

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Title	Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York
Introduction/Quote	# “A lot of people think Mohawks aren’t afraid of heights; that’s not true. We have as much fear as the next guy. The difference is that we deal with it better. We also have the experience of the old timers to follow and the responsibility to lead the younger guys. There’s pride in walking iron.” —Kyle Karonhiaktatie Beauvais (Mohawk, Kahnawake) March 2002
Introduction/Text	<p>Mohawk people have been building bridges and skyscrapers for more than 100 years. Beginning as unskilled laborers, they quickly earned a reputation for being top-notch workers on high steel. Later, they began “booming out” from Native communities in upstate New York and Canada in search of work on windswept girders far from home. Today, Mohawk ironworkers still leave their homes and families to search for work, continuing a tradition that spans six generations.</p> <p>This photography exhibition portrays the history and contemporary lives of Mohawk ironworkers from two Native communities: Akwesasne (which straddles Ontario, Quebec, and New York State) and Kahnawake (near Montreal). The images reflect the towering contribution Mohawk people have made to the United States, Canada, and, especially, New York City.</p> <p>Mohawk people began “walking iron” in 1886, when they were hired to work on a bridge being built over the St. Lawrence River onto Mohawk land. A company superintendent recalled that:</p> <p><i>As the work progressed, it became apparent that these Indians were very odd</i></p>



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

in that they did not have any fear of heights. So we picked out some and gave them a little training and it turned out that putting riveting tools in their hands was like putting ham with eggs. They were natural born bridgemen.

Upon completion of the bridge, Mohawk men began their tradition of “booming out.” By 1916, they made their way to New York City, where they helped build the Hell Gate Bridge. More jobs followed, and during the next 80 years, Mohawk men worked on practically all of New York’s major construction projects, including the George Washington Bridge, the Empire State Building, the United Nations, and the World Trade Center. Today, they continue to work on high steel, carrying the Mohawk reputation for skill, bravery, and pride into the 21st century.

#



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Caption Photo #26

From right: Joe Regis (Mohawk, Kahnawake) and an unidentified ironworker erecting the Chase Manhattan Bank Building in New York, ca. 1960. Courtesy of Bethlehem Steel

#

Caption Photo #103

From right: Arnold Goodleaf (Mohawk, Kahnawake) and an unidentified ironworker, Fifty-third Street and Park Avenue, 1970. Photo by David Grant Noble

#

Caption Photo #132

From left: Keith McComber (Mohawk, Kahnawake) and Marvin Davis (Six Nations) “topping out” the Bear Stearns Building in New York, 2000. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Section One

Extended Label Text

Remembering the World Trade Center

For years, Mohawk ironworkers traveled far and wide for the opportunity to work on the big job. When word of a pair of towers that would become the tallest in the world circulated in the 1960s, Mohawk men were ready to accept the challenge. From below ground to the top floor, Mohawk ironworkers played a key role in the construction of the World Trade Center. In 2001, they returned to the site, this time to assist in rescue and cleanup operations at Ground Zero.

#

"It looked like a movie. I thought, 'This is a skit from a movie.' Where are these two buildings, 220 floors of steel and concrete? Where are they?"

Quote



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

They're gone."

—Kyle Karonhiaktatie Beauvais (Mohawk, Kahnawake), September 2001

#

Caption Photo #88b

The last beam, signed by ironworkers, going up the South Tower of the World Trade Center, ca. 1970s. Courtesy of Dave Rice (Mohawk, Kahnawake) and Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Quote

"That's part of history, right there. The ironworkers signed it, put their signatures and the date on it. They're saying: 'We were here at this time. Now it's over, the job's topped out, no more iron.'"

