

*For School Systems Everywhere*

## A Teachers Study Guide

for

## ‘Paddle Song’

a story

of



Pauline Johnson

in

## Words and Music

|            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| starring   | Cheri Maracle  |
| written by | Dinah Christie |
| with       | Tom Hill       |

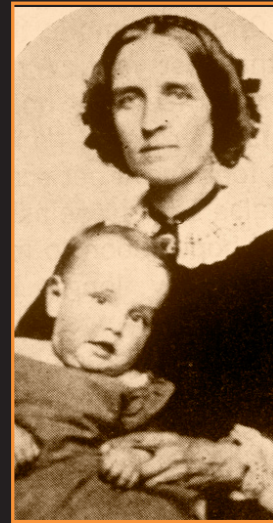
“ ... one whose life and writings were an  
● uplift and a blessing to our nation ... ”

<http://www.paulinejohnsononstage.ca>

## ● 1. Who was Pauline Johnson?

**P**auline Johnson (March 10, 1861 – March 7, 1913) was the youngest of four children born to Emily Howells, a British school-teacher, and George Henry Martin Johnson, a Mohawk Tribal chief, of Canada's Six Nations near Brantford, Ontario. George himself had a Mother who was half European.

As a consequence to this mixed ancestry, Pauline was also known in Mohawk as "Tekahionwake" (pronounced dageh-eeon-wageh, literally "double-life") but commonly known as E. Pauline Johnson or just Pauline Johnson. She was a much admired Canadian writer and performer popular in the late 19th century.



## ● 2. Her Importance :

**W**hether she was aware of how unique and challenging was her position on the "food chain" of the late 1800's is not clear. Evaluations of this nature are perhaps best contextualized in hindsight. A woman traveling alone, over oceans and across borders, at a time when the difficulty in attempting such escapades was certainly fraught with challenges at the turning of the century, must be looked upon with a strong measure

of awe. She was a WRITER ... a truly splendid conjurer of word images. Nothing would deflect her from their production nor from their dispersal.



Her poetry was published in England and sold in Canada, the United States and Great Britain. Pauline was one of a generation of widely read writers who began to define a Canadian literature.

## ● 2. Her Importance : (continued)

Johnson was notable for her poems and onstage performances that celebrated her First Nations heritage. One such celebratory poem is the frequently anthologized "The Song My Paddle Sings." In the '40s and '50s this poem was taught to school children throughout Canada.

The Johnsons enjoyed a high standard of living, and their family and home were both well known. Chiefswood was visited by such intellectual and political guests as inventor, Alexander Graham Bell; painter, Homer Watson; noted anthropologist, Horatio Hale and Lady and Lord Dufferin, Governor General of Canada.



*CHERI MARACLE AS PAULINE JOHNSON IN 'PADDLE SONG'*



### ● 3. Her Heritage:

Emily and George Johnson encouraged their four children to respect and learn about both the Mohawk and the English aspects of their heritage. Because the children were born to a Native father, by British law, they were legally considered Mohawk and wards of the British Crown. Because their mother was not Mohawk they were excluded from aspects of the tribe's matrilineal culture. Their paternal grandfather, John Smoke Johnson, who had been elected a Pine Tree Chief, was a much admired authority in the lives of his grandchildren. He told them many stories in the Mohawk language, which they comprehended but did not speak fluently. Pauline said that she inherited her talent for elocution from her grandfather. Late in life she expressed regret for not learning more of his Mohawk heritage.

### ● 4. Her Early Years :

A sickly child, Pauline did not attend school at Brantford's Mohawk Institute. It was established in 1834 as one of Canada's first residential schools for Native children. Her education was mostly at home and informal, derived from her mother (a school teacher), and a series of non-Native governesses. A few years were spent at the small school on the reserve, and fleshed out with self-directed reading in the family's expansive library. She became familiar with literary works by Byron, Tennyson, Keats, Browning, and John Milton. She enjoyed reading tales about Native peoples, such as found in Longfellow's epic poem "The Song of Hiawatha" and (author) John Richardson's, "Wacousta."

At age 14, Johnson went to Brantford Central Collegiate with her brother Allen, and graduated in 1877.

During the 1880s Pauline wrote and performed in amateur Theatre productions. She enjoyed the Canadian outdoors, which she explored by canoe. In 1883 she published her first full-length poem, "My Little Jean," in the New York City "Gems of Poetry" publication, giving incentive to her burgeoning writing and publishing career.

