



Impact Statement

Lex Glime, Grade 11

Strength Through Unity, 2026

Charcoal, graphite on paper, 11 x 14 inches

Hartland High School, Hartland, MI

Unsung Hero: Hiawatha

For my Unsung Hero project, I chose Hiawatha because of his role in creating unity and peace among the Native American tribes. I was inspired by how he helped bring together groups that were once enemies and guided them toward cooperation instead of conflict. What I admire most about Hiawatha is his ways of peace, leadership, and understanding, which he used to unite people, and show that there are other ways than violence that can be used to solve problems.

Hiawatha made a big impact in history because he helped form the Iroquois Confederacy, which was an alliance of different tribes that agreed to live in peace and follow shared rules. This decision made them stronger as a group and helped stop a lot of fighting. His story shows that talking things out and respecting others can be more powerful than fighting. When I was researching, I also learned that this system of unity even influenced ideas of democracy later, which made me realize how important he really was, even though not many people know about him.

In my artwork, I wanted to focus on both Hiawatha's strength as a leader and the meaning behind what he stood for. The main figure on the right side of my drawing represents Hiawatha. He is wearing a traditional headpiece, which stands for leadership, honor, and wisdom. His calm expression shows that he is a peaceful leader who thinks carefully. On the left side, I drew another Native American figure in a more intense pose to show the conflict and struggles that existed before peace was created. This contrast really helps show the great change from conflict to unity that Hiawatha worked hard to create for the Native American tribes.

I also added a majestic bald eagle in the center because it represents freedom, vision, and spiritual strength. The eagle connects both sides of the drawing, which symbolizes how Hiawatha brought people together. In the background, I included a horse and a vast, rocky landscape in the background to show the importance of nature and the land. The horse represents strength and movement, while the landscape shows the deep connection Native Americans have with their environment.

For my process, I used Faber Castel graphite pencils to create a realistic and detailed drawing on textured paper. I focused on shading, blending, and contrasting to make the figures look more lifelike. I also spent extra time on textures like feathers and fur to add more detail. I chose to keep the drawing in black and white, so the focus stays on the meaning, emotion, and symbolism, without potentially adding distracting colors.

This project helped me understand how important unity and understanding are, even today. Hiawatha's story shows that real leadership is about bringing people together, not about controlling them. I hope that my artwork can bring attention to Hiawatha, open minds about his story, and hopefully inspire them to value peace and cooperation in their own lives.