—John McGowan (Mohawk, Kahnawake), March 12, 2002

#

Caption Photo #31

Randy Horne (Mohawk, Kahnawake), 19, "bolting up" on the South Tower of the World Trade Center, 1969. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Caption Photo #130

Ben "Benji" Roundpoint (Mohawk, Akwesasne; top) with Richard "Dick" Otto (Mohawk, Akwesasne; left) and Mike Schindler (Mohawk; right). Courtesy of Jeffrey Sunday (Mohawk, Akwesasne) and Herby Kirby (Mohawk, Kahnawake)

#

Caption Photo #161

Wayne Smoke (Mohawk, Akwesasne). Courtesy of Vivian Smoke (Mohawk, Akwesasne) and Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne)

#

Caption Photo #147

Taken from the basket at Ground Zero, 2001. Courtesy of John McGowan (Mohawk, Kahnawake)



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

#

Caption Photo #148

Taken from the basket at Ground Zero, 2001. Courtesy of John McGowan (Mohawk, Kahnawake)

#

Caption #28a

Looking down at construction of the South Tower of the World Trade Center, ca. 1970. Note the double bracing of the building's core. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Quote

"I feel sadness for the people in the building and the planes. I never thought that building would come down. All the steel on those floors was double braced at the core from the third floor up."

—Walter Beauvais (Mohawk, Kahnawake) quoted in *The Eastern Door*, September 14, 2001

#

Caption Photo #55b

Using a torch, Brad Bonaparte (Mohawk, Akwesasne) cuts through debris at Ground Zero, 2001. Photo by Jeffrey Foxx

#

Caption Photo #29

Herby Kirby (Mohawk, Kahnawake) at the New York University expansion site on West Fourth Street. The photo was taken just after the first plane struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center, September 11, 2001. Courtesy of Herby Kirby

#

Caption Photo #146

John McGowan (Mohawk, Kahnawake) at Ground Zero, 2001. Courtesy of John McGowan

#



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

- Quote "What I really wanted to do was bring somebody home alive. But the best we could do was bring people home who weren't alive. That way, at least, the loved ones had somebody."
—John McGowan (Mohawk, Kahnawake), March 12, 2002
#
- Caption Photo #53a Brad Bonaparte (Mohawk, Akwesasne) at Ground Zero, 2001. Photo by Jeffrey Foxx
#
- Caption Photo #128 Mikey Roberts (Mohawk, Akwesasne) at the Goldman Sachs Building in New Jersey. Courtesy of Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne) and Mikey Roberts (Mohawk, Akwesasne)
#
- Caption Photo #35 Children walking to school in Brooklyn, 1975. From left: Wade Maldonado (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Malcolm O'Brien (Mohawk, Kahnawake), James Kavanaugh (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Jill Maldonado (Mohawk, Kahnawake), and Lesley Kavanaugh (Mohawk, Kahnawake). Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives
#
- Caption Photo #27a From left: Allan Delaronde (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Doc Alfred (Mohawk, Kahnawake), and Art Oakes (Mohawk, Akwesasne) on the 110th floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center, ca. 1970. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa
#
- Caption Photo #127 Members of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, and Ornamental Iron Workers, Local 440, bringing relief to rescue and



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

cleanup workers at Ground Zero, 2001. From left: Morris Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Herbie Oakes (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Jimmy Sunday (Mohawk, Akwesasne), and Mike Swamp (Mohawk, Akwesasne). Courtesy of Mike Swamp and Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne)

#

Section Two

Extended Label

A Foothold in New York

As the search for jobs widened, Mohawk ironworkers looked south to New York City. By 1916, a number of men from Kahnawake had already found work on the Hell Gate Bridge. Soon, others began to make the trip to the city that would set the standard for feats of construction.

#

Extended Label

Crossing Borders

In the mid 1920s, the United States Immigration Service tried to deport a number of Mohawk ironworkers on the grounds that they were illegal aliens. Paul Kanento Diabo (Mohawk, Kahnawake) was selected to be the test case in a court battle that was eventually decided in favor of the Mohawks. In *Diabo v. McCandless*, a U.S. court ruled that the Mohawks were a Nation within a Nation and had every right to cross the border without restriction.

#

Quote

“When I was a young boy, we lived in Philadelphia. My father, Kanento, and a few other ironworkers fought a court case for our border rights. If they didn't do this, our boys might not be able to cross the border to



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

work today."

—Alex McComber (Mohawk, Kahnawake), April 2002

#

Caption Photo #131

Angus Adams Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne) receiving the Ironworker of the Year Award at the Ninth Street Bridge, Brooklyn, New York, 2000.