## ● 4. Her Early Years : ( continued )

Shortly after her father's death in 1884, the family rented out Chiefswood. Pauline moved with her sister and widowed mother to a modest home in Brantford. She worked to support them all, and found that her stage performances allowed her to make a living. Johnson supported her mother until her mother's death in 1898.

## ● 5. Her Middle Years :

During the 1880s, Johnson built her reputation as a Canadian writer, regularly publishing in periodicals such as "The Week" and "Saturday Night Magazine." In the late 1880's and early 1890's, she published nearly monthly, in Saturday Night. Johnson was one of a group of Canadian authors contributing to a distinct national literature. The inclusion of two of her poems in W.D. Lighthall's anthology, "Songs of the Great Dominion" (1889), signaled her validation and legitimacy as a force in the art of writing, and Theodore Watts-Dunton noted her for praise in his review of the book. He quoted her entire poem "In the Shadows" and called her "the most interesting poetess now living." In her early works, Johnson wrote mostly about Canadian life, landscapes, and love.

In 1885, Charles G.D. Roberts, destined to become a life long friend of Pauline's, published Johnson's very powerful and evocative, "A Cry From an Indian Wife" in both his magazine, "The Week," and in Goldwin Smith's, "Toronto Magazine." She based her observations upon insights, both shared and deduced, from the Battle of Cut Knife Creek, during the Riel Rebellion. In 1885 Johnson traveled to Buffalo, New York to attend a ceremony honouring the Iroquois leader. Sagoyewatha, also known as Red Jacket.



## ● 5. Her Middle Years : ( continued )

She wrote a poem expressing admiration for him and a plea for reconciliation between British and Native peoples.

In 1886, Johnson was commissioned to write a poem to mark the unveiling in Brantford of a statue honouring Joseph Brant, who was an important and influential Mohawk leader during and after the American Revolutionary War. "Ode to Brant" was read at a ceremony before "the largest crowd the little city had ever seen." It called for brotherhood between Native and White Canadians under British imperial authority. The poem sparked a long article in the Toronto Globe, that served her well by increasing interest in her poetry and in her "exotic" heritage.

## ● 6. Theatrical Success :

On January 16, 1892 she was the only woman attending a "Canadian Authors Evening," held at the Toronto Art School Gallery. She read to an overflow crowd, that included luminaries such as W.D. Lighthall, William Wilfred Campbell, and Duncan Campbell Scott. The success of this performance began the poet's 15-year stage career, as she was signed up by Frank Yeigh, who had organized the Canadian Authors Evening. He gave her the headline for her first show on February 19, 1892, where she debuted a new poem written for the event, "The Song My Paddle Sings". (Johnson was perceived as quite young ) (although she was then 31), a beauty, and an exotic Native performer. After her first recital season, she decided to emphasize her Native aspects by assembling and wearing a feminine Native costume. She wore it during the first part of the show. When reciting her dramatic "Indian" lyrics, she changed into fashionable English dress, appearing as a Victorian lady, to recite her "English Verse."





## ● 7. Stage Approach :

**P**auline's performing style made her an approachable artist and left her audiences informed, delighted and inspired.

The audiences she encountered in Canada, England and the United States recognized the uniqueness of native peoples in performance. (The 1890s were also the period of popularity of Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show ).

She and her siblings inherited an artifact collection from their father which included significant items such as wampum belts and spiritual masks. Pauline employed this rich lode in costuming her performances.

Scholars have had difficulty identifying Johnson's complete works, as much was published in periodicals. Her first volume of poetry, "The White Wampum," was published in London, England in 1895. It was followed by "Canadian Born" in 1903. The contents of these volumes, together with additional poems, were published as the collection, "Flint and Feather", in 1912. Reprinted many times, this book has been one of the best-selling titles of Canadian Poetry. Scholars have had difficulty identifying Johnson's "complete works" as much was published in periodicals. (Since its 1917 edition, "Flint and Feather" has been misleadingly subtitled "The Complete Poems of E. Pauline Johnson").



## ● 8. Later life :

After Pauline retired from the stage in August 1909, she moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, and continued writing. Her pieces included a series of articles for the "Daily Province," based on stories related by her friend Chief Joe Capilano of the Squamish people of North Vancouver. In 1911, to help support Johnson, who was now suffering the double angst of no longer "having her health" nor stable finances, a group of friends organized the publication of these stories under the title

"Legends of the Capilano". Later the title was changed to "Legends of Vancouver". They remain classics of that city's literature.

