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**The History of the French-Ottawa Alliance  
1613-1763**

A Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Department of History in the University of Toronto  
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**Abstract**  
**History of the French-Ottawa Alliance, 1613-1763**  
**William James Newbigging**  
**Doctor of Philosophy 1995**  
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This dissertation seeks to establish the nature of the relationship between the French and the Ottawa Nation of northern Lake Huron in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The enquiry is pursued through the study of the Lake Huron environment, Ottawa culture, and an examination of the interests of both groups over a period of one hundred and fifty years. Through the use of a wide body of evidence - French and Ottawa texts, correspondence from the posts in the Upper Great Lakes to Quebec and from Canada to France, the *Jesuit Relations*, archaeological reports, and cartographical materials - the ways in which the Ottawas and the French sought to identify their common interests, and the ways in which they attempted to protect their individual interests, are brought to light. This dissertation presents a view of the Ottawa Nation quite unlike the traditional depiction of them as middlemen in the fur trade and different from their more recent portrayal as refugees. The Ottawas inhabited the relatively rich area of the transitional forest which provided more economic opportunities than those to the north or south. The Ottawas were able to build on the strengths of their economy throughout the period of their alliance with the French and were able to incorporate French forces into the defence of the region. For their part, the French were pleased to have the support of an influential ally and they supported Ottawa dominion in the area of the *pays d'en haut*. Ottawa power was based on their ability to control the accesses to Lake Huron and the French forts at these gateways were used to enhance this ability.

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## Preface

The idea of writing a dissertation about the relations between French colonizers and the Ottawa Nation of Lake Huron first came to me in the form of a question. Like other students beginning doctoral programmes, I was not entirely sure what I wanted to choose as a dissertation topic. I was only certain that I wanted to study Canada's early history. As I prepared for my comprehensive exams, I encountered several references to the Ottawa Nation. From what I gathered, they were an influential ally of the French and had been prominent in the Upper Great Lakes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I soon began to wonder why a people who commanded so much attention from the French and who had been assigned a prominent role in the historical writing should have remained a mystery. Nothing much was known about these influential, yet mysterious people. I wanted to know more and suddenly I realized that I had a dissertation topic.

I decided that to do the Ottawas justice, I would have to consider their relations with the French over the entire French regime period. A few days in the National Archives of Canada left no doubt in my mind as to the viability of the topic; the lack of a comprehensive study was not for lack of sources. I then looked for other clues as to why the Ottawas should have been neglected. I found what I was looking for in an observation by the Recollet missionary Gabriel Sagard:

To give my opinion about some of them, and to say which are the happiest or wretchedest, I consider the Hurons and other sedentary tribes the aristocracy, the Algonquin peoples the townspeople, and the other savages nearer us, such as the Montagnais and Canadians, the villagers

and poor people of the country.<sup>1</sup>

Sagard was not the only one to consider the Hurons to be the aristocracy. The Jesuits soon tired of hiking through the snow after Algonquians, and they devoted the bulk of their energy to the Huron missions. Consequently, the Hurons became the principal actors in the *Jesuit Relations*. Like the Jesuits, scholars with an interest in the Great Lakes found it much more profitable to concentrate their efforts on the Hurons. There are reams of documents which concern the Ottawas, but they are nowhere near as accessible as the *Jesuit Relations*, copies of which are to be found in every university library.

This dissertation begins with a discussion of the historiographical portrayal of the Ottawas. Although very few scholars have chosen the Ottawas as a subject, most scholars working in the field of Indian-White relations in colonial North America encountered the Ottawas in their research and formed some opinion of them. As the scholars in question did not focus their efforts on the Ottawas in particular, their opinions were not usually the product of thorough analysis, and therefore the Ottawas were cast in roles which did not accurately depict their way of life. In general, Ottawa men were depicted as middlemen in the European fur trade, and the society as a whole was dismissed as aimless refugees, trying to make sense of the vestiges of their lost world by engaging in brutal wars.

In order to appreciate what Ottawa society was really like, the main text of the dissertation begins with a description of Ottawa ethnogenesis in the region of northern

---

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Wrong, ed., *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), 139.

