

Welcoming Remarks – 5 July 2026

Kwe, hello, and welcome, paddlers.

On behalf of Kichi Sibi Trails, it is an honour to greet you at the start of this year's **Pinesi Paddle**.

Today we gather on the shores of the Kichi Sibi, the Ottawa River, at the **Canadian Museum of History**, a place that reminds us that every journey is part of a much longer story.

We're standing in front of Parliament Hill, which is obviously a magnificent place, but I want to help you to understand where we are in space and time.

To the left, the Atlantic Ocean, with a few rapids in between, about 1,300 km away.

To the right, the Great Lakes, through Akikodjiwan/Chaudiere Falls, via Georgian Bay and eventually the Pacific.

There are names for the falls in this area in Anishinaabe Algonquin and also Haudenosaunee, both in Mohawk and Onondaga.

Most of them are natural names, but the Onondaga one describes it as a chief council fire, which shows that this place was a place for negotiation, as well as ritual and trade.

If we go back 12,000 years, this area would have been under 2 km of ice, and after that, the Champlain Sea above Parliament Hill, was about 150 m deep, and in that general area they found a cluster of 6 beluga skeletons.

This place was more like Iqaluit at that time, and then the water started falling quite rapidly.

So it is likely that Parliament Hill emerged about 9,000 years ago as the highest point in this part of the river.

The land rose and the water dropped to its current level about 7,000 years ago.

Parliament Hill was a place for ritual for thousands of years, for equinox and solstice ceremonies amongst others.

Water dowsers and the like say that Parliament Hill is one of the most important energy vortexes in Canada.

Energy vortexes are found in various other locations, such as Taos, New Mexico, notably, but animals seem to like sitting on them and people like building important buildings on them.

On the left, you can see what was Nepean Point, now called Kiweki Point “returning to one’s homeland”, an excellent lookout.

On the right, the portage of Akikodjiwan and Chaudiere was a vital meeting place of negotiation, ritual and trade.

Also on the right-hand side, Richmond Landing, which went on to Richmond Road and down to Richmond, Ontario, was, as far as we can tell, a route for bringing beaver pelts and meat to the riverside.

Caribou would have roamed along that ridge to Montreal too.

In a few moments we will push off together and begin our paddle toward **Kahnawà:ke**.

Along the way, the river will offer us what it always does: steady lessons in respect, patience, and teamwork.

It will ask us to read the wind, to listen for changes, to help one another when the current gets lively, and to keep moving when our shoulders feel the miles.

This paddle is more than a route on a map. It is a chance to **reconnect**, with the land and water that carry us, with the communities along the river, and with one another.

Whether you are here for your first long-distance **adventure** or returning with years of experience, you belong in this circle.

Each stroke you take adds to a shared spirit of courage, care, and curiosity.

As we travel, let's paddle with gratitude and with intention:

- For the waterways that sustain life.
- For the knowledge and hospitality of the people whose homelands we move through.
- For the friendships we will strengthen, and the new ones we will make.

And when our days of adventure bring us to the weekend of the **Kahnawà:ke Pow Wow**, may we arrive not only proud of the distance we have traveled, but also mindful of the connections we have built, **connection to place**, to **culture**, and to **community**.

Thank you for being part of the Pinesi Paddle. Take care of each other. Paddle safely. And most of all, let's make this a journey we will carry with us for a long time. Miigwetch, Thank you, Merci. Ajuinata- Never Give Up.