

## News Release

### Niagara Foundation to Acquire Half Interest in Historic 5.5-Acre Niagara-on-the-Lake Woods

#### *The Wilderness Property in Old Town is significant to Indigenous and Military History*

**NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ON** — The Niagara Foundation is pursuing the purchase of a half-interest in an historically significant Old Town property known as the Wilderness, the Foundation announced today.

The 5.5-acre (2.2-hectare) wooded property and its historic buildings in the heart of Old Town is being acquired from the estate of one of two sisters belonging to a family that has owned the site for many decades, to protect it for posterity. The purchase, subject to court approval, is designed to protect the Wilderness and the properties on it from further development.

The Wilderness is being acquired by the Foundation because it has rich historical significance, said Niagara Foundation President Michael Howe.

“It is not only an area of natural beauty; it’s also important to Indigenous people and our region’s military and political history, as far back as the 18<sup>th</sup> century,” Mr. Howe said.

“We believe this historic land and building must be preserved for everyone — Indigenous people, residents of Niagara, visitors and indeed, all Canadians.

The property was once the home of William Claus, Deputy Superintendent of the Indian Department and one of the three trustees of the Six Nations. The Wilderness was originally given by the Six Nations Indians to Mr. Claus’ wife Nancy Johnson “in token of her many deeds of kindness.” Her father Sir William Johnson negotiated the Treaty of Niagara with 24 Indigenous nations in 1764. The Treaty formed the basis for the original treaty relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers in Eastern North America.

Sir William Johnson met with more than 2,000 Chiefs from all of eastern North America in Niagara in 1764 to negotiate the Treaty. It was considered the high point of colonial relations with Indigenous peoples. It was specifically conceived as a treaty of sharing of the land, not conquest.

The site provided shelter for soldiers and a family in a root cellar during the War of 1812 after Niagara-on-the-Lake was razed by the fleeing American forces in 1813.

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake designated the Wilderness a heritage property in 1994. This designation applies both to the heavily wooded land as well as the entire exterior and interior of the house on the site, as well as the carriage house and the archaeological remains. The house was built in 1816. A creek that meanders through the property is protected by a conservation easement.

The Ontario Heritage Trust has strongly encouraged the preservation of this property.

**For more information, please contact:** Brad Nixon 416 606 5441 [bnixon@nfplaw.ca](mailto:bnixon@nfplaw.ca)

#### **About the Niagara Foundation**

The Niagara Foundation is a not-for-profit charitable corporation with the express goals of preserving and protecting the heritage of Niagara-on-the-Lake. It was incorporated in 1962.-30-