

Native American Sculpture of “Connecticut”

Relocation from the Diamond a New Home

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When the story first aired regarding the Native American statue of “Connecticut” being dismantled from its current location at the Richmond Diamond and the concern of where it should be placed, instantly my ears perked up and my mind began to move forward to the possibilities that might arise from this project.

To catch you up to speed on Curtis & I ... and Native American interest for our own county of Powhatan and my Native American background ... let’s rewind to 2007. In 2007, our country celebrated the 400th Anniversary of “America”. This celebration was held in our very own Virginia and the media continued to cover events surrounding this celebration. One piece of which was that our own Powhatan County was named after the honorable Chief Powhatan. I won’t go into all the details of “why or how” it was named at this time, but for those who live and work here in our own community, our “name” was all over the news/events/literature etc.

Because we had designed and own which you know the www.powhatanva.com for our community for many years prior to this date, my husband and I ... (both Native American Cherokee Indians) wanted to help our county have its own “celebration/acknowledgement” of the Native American culture and remind people of the sacrifices and importance of the Native background – not just the “celebration of the settlers coming from across the pond”.

We therefore presented the Powhatan County Board of Supervisors to hold a Pauwau (powwow) that year. It was a huge success and a great beginning to opening the door in our own community while showing the world how proud we were share the name of a Chief.

We wanted this ceremony to also bring together our community as a “people.” Last year we held our 3rd annual Native People Pauwau and Powhatan Day Celebration.

So naturally with the website that I maintain for the community and our part in establishing the Pauwau/Community Celebration – for the past few weeks I have received hundreds of emails, phone calls, facebook requests, etc as to “my stand” on where this sculpture would and should be placed. Also requesting that I post information on my site for the proposal of the placement to be Powhatan High School.

I was at a loss ... I just didn’t know how to respond. So I had to wait.

I felt very strongly that I needed to start at the beginning of the history of this sculpture so I contact Mr. Paul DiPasquale, the Artist. He shared his reason for building this sculpture – which has been to honor the Native American Culture and it’s People. I was in awe when I talked to this man who is an incredible “man” and an incredible “artist.” His passion for life and the reasoning behind his work was like a breath of fresh air. His story is a story in itself that hopefully through this will be told. His word is “incredible!” If you haven’t visited his website or followed his works, you will be amazed at his talent. He builds sculptures with such detail and definition that are larger than my entire house. I enjoyed listening to his care and wanting to see his work

create the passion and love for the people who were here on these lands many many years before 1607. Through our conversations, I felt as though that “my part” was to support “everybody.”

Yes, I would personally love to see Connecticut come to Powhatan, because of our endeavors for the past few years and my own personal and family bloodlines to our Cherokee People and to all our Native American relatives, friends and community. But I too am “white” and am a normal every day citizen of Powhatan, Virginia, and America. Should I wish it here for me and what we hope for our own community? No ... I should wish it to be where it can benefit as many as possible.

Where is the perfect place? I do not know. Who can answer that question? I do not know that either.

However – the Richmond Metropolitan Authority has the ownership of this statue and they have decided not to “keep it themselves” but to donate or sell it to the party chosen from proposals submitted. You most likely know the details of this. I wonder if they have thought “wouldn’t it be nice to know where Chief Powhatan thinks it should go?” Well, he’s not here any longer - he was just an ordinary man – but was gifted the power of leadership by our Creator and also his People. He had to exemplify great talent and knowledge to be given such an honor. There are people though who have received great honor to have this power passed down to them to help make decisions and lead. Maybe these people are the ones who will make this decision or consulted for the decision at hand. We just have to hope and trust.

The committee established to review and choose the right group/location for this sculpture has a big job on their hands. They must proceed cautiously and we as people should pray for their wisdom and judgment. I don’t want to be the cause of persuasion one way or another – only that the deep rooted meaning of this “Indian” man and its impact that it could have on many “Native People” or many “School Children” or many “citizens and visitors to the Commonwealth”.

So to answer your questions on “my stand” and “what can Katrina ... the websites ... the Pauwau ... the newsletter ... the thousands upon thousands of people who will read this letter ... do to help” ... I can only share my thoughts ...

