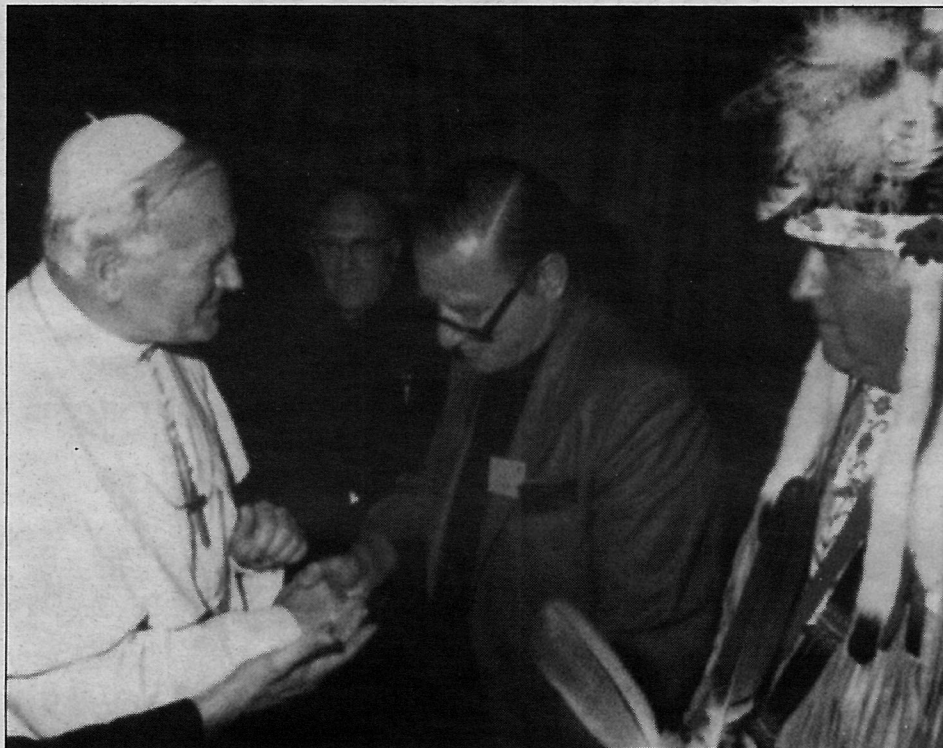


Former grand chief looks back on historical Kahnawake events



COURTESY KATERI BULLETIN

Andrew Delisle Sr. and Father Lajoie meet with Pope John-Paul II at Vatican City in 1980 for the beatification of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. The photo appeared on page 20 of the 150th anniversary edition of 'Kateri' in 1995.

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THE EASTERN DOOR

Published in 1995, the 150th anniversary edition of The Kateri Center's bulletin 'Kateri', holds many stories within its 31 pages, though we were given only a glimpse through photographs of major events in the St. Francis-Xavier Mission's history.

Andrew Delisle Sr., now an elder advisor for the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake, was grand chief during a few of those events and he looked back on two featured in the magazine.

The first took place not in Kahnawake, but in Vatican City for Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha's beatification in the summer of 1980. A large group from Kahnawake and Akwesasne flew to Rome for the ceremony headed by the Pope John-Paul II, a man who was generous with his time.

"He had all these Cardinals around him, you know, they told us what to do, and they said 'ok, you'll have six minutes with him'," recalled Delisle, representing the Mohawk people, dressed traditionally in buckskin and a Kustowa, pictured on the left with the Pope and Father Lajoie.

"Then they would say 'now you only have four minutes, then two,' but when I finally got to meet him we spoke for 22 minutes. He just kept talking, he didn't care."

Years later, in the late 1980s, he met the very same Pope at an event in Quebec City. "He came right up to me and said 'I know you'," said Delisle, who was wearing the same outfit, probably why he was so easily recognized. "I guess it was memorable."

The second event occurred one year later, again involving Kateri, when a Canadian stamp was made in her image. Delisle, who was also president of the



COURTESY KATERI BULLETIN

Delisle Sr. looks on as defense minister Gilles Lamontagne presents postage stamps with Kateri on them to Bishop Bernard Hubert in 1981. The photo was taken by Paul Hamel, likely the official photographer of the occasion.

Indians of Quebec Association at the time, invited all the regional chiefs from Quebec to the official launching on April 26, 1981 at the church.

Pictured on the right, Delisle stands with Bishop Bernard Hubert and defense minister Gilles Lamontagne. "Canada gave us each a framed sheet of about 50 stamps," said Delisle, who still keeps the collector's item at home.

The 17-cent postage stamps were actually in circulation, for sale at Canada Post offices. "If we ever have an official museum here, I would put it in," he said.

He still has the outfit and the Kustowa he wore in these photos, they are one in the

same, however, he did have three other Kustowas made by local talent.

Unfortunately, along with many other items, they burned in the fire at Khanata Plaza a few years ago, where he had his Native arts store Okwari. It's now located behind Playground Poker.

The outfits remain intact as they were kept at a separate location. "I used to get them to make the base (of the Kustowa) and then I would add to it," said Delisle, who was MCK grand chief from 1964 to 1972 and again from 1976 to 1982. "I still wear this one when necessary."

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