

# **Pathway to Peace: What Heritage-based Collaboration offers the Cross-border Niagara Region**

Kerry Mitchell



**“The ideal site for the world peace capital”**

*Niagara*

**“... here, there is peace”.**

*“Surely to those who will implement the purpose of the United Nations, it will be inspiring to execute their high duties in a locality steeped in traditions of peace and good -neighborliness, among peoples of various ancestry who have forged indissoluble bonds of international good will and co-operation, and who have made peace work.”*

*Drawn from the Canadian proposal to establish the UN at Navy Island; (McGreevy, “Imagining Niagara” p .66)*

***“Niagara should be listed among the great treasures of the world for its natural scenery.”***

*Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, General Plan for the Improvement of the Niagara Reservation, 1887*

***“We must ask ourselves if we are leaving for future generations an environment that is as good or better than we found.”***

*Theodore Roosevelt, 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States and NYS legislator credited with the legislation creating the Niagara Reservation, America’s first state park.*

Symbols of peace and friendship between Canada and the United States can be found in monuments, agreements, bridges, official statements and individual relationships. The integration of the Canadian and U.S. economies is a testament to it, as is the joint stewardship of the Great Lakes, and the binational response to the events of 9/11. Whether overt or covert, symbols of peace and friendship are quite simply, everywhere. When the history of the relationship has already spoken so clearly to these ideals, what then is the benefit of yet another symbol of peace between Canada and the United States? This paper aims to address that question by putting forward the basis for re-imagining the cross-border Niagara region as an International Peace Park.

## History and Goals of International Peace Parks

Responding to the environmental destruction and aggression that plagued many world regions in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as to the growing attention being given to environmental issues by the international community, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) began promoting Parks for Peace in 1997. Enhancing regional cooperation, biodiversity conservation, conflict prevention and sustainable regional development are the goals of this noble initiative whose roots can be traced back to 1932 when the world's first International Peace Park was established between Waterton Lakes National Park in British Columbia and Glacier National Park in Montana to commemorate the long history of peace and friendship between Canada and the United States.

Running parallel to the global rise in environmental awareness, regulation and enforcement is a corresponding increase in the number of designated protected areas and adjoining protected areas around the world. The World Conservation Union documents 59 groups of adjoining protected areas in 1988, and by 2001, that figure had grown to 169, representing 666 individual protected areas. Amongst these transboundary protected areas, just two are named as International Peace Parks, or more accurately, Parks for Peace (Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and Parque Internacional La Amistad between Cost Rica and Panamá). To better understand the distinctions between the various labels/levels of protection, three key definitions drawn from the World Conservation Union's (IUCN) 2001 publication "Transboundary Protected Areas for Peace and Cooperation" are found below: (Sandwith, T., Shine, C., Hamilton, L. and Sheppard, D. 2001). *See Figure 1.*

**Protected Area:** An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means. Protected areas can follow any of the formal IUCN definitions related to: Strict Nature Preserve; National Park; Natural Monument; Habitat/Species Management Area; Protected Landscape/Seascape; or Managed Resource Protected Area.

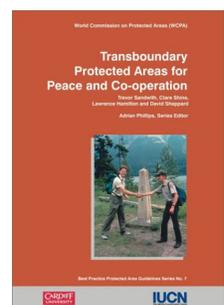


Figure 1.

***Transboundary Protected Areas (TBPA):*** An area of land and/or sea that straddles one or more boundaries between states, sub-national units such as provinces and regions, autonomous areas and/or areas beyond the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction, whose constituent parts are especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed co-operatively through legal or other effective means.

***Parks for Peace:*** Transboundary protected areas that are formally dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and to the promotion of peace and cooperation.

Developed expressly with the twin and equal purposes of protection and cooperation, *Parks of Peace* include specific objectives such as:

- Supporting long-term cooperative conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services, and natural and cultural values across boundaries;
- Promoting landscape-level ecosystem management through integrated bio-regional land-use planning and management;
- Sharing biodiversity and cultural resource management skills and experience, including co-operative research and information management;
- Enhancing the benefits of conservation and promoting benefit-sharing across boundaries among stakeholders

## **Global Peace Parks Initiative**

Since 1997, the efforts of many international partners led by the UN University for Peace and the World Conservation Union have created the Global Peace Parks Initiative -- an international Partnership for Peace Parks designed to provide a global framework for promoting, support and international recognition of Peace Parks. With the increasing attention given to Peace Parks as a valuable tool in high-level negotiations, the international partners have proclaimed Peace Parks as a concept “whose time has come” and which has the potential to link differing, yet complementary agendas.