Life is not about how many toys you die with nor how many vehicles are in your driveway, it’s not about the amount of money in your bank account, nor the price tags on your finest clothing, not about how many million copies of a book is sold, nor your popularity in society, it’s not about votes or winning or the amount of Facebook friends you have, it’s not about the hits on a website and getting on top and it’s certainly not about how many “Twits” you have following you. (For those who are not technical minded, that refers to the people follow you on Twitter – a computer/mobile application to keep you in constant touch with your followers).

Life is about substance, meaning and “Doing all the good you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, for all the people you can, for as long as you ever can.” a quote by John Wesley

Life and the things we do have to have substance and meaning and when we “do” or participate in things, we need to look at the good that may come of it and think of the individuals, causes, missions or futures of who will be affected.

As I have pondered, thought and prayed about where I would like to see this statue be placed – my thoughts remained to be the same ... is there a “place” that is “perfect”? No! There is not a building tall enough to place a statue of a Native American man representing and honoring the history, sacrifice and appreciation for the people who’s land was literally taken so that our present nation exists.

On the other hand, there is not a building tall enough, a steeple towering high enough or a mountain large enough to erect a cross honoring the sacrifice and appreciation for the life that was given to save the entire world.

But we erect our crosses in honor and remembrance and to keep us focused on the mark.

And this statue was created and designed and should be placed to keep us also focused on what someone gave and contributed to make us who we “are” today.

You know, we live in a society that is so great, yet on the other hand, it has been extremely scared by confusion and lack of leadership. We have the finest homes, cars, technology, freedom of religion, speech, the means to live the “American Dream”. But for many the “American Dream” has no substance ... merely a pipe dream. Funny – the term “pipe dream” is commonly used, as the Native American people regarded the pipe as a way to symbolize the unity and coming together to build a bridge, representing peace into the future. Those who live who think “getting ahead” to make them happier to live the life of luxury sometimes miss the special moments or individuals that were stepped on as they rose to the top.

I have said all this to say this ... where should this statue rest?

I don't even have that answer. I don't think there is a “perfect” place. There are many factors here to consider, the architecture of the building or structure in which it will sit, the weight of the sculpture, the moving of the piece, the maintenance of the piece, the pride that will come from the group that gets this “awarded” to them. But the most important piece of all ... is the respect that needs to come by this piece and the opportunity to open the doors that have been closed for years by people who want to “block out the heritage, the history, the people of another color, the less fortunate, the society that they are not a part”. But also opening the door to educate and teach appreciation and respect for a culture that you just don't know about!

There are so many opportunities that this sculpture can make happen. At a time when “we” all of those who occupy the United States of America have lost the “mark” – this could be the opportunity to bring people to reality of “Life” ... finding the “mark” once again.

It's never too late – no one is ever too poor, too uneducated, too evil, or any other “issue” they may have to be given up on. Until the last breath goes out of our body, there is opportunity to learn and work and “Do all you can ... for as long as you ever can.”

It is my desire to support and share in the placement of this Native American sculpture “Connecticut” at any location the RMA chooses. My part is to pray and hope that the decision will be one that brings respect and honor to those before us and the Native American community today. The hope would be that it will rest in a place that helps the most people but also remembering that each soul is important. So if it is placed in a location that only truly benefits one individual ... then that individual is worth it!

If a school is chosen, I trust that the opportunity comes to learn and explore and dig into our Indian culture to learn survival and appreciation and the life that we all desire to have a part in our own lives today. Also remembering that the school is not just a place where the local students attend, but also open to thousands of people visit for ball games, and events, and many many times these schools are open to the public for meeting places and special gatherings. Can you imagine how many people will take a moment or more to reflect on the past and the present? Can you imagine how much learning for these children can be established for our Native Americans but for all cultures which make up our Country?

If a school is not chosen, I trust that they won't feel “defeated” – for this is not a “game”. But also open the door of opportunity of breaking those bridges that separate and learn much.

If a place overlooking the James River where the seat of Chief Powhatan actually was before 1607 is chosen, then I trust that it will be a place where it can be appreciated and an icon to all those who visit or pass by. Can you imagine the number of people that will be exposed to this sculpture?

If a reservation is chosen for the location of this piece, the sheer fact of the Native American people who still live on small donated pieces of land that they was rightfully theirs to begin with – I can assure you that it will be honored and cherished for the reason it was created. I can assure you that it will be appreciated. Can you

imagine what an example it could set for our government acknowledgement and the ability to help grow the Native American community and the businesses of our Native People?