Courtesy of Angus Adams Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne), and A. J. Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne)

#

Caption Photo #137

Ironworkers on Kingston Rine Cliff Bridge, 1956. Back, from left:

Unknown, Joe Beauvais (Mohawk, Kahnawake), John S. Diabo

(Mohawk, Kahnawake), Big John Mayo (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Gene

Taylor (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Gene Sky (Mohawk, Kahnawake); front,

from left: Thomas Albany (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Artie Cross (Mohawk,

Kahnawake), and Donald Skye (Mohawk, Kahnawake). Courtesy of

Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Caption Photo #98

From left: John Scott (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Tommy Rice (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Jim Ross (Mohawk, Kahnawake), unidentified attorney, Joe Albany (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Paul Kanento Diabo (Mohawk, Kahnawake), and Dominic McComber (Mohawk, Kahnawake) on courthouse steps after the *Diabo v. McCandless* decision, ca. 1927.

Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Caption Photo #51

Gene Sky (Mohawk, Kahnawake) at home in Kahnawake, 1999. Photo by Todd France

#



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Caption Photo #141

Upper Hack Bridge, Newark, New Jersey, 1996. Paul Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne) with hammer. Courtesy of Angus Adams Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne), and A. J. Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne)

#

Caption Photo #99

Commemorative photo plaque of 33 Kahnawake Mohawk ironworkers killed during the collapse of the Quebec Bridge on August 29, 1907. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Quote

"I was driving rivets and I was about to shoot another rivet when the crash came. I was right inside the chord and had to come out underneath, because I had to pry the plate off. I held on to the chord and never touched the ground. As soon as everything was still, I came out. I had one leg broken and my nose was broken."

—Alexis Beauvais (Mohawk, Kahnawake), one of the few survivors of the collapse of the Quebec Bridge. Quoted in *Testimony to the Quebec Bridge Inquiry*, 1907

#

Caption Photo #86

Early Mohawk bridgemen (Kahnawake), ca. 1910. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Caption Photo #96

Paul Kanento Diabo (Mohawk, Kahnawake; second from right) and his brother Mike Diabo (Mohawk, Kahnawake; eighth from right), moving a beam at the Hell Gate Bridge construction site in New York City,



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

November 6, 1916. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na
Raotitiohkwa

#

Caption Photo #140

Upper Hack Bridge, Newark, New Jersey, 1996. Joe Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne; top of wheel), Angus Adams Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne; center of wheel), Paul Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne; head peeking through wheel), Dave Petrozuli (in green hard hat), and unidentified worker (in white hard hat). Courtesy of Angus Adams Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne), and A. J. Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne)

#

Caption Photo #12

The last key unit of the floor truss system being lifted into position on the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, May 1, 1964. The floor truss system was constructed to support the bridge's two roadways.

© MTA Bridges and Tunnels Special Archive, 1990

#

Section Three

Extended Label

Danger of the Job

Every Mohawk family has known the anguish of having loved ones seriously hurt or lost on the job. It is an accepted part of ironwork, something Mohawk people learned to cope with shortly after their introduction to the trade. In 1907, a bridge being built across the St. Lawrence River at Quebec City suddenly collapsed, killing 75 men, 33 of whom were Mohawks from Kahnawake. After the accident, Mohawk



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Quote

women insisted that the men spread out to different job sites, minimizing the prospect of another tragedy of such proportions.

#

“Some stories were tough to listen to as a kid growing up. You heard about accidents, stories about 'This is how many pieces I set up today, this is who got hurt, this is who got killed.'”

—Herby Kirby (Mohawk, Kahnawake), March 12, 2002

#

Caption Photo #42a

From left: Winston Delormier (Mohawk, Kahnawake) and Mickey McDonald (Mohawk, Akwesasne). In 1963, *Look* published this photograph with the following caption: "A lunch break also includes a little traditional leg watching." Quoted from *Look*, March 1963, Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, *Look* Magazine Collection. Courtesy of James Karales

#

Quote

"It's never a question of not looking up or down when you're on steel. You've got to look all over the place. Your eyes have to scout all over constantly. If you don't watch it, you're gonna get knocked off the steel. When something is coming toward me, I can *feel* it."