As identified in a UN University for Peace document dated 12 April 2002, (VRI/GPP/1.1, 2002), the specific objectives of the Global Partnership project are:

- To catalyze, promote and support the establishment of new Peace Parks and strengthening of existing ones and according them international recognition and status;
- To provide the framework for cooperation and consultation amongst the organizations and parties actively interested and involved in the establishment, management and support of Peace Parks;

- To assist in the empowerment of local communities and indigenous peoples in Peace Parks areas to actively participate in and benefit from the development and implementation of Peace Parks initiatives through training and capacity building;
- To help make Peace Parks centres of education, research and related activities particularly focussed on cooperative approaches to peace, conflict prevention, conservation and resource management and ecotourism consistent with and supportive of such activities;
- To develop, adopt, test and disseminate Best Practice Guidelines and a Code of Conduct for Peace Parks;

Through a Resource Centre and Network, to promote and facilitate the exchange of information and data, access to specialized expertise, capacity building, legal and technical assistance for planning, developing and implementing Peace Parks;

- To establish a Peace Parks Council and Technical Advisory Committee to promote, oversee and mobilize support for Peace Parks through the above activities.

### *Designation Criteria*

Significant work has been done to develop the International Peace Park concept much of which is articulated in the 2001 publication released by the World Conservation Union entitled, “Transboundary Protected Areas for Peace and Cooperation”. This publication lays out the framework for establishing Peace Parks -- including key definitions, objectives and benefits of Peace Parks, draft codes/agreements for cooperation and suggested designation criteria. As firm designation criteria and a certification process remain a goal of the Global Peace Parks Initiative, the following criteria are among those put forward as ‘interim guidance’ for International Peace Park status:

- Two protected areas sharing a common national boundary;
- There should be clear objectives for the protection of biodiversity and cultural heritage, but also clear goals for cooperation;
- A cooperation agreement between the jurisdictions;
- Cooperative management arrangements should be established by the agencies responsible for the protected areas;

Just as the United Nation’s University for Peace, in collaboration with numerous international partners, is launching its Global Peace Parks Initiative, it is important to remember that the first International Peace Park was designated in 1932 between Canada and the United States linking Waterton-Glacier National Parks. By creating the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park,

Canada and the United States sought to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary natural and cultural links between the two countries. In establishing an International Peace Park at Niagara, a cross-border region endowed with an extraordinary natural environment and a rich binational history, as well as many pressures from its powerful industrial heritage and highly trafficked transit corridors, Canada and the United States would take another step forward together, demonstrating for the world the means and benefits of complex cooperation, but also, of restoration, and of regional renewal.

## Niagara Stories

### *Nature's Majesty or Environmental Hotspot?*

The Niagara Escarpment has been described in dramatic terms by McGreevey (1994: 62), as:

A soaring 1,609 km long ridge of fossil rich sedimentary rock whose formation began over 450 million years ago and is among the oldest rock in North America, is clearly a story of the ages and today provides critical habitat to a rare, diverse and abundant array of plant and animal species; the Great Lakes, formed of glaciers 14,000 years ago and home to countless species and habitats, contain 20% of the world's fresh surface water, the planet's largest remaining supply; through the 12,000 year old and 35-mile long Niagara River flows an average of 212,000 cubic feet of water per second, dropping 325 feet along its course from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, and a spectacular 212 feet from the head of the rapids to the base of the Falls; Niagara Falls, formed from the eroding Escarpment nearly 12,000 years ago, is the third largest waterfall in the world as measured by its rushing cascade of 5,830m<sup>3</sup> water per second generating both energy and human ingenuity in unfathomable abundance; and the Whirlpool, created almost six thousand years ago, is a natural phenomenon born of the energetic flow of the river in combination with natural erosive forces acting on the gorge which have resulted in a sharp turn in the rock face circularly directing the flowing water. Majestic, sublime, massive, soaring, thundering, a sanctuary, "Nature's high altar.

Niagara's story tells of the extraordinary creative force of the divine, and of man. Harnessing the formidable energy at Niagara brought great innovation, progress, industry, and also, unintended consequences. As McGreevey suggests in *Imagining Niagara*, "Niagara was vigorously developed not because developers thought so little of the falls' natural splendour, but rather because they thought so much of it." (McGreevey, p.154) The potential of up to 8 million horsepower or 5,965,600 kilowatts of energy from hydro-electricity spawned great development along the Niagara, although unevenly from one side of the border to the other.

With the heavy industry that came to dominate the Western New York landscape also came extraordinary environmental peril. The large chemical plants at Niagara were dumping untold gallons of chemicals directly into the river. The accumulation of chemical companies' dumpings and toxins, in combination with the reduction in water flow resulting from diversions for greater hydro-electricity generation all began to show their effects in the 50's with waning fish stocks, occasional oil slicks, detectable phosphorous concentrations and human feces in

surface water. Licensed release of chemicals continued even after improvements to sewage treatment plants and a phosphorous ban in the early '70's. In a wake-up call heard the world over, the Niagara Frontier became the poster child for environmental degradation when in the late '70's Love Canal became the first toxic waste disaster in America. Built in the early 1900's by developer William Love, the canal was later used by Hooker Chemical for dumping chemical waste. If there is a positive outcome to tragedy, it is in the new understanding and awareness that emerges; from Love Canal came the impetus for the development of the national Superfund program to clean up toxic waste sites across the United States.

