *interpretours* system, developed collaboratively with funding assistance from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, delivers site-specific, GPS-triggered multimedia content to personal mobile devices.

Visitors will first be able to use their smartphones for navigation to the monument, from any location - on foot, by bicycle, or in their cars. Upon arrival, they will be provided with an interactive multimedia experience that is keyed to their physical location, delivering location-specific wayfinding information and engaging interpretive content as they approach, arrive at, and contemplate the monument.



## *interpretours digital interpretive platform*

*The trail and the monument will be interpreted using a state of the art digital interpretive system (interpretours), developed collaboratively by the Friends of Laura Secord. It delivers site-specific, GPS-triggered multimedia content to personal mobile devices.*

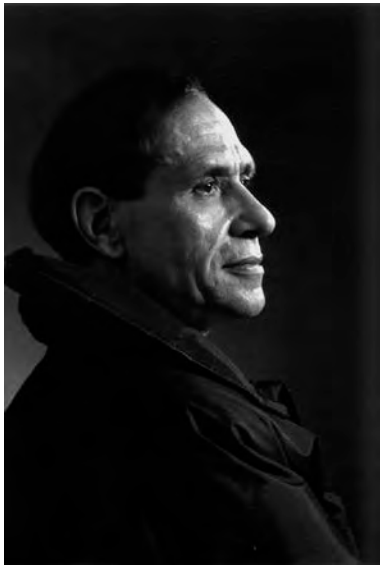
# dedication

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This project is dedicated to the proposition that the commonalities and shared experiences that bind us together as allies today must become much stronger than our historic differences.

The spirit of reconciliation pervades this monument at many levels - but reconciliation is not a simple goal. Douglas Cardinal himself speaks frankly about the degree to which Native peoples have been marginalized in our history, and how he himself has struggled for a lifetime to reconcile his personal identity and professional activities with individuals, institutions, organizations, and governments that so often do not understand or appreciate the role, perspectives, ethos, and rights of First Nations peoples.

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*Photo: Yousef Karsh*

*"For centuries Native peoples have been marginalized and erased from our history. However, as we enter what appears to be a new era offering opportunities for genuine acknowledgment and reconciliation among those who contributed to Canada's inception, defence, culture, national character, and wealth, I felt compelled to become involved in this project."*

- Douglas Cardinal

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Senior Advisors Tim Johnson (Mohawk) and Larry McDermott (Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation) both understand these issues intimately. Johnson is the former Associate Director for Museum Programs at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian and McDermott is Director of the aboriginal organization Plenty Canada and a former member of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

It was through their acquaintance and friendship with Cardinal that the architect was drawn into the memorial project. In 2006 they facilitated a rapprochement between Cardinal and the Smithsonian, resulting in an important spirit of reconciliation that was extended to this memorial.

It was a natural progression to apply this positive energy to a memorial that would honour both the spirit and duty of reconciliation at the destination point of Laura Secord's historic walk during Canada's 150th Anniversary.

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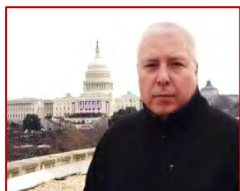
As senior advisors to the Friends of Laura Secord, Tim Johnson and Larry McDermott were central in engaging Douglas Cardinal as architect and designer of this small but profoundly significant monument at DeCew House Heritage Park.

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"This exquisite monument will serve as a symbol for our community educating Canadians on the role that indigenous groups courageously exhibited during the Battle of Beaverdams, while also raising awareness of the vital contributions that First Nations peoples have made in building our great country."

**Vance Badawey**, Member of Parliament for Niagara Centre



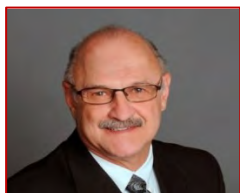
"On the road to reconciliation the first step is to remove the obstructions of prejudice and ignorance through education. And this inspirational architectural sculpture designed by Douglas Cardinal — imbued as it is with aesthetic beauty and deep symbolic meaning — moves us closer to that goal by evoking the power, spirit, and reality of the Indigenous origins of Canada."

