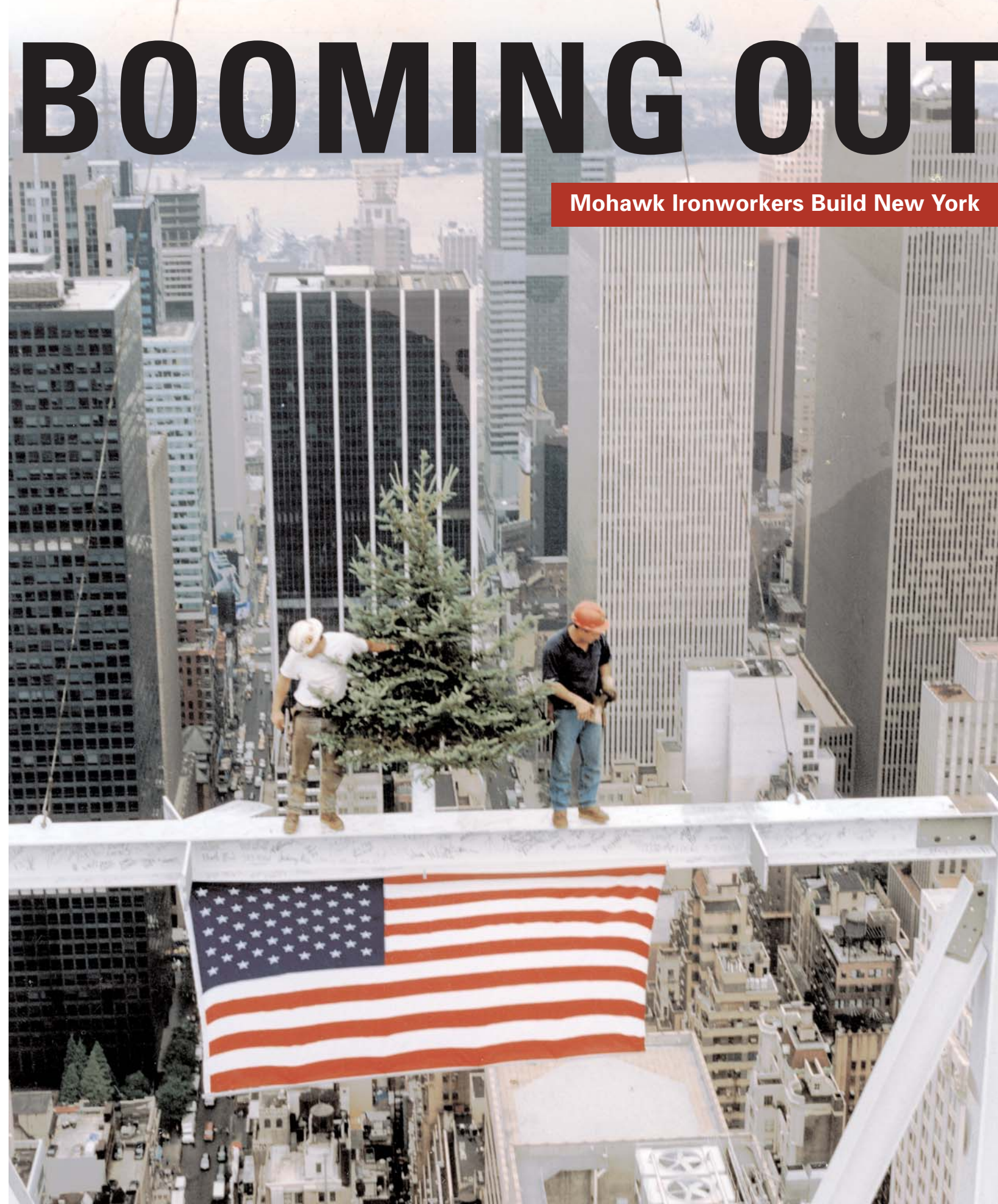


BOOMING OUT

Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York



An exhibition created by the **NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN** and organized
for travel by the **SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE**



“It’s like you’re on top of the world. When you are up there
you can see all over Manhattan . . . You’re like an eagle.”