Lake Huron. In order to try to understand the Ottawas' world as they understood it themselves, the first chapter describes the regional resources and the ways in which the Ottawas adapted to them. Two things were critical to the Ottawas' cultural adaptation to their region: the possibilities offered by the transitional forest environment of northern Lake Huron, and the lacustrine orientation which the Ottawas developed in response to the resources of the Lake. Compared with their nearest neighbours, the Ottawas had a relatively rich economy.

In order to protect their resource base, the Ottawa Nation formed a plan to prevent others from entering the gateways into Lake Huron. This plan was not one of simple exclusion, but rather it was designed to protect the region from strangers and to foster the development of trade relations with the Ojibwas to the north and the Tionnontatés to the east. The second chapter explains both the roles of the four groups who together made up the Ottawa Nation and the nature of their relations with their closest allies. When French explorers first arrived at Lake Huron in 1615, they were introduced into a system of trade and alliance which was already well established.

The third chapter of the dissertation concerns the challenge made by the warriors of the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy in the middle of the seventeenth century. It also discusses the ways in which the Jesuits managed to keep contact between the French and the Ottawas open at a time when most French colonizers were content to remain in the St. Lawrence valley. The argument in this chapter is intended to sound a note of dissent from those who view the middle of the seventeenth century as a period of tremendous destruction throughout the Great Lakes. With the exception of the



Kiskakon Ottawas, who abandoned the Nottawasaga region, the impact of the Iroquois assault was minimal.

Chapter four consists of a discussion of the Ottawa efforts to control their developing alliance with the French. The Ottawas wanted to use the French as an auxiliary force in their wars against the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy, and they wanted to assure themselves of a steady supply of French guns, powder, and shot. The best way to ensure all of these requirements was to invite the French to establish a post at Michilimackinac, in the heart of the Ottawas' ancestral home. Personalities, misunderstandings, and private motivations conspired to cause troubles for the alliance, but by 1690, the Ottawas took the upper hand in the diplomatic struggle and they began to convince the French of the need to establish permanent bases in Ottawa territory.

The 1690s saw the decline of Iroquois power, a glut of beaver pelts on the European market, and the resettlement of the Kamiga Ottawas in their old territory at Bkejwanong in southern Lake Huron. The fifth chapter of this dissertation considers the ways in which these important events put strains upon the alliance and the ways in which these strains were resolved. France's royal government came to see the alliance with the Ottawas in a different light at this time. Posts in the Upper Great Lakes were now considered to be useful not because of the furs they processed, but rather because of the warriors they provided in times of war with the English.

The early eighteenth century was a difficult period for the alliance between the French and the Ottawas because of the challenges to the established order posed by a Tionnontaté named Michypichy and a Kamiga Ottawa called Mekoua. These two men

attempted to disrupt the alliance, but they managed only to create brief, but bloody, power struggles. In response, a French marine commissary named Clairambault was sent to the French posts in the Great Lakes to determine their usefulness to the colonial effort. Clairambault concluded that the French-Ottawa alliance was critical to the economy and safety of the colony. This fact was not lost on Governor Vaudreuil, who committed men and equipment to help the Ottawas fight the Outagamis in the western Lake Michigan region, well beyond the French sphere of interest.

As the eighteenth century proceeded, the common interests and common enemies that had sustained the alliance through all of its tribulations began to fade from view. The Ottawas turned their attention to the west, even while the French worried about the growing British threat in the east. When war came, the Ottawas and French were overwhelmed by the British, and by their own inability to regain the spirit of cooperation which had allowed them to prosper throughout the years of their alliance.

The French-Ottawa alliance is a crucial part of Canadian history. Unlike other colonizers, the French formed alliances with the indigenous peoples they encountered. The French, or at least those French who lived in the Great Lakes region, lived like the people they met. They ate, drank, loved, fought, worked, and entertained themselves as their hosts did. They adapted their ways to suit their environment as their hosts did. The French-Ottawa alliance is not always a story of two powers cooperating for their mutual benefit; it is also a story of the power of the environment and the people who understood it best.