Not only chemical companies were using the Niagara Frontier for its dumping grounds. A 1981 interim report from the New York State Assembly Task Force on Toxic Substances noted that 37 million gallons of radioactive wastes from the "Manhattan Project" were injected in shallow wells on a Linde Air Products Co. site near the Tonawanda Channel from 1944 to 1946 (Zweig and Boyd, p.120). According, these wells had never been monitored or identified in government surveys.

While the magnitude of the toxic inputs to the Niagara emanated from point sources in Western New York, point and non-point sources in the Niagara Peninsula also contributed to the problem. Following the designation of the Niagara River as an "area of concern", the differing inputs and clean-up demands led to a cooperative, yet separate, approach to the development of remedial action plans (RAPs) for the Niagara River by the United States and Canada. In the decade which followed, a comprehensive toxics study led to the signing of the Niagara River Declaration in 1987 and with it, the development of the binational Niagara River Toxics Management Plan (NRTMP) to "achieve significant reductions of toxic chemical pollutants in the Niagara River" with a stated goal of 50% reduction by 1996. A June 2002 assessment of the Niagara River Area of Concern by the International Joint Commission points to the NRTMP as a model for cooperation and a "Great Lakes remediation success story", all the while making clear that "restoring beneficial uses" in the Niagara will require more action, funding, binational coordination and public consultation. (International Joint Commission, 2002)

The legacy of chemicals in the Niagara River and environs will undoubtedly continue to impact species of all kinds for hundreds of years to come. But might it also help to inspire environmentally sound technologies and greater environmental responsibility to nature and neighbours everywhere?

### *Peace and Freedom*

The cross-border Niagara region has a rich history of war, peace and freedom. While it is not the intent of this paper to provide an historical account of the region from these perspectives, rather, by highlighting select events and movements, it is hoped that an image begins to emerge of Niagara as a place where peace is both found and made.

- *Pax iroquoia*: On the land between the Niagara and Hudson Rivers was the homeland of the Iroquois Confederacy, the United Nations of the Iroquois, to whom "peace" and "law" are synonymous terms, and whose great wisdom and ways inspired Americas

Founding Fathers and with them, the transformation of thirteen colonies into the United States of America.

*“The Six Nations ...They excelled in statesmanship and the art of diplomacy. After the white man came, during more than a century of intercolonial strife, they loyally protected the infant English colonies, showed them the way to union, and so helped prepare the American and Canadian people for nationhood.” (Iroquois monument to author, Paul Wallace) (Wallace, 1946)*

- *House of Peace:* A “House of Peace” granted by the Iroquois and established by the French (Louis-Thomas Chabert de Joncaire) at present day Fort Niagara in 1725. A National Historic Landmark, this French castle is the oldest building the Great Lakes Basin.
- *The Niagara Peace Mission:* The Niagara region was held by the British and the site of much activity against the rebellious American colonists throughout the American Revolution. Upon resolution of the war, Ephraim Douglass was appointed a Peace Emissary by the Commissioners for Indian Affairs and the Secretary of War to visit “the western tribes and make known to them the peaceful disposition of the United States, if they would cease all hostilities towards its citizens”. Ephraim Douglass, whose primary destinations were the British posts at Niagara and Detroit, “was the first official representative of the United States who brought a message of peace and good will, and a proclamation of new sovereignty, to Indian tribes north of the Ohio and in the region of the Great Lakes”. (Severance, 1914)
- *War of 1812:* Niagara was the only continuous theatre of battle during the War of 1812. Battles at Queenston Heights and Fort George during the fall of 1813 preceded the burning of Newark and the British capture of Fort Niagara later that winter. By the year’s end Buffalo and Black Rock had both been burned by the British. The summer of 1814 witnessed the Battle of Chippawa followed by the historic Battle of Lundy’s Lane and later the siege on Fort Erie. When the peace treaty was signed between the British and the Americans on March 15, 1815, much of the Niagara region laid in ruins. The British returned Fort Niagara to the Americans, and the Americans returned Fort Erie to the British. The borders of the two countries remained the same as before the war began and as established by the Jay Treaty of 1794. (see [www.niagarafrontier.com](http://www.niagarafrontier.com))
- *Monument to the Rush-Bagot Treaty:* The only disarmament agreement reached between the two countries following the War of 1812 was the Rush-Bagot Treaty of 1817, which limited naval forces in the Great Lakes. A monument to this treaty today stands at Fort Niagara. (Old Fort Niagara Association, 2004)
- *Niagara’s Freedom Trail:* From the early 1820’s, blacks seeking refuge from slavery in the United States followed the North Star to shelter in Upper Canada. The Buffalo/Fort Erie communities were major conduits of the Underground Railroad, which operated at its peak from the 1840’s - 1860’s. From “safe houses” in Buffalo, the escaping families were ferried across the Niagara River to Fort Erie, where they were accommodated at