—GEORGE GILBERT (MOHAWK, KAHNAWAKE), 1999



All images courtesy
Kanien’kehaka Onkwawén:na
Raotitiohkwa

COVER: Keith McComber
(Mohawk, Kahnawake) and
Marvin Davis (Six Nations)
“topping out” the Bear
Stearns Building, New York,
N.Y., 2000

LEFT: Alex Mayo (Mohawk,
Kahnawake) on a column at
Second Avenue between
47th and 48th Streets, New
York, N.Y., 1971

OPPOSITE: Joseph Jocks
(Mohawk, Kahnawake) rivet-
ing at the San Francisco Bay
Bridge, San Francisco, Calif.,
1930s

FEARLESSLY TREADING where few dare to go, Mohawk ironworkers have built bridges and skyscrapers throughout the United States and Canada for more than 100 years. The Mohawk tradition of ironworking began in the mid-1880s, when they were hired as unskilled laborers to build a bridge over the St. Lawrence River, between Canada and Mohawk land in New York State. They quickly earned a reputation for being good workers, and Mohawk “skywalkers” began “booming out” from their Native communities in search of work on girders far from home.

By 1916, they made their way to New York City; soon others began to make the trip to the city that would set the standard for feats of construction. More jobs followed, and during the next 80 years, Mohawk men worked on practically all of New York’s major construction projects, including the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, the George Washington and Triborough Bridges, Madison Square Garden, and the World Trade Center. Today, Mohawk ironworkers continue to work on high steel, carrying the Mohawk reputation for skill, bravery, and pride into the 21st century.

Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York, a photography exhibition developed by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and circulated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), documents six generations of Mohawk ironworkers from two Native communities: Akwesasne (which straddles Ontario, Quebec, and New York State) and Kahnawake (near Montreal). The communities are part of the Iroquois Confederacy, which has, as historian Richard Hill, Sr. (Tuscarora) notes, a long history of building structures. In fact, he says, the Iroquois’s



name for themselves—*hodoso:ni*—means “they build longhouses.”

The exhibition’s 67 color and black-and-white photographs are organized into six sections focusing on aspects of Mohawk ironworking: *Crossing Borders/A Foothold in New York, Danger of the Job, Mohawks in*

Brooklyn, Building Landmarks, Booming Out, and Remembering the World Trade Center. Many of the photographs were shot by the ironworkers themselves. Others, such as the famous Lewis Hine photo of ironworkers lunching on a crossbeam during construction of Rockefeller Center, are historic images from the collections of the Smithsonian Institution, Library of Congress, Museum of the City of New York, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Bridges and Tunnels, and other archival sources.

Text panels and photo labels are supplemented by quotations from ironworkers, past and present, who provide personal and sometimes poignant commentary about a job that is demanding, dangerous, yet often exhilarating.

The exhibition design echoes the construction-related subject matter via visible wall-mounted metal brackets that support the hanging exhibition structure (the design of which evokes I-beams). Photographs and blocks of text are affixed on multi-layer panels from the structure, becoming, in effect, a three-dimensional collage. Horizontal aluminum cables, which serve an aesthetic rather than functional purpose, further reinforce the theme.

A sculpture by Darryl Pronovost (Mohawk, Kahnawake) accompanies *Booming Out*. The work, now in NMAI’s collection, is made from metal collected at the World Trade Center’s Ground Zero by Mohawk steelworkers, whose skills were critically important to the rescue and cleanup operations there.

