

On Location

Toronto

Divided Loyalties

It's a warm, sunny Sunday and they're into the third week of shooting on *Divided Loyalties* at Toronto International Studios (Kleinberg), in the rolling countryside just outside the city. This is a \$4.5 million TV-movie, made for the CTV Network in association with Baton Broadcasting Ltd., and scripted by Peter Jobin. It covers the life of Joseph Brant, a Mohawk chief and protégé of Sir William Johnson (the representative of the Crown in the colony), from his teens to his death in 1807.

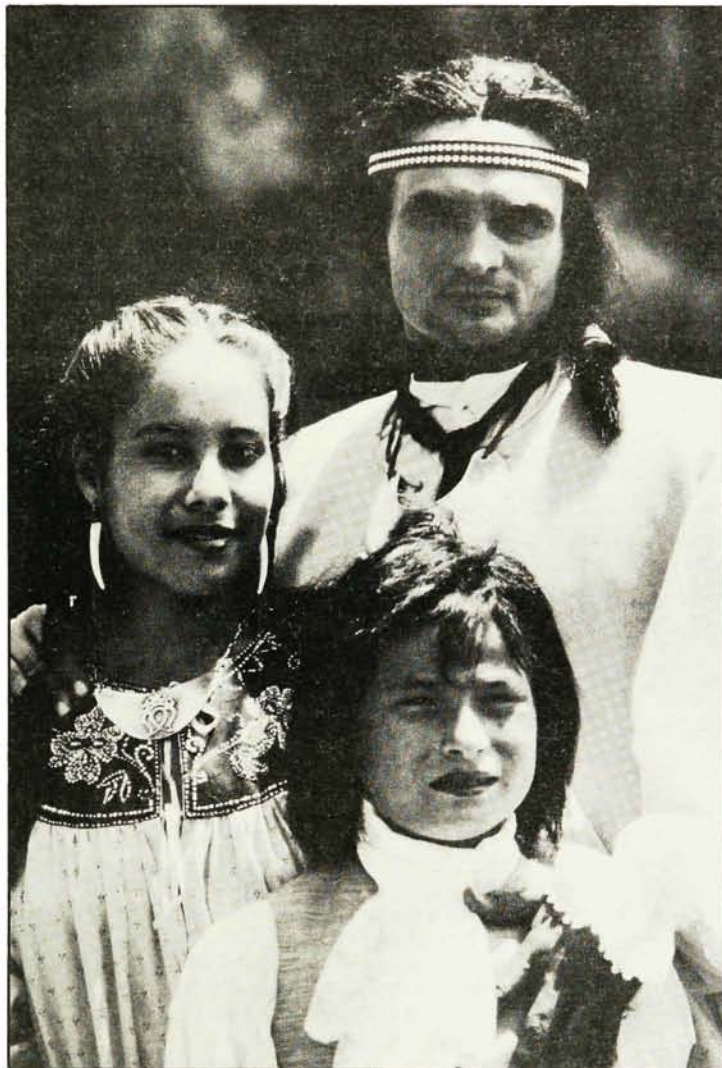
Executive producer Tom Gould hopes that, if all goes as planned, *Divided Loyalties* will be one of 13 made-for-TV movies "providing an overview of Canada's pre-confederation period."

I'm driven down to the location site – fording the Humber River en route – and come upon crowds of principals, extras, horses and horsemen, interspersed with a busy-bee crew. A reproduction of the façade of Sir William's house sits on a gentle rise of land and, on the grassy area in front, an open-sided tent is set up for a feast. A dirt trail winds down to a gate, and beyond there's Vic Sarin behind a camera rolling along tracks.

Director Mario Azzopardi is rehearsing the second set-up of the day – Brant and family arriving for the marriage of Sir William Johnson's son (Robert Bidaman) to the Lady Mary (Wendy Lyon). The walking party is followed by a single horseman and two carriages, one covered and drawn by a pair of horses and the other an open surrey pulled by a single horse. Brant (Jack Langedijk), with son astride his shoulders, walks beside his wife Neggin (Lisa LaCroix). Azzopardi and Sarin confer, look through the eyepiece and then, after a few takes, that's it.

During a short break while the next set-up is readied, Mario Azzopardi, a big, handsome bearded man, talks about the film, and tries to relax. A car accident 10 days ago, on his way home from a 12-hour day of shooting, has left him with a painful whiplash. He sits in a colourful garden chair equipped with back support and neck rest, feet propped on a matching footstool, and shaded by a large umbrella. Experienced in TV, he's directed many episodes of series produced in Canada – *Wiseguy*, *Knightrwatch*, *Diamonds*, *Night Heat*. His most recent feature was *Nowhere to Hide*.