Bertie Hall until they could find permanent accommodations and jobs. Numerous historical sites related to the Underground Railroad exist across the Niagara region. (see [www.niagarafrontier.com](http://www.niagarafrontier.com))

- *Our Lady of Peace Pilgrimage Shrine*: Inspired by Niagara Falls as a place of worship, Irishman John Lynch founded a seminary in 1856 near Lewiston, New York, which today is part of the grounds of Niagara University. Continually inspired by Niagara Falls, and the sense of peace and hope which it symbolized for him, after being named Archbishop of Toronto, Lynch suggested to Pope Pius IX that a pilgrim shrine be established at Niagara Falls dedicated to “Our Lady of Peace”. Accordingly, this proposal was made by Lynch at the beginning of the Civil War when “moved with sorrow at the loss of many lives and the prospect of so many souls going before God in judgement, some it is to be feared, but ill prepared, and at the sight of the beautiful rainbow that spanned the cataract, the sign of peace between God and the sinner”. In 1861 Pope Pius IX issued a Papal Decree establishing Our Lady of Peace as a Pilgrimage Shrine “to avail for all future time”. (McGreevy, 1994: 68)
- *Niagara Peace Conference of 1864*: Owing, at least in part, to the interests of some prominent southerners to “sojourn in Canada during the Civil War period”, Niagara Falls became the sight for an unsuccessful Peace Conference in July of 1864. While the so-called Peace Conference did not produce the intended result, the communication from that event contributes to an understanding of the views and positions of President Lincoln and others while positioning Niagara and some of its regional leaders within some critical Civil War discussions over abolition and peace. (Severance, 1914)
- *Niagara Movement, 1905*: In the summer of 1905, 29 prominent blacks, including W.E.B. DuBois, met secretly at Niagara Falls, Ont., and drew up a manifesto calling for full civil liberties, abolition of racial discrimination, and recognition of human brotherhood. The Niagara Movement, which disbanded in 1910, was the forerunner to the NAACP. (see [www.niagarafrontier.com](http://www.niagarafrontier.com))
- *1914 Peace Conference at Niagara Falls*: Stemming from tensions and acts of aggression between the United States and Mexico, three South American countries came forward with a proposal to mediate peace negotiations between the US and Mexico in an effort to avoid further conflict and bloodshed. The friendly North American border at Niagara Falls enabled meetings between the mediators and US and Mexican delegations, while maintaining the political distance of the national boundary. Forty-six days of nearly continuous talking led to a “‘principle of American policy’ that international problems affecting the nations of the Western Hemisphere would always have ‘a fair examination and be settled without foreign interference’”. This statement embodied the idea of Pan-Americanism which many of the foremost statesman of the Latin American republics have advocated.” (Severance, 1914)
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- *Peace Bridge, 1927*: “The Bridge of Peace” was a vision that originated over a century ago when, in the late 1890's, Alfonzon Mather, an American inventor and entrepreneur,

conceived of a monumental landmark at the mouth of the Niagara River. From Mather's first concept to its actual construction in 1927, the bridge was always viewed as a landmark and link that would facilitate the movement of goods and people between Buffalo and Fort Erie. The Peace Bridge was officially opened on August 7, 1927 as a symbol to 100 years of peace and represented the longest standing friendship between two countries with shared borders: the United States and Canada. (Buffalo-Fort Erie Bridge Authority, 1993)

- *United Nations, after WWII*: “ Just after WWII, the peaceful border at Niagara Falls helped to inspire another expression of optimism about the future. The war and the atomic bomb had so changed the international order that some saw a chance for a new beginning. The old hope for unity of humankind was revived, the most concrete result of which was the establishment of the United Nations. ... When the United Nations decided to locate their headquarters in the United States, ... Grand Island became one of the final four sites.” (McGreevy, 1994: 152)
- *The Friendship Festival, 1987*: Started in 1987 and celebrated annually between the two countries national holidays on July 1 and 4, the Friendship Festival commemorates the nearly 200 years of peace and friendship between Canada and the United States. The special friendship that characterizes the Canada-US relationship is especially prominent in Niagara, where the existence of the border has created a distinctively cross-border character to life in the region.