This entire episode has done more than people think, you know ... with my experience in the technical field and the marketing and web development that I do each day, it has proved once again the power of marketing and the possibilities in spreading the word through many thousands of people quickly ... and that's a good thing! The media has had a field day with this ... it's been a hot story to give them something "good to report" in our sad world of murder and evil that prevails ... giving them a little "good news to write and report" ... and that's a good thing! The schools have been showing their school spirit with their rivals ... keeping them quite occupied and probably out of a little trouble in the cold quiet winter ... and that's a good thing! The RMA and all those involved – from government and museums and those who are passionate about art and history are enjoying the exposure. It has brought out acknowledgement to organizations who sometimes go unnoticed ... and that's a good thing! It has brought excitement and publicity to the new baseball team coming to town and the Diamond that could give them the extra push they need to revive the "American Baseball" for families and sports enthusiasts ... and that's a good thing! It has opened the door already of acknowledgement and I have been amazed to see the surprising interest in the Native American that we also have worked so hard to bring to our own community. It has made people listen to the stories regarding federal and state recognition of these people – which many brush off when they read or hear on the news. It's made people take the initiative to dig and study and read up on a part of very very important issues that we face. This has made people work hard, and feel passionate about what they believe in and stand up for their people ... and that's a good thing!

For some, it may just be a novelty, just a game, but also through this they too can learn when it's time to have fun and when it's time to buckle down and get serious.

It's all good ... and it is all in the "Perfect Plan".

A friend and business associate made a statement to me yesterday that summed my entire decision up. And with deep prayer last night, I felt at peace with these words I write to you today. He said ... in his life he remembered a thought a friend of his shared many years ago ... "Is this a mountain you are willing to die on?" With those words I began to think of the mountains that I feel like I have had to climb and the present ones in my own life and business. And with an emphatic yes and without delay ... I could say "Yes!" Because I am just that passionate and that focused on helping my neighbour to the best of my ability – the supportive role to every person that I can help.

We all have mountains ... some more or taller than others. If what we believe in or care for or are passionate about is for the good of mankind, to show respect, to accomplish great feats, or to hold high our remembrance of what can keep ourselves and all around us focused on "the mark" then that is the mountain to die on.

I support Powhatan, the community we live in and work in. I support our schools and our children and the futures we are helping to create for them and their families. I support events that encourage and build. What kind of citizen or community helper would I be if I didn't share what our own neighbours and fellow citizens of this County are doing?

Our local county school – Powhatan High School also wants to present their proposal to move Connecticut to overlook their school. I am not an architect or engineer, so I would not be the one to comment on which building or what type of school it should be placed.

I can however tell you that a group of students and teachers are raising money from donations from the business community and individuals to help with the movement of this sculpture. The school is putting together their final proposal for to present to the RMA on Friday.

I am most sure that your passion and your desire will lead you in the path you should take. If this builds our community stronger ... with or without the Indian sculpture ... it will continue to be exactly what "we" ALL put into it! I trust that it will make many "think."

As a Native American with the blood of a warrior flowing through and through, I will stand for my people and my heritage and the old fashioned simplistic way of life until the day I die. For my ancestors lives were a life that realized harmony with nature, sustainability, personal freedom, and balance between work, play, and praise. The land furnished all ... food in abundance, materials for shelter, clothing and utensils, visual grandeur still vivid today, and herbs to treat every known illness until the settlers came.

Life would never be the same again for those who were great steward of God's precious land.

The sacrifice that our ancestors all the Natives who gave up their lands to the hands of those who gave them no choice ... but those who also learned to live peaceably among them ... even some today still suffer persecution and racism ... and also are struggling because they are considered less.

In God's name we honor our Ancestors ... and teach our friends and neighbours that we can not change the past ... but we can however respect and care for one another. We can tear down the walls that separate and destroy and we can work TOGETHER for the betterment of our Country and our children and our future.

We have a banner raised in the front of our church that references II Corinthians 5:17. My Daddy had it made some years ago and summarizes by saying "The evidence of a new heart, is a changed life." Well ... until man's heart is changed or "fixed" the lives will be no different.

I trust that this entire matter will "change hearts!"

May the Lord be with you all as you continue on your journey in life. May the strength, encouragement and will to be the very best neighbour you can be on your shoulders each day.

~ Katrina