**Tim Johnson**, Mohawk, former Associate Director for Museum Programs, Smithsonian's Museum of the American Indian, and Senior Advisor, Friends of Laura Secord



"This project shows how people from vastly different cultural backgrounds can come together and work together with powerful results. The monument is a stunning piece of art to recognize another significant contribution of indigenous people."

**Valerie Pringle**, Veteran Broadcaster  
Honorary Chair, Friends of Laura Secord



"On behalf of Thorold City Council, I am thrilled to hear the news of the funding received by the Friends of Laura Secord from the Canada 150 Fund to construct a memorial at DeCew House Heritage Park in Thorold. This monument will serve as a physical reminder of the reconciliation process that has begun between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians."

**Ted Luciani**, Mayor, City of Thorold



"What an honour it is to be involved with the establishment of this timely and compelling monument. It is a testament to all that is positive and enduring between First Nations peoples and the rest of our nation, as well as a celebration of the exceptional talent and vision of Douglas Cardinal."

**Donna Scott, O.C.** Founder, 'Flare' Magazine; former VP of Publishing, Maclean Hunter; former Chair, Canada Council for the Arts; and former executive Director, Ontario Arts Council

# project beneficiaries

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The monument is comprised of traditional elements (timeless stone, ancient First Nations symbolism, compelling historic narratives), juxtaposed with contemporary components (modern architectural design, dramatic low-energy LED lighting, state of the art digital multimedia interpretation). Visitors will be drawn to its enduring symbolism, permanence, and timeless materials, and will be excited by its digital sophistication, dynamic outdoor trailside location, and opportunities for an 'active and interactive' educational experience.

First Nations peoples will be acknowledged and honoured directly by the monument, using their own architectural expression, symbolism, stories, and voices.

Multi-generational Canadians will benefit by understanding how the familiar narratives they grew up with can be made more inclusive, recognizing and celebrating the contributions of First Nations peoples.

Inclusiveness is a pervasive Canadian virtue. Thanks to support from the Rick Hansen Foundation and others, the project will feature an accessible pathway to allow those with mobility issues to more easily engage in the history at the site.

New Canadians will benefit by hearing a more complete and comprehensive version of Canada's national narrative that incorporates the role of First Nations peoples from the outset. Digital translation tools integrated into the interpretive platform will expand the reach of text-based content to more than 80 languages, and the platform's inherent modularity and flexibility will allow for the incorporation of additional content in as many languages as time and budgets permit.



*Project team members Robert Watson, Idoia Arana-Beobide de Cardinal, Caroline McCormick, Douglas Cardinal (architect), Tim Johnson, and David T. Brown at the Secord Homestead in July 2016.*

Additionally, in many ways, Laura Secord represents a wide spectrum of ordinary people, female and male, native-born and immigrant, whose daily struggles and contributions to the building of the nation went largely unnoticed, but who rose to the challenges of their circumstances with exceptional courage and heroism. Her story resonates with the Canadian public, and evokes a wide range of noble traits associated with her exploits.

## partners

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All worthy charitable initiatives rely upon the generosity and goodwill of many contributors. Partners already committed to assisting the Friends of Laura Secord to complete this project include:

DOUGLAS  
CARDINAL  
ARCHITECT



Canada

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We look forward to expanding our circle of donors and partners  
so this visionary initiative can achieve its full potential.

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# summary

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Over the past 150 years, Canadians have documented the evolution of the nation by celebrating leaders from the political, military, and demographic mainstream. But the story is incomplete.

On the eve of Canada's Sesquicentennial, we will build an interactive interpreted monument that will amplify upon a well-known Canadian historical narrative to emphasize the vital contributions of First Nations peoples, and to remind Canadians of the critical importance of reconciliation and fellowship with First Nations communities.

Douglas Cardinal's iconic monument combines timeless artisanal stonework, traditional aboriginal motifs, and First Nations storytelling traditions with modern architectural symbolism and contemporary digital interpretation. It will stand in DeCew House Heritage Park in Thorold, Ontario, where First Nations warriors escorted Canadian heroine Laura Secord to warn the British forces of an impending American invasion.