### *Cradle of Cooperation*

Niagara's peace and freedom stories speak alternately of it as a place of inspiration, negotiation, resolution and even renewal. So too is the friendly and cooperative spirit celebrated -- *in Niagara's people* as avowed by countless cross-border families and ties; -- *in the region's cross-border character* which produced the Niagara Institute (originally a think tank on Canada-US issues); nationally recognized centres of Canada-US comparative research and learning; cross-border businesses, philanthropic support, and sports fans; and *at the highest reaches of government* where the cooperative spirit is evidenced by five bridges and two binational commissions that facilitate the daily transport of people, goods and continual goodwill across the Niagara.

Since the implementation of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement in 1989, an economic policy aimed at deepening the economic integration between Canada and the United States, one finds in the cross-border Niagara region a continual exploration with new forms of cooperation and reasons for cross-border arrangements. Strategic business alliances, cross-border marketing, joint tourism promotion, international event planning, cooperative research, academic conferences, legislative meetings, shared environmental interests, heritage tourism 'think-ins', cross-border sports markets, air wave reach, transportation efficiencies, reduced medical costs, emergency planning, border security, new opportunities.... The motivations for increased cross-border cooperation and planning are many, and growing each day.

While not all cross-border pursuits in Niagara have been successful, each attempt has tested the merits of reaching cross-border, and in the process, important 'seeds of need' have been planted - particularly in the areas of border infrastructure/management, tourism promotion, and in the development of a cross-border sense of 'region'. With the integrating North American economy pulsing every minute over Niagara's bridges, a wonder of the world joining the Niagaras with millions of annual tourists, and a river as indivisible to fish and the Falls as it is to toxins, national identity and joy --- perhaps, it is time to move from the comfort of the cradle toward more formalized cross-border cooperation.

## **“Niagara International Peace Park”: Can it be?**

The idea of Niagara as an International Peace Park was first raised during a gathering at the Chautauqua Institution in August 2001. Canadian Maurice Strong, the former Director of the United Nations Environmental Program and leader of the '92 Earth Summit in Rio, and then, Vice Rector for the UN University for Peace was the featured speaker at Chautauqua that day. During his address, Strong spoke of the UN University for Peace's role in establishing Peace Parks, and in private conversation later that day, encouraged the small Western New York delegation to pursue the idea of Niagara as an International Peace Park. With the terrorist attacks on 9/11 just one month later, peace and security were no longer distant concerns to North Americans, US ports of entry around the world, including those along the 'peaceful Niagara' have been 'on alert' ever since. With a speed that could only be born of a high degree of readiness and reliability between partners, in December 2001, the Governments of Canada and the United States announced the Smart Border Accord, a 30-point Action Plan to ensure the security and viability of the Canada-US border.

### *What's Happening Now?*

In April 2002, a small group of individuals from both sides of the border representing the environment, tourism, cultural interests, academe, and government were brought together to discuss the concept of Niagara as an International Peace Park. What ensued from that meeting and others since then is a vision for *a new breed of park -- one which reaches across the region - - from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario and from the Welland Canal to the Erie Canal* all the while fully respecting the national boundary between Canada and the United States. Unlike Waterton-Glacier National Parks, where clear legal boundaries frame the parkland itself, people would live, work and play throughout the 'park land' of this cross-border biosphere reserve. Sensitive natural areas would enjoy environmental protection, surrounding areas may not, but the principles of sustainable development would be applied throughout this *“park without borders”*.

Beyond Niagara's rare natural assets and colourful cross-border history, the idea of Niagara as an International Peace Park is further inspired by many complementary initiatives currently being pursued in the cross-border region. While not meant to be a definitive account of environmental and/or heritage related activities currently underway, the pursuits listed below indicate a growing

community orientation toward heritage preservation and planning -- much of it specifically regarding assets generally viewed as shared or common with neighbours across the river.

- *Niagara's Green Master Plan* – Using sustainability as a lens, Region Niagara is creating a strategic environmental plan to guide and prioritize current and future environmental decisions
- *The Great Arc* -- a cross-border, basin-wide initiative linking the length of the Niagara Escarpment through trails and preservation planning;
- *The Niagara Escarpment Legacy Project* -- restoration and protection of key segments of the Escarpment in Lockport, New York;
- *Niagara Falls National Heritage Area* – national heritage designation pursuit for the Niagara River Corridor in Niagara County, New York;
- *Lake-to-Lake Greenway* -- a network of parkland, greenspace and trails running along the New York side of the Niagara River Corridor from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario
- *Fort Erie Natural Areas Inventory* -- a first-time study to identify and classify the Town's natural heritage for policy making and preservation planning purposes;
- *The Green Map* – ecotourism mapping initiative highlighting protected areas, natural heritage and the trail network across Region Niagara;
- *Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor* -- one of 23 nationally designated heritage areas or corridors in the United States;
- *The Shoreline Trail* – a bicycle and pedestrian trail system currently under development that would stretch 67 miles from Fort Niagara to the Chautauqua County line with strategic connections to the Erie Canalway Trail, Bike Route 17 and the Ontario trail system;
- *The Greater Niagara Circle Route* – a system of recreational trails circling the Niagara Peninsula with binational connections at the region's international bridges;
- *Binational Niagara Tourism Alliance* -- operating since 2000, much of the BNTA's mission is to strengthen Niagara's tourism potential by facilitating greater connection and coordination amongst the region's cultural/heritage and tourism organizations.

