

Ancestors in the Archives

How Corn Husk, a Book, and
Photographs Opened the Museum
Doors to the Community

Woodland Cultural Centre



- Established in 1972, the Woodland Cultural Centre has a mandate to preserve, promote, and educate regarding the Woodland First Nations culture, traditions, art, history, and lifestyles, both past and present
- The Woodland Cultural Centre has three support communities – all Woodland First Nations – Six Nations of the Grand River [near Brantford], Wahta Mohawks [in Muskoka], and the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte [near Belleville]

- Due to the geographic distances between the Centre [in Brantford] and its support communities [30 minutes; 4 hours; 6 hours driving times], engaging the people of these communities has been difficult
- Centre proposed to have staff go to the support communities and offer services as enticements to have the community members make the return visits to the Centre



Ancestors in the Archives

THE BOOK

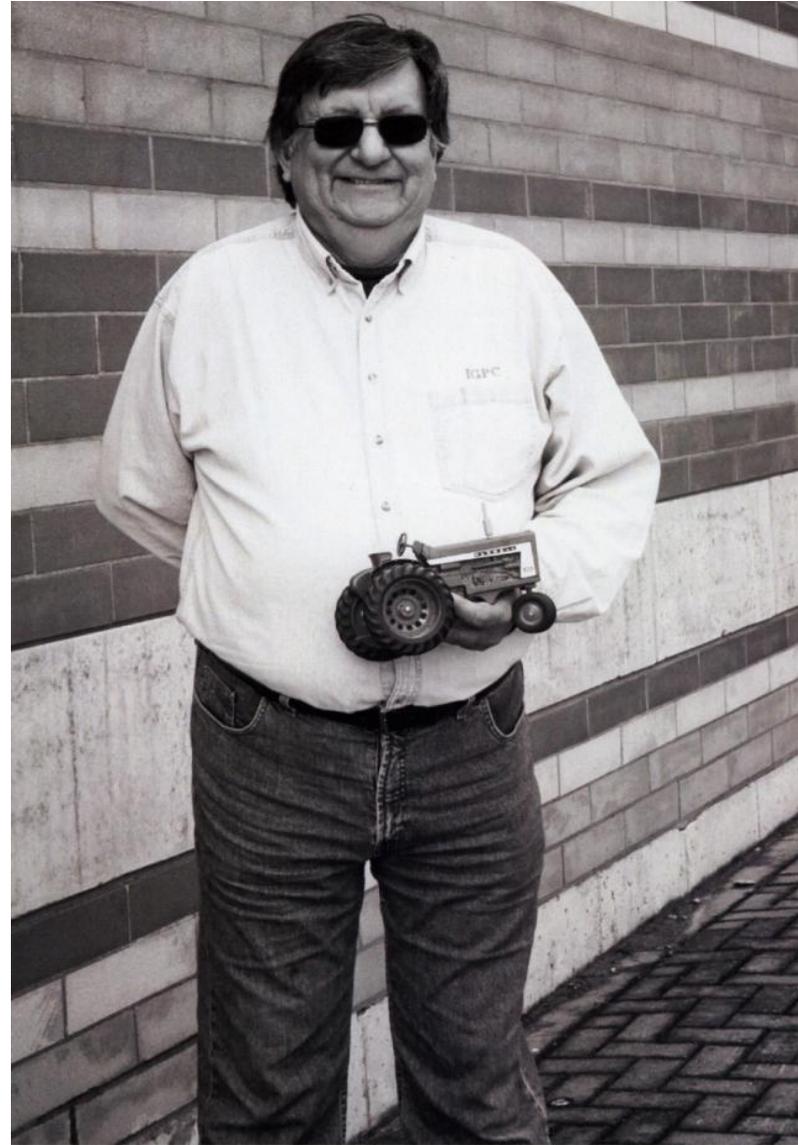
Marian Martin

- Developed out of the culminating project for ArtsAccess – a province-wide arts initiative between WCC, Art Gallery of Ontario, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, and the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery
- WCC's Education Extension Officer, Lorrie Gallant, envisioned a project bringing together people of experience [Elders] and young people in the Six Nations community