In order to bring the Ottawas to the fore in this dissertation, their language is

used wherever English words were not as expressive. For example, rather than use the English word *chief*, I used the Ottawa word *ogima*. The names of the various different nations pose a more difficult problem. As a general rule, I use the English equivalents of words which I found in the documents. Where more than one word is used in the documents, I use the Ottawa word. For example, the terms Renard, Fox, and Outagami are all to be encountered in the documents but I chose to use the word Outagami because it has a descriptive meaning, "people of the other shore," in the Ottawa language. When quoting from manuscripts, I provided the original text in the footnote and I respected the original spellings and accent usage. All of the translations from the French are mine.

This dissertation made use of the collections of the Archives Nationales in Paris. The most important series of documents was the C11A or Canada series, which is available on microfilm at the National Archives of Canada and at Robarts Research Library at the University of Toronto. Other important collections include the maps in the Section des Cartes et Plans at the Bibliothèque Nationale, the map collections in the Bibliothèque du Service Historique de la Marine in Vincennes, France, and the manuscript collections of the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan. Although others have subjected the documents of the C11A series to fruitful analysis, there is still much to be done in a series which contains one hundred and twenty-six volumes and which includes almost ten kilometres of microfilm.

It is a genuine pleasure to acknowledge the kind assistance of many people who contributed to this dissertation. Professor Sylvia Van Kirk of the University of Toronto

read several drafts of this dissertation and her comments improved it a great deal. I am grateful to her for her devotion to our profession and for the kindness which she showed me during my years as her student. I had the good fortune to work with many other excellent historians at the University of Toronto, but none helped me more than Professors William Callahan, William Eccles, and Allan Greer. Their comments on earlier drafts helped me to eliminate a number of problems. A number of other scholars commented on sections of this dissertation presented at conferences. In particular I would like to thank Professor Jennifer Brown of the University of Winnipeg, Professor Charles Cleland of Michigan State University, and Professor Dale Standen of Trent University. My two external readers, Professor James Axtell of the College of William and Mary, and Professor Germaine Warkentin of the University of Toronto gave me numerous suggestions and helped me to correct a number of errors.

At the National Archives of Canada, Monsieur André Desrosiers, Monsieur Gilles Durocher, and Madame Marie Lewis worked very hard to help and even provided me with an office and a computer to facilitate my work. At the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan, I was always given a warm welcome and thoughtful assistance by Mr. Robert Cox. At the Section des Cartes et Plans of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, Madame Monique Pelletier helped me to overcome a number of challenges.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada provided me with a doctoral fellowship for three years. This money paid for my travels, my books, and my IBM PS1. The University of Toronto provided me with an open doctoral

fellowship and four teaching assistantships. My parents, Barbara and Graeme Newbigging, my in-laws Donna and Gary Kohler, and my late grandmother Jessie Rodger Newbigging helped Kathryn and me to keep the wolf away from the door on those occasions when poor planning and extravagant living caught up with us. I am grateful to them all.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude to a number of friends whose contributions took other forms. My fondest memories of this dissertation are the many picnic lunches I shared with Professor William Hanley of McMaster University on the benches of the Palais Royal during three summers in Paris. Professor Charles Jose also of McMaster was always happy to answer difficult translation problems. Three fellow graduate students must also be mentioned. Dr. Andrew Holman of York University set an example for hard work that I tried to follow. Dr. Laurence Mussio, also of York, was an excellent travel companion on long research trips to Ottawa and points east. Dr. Lori Chambers of the University of Toronto was always generous and positive. The most important contribution to this dissertation, however, was made by my closest friend, Kathryn Kohler. Her knowledge of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French was helpful, but her understanding of the French library system is truly unsurpassed. Her ability to help me with my career while she worked so hard on her own is sincerely appreciated.