—Mickey McDonald (Mohawk, Akwesasne), 1962

Quoted in *Look*, March 1963

#

Caption Photo 8b

The UN General Assembly Building, 1952. "Mickey Snow (Mohawk, Kahnawake), the heater of an all-Mohawk riveting gang, cranks a small hand blower on his furnace to force air through the glowing coals. Rivets,



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

lying directly on the coals, must become malleable but not melt. When one is ready, Mickey picks it up in the tongs and tosses it (white blur in upper right) to a catcher, who receives it in a metal can." Quoted from *National Geographic*, July 1952. Photo by B. Anthony Stewart. Photo and text courtesy of the National Geographic Society

#

Caption Photo #158

Jerry McDonald (Mohawk, Akwesasne) rebuilding the Winter Garden at the World Trade Center, [April 2002](#). Courtesy of Jerry McDonald

#

Caption Photo #21

"J. R. Phillips, a Mohawk (Kahnawake) who lives near Montreal, working on the Ernst & Young Building in Times Square." Quoted from *The New York Times*, March 16, 2001. Photo by Edward Keating/*The New York Times*

#

Caption Photo 9a

"Tom Lahache (Mohawk, Kahnawake) demonstrates another popular use for a hot rivet" at a construction site at the United Nations in 1952. Quoted from *National Geographic*, July 1952. Photo and text courtesy of the National Geographic Society

#

Caption Photo #6

Unidentified ironworker, Empire State Building construction, Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street, ca. 1930. Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York

#

Caption Photo #47

"Mr. J. R. Phillips (Mohawk, Kahnawake) greeted his son in Kahnawake on a recent Friday, after returning from a week of work in New York City." Quoted from *The New York Times*, March 16, 2001. Photo by



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Edward Keating/ *The New York Times*

#

Caption Photo #40

Winston Delormier (Mohawk, Kahnawake) working in a raising gang during the construction of the New York Hilton at Rockefeller Center, 1962. Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, *Look* Magazine Collection. Courtesy of James Karales

#

Caption Photo #5

Unidentified ironworkers connecting beams during construction of the Empire State Building, Fifth Avenue and Thirty-Fourth Street, 1930. Photo by Charles Rivers. Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York

#

Section Four

Extended Label

Mohawks in Brooklyn

By the 1930s, the Great Depression and the availability of work in New York had drawn numerous Mohawk families to the city in search of a better life. Eventually, more than 800 Mohawk people were living in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Boerum Hill, formerly known as North Gowanus. Changing times encouraged most of these families to return home. By the late 1960s, the community had virtually disappeared.

#

Caption Photo #134

Relatives enjoying a Sunday afternoon on State Street, Brooklyn, 1953.



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

First row, from left: John "Sonny" Douglas (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Louie Deer (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Leon "Sonny" Rice (Mohawk, Kahnawake); second row, from left: Maynard Paul (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Nick Mugavero, Kenneth "Rosie" Jacobs, and John S. Diabo (Mohawk, Kahnawake). All the men were brothers-in-law, except for Maynard Paul, a cousin. All were ironworkers, except for Nick Mugavero, a bricklayer.

Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Caption Photo #133

Peter Sakaronhiotane Rice (Mohawk, Kahnawake; third from left) working on an unidentified project, 1925. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Caption Photo #49

Anthony Beauvais (Mohawk, Kahnawake) working in Harlem, 1999. Photo by Todd France

#

Caption Photo #143

Danny Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne) doing track work on the #7 subway line, 1987. Courtesy of Angus Adams Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne), and A. J. Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne)

#

Caption Photo #87

Kahnawake ironworkers at an "Honouring Our Own Day" celebration, November 24, 2001. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Caption Photo #150

From left: Bruce Roundpoint (Mohawk, Akwesasne) and an unidentified man at the World Trade Center, ca. 1960s. Courtesy of Bruce Roundpoint and Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne)



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

#

Caption Photo #104

Walter Joe Goodleaf (Mohawk, Kahnawake) at Fifty-third Street and Park Avenue, 1970. Photo by David Grant Noble

#

Caption Photo #79

From left: Blaik Kirby (Mohawk, Kahnawake) and his brother Shawn Kirby (Mohawk, Kahnawake), during the construction of the AOL Time Warner Building in New York, December 2001. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Caption Photo #139

Upper Hack Bridge, Newark, New Jersey, 1996. From left: Angus Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Dave Petrozuli, Paul Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne), and Joe Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne). Courtesy of Angus Adams Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne), and A. J. Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne)

#

Caption Photo #117

Kahnawake Mohawk ironworkers "topping off" a building at Fifty-third Street and Park Avenue, 1970. Photo by David Grant Noble

#

Section Five

Extended Label

Building Landmarks



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Mohawk ironworkers have been working in New York City since the 1920s. During this time, they have contributed significantly to the city's infrastructure and shaped its world famous skyline. The Empire State Building, the George Washington Bridge, Madison Square Garden, the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, and the World Trade Center—Mohawk ironworkers helped build them all.