- Concept was to teach young people basic interview skills, photography, and graphic design then provide them with community members on whom to hone their newly acquired skills
- Elders would have the opportunity to interact with this younger generation and pass on their experiences, wisdom, and knowledge to a receptive audience
- Interviews and photographs of the Elders were formatted into books for community members of all ages to read, learn, and enjoy

- Both students and Elders were enthusiastic participants; school after school at Six Nation asked to have the project extended to their grade 7 & 8 students; Students were allowed to choose “their Elder” and Elders were thrilled the students wanted to speak with them specifically
- Funding for the extension of the project was gladly and enthusiastically provided by the Six Nations Community Development Fund – and offers by the jury panel to be Elders for the next round of books

Through the creation of the first round of books [there were four initial books which have since been re-published as one compilation edition], the Education Extension Officer, Lorrie, approached a local community member and asked him to act as an Elder for one of the schools. Little did the Centre suspect how this initial request would become a symbiotic relationship indicative of the mutually beneficial relationship growing between the Centre and its communities.

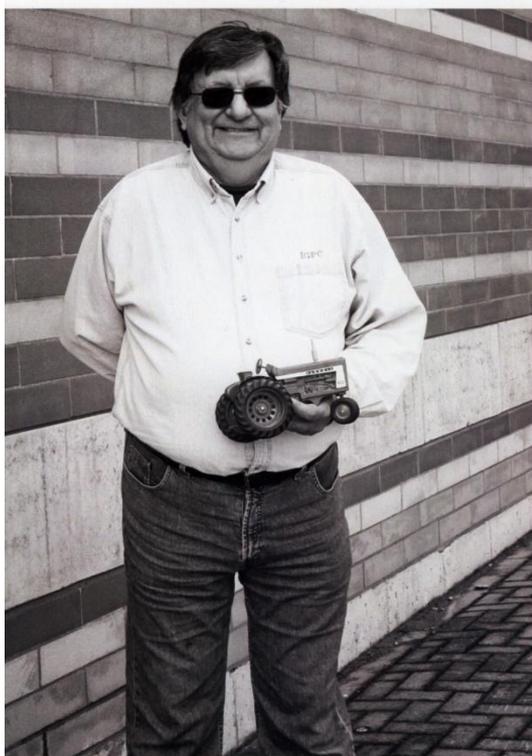


- William Barry Hill, known as Barry, is a successful crop farmer [corn & soybeans]; president of the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association; member of the Six Nations Genealogy Society; and an accomplished pianist, journalist and surveyor
- A valued member of the Six Nations of the Grand River and an accomplished individual, Barry was asked to serve as one of the Elders for the Elders Project

Barry Hill

A surveyor, a farmer, an instructor and President of the Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association

Bobby Hill
Photography: Aaron Hill



Barry Hill was destined to be a farmer. Barry Hill's father, grandmother and grandfather were farmers. They were his inspiration. Barry has two kids who he loves very much. Barry was born in 1943. He was born in Brantford, Ontario and belongs to the Mohawk nation and the wolf clan of Six Nations. His hobbies include history, playing the piano and playing the organ.

Barry attended school at S.S. #6 for grade 1-3. He also went to the original Jamieson School. He played basketball, soccer and baseball. Later, Barry went to school to be an engineer.

Barry used to have a cottage which had a garden. This is where he first started to grow soybeans. Barry travelled to England on a scholarship. He was on television in England. He had to wear a red shirt and white pants. He said they were very hot in the summer.

Barry began his farming career over thirty years ago. He was a part-time farmer since 1979 and a full-time farmer since 1993. Being a farmer in 2010 has its benefits. Barry likes the new farming technology because it produces more while using less fuel. The highlight of his farming career was when he was elected president of the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA). He enjoys running his own business and expanding his farmland. Barry also attended the international plowing match.