EXHIBITION COLLABORATORS

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) is dedicated to the preservation, study, and exhibition of the life, languages, literature, history, and arts of Native Americans. Established by an Act of Congress in 1989, NMAI works with Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere to protect and foster their cultures by reaffirming traditions, encouraging contemporary artistic expression, and providing a forum for Native voices. NMAI's George Gustav Heye Center in New York City hosts exhibitions and a variety of programs. The Cultural Resources Center in Suitland, Maryland, houses NMAI collections and serves as a research center for historians and conservators. In 2004, NMAI will open its new museum on the National Mall. For more information, visit www.nmai.si.edu.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE

The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 50 years. One of the Smithsonian's four national outreach programs, SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science, and history, which are shown wherever people live, work, and play: in museums, libraries, science centers, historical societies, community centers, botanical gardens, schools, and shopping malls. For more information, including exhibition descriptions and tour schedules, visit www.sites.si.edu.

OPPOSITE: Ironworker apprentice Steve Cross (Mohawk, Kahnawake) at the AOL Time Warner Building, New York, N.Y., 2001

RIGHT: Ironworkers on Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge, Kingston, N.Y., 1956

BELOW: Looking down at construction of the South Tower of the World Trade Center, New York, N.Y., about 1970



SPECIFICATIONS

CONTENTS: 67 black-and-white and color photographs, text and quotation panels, and labels on bracketed multi-layered panels with decorative aluminum cables; metal sculpture in a pedestal case with vitrine

PARTICIPATION FEE: \$3,500, plus outgoing shipping

RUNNING METERS: 40 (130 running feet)

WEIGHT: TBD

CRATES: 9, estimated

SECURITY: Moderate

SHIPPING: Standard

TOUR BEGINS: Spring 2004

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

As a host of *Booming Out: Mohawk Ironworkers Build New York*, you will receive the following:

- Exhibition script and object checklist.
- Registrarial information for condition reporting; shipping, handling, and installation instructions; crate lists and weights.
- Wall-to-wall insurance coverage under the Smithsonian’s policy.
- Public relations support in the form of press releases, digital press images/logos, and advice on promoting the show and hosting special events.
- Guidelines for local fundraising.
- Educational and programming resources.
- Ability to link to and from the SITES and NMAI website.

Allan Delaronde (Mohawk, Kahnawake), Doc Alfred (Mohawk, Kahnawake), and Art Oakes (Mohawk, Akwesasne) on the 110th floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center, New York, N.Y., about 1970

Early bridgemen (Mohawk, Kahnawake), about 1910

REGISTRARIAL REQUIREMENTS

Exhibitors must meet the following space, protection, and environmental requirements to ensure the safety and stability of the exhibition:

- Exhibition must be displayed in a limited-access, gallery-type area. An open mall, hallway, or lounge area is not acceptable.
- Locked, environmentally stable interior exhibition storage and staging areas.
- Guards or other trained personnel, in sufficient numbers to assure the safety of exhibition components, whose sole duty is the supervision of the exhibition while it is on view.
- Exhibition area must be locked and secure during closing hours. Alarm and/or guards during night hours are preferred but not required.
- Handling of objects, if not actually by a registrar or curator, must be by preparator, exhibition technician, or other persons trained in handling museum objects.
- Fire protection must be provided in accordance with local ordinances and subject to SITES’s approval.
- Temperature and humidity levels should be maintained at 68–72 degrees Fahrenheit and 45–50 percent relative humidity, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Light levels must not exceed 20 footcandles. Direct sunlight should be diffused or eliminated to prevent fading of panels and photographs. Any fluorescent lighting should have ultraviolet filters.
- Empty crates must be stored in a secure, temperature- and pest-controlled area.