#

Caption Photo #74

Ironworker apprentice Steve Cross (Mohawk, Kahnawake) working at the AOL Time Warner Building in New York, December 2001. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa

#

Caption Photo #59a

Roy Phillips (Mohawk, Kahnawake) traveling between Kahnawake and New York, 1999. Photo by Todd France

#

Caption Photo #58a

From left: Anthony Beauvais (Mohawk, Kahnawake) and Roy Phillips (Mohawk, Kahnawake) in a bar back home in Kahnawake, 1999. Photo by Todd France

#

Caption Photo #154

From left: Kenny Diabo (Mohawk, Akwesasne) and Norman Bigtree (Mohawk, Akwesasne) working in Queens. Courtesy of Mike Mitchell (Mohawk, Akwesasne) and Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne)

#

Caption Photo #160

Working at Fifty-seventh Street, 1972. From left: Dave Sunday Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Abe Gray Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne), and Angus Adams Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne). Courtesy of Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne)



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

- #
- Caption Photo #65 Alex Mayo (Mohawk, Kahnawake) on a column at Second Avenue between Forty-seventh and Forty-eighth Streets, 1971. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa
- #
- Caption Photo #44 George Gilbert (Mohawk, Kahnawake) wearing a *kastó:wa*, 1999. Photo by Todd France
- #
- Quote "It's like you're on top of the world. When you are up there you can see all over Manhattan and, if you're in the right place, into Brooklyn. You're like an eagle."
—George Gilbert (Mohawk, Kahnawake) quoted in *Brooklyn Bridge Magazine*, March 1999
- #
- Caption Photo #25 Peter Skaronhiati Stacey (Mohawk, Kahnawake; third from left), Joseph Jocks (Mohawk, Kahnawake; fourth from left), Peter Sakaronhiotane Rice (Mohawk, Kahnawake; sixth from left), and other ironworkers taking a break during the construction of Rockefeller Center in 1928. Photo by Lewis Hine. Courtesy of Bethlehem Steel
- #
- Caption Photo #83 Joseph Jocks (Mohawk, Kahnawake) riveting at the San Francisco Bay Bridge, ca. 1930s. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa
- #



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Section Six

Extended Label

Booming Out

“Booming Out” in search of the next big job has always been a fact of life for Mohawk ironworkers. Shortly after their introduction to the trade in the late 19th century, Mohawk men realized they would have to travel if they wished to work in their new field. Initially, bridge work took them throughout the northeast. Soon, New York City beckoned. Today, Mohawk ironworkers travel throughout the continent and beyond.

#

“Kentucky . . . I used to come home only every second weekend. Eight hundred miles, that’s a little too far to come home every week.”

—Watio Bordeau (Mohawk, Kahnawake) quoted in the film *Spudwrench: Kahnawake Man*. National Film Board of Canada, 1997

#

Caption Photo #129

International Association of Bridge, Structural, and Ornamental Iron Workers, Local 440, Annual Picnic, Akwesasne. Courtesy of Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne) and Mike Swamp (Mohawk, Akwesasne)

#

Caption Photo #163

Ben Roundpoint (Mohawk, Akwesasne) at a construction site at New York University, August 22, 2001. Courtesy of Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne) and Ben Roundpoint

#

Caption Photo #159

Stanley Myiow (Mohawk, Kahnawake) at the Honoré Mercier Bridge,



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Kahnawake, 1999. Photo by Todd France

Quote

#

"We've always done things that were exceptionally difficult. We were never afraid of it. And now, well, the wars are over and the war now is work, so we go to work."