Barry was the first farmer to grow soybeans in the community. He promotes soybeans because lots of Natives are lactose intolerant and can't drink milk from the cows.

Farming is hard work and vacations are few. Barry's favourite vacation destination are the Rocky Mountains. He would like

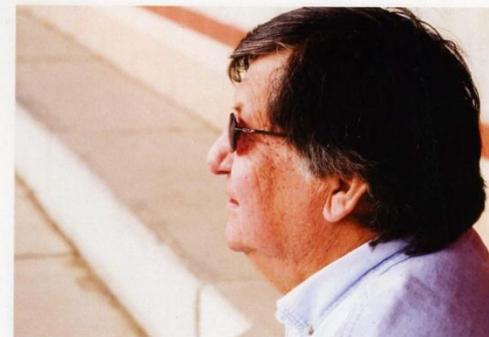
to return there and ride a train through the mountains some day.

Before he was a farmer, Barry worked at Ontario Hydro. He bought a slider which could do math. It cost him a weeks pay which was \$20 at the time. He also worked for Stelco and International Hydro. In the summer, he worked as a surveyor. All he had was a slider and an adding machine.

"If you try new things you will get job experience," says Barry Hill. When he worked in the city he wanted to go to the country. He'd rather have his own business than be a part of something else.

He would like to invest in the food market and different foods. He would also like to expand his farm. Barry enjoys growing corn and soybeans. He goes to the stock market and buys all kinds of different food and farming supplies.

Barry brought in a box of items to share with us when we interviewed him. We found out why a farmer would have a helmet and a red suit. The reason he had the suit is because he went to France and England where he had to wear them. He had the orange helmet because he used to work for the Ontario Hydro company before he was a farmer. He also brought



in a toy tractor. He explained in the interview that it was his first toy tractor that his parents bought him from a farm show. They brought it home for him because he was too young to go.

Today, Barry has more time so he likes to write. He writes a column in the Brantford Expositor. He also goes to the

farming show in Woodstock. He likes going to the outdoor farm show. When Barry has time, he listens to music. His favourite musical artist is the young Elvis.

If Barry could have another job he would be a ferry mechanic, a tour guide and a full-time musician but not all at the same time.



Barry with his first tractor which came from the Canadian Exhibition of Farming, Toronto

Ferry Mechanic or ...

If Barry could have another job he would be a ferry mechanic, a tour guide and a full-time musician but not all at the same time.

Ferrari Mechanic?

A grayscale photograph of a cornfield. In the middle ground, a person stands next to a dog, surrounded by several large, round objects, possibly baskets or barrels. The field is filled with corn plants, some standing tall and others cut down. The background shows a line of trees and a cloudy sky.

Ancestors in the Archives

THE CORN HUSK

- In the early of autumn of 2009, the Museum Education program and the Education Extension program simultaneously decided to begin offering corn husk doll-making workshops using authentic materials and techniques where compatible with our young audiences
- Prior to this time a hard to work with paper ribbon was used in place of corn husk as a means to be hygienic as possible – this was hard to form dolls with so a wreath craft was offered but this was not a traditional undertaking

- A decision was made to scrap the “hygienic” material and use real corn husk that we would pre-treat with bleach to remove any nastiness

BUT...

- Where were we to get corn husk from in November?



Barry Hill

[with his first “real” tractor in 1979]

- Having made a connection with Barry in her role as facilitator of the Elders Project, Lorrie knew Barry was a corn farmer and that he was currently harvesting a crop
- Lorrie made the call and Barry obligingly arranged a time for Education staff to “pick corn husk” at one of his corn fields – as he needed the corn and we needed the husk a beautiful symbiotic relationship was born in the tradition of our ancestors wherein no piece of the corn was wasted



The Process of Picking Corn Husk or How Lorrie saved Tara's Life

- Barry kindly provides large receptacles for us to hold the corn; once these bins are filled he drives the Corn Picker over and we throw [not dump] the husked corn into the blades for collection; we keep the husk in Rubbermaid containers and garbage bags for travel back to the Centre





