

BY RUSS TARBY

Great Law of Peace Center to transform Ste. Marie

After going dark for more than a year, the old French Fort's fixin' to rekindle its fires, brighter than ever.

The facility – which has been known as Saint Marie Among the Iroquois for the past two decades – is the focus of new plans drawn up by the Onondaga Historical Association, Onondaga County, the Onondaga Nation and local colleges.

If everything proceeds as expected, the museum will reopen in 2014 as the Great Law of Peace Educational Center.

This month, OHA Executive Director Gregg Tripoli – who grew up in Liverpool – met with the board of directors of the Friends of Historic Onondaga Lake to discuss Ste. Marie's coming transformation. In October, county Legislator Judy Tassone also met with FoHOL to talk about the changes.

Jesuits and Iroquois

Since its renovation in 1991, Ste. Marie has told the story of the French Jesuits who established a mission there in 1656 as they interacted with the native Iroquois.

At the Great Law of Peace Educational Center the Jesuit presence will be represented at the mission site while the visitor center will commemorate the Iroquois Confederacy.

"It's going to be different, but it'll be a good usage," said FoHOL Board president Joe Ostuni Jr., who lives in Liverpool. "Instead of focusing on the Jesuits of the 17th century, it'll take a closer looking at the Native American component."

Tripoli first informed FoHOL of the plans at its August board meeting, and when he returned in November he was accompanied by OHA Facilities Maintenance Director Dan Connors and Development Director Lynne Pascale.

Due to budget constraints in 2002, County Parks and Recreation officially closed Sainte Marie Among the Iroquois. It reopened under volunteer power in 2004 and then merged with FoHOL in 2006.

At the Great Law of Peace Educational Center, FoHOL will no longer be involved with operational aspects of the museum.

"FoHOL's mission is to support County Parks here along Onondaga Lake," Ostuni said, "So we're going to help in any way we can."

Haudenosaunee heritage

Last week, OHA announced that Philip Arnold, the director of Native Studies at Syracuse University, will serve as director of the Great Law of Peace Educational Center. As an associate professor of religion, Arnold is certainly well-schooled in the Jesuits' influence on colonial America and their relationship with the Iroquois.

Ostuni thinks the mix of academic and Onondaga Nation personnel will enhance the new center. "It'll definitely help visitors understand Haudenosaunee heritage," he said.

Jon Anderson, a former longtime Ste. Marie volunteer who actively opposed the leasing of visitor center second-floor space to the county Soil & Water District last year, applauds the new plans.

"I'm pleased that an educational-historical initiative is being initiated," said Anderson, who is a member of the OHA board of directors and a former FoHOL member. "A shared OHA-SU- Le Moyne College venture is interesting and promising. Although the focus appears to concentrate on the Haudenosaunee scene, I trust that the Ste. Marie story

will not be entirely marginalized. That story is still an incredible local history saga worthy of attention.”

Onondaga County Parks will continue to own the facility.

White Water greens

Chef Larry Pavese outdid himself with a serving of his East Utica greens on the day before Thanksgiving at the new White Water Pub, 110 S. Willow St. Liberally seasoned with garlic and oil, a plate of the delicious greens and a slice of garlic bread sold for \$8.25.

Tent taken down

The house-sized plastic roof in front of Ophelia’s Place at 407 Tulip St. finally came down Nov. 19. Verizon apparently completed repairs to fiber-optic cables that had been damaged following a water-main break in October.

It’s about time

The Village of Liverpool Clock Campaign spearheaded by local businessman Jack Fisher has raised about one-third of the \$35,000 it needs to erect a Victorian-style timepiece at the eastern end of Washington Park. To donate, email liverpoolclockcampaign@gmail.com, or call 652-3773.