—George Gilbert (Mohawk, Kahnawake) quoted in "Mohawks High Up," *National Geographic Explorer*, 1989

#

Caption Photo #109

Kahnawake Mohawk ironworker with a feather attached to his hardhat at Fifty-third Street and Park Avenue, 1970. Photo by David Grant Noble

#

Caption Photo #102

Roger Horne (Mohawk, Kahnawake) working on Eighty-sixth Street and Lexington Avenue, 1970. Photo by David Grant Noble

#

Caption Photo #142

From left: Roy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne) and Angus Adams Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne) laying decking at One New York Plaza, 1968. Courtesy of Angus Adams Sr. (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne), and A. J. Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne). [Photo by Raymond Juschkus](#)

#

Caption Photo #119

Kahnawake Mohawk ironworkers climbing a tower at Fifty-third Street and Park Avenue, 1970. Photo by David Grant Noble

#

Caption Photo #112

From left: Jay Jacobs (Mohawk, Kahnawake) and Sparky Rice (Mohawk, Kahnawake) working on a beam at Fifty-third Street and Park Avenue, 1970. Photo by David Grant Noble



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

- Caption Photo #162
- #
- Members of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, and Ornamental Iron Workers, Local 440, at a ceremony in their honor at the St. Regis School, December 2001. From left: Benny Roundpoint (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Phil Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Matt Jacobs (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Loren Clute (Mohawk, Akwesasne), Richard "Dick" Otto (Mohawk, Akwesasne), and Mrs. Margie Skidders, principal of the St. Regis School. Courtesy of Wendy Adams (Mohawk, Akwesasne) and Mike Swamp (Mohawk, Akwesasne)
- Caption Photo #164
- #
- From left: Matty Montour (Mohawk, Kahnawake) and partner (unknown), 1985. Riyadh International Stadium, Saudi Arabia. Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa
- Caption Photo #165
- #
- Alaska Highway, 1944. From left: Unknown, Joe Jocks (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Tom Leclaire (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Mike Lazare (Mohawk, Kahnawake), and John Canadian (Mohawk, Kahnawake). Courtesy of Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa
- Caption/Sculpture
- #
- Untitled 2002
Darryl Pronovost (Mohawk, Kahnawake), 1963–
Made of steel from Ground Zero
Collection of the National Museum of the American Indian
- #
- Credit Panel
- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Guest Curator | Kanatakta (Mohawk, Kahnawake) |
| Assistant Curator | Devorah Romanek |
| NMAI Curatorial Liaison | Gerald McMaster (Plains Cree) |



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Exhibition Designer Barbara Suhr
Editor Mark Hirsch
Exhibition Specialists Stacey Jones, Ford Bailey, Damon Prieur
Public Programs Liaisons Shawn Termin (Lakota), Paul Betancourt (Seneca)
Project Manager Ann Silverman (Ojibwe)
Assistant Project Manager John Richardson
Photographic Printing Modernage Custom Imaging Labs
Graphic Production Color Wheel, Specialty Signs

Special thanks to the Akwesasne community, especially Angus Adams, Wendy Adams, A. J. Adams, Brad Bonaparte, Jerry McDonald, and the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne; the Kahnawake community, especially Lee Beauchamp, Kyle Beauvais, Lynn Beauvais, Landon Goodleaf, Herby “Gremlin” Kirby, Jamie Kirby, John McGowan, Stanley Myiow, Darryl Pronovost, David Rice, and Kanien'kehaka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa; Jennifer Brathovde, Maja Keech, and Katrina McDonald, the Library of Congress; Phyllis Collazo, *The New York Times*, James D. Courtney, Bethlehem Steel; Mimi Dornack, National Geographic Society; *The Eastern Door*; Jeffrey Foxx; Todd France; David Grant Noble; James Karales; Marguerite Lavin, the Museum of the City of New York; Laura Rosen, MTA Bridges and Tunnels; Vyrtilis Thomas, Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives; Bill Wander; and NMAI staff Steve Bell, Peter Brill, Maria Canellis, John Dwight, Ann Kawasaki, Lilli Liell, Robert Mastrangelo, and Julie Zolot; Deborah Macanic, Erica Johnson, Laurie Trippett, and Ryan Rodriguez, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service; and the Smithsonian Office of Exhibits Central.

#



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York

An exhibition created by the National Museum of the American Indian and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service



Smithsonian Institution
Traveling Exhibition Service

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes.