

# Meeting Again: Bringing Archaeologists & First Nations Together in the St. Lawrence Valley, Québec

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## Who are the St. Lawrence Iroquoians?

The identity of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians (SLI) is a long-lasting mystery in archaeology. It lies in the fact the groups encountered by Jacques Cartier in his voyage (1534-1542) had left the St. Lawrence Valley by the time Samuel de Champlain arrived in Québec in 1603, and were never to be encountered again as a separate cultural entity.

Currently, two different viewpoints exist on the matter:

1. Hurons-Wendat and the Mohawks believe themselves to be the direct descendants of the SLI;
2. Archaeologists, however, assign the SLI a distinct identity from that of the historic Iroquoian groups.

## Issues

The disagreement over the identity of the SLI between the archaeologists, the Hurons-Wendat and the Mohawks has resulted in a lack of communication and collaborative research. This can translate unintentionally into important consequences for the latter communities :

Denial of the validity of their oral tradition



Denial of their identity and their right over the SLI cultural heritage



Marginalization of the Indigenous perspective



Power imbalance in research

***How can the views of the archaeologists and those of the First Nations be reconciled when archaeological data and Indigenous knowledge conflict over issues relating to identity, history and heritage?***

## Preliminary Objectives of my PhD Dissertation Research

I wish to develop a *community-based research project* with the Hurons-Wendat:

1. To document how Québec archaeologists and Hurons-Wendat view a) the role of Western science in documenting the past; b) the role of Indigenous epistemologies in documenting the past; c) "identity" and "heritage".
2. To compare and contrast these views, looking for areas of convergence and divergence in order to build a more respectful, representative framework for future collaborative research.

## Methods

1. Qualitative: investigating the layers of meanings given to recurrent concepts used when investigating the past (e.g.: artifact, archaeological site, identity, heritage, ancestor) through literature review and semi-structured interviews.
2. Quantitative: quantifying the convergence and divergence in order to build a model for reconciliation.

## Relevance and Benefits

An inclusive archaeology is necessary to distance our field from colonial practices and have a positive impact on First Nations. Developing a dialogue between Québec archaeologists and Hurons-Wendat will most likely result in:

- a reevaluation of archaeological practices;
- a better integration of Indigenous peoples and worldviews in archaeology;
- a better understanding of Indigenous peoples' rights over their cultural heritage.

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