In an effort to begin to frame the concept of Niagara as an International Peace Park, a Cross-border Working Group has crafted *Draft First Principles* -- highlighting 4 key areas of commitment that are seen as critical to any pursuit that Niagara might make to establish itself as an International Peace Park (the full set of principles can be found in the attachments to this paper):

1. Preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the bi-national Niagara Region
2. Promoting sustainable economic development in the bi-national Niagara Region
3. Fostering peaceful and creative cooperation across the binational Niagara Region
4. Fostering education and research in the binational Niagara Region

In the closing lines in his book, *Imagining Niagara*, McGreevey (1994) states, “Perhaps the one conclusion we can draw from the history of Niagara Falls is that the way (emphasis his) we imagine the future may be very important”. I couldn’t agree more.

### *What’s Needed?*

#### **Environmental Restoration & Heritage Planning**

Although formal designation criteria for International Peace Parks are still under development, protected area status for national lands/waterways within a transboundary region is certain to be one of the baseline requirements. Presently, all International Peace Parks are either World Heritage Sites or UNESCO World Biosphere Reserves (WBR). With the 1991 designation of the Niagara Escarpment as a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, one of the critical International Peace Park components is already in place in Canada. Further, the restoration objectives of the Niagara Escarpment Legacy Project make a clear and compelling case for protecting parts of the Escarpment in Western New York. *An assessment of the Escarpment’s heritage designation potential in Western New York, along with the related restoration needs, would be critical for cultivating regional champions to lead the International Peace Park pursuit as well as to align government and other’s funding priorities with the restoration agenda for the Escarpment.* To facilitate the suggested assessment, the Western New York Land Conservancy and others involved in Escarpment restoration in Western New York, would benefit from the advice and guidance of the Niagara Escarpment Commission in Ontario. Likely, such collaboration would also serve to lay the groundwork for the cooperative linkages envisioned by the International Peace Park program.

*Critical to the consideration of Niagara as an International Peace Park is the inclusion of both the Niagara Escarpment and the Niagara River Corridor.* For many years the federal, state and provincial governments, along with local partners, have been working cooperatively, and successfully, to clean up the Niagara River and environs. In a June 2002 report on the Niagara River by the International Joint Commission, the Niagara River Toxics Management Plan (NRTMP) was identified as one of the Great Lakes’ remediation success stories, citing the cooperation between the agencies involved as a model for planning and implementation. While much has been accomplished, the magnitude of the problem and the magnificence of the resource both demand that continued priority be given to the restoration of the Niagara River watershed.

Whether separate recognition of the Niagara River Corridor would be required for International Peace Park status, or whether bundling different heritage assets -- both natural and cultural -- within an Escarpment designation would be acceptable, remains an open question -- one best placed before national and/or international authorities on heritage designations. In either case, *full commitment to the environmental and natural/cultural heritage initiatives noted above seems a critical first step* in order to legitimize the question.

Cultural and heritage tourism coordination is taking a major step forward in the cross-border region with the anticipated incorporation of the Binational Niagara Tourism Alliance in Spring

2004. This initiative, spearheaded by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, recognizes the potential gains to Southern Ontario and Western New York of greater cross-border tourism planning. From the outset, cultural and heritage assets were identified as key targets -- both as regards their tourism potential and their need for regional coordination. Formation of the Binational Niagara Tourism Alliance follows nearly a decade of cross-border tourism initiatives, studies and regional dialogues -- all based on the fact of the region's shared heritage, both natural and cultural. Much of this work was led by the Urban Design Project at SUNY/Buffalo in partnership with the Waterfront Generation Trust, which in the mid 90's launched a cross-border planning framework entitled, "Rethinking Niagara", which continues in force today.

## **Regional Coordination**

More than a decade of 'planning without agency' has helped to till the soil for more systemic regional cooperation. Despite many worthwhile, even successful, cross-border pursuits by individuals and institutions, it is clear that sufficiency of jurisdiction, regional buy-in and staying power are among the critical factors in building the momentum necessary to develop a sustainable cross-border alliance. A major difficulty -- and opportunity -- of transboundary cooperation is rooted in the fact that multiple jurisdictions operate at the international border. Developing a substantive cross-border alliance will inevitably require participation by all levels of government, and therefore, the regional agenda must be made to link with the national agendas of the two countries. Securing interest at the highest levels of government requires assets on the ground that are capable of responding to national policy objectives at the highest level of government. The challenge therefore before the cross-border Niagara region is to coordinate Niagara's ground-level resources in a framework that enables them to stretch to their fullest potential.

