

NEW DAWN STAFF OF PLACE AND BELONGING

Dalhousie's New Dawn Staff of Place and Belonging is carried into the convocation ceremony by the University Beadle at the head of the graduate procession and placed onstage to signal the start of the celebration, then carried back out to mark the end.

MI'KMAQ CREATION STORY:

The Staff's lower section depicts the Mi'kmaq creation story through a series of illustrations by artist Alan Syliboy inspired by Mi'kmaq petroglyphs (rock etchings). An eight-pointed star laser-cut in rubber hidden at the base of the staff represents Mi'kma'ki's seven districts, with an eighth point signifying welcome into the territory.

KNOTTED RAWHIDE BAND:

Laid over birch bark and reed, the band symbolizes the exchange of knowledge and welcome shown by the Mi'kmaq to the French upon their arrival to settle the territory. Flags representing Scottish and British settlers are included in the following section as are symbols representing conflict and violence, including the expulsion of the Acadians.

ELEMENTS OF THE MACE:

The New Dawn Staff pays tribute to the ceremonial mace, replicating some symbols, including the shamrock, thistle and English rose here above the quill band alongside new symbols from various traditions.

BIRCH-BARK GRIP: One of four hand grips integrated along the Staff to provide functionality as an aid for walking. With grips in different locations along the shaft, the Staff can be carried by individuals with different walking or sitting heights.

SANKOFA SYMBOL:

African Nova Scotian artist Wendie Poitras contributed several adaptations of Adinkra symbols from West Africa to the Staff. Her version of a Sankofa symbol, centrally placed here, emphasizes the importance of moving forward while reaching back to learn lessons from the past.

QUILT WRAP: Pre-existing works from many unknown makers are also incorporated into the Staff for their cultural significance, including textiles from around the world such as Jordanian keffiyeh material, indigo cloth from Mali, Nigerian batik, Chinese brocade, and Nova Scotian tartan.

"IDENTITIES" AND BRAILLE:

A decoupage reproduction of "Identities" by Halifax-born artist Arjun Lal acknowledges our culture's growing awareness of different identities, while braille for the words "I belong" is embedded in both English and French into the Staff's wood above and below Lal's piece, following earlier script of the phrase in Arabic, Dutch, and Chinese.

DRIFTWOOD WITH WIRE

WEAVINGS: Thirteen gilded wire weavings by Lily Volio, one for each university Faculty, made up of diverse strands that represent faculty, students, support staff and administration. Set snugly into blackened driftwood, there's room for more bands should new faculties be created.

RISING "NEW DAWN" SUN:

3D printed at Dal's Product Design & Development Centre with hard resin and gilded by Mark Austin, co-lead artist on the project along with Alan Syliboy. Inspired by Dal's 200th anniversary logo, the eye-catching feature is a reference to the Mi'kmaq — also known as the People of the Dawn, given Mi'kma'ki's location in the east where the sun first hits in North America.