**Introduction:**  
**"Phoenicians" of the Upper Lakes or "Savages of a Lower Grade,"**  
**The Ottawa Nation in Historical Writing.**

When the French explorer Samuel de Champlain first reached the waters of Lake Huron in the summer of 1615, a delegation of local people came to meet him and to ask his business in their ancestral home. Champlain called these people *les cheveux relevés*, a reference to their elaborately styled hair. They called themselves Ottawa and they explained that they belonged to a confederacy of four individual nations: the Kamigas, Kiskakons, Nassauakuetons, and Sinagos, who lived along the coasts and islands of northern Lake Huron from Nottawasaga in the east, across Manitoulin Island, to Michilimackinac and Bawating in the west.<sup>1</sup> These people spoke an Algonquian language distinct from their neighbours the Ojibwas who lived to the north and west and the Potawatomis who lived to the south. The Ottawa Nation, as the French called the confederacy of the four Ottawa groups, shared a common history, a common defensive system, and a common economic strategy. The Ottawas were distinctive, influential, and resourceful, and they soon became France's most important ally in the Upper Great Lakes region. Curiously, their history has never been written.

To appreciate the ways the Ottawas understood their world, one must first overcome three obstacles. First, one must confront the interpretation of the relationship between the Ottawas and the French in the historical writing on colonial North America. According to the conventional interpretation, this relationship had an economic base,

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<sup>1</sup> H.P. Biggar, ed., *The Works of Samuel de Champlain* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1922), 3: 42-44.

with the Ottawas filling the role of middlemen in the fur trade.<sup>2</sup> In reality, the relationship was based on a defensive military alliance.

Second, historians have found it convenient to portray the Ottawas as a mere conflation of peoples and not as a distinct confederacy of four closely related groups to whom the French referred as nations. This second obstacle is closely related to the first. With so few specific studies of the peoples of the Upper Great Lakes, historians have found it useful to employ the term Ottawa as a generic word for trader and the term Algonquian as a generic word for all of the nations of the region. One of the central propositions of this dissertation is that the differences between these nations are vital. If historians wish to speak with authority about the Upper Great Lakes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, individual nations must be studied one community at a time.<sup>3</sup>

Third, the evidentiary shortcomings of French documents and Ottawa oral histories must be overcome. Of French documents there are three kinds: accounts of

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<sup>2</sup> American historian George Hunt cast the Ottawas in the middleman role in his study of the wars between the Ottawas and the Iroquois in the latter half of the seventeenth century. False as it is, this depiction continues to influence the way in which historians depict the Ottawas. For example, in a recent and much more sophisticated interpretation of the shifting boundaries and cultural blending of the Great Lakes peoples, another American historian, Richard White, quietly accepted the salient features of Hunt's Ottawa middleman theory. White acknowledged the intendant Jacques Duchesneau's observation that the Ottawas prevented other nations from the trade, but he did not feel that this was an important issue. His interest lay in tracing the development of the process of accommodation. White was neither interested in exploring the important differences between these peoples, nor did he wish to dwell on their individual agendas. George T. Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study in Intertribal Trade Relations* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1940), 49; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 105-106.

<sup>3</sup> Many historians have found it useful to consider the peoples of the Upper Great Lakes region. Richard White, for example, classified all of the peoples of the Upper Great Lakes as Algonquians and all of those who went to trade furs at Montreal as "Ottawas." Others, like Canadian historian Peter Schmalz, subsumed the Ottawas as part of the Ojibwa Nation. There is as great a need, if not greater, to consider these peoples in the way they considered themselves, as individual nations. White, *Middle Ground*, xi, 105; Peter S. Schmalz, *The Ojibwa of Southern Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 19, 31.

exploration, such as maps and journals of Champlain, Radisson, and some of the Jesuits; official reports such as the *Jesuit Relations*, the correspondence between the colony and officials in France and the records of the *Service hydrographique*; and histories written by people who had been in the Upper Great Lakes such as Charlevoix. The accounts of the explorers, like the Ottawa oral histories, were written from a highly selective, individual perspective. The official accounts were written for political purposes and only rarely discuss what life was like in the Upper Great Lakes. In order to understand the ways in which the Ottawas identified the necessities of their world, the historian cannot limit the enquiry to reading documents, but must also consider the environment, the lakes, fish, animals, and trees of the Ottawa world.

