

*The Lake Between*  
(Working title)

A Documentary by Caro Thompson, Broadwing Productions

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People who live in the valley that cradles the lake known to most as Champlain are connected to a rich and complex history. It is called by many names: Mohawk and Abenaki words that are much older than the one given to the lake by Samuel de Champlain, an explorer and mapmaker from France. This lake has been a trade route for thousands of years. It has served as a boundary and as a common resource. Crops have been planted and harvested along the shores by indigenous peoples and immigrants alike. Battles have been fought there. Much of this history has remained under the radar of local residents. Yet this region played an important role in the struggle between England and France for control of the continent. There was intrigue. There were alliances. But for the most part, it was a place where families were making their way day-to-day, trying to stay out of the crossfire.

During the spring and summer of 2007, Caro Thompson will be doing research through books, interviews and visiting historic sites. She is also looking for families who have connections to the valley that go back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century or beyond.

The documentary will begin with the two peoples who have lived onshore and traveled over the water longest: those whose language is Algonkian (primarily the Abenaki) and those who are Haudenosaunee (Iroquois). Where did they live in 1600? What alliances existed before the French, Dutch and English arrived? How do we learn through oral history traditions? How is the present connected to the past? At this point, these are only a few of the questions. Research is often as much about finding the right questions as it is about learning the answers.

Samuel de Champlain first traveled the lake in 1609. He wrote detailed notes about his experiences. Are they accurate? Did he know for sure who he killed and why they had gathered on the western shore? Do we? How did his actions change the course of history? The documentary will explore a variety of points of view.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century fur trade had a tremendous impact on the landscape, on ecosystems and ways of life. Summarizing key points from both indigenous and European perspectives sets the stage for the battles, new settlements and increased contact among all groups that came in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

New residents arrived in more numbers by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. French, Scots, Dutch and people from the English colonies to the east were looking for new land to plow and found fields already cleared and cultivated in the valley of the lake they knew as Champlain. How did their presence affect alliances between the Mohawk and the English, the Abenaki and the French? What kind of trade relationships developed? What did people learn from each others' ways of doing things?

The documentary will weave a narrative that connects the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to contemporary residents. Elements of social and governmental patterns begun over 200 years ago still exist today. We must understand the past in order to plan for a future that will protect the cultural, historical and environmental legacy of *Lake Champlain*.

*The Lake Between* will be a one-hour documentary broadcast by Vermont Public Television and other PBS stations in late 2008. Over the past 10 years, award-winning filmmaker, Caro Thompson, has worked with Abenaki basketmakers, historians and living history specialists on many productions. Her 2003 documentary, *New England's Great River: Discovering the Connecticut*, highlighted 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century interactions between English settlers and indigenous people whose homelands are in the Connecticut river valley.

Lake Champlain: Voyages of Discovery, the title of the overall IMLS project, will also include an archaeology component. The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and the University of Maine, Farmington's archaeology staff will work on a survey of early French settlement sites in Addison County, Vermont, in July of 2007. An interactive website will be developed in 2008, offering information and resources based on the documentary and the archaeology findings. For more information about the documentary or to share information about family connections, contact [BroadwingProductions@pshift.com](mailto:BroadwingProductions@pshift.com), 802-563-3115.