

Roger Sosakete Perkins

Roger Sosakete Perkins is a popular 37 year old Traditional Mohawk Bear Clan artist from the Akwesasne Mohawk Indian reservation on the borders of Ontario, Quebec and New York. Sosakete means “he who carries the corn” and consequently has almost single-handedly revived and carried forth the 4000 year old skill of traditional Mohawk pottery that was lost when the Dutch trade pots took over the traditional clay cooking pots in the late 1660's.

Sosakete and his four children (Kahentawaks, Kwate, Kariwaiens and Koiaare) recently moved to the California Bay Area where he married his beautiful wife and soul mate, Chela. He and his wife recently celebrated the new arrival of their fifth child and second son, Marseo.

In 1990, Sosakete studied the traditional pottery techniques of the Hopi under the teaching of acclaimed Hopi potter, Preston Dwyaney while it was still unknown to Sosakete that he would one day become the only traditional Mohawk potter in the world. Then in 1995, Sosakete returned to Kanatsiohareke in the Mohawk Valley, along the Mohawk river, 45 miles west of Albany, N.Y. —the traditional homeland of the Bear Clan Mohawks. After joining with his uncle and traditional leader, Tom Porter and several other Mohawk families, they re-established a traditional community and began to revive the traditional , cultural values and practices of the Mohawks in their ancestral homeland.

Sosakete helped work the land, dig holes for fence posts, and build foundations for new chimneys. In several instances, he uncovered pieces of arrowheads, pipes and pot sherds. “The first pot sherd I found and held in my hand, a warm energy came into me and I instantly felt an overwhelming need to build and create a complete pot from the 500 year old piece in my hand”. From that moment, Sosakete felt an unseen presence and push to revive what was lost so long ago. Soon after this unforgettable moment, he met a man who became one of his closest friends, a third generation, 57 year old archeologist by the name of Jan Swart. With Jan's immense knowledge and collection, Sosakete absorbed information and stories over many nights into the morning hours. Over the next 6 months, Jan brought and shared boxes upon boxes of pot sherds and nearly intact vessels. “I would sit for hours to hold, study and absorb every design, form, ingredient and profile of hundreds of items”. This was by far one of the most important events of his journey.

“The very first attempt at building a Mohawk pot, I was sitting with Jan, listening to one of his stories, when I noticed that he had stopped talking, I looked up at him and saw his eyes well up with a tear falling down his face”. I asked, “Jan, are you okay”? Jan said, “ Roger you have no idea what this means to me watching you make this pot. I've spent my entire life with my grandfather and my father excavating Mohawk sites,

and my own sites and to see you here now, a real Mohawk, making a real Mohawk pot , is something I never thought would ever happen or could be possible. Thank you.”

Over the next several years, Sosakete held workshops and demonstrations for organizations, museums and schools in Canada, the U.S.A. and Frankfurt, Germany. He taught over 700 people from age 8 to 80 how to gather and process clay, the technique of pinch and coil building, the firing process using hardwoods, the spirituality of working with these elements and the ancient history of the 4000 year old traditional pottery skill.

Sosakete is also a visual artist and has a vast collection of paintings that illustrate his belief in the positive aspects of nature, tradition, color and the interconnectedness of all life's creatures. His motto is “educate through art” and paints with a specific message in mind. It is his dream to inspire and unite everyone.