The need for greater regional coordination was articulated most comprehensively in the January 2003 Niagara Bi-National Region Economic Roundtable Report, "Realizing a Vibrant Niagara Bi-National Region". Regional political, business and community leaders called for "adopting a vision and strategy that facilitates a view of Niagara Bi-National as an internationally integrated economic region, capitalizing on shared regional assets; building on our synergistic strengths of community; and resolving constraints to the binational region's collective well-being". (Niagara Bi-national Region Economic Roundtable, 2003)

Further, the Roundtable Report underscored the following observations:

"The Region has a long history of cross-border ties that should serve as a basis for furthering institutional and organizational linkages.

The Region lacks a sufficiently formal or developed institutional network with a truly Bi-National mandate.

The Region faces a host of opportunities and challenges that cannot be realized or confronted in the absence of a more fully developed Bi-National institutional capacity.

Both the public and private sector have instrumental roles to play in cultivating a Bi-National institutional capacity and capitalizing on cross-border synergies.

The Region should strive to develop a truly Bi-National vision, realizing it is a vibrant international metropolitan area with exploitable economic synergies and resources shared cross-border.” (Niagara Bi-National Region Economic Roundtable, 2003)

*For meaningful and sustainable cooperation across Niagara to occur, a cross-border mechanism endowed with multi-jurisdictional authority, fullness of mandate, and resources to pursue a broad cross-border agenda must be established. Critical to the funding, formation and functioning of any such mechanism is leadership.*

Relevant models of cross-border cooperation already exist. Below are two such examples worthy of consideration and adaptation for the cross-border Niagara region.

### **International Joint Commission**

Established by the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, the Commission is a binational organization made up of three members appointed by the President of the United States and three appointed by the Prime Minister of Canada whose purpose is to prevent and resolve disputes between Canada and the US resulting from issues of water quality and quantity along the boundary between the two countries.

The Commission has three broad areas of responsibility -- 1) it responds to applications for the use, obstruction or diversion of boundary waters through the issuance of *Orders of Approval*; 2) it undertakes investigations of specific issues requested by the Governments with return recommendations to Governments put forward in *References*. The Boundary Waters Treaty also provides for the two Governments to refer matters to the Commission for binding decision, but to date, this provision has not been used.

“Consensus is an important goal in making decisions or in seeking solutions to problems referred to the Commission by the Governments. The Commissioners act as a single body seeking common solutions rather than as separate national delegates representing the positions of their governments.

Experts from both countries serve on technical boards for the Commission and carry out the required studies and fieldwork. Boards of Control are appointed by the Commission to report on compliance with Orders of Approval, while study or advisory boards assist in References. Public hearings and other opportunities for input by interested citizens are organized when Applications and References are considered.” (International Joint Commission, 1998)

### **St. Croix International Waterway Commission**

Following legal purposes and authorities set out in a 1986 Memorandum of Understanding between the Province of New Brunswick and the State of Maine, the St. Croix International Waterway Commission was established in 1993 to develop and facilitate the implementation of an international plan to protect, manage and develop the heritage resources of the St. Croix

boundary corridor. The plan, unique in the Canada-US context, “establishes international goals and policies for management that seek to preserve and celebrate a corridor heritage, maintain environmental integrity and support the region’s resource-based economy. It also recommends actions by which Maine, New Brunswick and others may begin to implement these policies.” (St. Croix International Waterway Commission, 1993) Provided below as guidance are the 7 principal themes and 22 related policies governing the Commission:

#### International Heritage Waterway

1) Develop the St. Croix’s identity as an International Heritage Waterway

#### Environment

- 2) Establish joint water quality objectives for the Waterway
- 3) Maintain the natural character and environmental buffering capabilities of the shorelands
- 4) Manage pollution to maintain environmental quality under increasing resource use
- 5) Maintain biological productivity and diversity within the Waterway

#### Human Heritage

6) Preserve and interpret the Waterway’s history and culture

#### Natural Heritage

- 7) Preserve the visual landscape
- 8) Conserve and interpret the Waterway’s natural heritage
- 9) Establish a Conservation Area protecting the resources of the upper river and Spednic Lake

#### Recreational Heritage

- 10) Develop appropriate long-term public land and water access
- 11) Develop a coordinated recreational information program
- 12) Integrate recreational planning to minimize conflicts
- 13) Manage high quality sport fishing as a primary recreational and economic asset
- 14) Develop and maintain quality opportunities for back-country canoe tripping and other water recreation
- 15) Expand land-based recreational opportunities