- Once at the Centre the husks are soaked in bleach water [We tried to be conservative with the bleach but through experimentation have preferred more bleach to get the husk almost completely free of dark colouring.]
- We “package” the husks into bundles so participants have the needed number of husks



Ancestors in the Archives

THE PHOTOGRAPHS

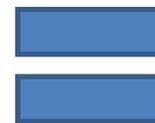
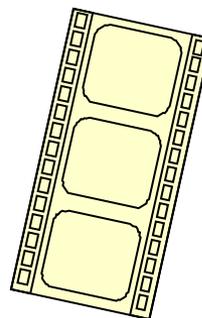
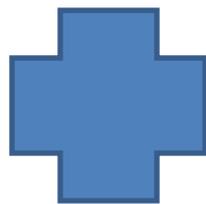
Elam Froman

- Wearing a hat other than that of Museum Education Co-Ordinator, Tara was asked to begin sorting, organizing, digitizing, and identifying the thousands of photographs in the Centre collection, archival and contemporary
- Sorting, organizing, and digitizing have been a chore but not a obstacle – identifying people in photographs over 100 years old is a problem and an individual is limited by the range of their memory

- People love old pictures – we all want a connection with our past, be it family or community
- The Centre has plenty of old pictures that need to be identified



People



Old Photos

ANCESTORS IN
THE ARCHIVES

- In February, traditionally a slow month for the Woodland Cultural Centre, the initial Ancestors in the Archives event was offered to the local community
- It was to be an afternoon of chatting with neighbours, swapping remembered stories, and reminiscing over tea and snacks all to a backdrop of a digital slide show of archival photographs
- Staff never imagined the wealth of information this “informal” event would generate – nor did we foresee the community enthusiasm for more of the same

- When advertising began for Ancestors in the Archives staff were encouraged to let their contacts in the community know of the event – we really feared no one would show up
- Lorrie contacted Barry Hill as she felt he would be interested in the event; little did she suspect Barry would mobilize the entire Ohsweken Genealogy Society who showed up en masse at the event, ignored the snacks, and got straight to business – putting names to faces



Eliza or Nancy Henry? The answer from the community, definitely Nancy!



Elam Frohman, a man Tara has heard about all her life but didn't have a face for the name until A in the A



Alma Greene, author and caster of spells – her curse is well known at Six Nations but her face had been forgotten



Left at the Museum desk with the message "You can find out who these are if you want the photo." So we did – Margie, Mike, Tom, and Spike Hill c. 1949



Wrestler from Six Nations, Mutt General



Elias Styres approx. 15 years old



Barry Hill - #2 School Choir c. 1953



Clifford Styres, community funeral director until the 1970s

- We included a selection of interesting photos that had identified people but were of community significance – the community enjoyed these reminiscences and provided details of these lives we gladly added to the records
- Barry and the Centre's retired Curator, Tom Hill, entered into a pseudo competition over who knew the most about the photos – it was very entertaining

The Great Date Fate!

The Girl of Everyone's Dreams



Upon seeing this unidentified photo Barry gave an excited “Oh” while his wife snorted and committed “There’s Barry’s first love!” Another person in the audience shouted out [while laughing] “I think she was Tom’s too.” which lead to the divulging of the STORY

- Apparently in their early teenage years both Barry and Tom had a weak spot for young lady named Loy – sadly one of them was to suffer from unrequited love
- Barry mustered all his courage and asked Loy to a dance in a nearby community; happily Loy said “Yes”
- But young Barry had a problem – how were he and his love to get to the dance?
- Barry asked his cousin, Tom, if he and his date could catch a ride with him; unhappily Tom also said “Yes”