Instead of merely re-telling the familiar but incomplete Eurocentric story, this project reveals how the battle was fought and won almost entirely by First Nations warriors – a feat which symbolizes many other profoundly important contributions and sacrifices made by First Nations peoples over the course of Canadian history. This story shows in microcosm how the relationship between new settlers and First Nations peoples was galvanized into a genuine and powerful alliance to defend their shared interests – a covenant that must be revisited today.



The monument will allow for interactive reflection upon events that took place in Niagara, but which were echoed across the nation - events which symbolize the wide range of First Nations contributions to the formation of Canada, and which deserve to be recognized, shared, and honoured by Canadians in our sesquicentennial year and beyond.

## The Friends of Laura Secord

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The Friends of Laura Secord is a not-for-profit organization which was formally established in October 2010 to preserve, strengthen and perpetuate the legacy of Canadian heroine Laura Secord, so it can continue to inspire and educate future generations about the many heroes, both famous and unsung, who helped to define this country.



Previous successful Friends of Laura Secord initiatives include researching and mapping Laura Secord's historic 1813 trek; designing, engineering, and constructing a suspension bridge across Twelve Mile Creek at Laura's Crossing; digital scanning and 3-D reproduction of Canadian sculptor Mildred Peel's celebrated 1901 bust of Laura Secord; launching the first annual Laura Secord Commemorative Walk that registered over 1,000 participants; and creating an enduring, 32-km long GPS-triggered multimedia interpretive trail which delivers site-specific information about the Secord legacy, Pioneering Women, First Nations peoples, Black History, Natural History, and general wayfinding to hikers on their personal mobile devices.

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### Caroline McCormick *President*

Caroline McCormick founded the Friends of Laura Secord in October 2010. She has been active in all aspects of the organization's mandate since then, and has actively overseen the growth of the organization from a modest community group to a significant player in the heritage field. Caroline also has a genetic investment in the Secord story – she is the thrice-great-granddaughter of Laura Secord herself.



### David T. Brown *Vice-President*

Dave Brown was a founding member of the Friends of Laura Secord, and has been involved in all aspects of the organization's development through the years as well as spearheading the digital interpretation of the Secord legacy. A professor in the Department of Geography and Tourism Studies at Brock University, Dr. Brown is a co-developer of the *interpretours* digital interpretive platform and a strong proponent of field-based experiential learning for cultural history, natural history, and local heritage.

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## who was laura secord?

On the evening of June 21, 1813 Laura Secord overheard American officers at her home in Queenston discuss plans to capture a British outpost located at John DeCew's House, 32 kilometres away, near the area called Beaver Dams. Early the next morning, Laura left her wounded husband and young children and walked through enemy lines and dangerous terrain to warn the British and their aboriginal allies of this impending attack by American forces.

After many hours of difficult travel on an exceptionally hot and humid day, she stumbled upon an encampment of native allies who escorted her to DeCew House to deliver her fateful message to Lt. Fitzgibbon.

Armed with this information, an ambush was laid by aboriginal forces from Kahnawà:ke and the Grand River that resulted in the surrender of nearly 600 American troops at the decisive Battle of Beaver Dams on June 24<sup>th</sup>. The victory at Beaver Dams changed the course of the war.

Laura Secord is indisputably an important figure in the canon of Canadian history. She remains an iconic figure who - perhaps more than anyone - represents the quiet determination and exceptional resolve of ordinary citizens to preserve and protect the values central to Canadian society.

Her story of courage, determination, fortitude and resourcefulness captured the imagination of Canadians from coast to coast and continues to inspire today. It is a story for all Canadians, and helps to highlight the important engagement of women, aboriginal peoples, and everyday citizens in Canada's evolving narrative.

Laura Secord was designated a 'Person of National Historic Significance' by the Minister of Canadian Heritage for her heroic actions during the War of 1812.

[www.friendsoflaurasecord.com](http://www.friendsoflaurasecord.com)

*For more information on the*

# first nations peace monument

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