#### Economic Development

- 16) Incorporate heritage concepts in economic development
- 17) Capitalize on the Waterway’s economic strengths

#### Waterway Management

- 18) Better integrate, interpret and exchange information on an international basis
- 19) Develop effective public/private partnerships for planning and management
- 20) Address long-term management issues on a proactive, inter-jurisdictional basis
- 21) Maintain coordination through a Waterway Commission
- 22) Regularly review management progress and directions

*While neither model offers an exact prescription for managing Niagara’s binational interests, both examples offer useful principles, structures and policies worthy of consideration and adaptation for Niagara.*

## **Resources**

*Dedicated and sufficient annual resources are essential to mount and adequately support a cross-border organization and/or structure.* Securing a regional source of funds is an essential first step and a critical lever to any future requests for further and/or outside monies -- be they from government, foundations or corporations. Ensuring the integrity of the broad binational agenda to be advanced directly raises the question of 'how' and 'from whom' resources might best be secured. Furthermore, it argues for funding sources in line with the multi-jurisdictional scope of the border. One intuitively appealing response to the question is found in the Buffalo Fort Erie Bridge Authority in combination with the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission. Not only are these two entities responsive to all levels of government, also, they are the only substantive operations in the cross-border region which are fully binational, and whose functioning is as related to Niagara as it is to the Canada-US relationship more generally. Very importantly, they also have a mechanism for raising funds and do not require any amending legislation to effect changes to their toll structures.

## **Pathway to Peace and maybe even Prosperity**

At the regional level, pursuing International Peace Park status through the United Nation's *Global Peace Parks Initiative* would provide the cross-border Niagara region with a progressive framework to 'organize its cooperative reach' through its most enduring and precious connections -- the Niagara River and the Niagara Escarpment. Rainbow-like, the over-arching International Peace Park themes of protection, cooperation, and environmental stewardship would naturally support and give lift to a broad range of initiatives currently underway -- from trails, greenways and natural heritage initiatives to cross-border tourism and economic development, regional image enhancement and improved regional cooperation. By committing to the process for heritage designation status, firmer footing would be gained in regional efforts toward sustainable development. *Demonstrating environmental leadership embraced in the language of peace, the Niagaras draw from their most celebrated and infamous pages in history to compose a new, 21<sup>st</sup> century story, of cooperation and enterprise.*

## **Benefits of a Niagara International Peace Park include:**

- Conferring upon Niagara a prestigious, *new*, international mark of distinction with UN association;
- Adding new symbolism and emphasis within the national capitals to the special character of the Canada-US relationship;
- Enabling the region to ready itself to respond on a binational basis to any opportunities (financial or otherwise) which may flow from the Great Lakes Restoration Plan and related initiatives;
- Demonstrating regional cross-border leadership capable of tackling critical Canada-US border issues

- Enhancing the image of the cross-border Niagara region -- as a region in and of itself, but also, in the broader political context of the Canada-US relationship;
- Identifying, prioritizing and organizing targeted areas for cross-border cooperation and collaboration;
- Requiring cooperative planning of natural resources leading to a growing reputation of the cross-border region as environmental stewards;
- Encouraging technology development and expertise on environmental issues/needs;
- Demanding investment in the natural, physical and promotional asset base of the regional tourism economy -- a critical growth sector for all jurisdictions involved;
- Positioning the region to take optimal advantage of important upcoming events --
  - 2005 -- 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NAACP
  - 2009 -- 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Boundary Waters Treaty
  - 2012 -- 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the War of 1812  
(Important to note that both NYC and Toronto are also likely to bid on the Summer 2012 Olympics...)
  - and at a date to be confirmed ...
  - 2017 -- 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rush-Bagot Treaty
  - 20?? -- the completion of a new Peace Bridge

At its core this proposal aims to carve out a new breed of International Peace Park -- one which is characterized by the successful integration of a healthy environment with the often conflicting pressures of international trade, transportation, development and since September 11 -- challenging new forms of security. Protecting the 'great and pure' is always a noble yet formidable challenge, but how much more will and worth are required to **“Restore the Greatness”**? The Great Lakes community has long sounded this call -- and the political community across the Basin is now responding. *Where in the Great Lakes better than Niagara to symbolize such reach and ideals?* By moving forward from a point of joint stewardship of shared natural resources, to a point where environmental/whole-systems thinking truly informs decision-making, this first-world international peace park attempts to elevate the notion of environmental governance as a path forward to Peace and prosperity.

*Such could be the Niagara International Peace Park; such should be the legacy of a 21<sup>st</sup> century symbol of peace between Canada and the United States.*

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Contact information:

Kerry Mitchell  
Manager, Political/Economic Relations and Public Affairs  
Canadian Consulate General  
3000 HSBC Center  
Buffalo, New York 14203