

## OUR PURPOSE

With the dedication of this statue, we, the present inhabitants of the Fox River Valley, honor the memory of the Potawatomi Indian Nation. They called themselves the Neshnabek which translates literally as the People. They hunted these lands, they fished these streams, they planted these fields for almost one hundred years. We owe them our gratitude and respect. Many a pioneer was saved by them during the Black Hawk Indian War. Many a pioneer was sustained by them in hard times. They were generally a peaceful race whose only wish was to co-exist with their white neighbors.

## THE PROJECT

In 1985, members of the St. Charles Rotary Club suggested a new community service project: replace the Pottawatomie Park Indian statue that had been vandalized and destroyed in 1965.

What gave hope that such an ambitious goal might be feasible was that the Rotary Club already had the sculptor. Guy Bellavar, a new resident and Rotary Club member, would donate much of his work on the statue.

As interest spread, St. Charles business leaders proposed that a special organization be created that would allow the whole community to participate in the project.

Therefore, in early 1986, the Pottawatomi Indian Statue

Fund, Inc., was founded to raise the funds and guide the project to its successful conclusion. Imaginations soared. Make a bigger Indian. Put it where everyone could see it. The committee evaluated multiple sites. The bank of the Fox River adjacent to the river walk seemed the logical place. The city would donate the use of the land.

To promote further community interest, Bellavar spent April and May of 1987 at the St. Charles Mall where he sculpted the styrofoam model for the statue.

School children collected their pennies. Businesses donated money and services. Donors of \$250 or more have their names immortalized on a bronze plaque.

Cash donations ultimately exceeded \$85,000. The value of additional volunteer services and materials is incalculable.

## THE STATUE

In the language of the Potawatomi, neshnabewokamek means "leader of the people". The new statue represents one of those

leaders. Though symbolic, it is historically accurate. Like the people he represents, this Indian braves the world and the elements. The rugged, inscrutable face looks westward across the river. His long hair blows freely in the wind. A bearskin robe partially covers his deerskin shirt and leggings. He holds a "calumet", a peace pipe.

The statue stands on the east side of the Fox River a few hundred feet north of the Main Street bridge. The city accepts

ownership of the statue and will maintain it in perpetuity.

The base of poured and reinforced concrete is six feet high and eight by ten feet wide. Bronze plaques are embedded on three of the four sides. The rest of the base is finished with crushed stone to match the wall of the river bank.

The styrofoam model was made in 120 separate pieces which were sent to the Artworks Foundry, Lawrenceville, Pa., for casting. The 120 separate bronze pieces were then welded together and the seams chased so as to be invisible. After assembly, the entire statue was sandblasted and painted with a chemical solution to give it the final patina.

Fifteen and a half feet tall, the hollow statue contains almost four tons of bronze. The bronze is one-half inch thick for the feet and legs but tapers gradually to one-fourth inch thick for the head.

## THE SCULPTOR

Guy Bellavar took every art course his schools offered. He

was also a high school gymnast, a college graduate with an economics degree, and a Xerox Company sales representative. But the need to create brought him back to the art world where he has worked full time since 1976. Some of his commissioned works can be seen at H. J. Heinz Corp., Pittsburgh, Pa.; Ram Construction Co., Canonsburg, Pa.; Arthur Anderson & Co. Center for Professional Development, St. Charles, Il. and Computer Bay, St.

Charles, II.

## THE PREVIOUS STATUE

The head is all that remains of the first Pottawatomie Indian statue dedicated on August 19, 1915 by Wilfred M. Doherty with these words:

"A great moralist might find in this statue a sermon in bronze. The same great blue sky, the same green woodland, the same gliding river which those keen eyes delighted in, are here today...There is in every human heart an appreciation of nature and nature's beauty, and an instinctive interest in the people of the past. This vicinity is rich in Indian legend and tradition. The Pottawatomie immigrated from Canada at an early date in the history of this territory. The last of the red men to leave this region were the Pottawatomie who were driven westward in 1835-1836. The valley of the Fox was their favorite abiding place and their

sorrow when removed was deep and bitter."