"Remember *Drums Along the Mohawk*?" asks Azzopardi, likening *Divided Loyalties* to it in some ways, and then adds slyly, "You should have been here for the battle scenes – the Americans get whipped!" He laughs uproariously, and then settling down, the director talks



Actors Jack Langedijk (Brant), Lisa LaCroix (his wife Neggin), and son.

about preserving historical accuracy in *Divided Loyalties*, but using "a little artistic licence" to make the earlier colonial days come alive in an interesting and entertaining fashion.

Director of Photography Vic Sarin says that "period films always work," and he should know, having worked on *Bye Bye Blues*, *Bethune* (2nd Unit DOP), *Charlie Grant's War* and *Chautauqua Girl*. Vic is hoping that his latest documentary, *Solitary Journey* will be screened at this year's Festival of Festivals in Toronto. "I used a lot of my own money on it."

Divided Loyalties is an epic historical drama with a shooting schedule of 31 working days, and a large cast of 34 principals, 54 secondary actors and around 150 extras. The crew work in affable harmony, moving quickly and neatly about the business of filmmaking, and sometimes lightening the labour with a little bit of clowning. About 25 extras shelter from the sun under a blue tarpaulin in the holding area. They are a mixed bag of wedding guests, the

men in breeches and hose, and knee-length cloth coats; and the women in charmingly voluminous pastel gowns, lowcut and lace-trimmed, straw hats perched on their coiled hair, saucily tilted at the back to display ribbons and lace.

A quartet of British officers is dressed to the hilt (and perspiring) in white breeches, top boots, red coats, wigs, and tricorn hats. Two of the officers, Arne Ljungström and Sven Busch, are friends of mine, and they gleefully inform me that there's not a Brit among them – they are Swedish and German, and the other two, Macedonian and US-Canadian! A couple of chiefs from the Six Nations are among the extras. The native men wear breech clouts and light leather shirts; some have headdresses, while others clasp blankets around themselves. The women are dressed in loose, colourful dresses with bead decoration that click musically as they move about.

A vaguely familiar figure in T-shirt and short

shorts wanders into view, sits down, and says "Hi, I'm John Kim Bell." The well-known pianist/conductor is composing an original score for the film. Though he will wait to see a rough cut before starting to work, he's here today because of a sequence containing a reel, for which he wants to get the tempo. Gazing over the organized chaos, he says: "Even this somehow spoils the illusion."

During the hot wait, Tantoo Cardinal (*Loyalties*), who plays Joseph Brant's sister, Molly, is corralled under some trees and interviewed for a documentary on the making of *Divided Loyalties*. Director Azzopardi is deep in discussion with DOP Vic Sarin, and cold drinks circulate, and then trays of watermelon slices – everyone happily spits the seeds in all directions.

The camera track has been relaid with a minimum of fuss, lights are in place, and the wedding reception tent in front of Sir William's home is filled with extras and principals. Joseph Brant sits with his family – Jack Langedijk, the actor/director portraying him does, I am told, bear an uncanny resemblance to the real Brant. It's a brave show – with everyone assembled at tables with white cloths, gleaming silver, and an assortment of foods. There's a lot of colour, including the bright Scottish kilts and plaids, the four British officers in red coats in the background, and two footmen in green velvet livery and white gloves hovering around.

Now a rehearsal: the champagne cork pops to shouts and applause from the assembly; a footman brings in the cake; Chris Wiggins as Sir William bellows, "All right you rogues", and proceeds to toast the bride Lady Mary and, as an afterthought, his son. Then there are several takes – the footman is nervous and has problems bringing in the large square of wedding cake decorated with cherries and fronds of fern.

"Let's go, let's go," shouts Azzopardi as Vic Sarin patiently picks up the cake and demonstrates exactly where to set it down. The sound man is harassed by passenger jets droning overhead at all the wrong moments.

It's really sweaty in the tent with the sun high in the sky, and Vic Sarin finally totters out while the crew set up for close-ups inside. So I take off for a short jeep tour with publicist Bill Vigers to view the other sets designed by Gerry Holmes. There's a replica of Fort Stanwix (which was in upstate New York, just outside Syracuse) built to scale in lumber – one part of it in stone to double as Fort Niagara – plus Brant's little house surrounded by a planting of corn, which is growing nicely. Interiors have been built on Toronto International Studios sound stages.

As I check out with the Production office, in the hallway by the exit, a costumed extra is on the pay 'phone, "... We've been doing a wedding reception in a sort of tent, and I think there's a good left profile of me..." Aah, the magic of the movies!

Pat Thompson ●

PHOTO: MARKO SHARK