The first step is to acquaint ourselves with the historical writing of the relations between the French and the Ottawas. The object is to illustrate the evolution of the middleman thesis and to clear away the two main misconceptions which have derived from that thesis. The middleman concept has exercised a long and malignant influence upon the historiography of our subject and it has rendered the Ottawas narrow, one-dimensional traders. Trade was indeed an important feature of their economy, but other elements also deserve to be examined. The middleman thesis holds that certain nations attempted to prevent their neighbours from contact with the French in order to control the fur trade and to profit by buying cheap and selling dear. Like other theories, it is based upon an assumption, the idea that it was in the Ottawa interest to garner a profit. In order to prove this theory, it is necessary for historians to find examples which illustrate certain nations taking measures to exclude others from contact with the French.



The middleman idea originates in Champlain's account of his attempt to ascend the Ottawa River in the summer of 1613. He got as far as Allumette Island, where he was welcomed by the Kichesipirini Algonquins who lived there. The chief of this nation was an imposing man named Tessouat, who invited Champlain to take part in a feast held in honour of his visit. Champlain accepted the offer and then promptly insulted his host by asking for four canoes in order to continue his journey. Tessouat was under the impression that Champlain had come to visit with the Kichesipirini Algonquins, not to continue on to Lake Nipissing and beyond, and he warned Champlain against continuing the journey.<sup>4</sup>

Champlain sensed that his host wished to prevent him from continuing, but he had encountered such resistance before and he was determined to continue. Tessouat refused again and this time he told Champlain that the Nipissings were sorcerers and that the *Windigo*, an evil spirit who lived to the north of Lake Nipissing, would devour the whole party should they continue on their journey.<sup>5</sup> Champlain did not fear these stories of sorcery, but neither did he understand their meaning. By invoking the *Windigo*, Tessouat was warning Champlain to ask for something less. According to the spirit world of the Upper Great Lakes, the *Windigo* "visited punishment upon those

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<sup>4</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 2: 283-284.

<sup>5</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 2: 287.

committing excesses."<sup>6</sup>

Clearly Tessouat did not want to allow Champlain to continue on his journey and clearly he regarded Champlain's repeated asking as rude and excessive. There is a long step between Tessouat's actions and the notion that he wished to profit by keeping Champlain from the Nipissings and the Ottawas who lived to the west. Champlain carried knives, hatchets, and arquebuses in his baggage, and he intended to use these items to trade for furs. Tessouat feared the consequence of allowing his neighbours access to these dangerous weapons. His attempts to dissuade the stubborn Champlain were based on his concerns for security rather than on a desire to sell these weapons to his neighbours for an inflated price.<sup>7</sup>

The first historian to write of the Ottawas was the Jesuit Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix. His *Histoire*, published in 1744, was flawed and it contributed to the confusion surrounding the identity of the Ottawas and the nature of their relations with the French. In a descriptive section on the different nations of the *pays d'en haut* in commerce with the French, Charlevoix mistakenly placed the Ottawas along the Ottawa River:

...the Ottawas, spread out in various locations along their river, claim to be the absolute masters of it, and, have established the right to collect a

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<sup>6</sup> Although their economies were markedly different, the spiritual beliefs of the Ottawas, Algonquins, Ojibwas and other Algonquian peoples were essentially the same. Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage: The ceremonies, rituals, songs, dances, prayers, and legends of the Ojibway* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 165-167.

<sup>7</sup> Hunt in fact claimed that the Iroquoians of the Saint Lawrence valley employed this tactic in the days of Cartier. According to Hunt, Donnacona, the chief of the town of Stadacona, attempted to prevent Cartier from visiting Hochelaga in order to "keep the trade and the middleman's profit himself." A Canadian anthropologist, Bruce Trigger drew the connection between Tessouat's actions and the desire to earn a profit. Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*, 18; Bruce G. Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976), 231-232; Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 2: 273.

toll from each canoe which descends, or comes back up.<sup>8</sup>

In the same passage he speaks of the Algonquins (he mentions their location on and around the great island in the Ottawa River), and the Nipissings or Nipissiriniens who live around the lake of the same name. Clearly he merely assumed that the Ottawas lived on the Ottawa River. He also assumed that they collected tolls.<sup>9</sup>