SCHEDULING INFORMATION

To reserve your date on the exhibition tour, please contact Michelle Torres-Carmona, Senior Scheduling and Exhibitor Relations Coordinator.
202.357.3168 x122 ■ torrescm@si.edu

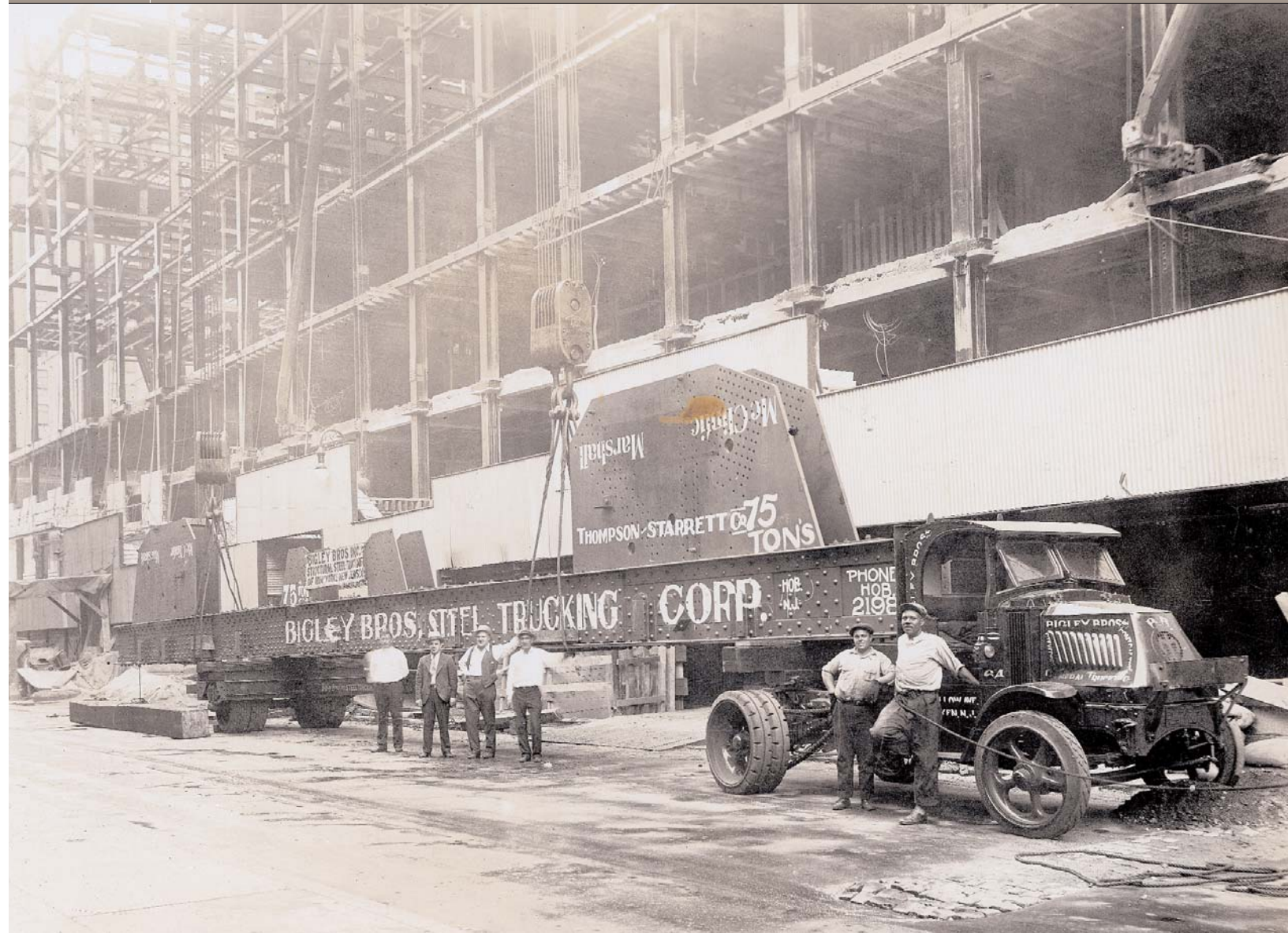
CONTENT AND DESIGN INFORMATION

For more information about exhibition content and design, please contact Deborah Macanic, Project Director.
202.357.3168 x137 ■ macanicd@si.edu



SITES

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Peter Sakaronhiotane Rice
(Mohawk, Kahnawake;
third from left) working on
an unidentified project,
1925