## THE HISTORY OF THE POTAWATOMI

Glacial ice covered much of North America when the forbears of American Indians entered the unpopulated New World 10,000 to 20,000 years ago. They came from Asia across the Bering Strait



into Alaska. As the last Ice Age receded, streams, flowers, meadows, and forests appeared in all their grandeur. The northern lakes of Wisconsin and Michigan teemed with wild rice and waterfowl. A copper culture thrived near Lake Superior before 3,000 B.C. Later, the mysterious mound builders inhabited the shores of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and their tributaries, including the Fox.

The northeastern Woodland Indians entered our written history through reports of French explorers who set up a vast fur-trading system by 1612 - eight years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock.

The Indians generally welcomed the French, whose emphasis was on trade. The English, however, were interested in land acquisition and permanent settlements. They felt an obligation to make formal agreements and buy the land from the presumed Indian landholders.

The United States even stated this policy in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, one of the first declarations of the new U. S. Congress:

"The utmost good faith shall always be

observed toward the Indians, their lands and  
property shall never be taken from them without  
their consent; and in their property, rights, and  
liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed,  
unless in just and lawful wars authorized by  
Congress; but laws founded in justice and humanity shall  
from time to time be made, for preventing wrongs done to

them, and for preserving peace and friendship with them."

The Potawatomi originated in lower Canada and upper Michigan. Indian population pressures pushed the Potawatomi southward along both shores of Lake Michigan and into northern Indiana and Illinois. Their large scale colonization in Illinois occurred after 1750. Their semi-nomadic villages stretched from the Rock River on the west, south to Peoria, and east to Lake Michigan.

As the white settlers continued their relentless westward advance, encroachment on Indian lands increased. Respect for Indian rights did not last long. The European settlers felt that they had a "manifest destiny" to subdue and settle the land.

Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in 1831:

"The Europeans continued to surround the Indians on every side. The Indians were isolated in their own country and their race only constituted a little colony of troublesome strangers in the midst of a numerous and dominant people."

The long years of border clashes and Indian wars inevitably

culminated in the defeat of the Indians. The Indians ceded all of their claims to their lands in multiple peace treaties.

Shabni (Shabonna), a peace chief and spokesman for the Potawatomi, was born in Ohio in 1775 and died in 1859. A true friend of the white settlers, he observed:

"In my youthful days, I have seen large herds of buffalo on these prairies but they are here no more.

For hundreds of miles no white man lived but now trading

posts and settlers are found throughout the country, and in a few years the smoke from their cabins will ascend from every grove....The red man must leave the land of his youth and find a new home in the far west.

The armies of the whites are without number, like the sands of the sea."

### THE NAME

Since the Potawatomi had no written language there is no correct spelling of the name. In all, there have been more than 140 different spellings - from Pouutouatami, to Patawatamay, to Pottawatomie, and finally to the modern accepted spelling of Potawatomi. The meaning of the word is also disputed, although some have called them the "Keepers or Blowers of the Fire".

### THE CHIEFS

The Native American people had what was one of the most

republican forms of government ever devised. There were no kings, queens, chiefs, or all-powerful rulers of any kind.

Native Americans had "leaders". Some were civil leaders, others were religious and warrior leaders. The Potawatomi called their leaders Okama. They became leaders because of their abilities, valor, and charisma. But they could not command, they could only lead.

## THE DAILY LIFE

The Potawatomi formed large villages along streams or rivers. They were expert canoe makers and relied heavily on fish for food. Hunters killed deer, elk, bear, buffalo, and small game. Fish and game not eaten immediately were dried for winter use.

Women planted small fields of corn, beans, peas, squashes, melons, and tobacco. They gathered wild nuts, roots, and berries. They made wooden baskets and bags. They used animal skins to form other containers.

The Potawatomi constructed wooden summer houses of rectangular shape with high arched roofs of elm or cedar bark. In the winter they lived in domed wigwams constructed of saplings and covered with animal skins. Smoke from the central hearth escaped through an opening in the roof.

## INDIAN NAMES

Ashkibi - The New River

Awbenabi - He Looks Back

Kakak - The Duck Hawk

Kiwani - The Lost One

Matchigzhek - The Big Sky

Menokwet - Banked Cloud

Mzhikteno - Thunder Coming Down

Mwas - The Little Wolf

Nibakwa - He Walks at Night

Nokamin - The Early Spring

Onaxa - He Flies Away

Okamanse - The Young Leader

Shabni - He Has Paved Through

Sebekwa - River Woman

Wabansi - The First Light

Wamigo - The Thunderbird



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