While the Ottawas undoubtedly did use the river and while they had some influence amongst the Algonquins and Nipissings, they did not live on the banks of the river during the historic period. When Champlain first met the delegation of Kiskakon Ottawas, they were further to the west, on the eastern shore of Lake Huron.<sup>10</sup> By this time they had important villages at a number of locations on the islands and shores of Lake Huron, but no settlements on the Ottawa River. According to the Ottawas' own history, they had settled areas in the Lake Huron region after leaving the Ottawa valley, but this was long before the arrival of the French in North America.<sup>11</sup>

Charlevoix was thus faced with a problem. On the one hand he had been amongst the Ottawas at Detroit and Michilimackinac and had learned a good deal about

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<sup>8</sup> Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France avec le journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale* (Paris: Nyon Fils, 1744), 1: 186.

<sup>9</sup> Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 1: 186.

<sup>10</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 43-44.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew J. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan* (Ypsilanti: Job Printing House, 1887), 79. Blackbird relates, "Very many centuries ago, before the discovery of the American continent by the white people, the traditions of the Ottawas say they lived along the banks of one of the largest tributaries of the St. Lawrence, now known as the Ottawa River. The Ottawas spread over the country around the headwaters of this stream, subduing all other tribes of Indians which they happened to encounter..." His history is supported by a wide body of archaeological evidence which will be presented in a later chapter.

their travels and their economy. He was also well-acquainted with the writings of Champlain and the others who were specific about the locations of the different nations during the seventeenth century. On the other hand, he had the reference of the Jesuit Father Claude Allouez which appeared to locate the Ottawas in the river valley.<sup>12</sup> Charlevoix's solution to the dilemma posed by these two accounts was to move the Ottawas out of the river valley at the period of the Iroquois dispersal of the Hurons. In his journal (which he published along with his *Histoire* in 1744) Charlevoix noted:

The Ottawas, once very numerous, lived along the great river which bears their name, and over which they claimed to be lords. Today, I know of only three thinly populated villages.<sup>13</sup>

These villages, at Bkejwanong (Detroit), at Michilimackinac, and at Waugaukeze (l'Arbre Croche), represented for Charlevoix the remnant of what he imagined was once large nation.<sup>14</sup>

Charlevoix is even more specific in a later section of the *Histoire* proper. In a long discussion of the assault against Huronia in the late winter and early spring of 1649, he notes that the Hurons were by no means the only nation subdued by the Iroquois ferocity:

Almost all was taken, quarter was given to no one, and what shows the extent of the terror the name Iroquois held for all of the nations, not only in the country of the Hurons, is that along the course of the Ottawa River, which had been so well populated few years earlier, was now found to be

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<sup>12</sup> Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* 73 vols. (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901), 51: 21.

<sup>13</sup> Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 3: 187.

<sup>14</sup> Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 3: 256-279.

almost entirely deserted; such that one could no longer know what had become of most of the inhabitants.<sup>15</sup>

This notion was not based on documents, but rather on the need to account for a vague reference in the *Jesuit Relations*. Charlevoix knew that the Ottawas had villages in the Lake Huron area, and yet he owed an intellectual debt to his Jesuit predecessors and he wanted to account for the ideas of Allouez. Curiously, Allouez never actually located the Ottawas in the river valley, but his observation about their lording over the river and collecting tribute certainly led Charlevoix to believe this. Charlevoix did not have the benefit of access to the archaeological record, and he may have heard from elders he met at Michilimackinac that the river valley was the ancestral home of the Ottawas. Unfortunately the misrepresentations in his account exercised a considerable influence on the historians who followed him.

The next historian to consider the Ottawas portrayed them as a cunning and cowardly people. This curious interpretation belongs to the American historian Francis Parkman who held the Ottawas in low esteem. Parkman's anti-French sentiment evidently coloured his perception of France's Indian allies as well:

The Ottawas were savages of a lower grade, tossed continually between hatred of the Iroquois, distrust of the French, and love of English goods and English rum."<sup>16</sup>

Parkman's source for this strange and brutal characterization is a letter sent by Governor

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<sup>15</sup> Charlevoix, *Histoire*, I: 302-303.

