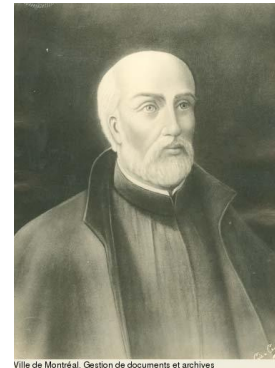

ST. JEAN DE BREBEUF AND GRAND CHIEF HENRI MEMBERTOU



St. Jean de Brébeuf (1593 - 1649)

St. Jean de Brébeuf was born in France in 1593, however, much of his ministry was spent in what is now Canada. A Jesuit priest, he travelled with Samuel de Champlain and some Franciscan Récollets and lived with the Huron-Wendat people in Huronia, which is today known as the area around Georgian Bay in southwestern Ontario.



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He and his companions learned the language of the people they met. With the Huron lay pastoral worker Joseph Chiwatenhwa, they translated hymns and prayers and preached in the areas they visited. Brébeuf was well-known for his dedication to his ministry and to the people he met, but he also experienced visions that inspired his willingness to be martyred alongside other Jesuit missionaries and the Huron-Wendat Christians.

In 1639 they built a mission, Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons, which is now the site of the Martyrs' Shrine in Midland, Ontario. The Jesuits went out to the surrounding Huron-Wendat villages and even further to other First Nations communities. Although he had to return to the new settlement of Quebec and travelled to France several times, Brébeuf's ministry in Huronia continued to flourish.

In the 1640s conflicts broke out between the rival French and British colonists and the Five Nations, or Haudenosaunee Confederacy. In these conflicts Brébeuf, his seven companions and some Wendat Christians were martyred. The Sainte-Marie mission also had to be abandoned as the conflict between nations escalated.

Since the early 1900s Martyrs' Shrine has been a place of pilgrimage, commemorating both Brébeuf and the other missionaries and the Indigenous Christians that received the Gospel. Brébeuf and his seven martyred companions were canonized together as the Canadian Martyrs in 1930.

Grand Chief Membertou (c. 1507-1611)

Grand Chief Membertou (baptized as Henri) was a highly respected Mi'kmaw leader and an **autmoïn**, or spiritual leader. When European settlers arrived in what is now known as Nova Scotia, his people welcomed them in and taught them how to survive the harsh conditions.

The Grand Chief was reportedly over one hundred years old, and was much admired among his people. The European settlers were also very impressed by his diplomatic leadership and wisdom. He had previously refused to form an agreement with the French authorities and, instead, he chose to enter into a sacred alliance with the Holy See, called **The Mi'kmaw Concordat**.

As part of this alliance, Grand Chief Membertou and his family were baptized on June 24, 1610, by the missionaries who had been living with them. Membertou and his people maintained important elements of their Mi'kmaw tradition after embracing Catholicism. This inculturation spread to other areas, until much of the Mi'kma'ki, or traditional Mi'kmaw territory, had also accepted the Gospel.

Although the Grand Chief died the following year, the Mi'kmaq continued in their faith amid French and British tensions, and even when no priests were available to them. They later entered into the Peace and Friendship Treaties (1725-1779) with France and Britain, which were inherited by the Dominion of Canada after Confederation. Despite restrictions by the Indian Act (1876), the Mi'kmaq Grand Council has kept the sacred alliance Grand Chief Membertou had made. The Council sees it as having enduring importance and continues to work for its recognition.



Portrait of Grand Chief Henri Membertou by Alan Sylliboy.

The portrait was presented to Queen Elizabeth II on June 28, 2010 by Grand Chief Benjamin Sylliboy and is on permanent display in Government House, Halifax.
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