- Johnson died of breast cancer in Vancouver on March 7, 1913. Her funeral (until then, the largest in Vancouver history) was held on her 52nd birthday - March 10, 1913. Her ashes were buried near Siwash Rock, a land mark in Vancouver's Stanley Park. In 1922 a cairn was erected at the burial site with an inscription reading  
... in part ...

● *"In memory of one whose life and writings were an uplift  
and  
a blessing to our Nation."* ●





## ● 9. Sources :

- - Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) (2000).
- - Gray, Charlotte (2002), Flint and Feather: The Life and Times of E. Pauline Johnson, Tekahionwake, Toronto: Harper Collins.
- - Johnston, Shelia M.F. (1997), Buckskin & Broadcloth: A Celebration of E. Pauline Johnson-Tekahionwake 1861–1913, Toronto: Natural Heritage.
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- - Monture, Rick (2002), "'Beneath the British Flag': Iroquois and Canada of Pauline Johnson and Duncan Campbell Scott"
- - Strong-Boag, Veronica; Gerson, Carole (2000), Paddling Her Own Canoe.



- - The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake), Toronto University of Toronto Press



*CHERI MARACLE  
AS PAULINE JOHNSON  
IN 'PADDLE SONG'*



## The Creators of 'Paddle Song'

- **Cheri Maracle** is an actor/singer/songwriter of Mohawk & Irish descent. Cheri has been performing on stages in Canada, the U. S. and abroad for many years.
- She is starring as E. Pauline Johnson in 'Paddle Song' and indeed, debuted the role in 2009.
- Cheri is a multi - talented award winning actor/singer/songwriter of the Six Nations of the Grand River, Ontario. She has a theatre trained background and has performed professionally for the past 19 years on the Turtle Island Network and across the United States and Europe.
- She has appeared in numerous theatre productions :  
World premiere of "The Refugee Hotel." at Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille; the world premiere of "Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout" WCTC; 'Death of a Chief' for the National Arts Centre ... and more.
- A short list of her tv/film credits :  
"Moccasin Flats" / APTN + "Blackfly" / Global  
"Talking Canadian" / CBC + "The Murdoch Mysteries" / CBC
- Cheri was nominated for the prestigious K.M. Hunter Theatre Award (2007) for her body of theatrical work.
- She was, from 2006-2008, an artistic associate of the award winning aboriginal Women's Theatre Company, "Turtle Gals."
- She is currently recording her second album, "If I am Water." Her first album "Closer to Home," garnered several award nominations. Cheri recently performed some APTN's Arbor: Live !  
Cheri of her new material on
- Cheri also spends time teaching and songwriting as teaches career level Aboriginal youth across
- In April of 2013 she performed her jazz evening at Washington's Smithsonian Institution



teaching workshops in singing as well as theatre arts. She also courses in broadcasting to Canada.



● **Tom Hill** : A.O.C.A, O. ONT., F.C.M.A., A.O.C.A.C., LL. M.  
( Honours )

- Dr. Tom Hill is a Seneca Indian from the Six Nations Reserve.
- In 1967, he received his A.O.C.A. from the Ontario College of Art and continued his studies on a scholarship with the National Gallery of Canada.
- After fifteen years with the federal government, Dr. Hill accepted the position as Museum Director at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford where he remained until his retirement in 2004.
- His work as a curator has done much to raise awareness of the contemporary art practices of First Nations artists including the book "Creations Journey" for the Smithsonian Institution in New York and the award winning catalogue, "It Takes Time", for the Woodland Cultural Centre.
- He has served as a member of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Canada, a Member of the National First Nations Advisory Committee to the Canada Council,
- Board Member to the Ontario Film Development Corporation,
- Co-chair for the National Task Force on Museums and First Peoples,
- Board member for the Ontario Museums Association and the Ontario Arts Council.
- He has served for two terms as a Board member for the Canada Council.
- He has been serving as a member of Chiefswood Museum since 2013.
- He commissioned Dinah Christie to write 'Paddle Song' for an extremely successful Woodland Cultural Centre's 2009 exhibition entitled "Faithfully Yours, E. Pauline Johnson."