- The night of the dance arrived, Barry, Loy, Tom, and Tom's mother were all slicked up for the dance and got there in a timely manner
- Fraught with nerves, Barry excused himself to his date and left her unattended for just a few moments
- Seeing his chance, Tom swooped in and asked Loy to dance. Thus, when Barry had recovered himself and returned to the dance he was shocked to see his date and his ride swaying on the dance floor as only 13 year olds can

- Poor Barry was the ignored wallflower for the rest of the evening, watching Tom and Loy become closer and closer
- As he sat holding up the wall and smoldering (probably next to Tom's Mom), he learned the reason for his sad date fate – Tom and Loy had been going steady but had hit a road bump in their love's journey and broken up just hours before Barry asked her out
- Little had Barry realized he was setting up a reconciliation when he asked his cousin for a ride to the dance



Ancestors in the Archives

THE FUTURE

Ancestors in the Archives Part II

- The success of this event and the great response from the Genealogy Society started ideas rolling at the Centre
- The local community wanted more interaction with this portion of the Centre's collection and were also eager to learn from the expertise of Centre staff in maintaining their own archival photos
- The day after the first Ancestors in the Archives a community member came to the Centre with 32 photo albums and picture boxes filled with every manner of photo wanting to know how she should maintain them and, by the way, did the Centre want copies of any of her collection

- The second round of Ancestors in the Archives happened recently [in September] and just by word of mouth more community members came to the Centre wanting to see photos
- Barry Hill and his wife brought in their personal collection to be digitized and shown to the community as well – Barry's mother had been the school teacher at a one-room school for decades and had bequeathed an extensive collection of school photos to her son – the community loved seeing themselves 60 to 80 years ago

- Wanting copies of the photos they enjoyed, Ancestors has also become a slight revenue stream for the Centre – although we do not charge very much to make copies for this event, it has generated some dollars
- In return the community is identifying photos for the Centre and even randomly arriving at the Centre to have Centre staff digitize their own photos for use in future Ancestors so they can get their pictures identified

- Plans are in motion to host an archival photography workshop for the community – a local conservator has been approached to prepare a presentation on different types of archival photographic materials and how to preserve and care for these items; Centre staff will provide basic instruction on digitizing and displaying archival photos [or better yet copies of archival photos]; and we aim to have an archival supplies company rep on hand to answer questions and provide product
- Years from now, when the photo collection is organized, digitized, and uniformly catalogued the Centre hopes to create an exhibition on Ancestors in the Archives – there is nothing like reminiscing over reminiscences

Ancestors in the Archives

WHAT WORKED & WHAT NEEDED TO BE REWORKED – Q & A

Worked

- Have applied for second round of funding to expand the project with a new group of Grade 7/8 students & other 2 support communities are seeking funding for their versions
- Will be going to “pick corn husk” any day now
- February 2012 is the next go-round for Ancestors in the Archives [many seniors in the community have requested notice of the date]

Reworked

- We wouldn't dare change the Elders Project, the community would revolt ,although we are allowed to expand book size
- When picking corn husk make sure to wear work gloves – husk is sharp and bits into flesh like a paper cut
- Do not facebook or email advertisements for events aimed at people over 60 – very few are into facebook – word of mouth and mail outs work best

Worked

- Offered duplicate copies at a lower price for photos featured in Ancestors to those attending
- Offering to digitize community members archival photos with the condition the Centre had the right to use them in Ancestors or other shows – thereby getting a more complete community portrait (seeing what is out there)

Reworked

- Developed photo request forms specifically for Ancestors so people were not waiting around during the event for photos & staff was not rushing to fulfill requests
- Need to work at finding a price point that is fair for community members but also does not have staff working at a loss (USB stick version of photos under priced)

The Woodland Cultural Centre would like to say
Nya: weh Go:wa
to Barry Hill and his wife, Cheryle, for their continued
support of the Centre and their commitment to all
Six Nations community endeavours

All Photos of Barry Hill are courtesy of Barry Hill & can not be used for any purpose other than presentation to the OMA by the Woodland Cultural Centre. As per Barry Hill, said photos can not be duplicated or used for advertising, promoting or any other purpose.