<sup>16</sup> Francis Parkman, *Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1897), 424.

Frontenac to the Minister of the Marine in 1696.<sup>17</sup> In this report Frontenac claimed that the Ottawas would abandon the French in favour of the English unless more brandy were made available.<sup>18</sup> With the Iroquois power declining in 1696, Frontenac was merely trying an old argument on his friends in Versailles in order to give himself more room in which to manoeuvre. By raising the old spectre of an English-Ottawa alliance, Frontenac hoped to overturn Louis XIV's edict of May 1696 which banned the *cong * system and was designed to shut down trade in the *pays d'en haut* in order to encourage the economic development of the St. Lawrence colony.

The commercial interests upon which Parkman commented actually belonged to Frontenac and not the Ottawas at all. His observations about their interest in English goods were based on Frontenac's equivocations. Frontenac was well-informed about the situation in the west (he had important business interests there) and he knew that the Ottawas were threatening to go over to the English merely as a means of intimidating their French allies. As early as 1690, the Jesuit Etienne de Carheil had warned Frontenac of Ottawa actions which were designed to impress upon him the "...contempt they felt for our alliance and for your [Frontenac's] protection."<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the report Frontenac sent to the minister exaggerated the dangers in the west. By telling only half of the truth, Frontenac was able to misrepresent Ottawa motives in order to

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<sup>17</sup> Frontenac au ministre, 25 octobre, 1696, AN, C11A, 14: 154-167.

<sup>18</sup> Since the publication of *Frontenac: the Courtier Governor*, by Canadian historian W.J. Eccles, historians have known that Frontenac's reports were less than true. W.J. Eccles, *Frontenac: The Courtier Governor* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1959), 264-267.

<sup>19</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 31.

keep open the lucrative trade at Michilimackinac. His tactic worked, and Louis XIV ordered the post to remain open. Unfortunately for the history of the Ottawas, Parkman and his successors did not appreciate Frontenac's equivocations. Parkman accepted Frontenac's imaginative version of Ottawa commercial motives as historical fact.

Parkman's other observations about the Ottawas are taken from the correspondence of the Marquis de Denonville. Denonville was an effective governor of New France, but he was frustrated by the situation in the *pays d'en haut*. Like Colbert, Denonville felt that effort should be placed on the development of the St. Lawrence region and that the fur trade prevented the colony from diversifying its economy.<sup>20</sup> Denonville was repeatedly frustrated by his difficulties with the Ottawas and other French allies, and he gave vent to his spleen in his letters to the minister. The Ottawas were acting according to their own needs and not always in Denonville's interest. His severe difficulties with the Iroquois left him ill-disposed to write glowing accounts of Ottawa cooperation. Parkman, with his keenly developed sense of drama, found Denonville's lively and critical correspondence to be a colourful and rich source for his vehement attack on the Ottawa people.<sup>21</sup> Combined with his misreading of Frontenac, this correspondence gave Parkman a sense of Ottawa perfidy and self-interest. He did not pause to ask why the Ottawas should have slavishly acted in the French interest even when the French were something less than faithful allies themselves.

Parkman added to the confusion surrounding the history of the Ottawa Nation,

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<sup>20</sup> *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. "Brisay de Denonville."

<sup>21</sup> For examples see Parkman, *Count Frontenac*, 126, 152-153, and 160. Denonville au ministre, 12 juin, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 59-63v; Denonville au ministre, 25 août, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 83-111.

but he did not contribute to the middleman theory. The next step in the development of that thesis was taken by two of Canada's most prominent historians: Harold Adams Innis and Donald Creighton. Innis had read a history of Canada by the Scottish geographer Marion Newbigin. Her central proposition made a great deal of sense to him: "...one comes back to the great eastern river with the feeling that here must be sought the secret of what Canada has meant and means."<sup>22</sup> Newbigin's sound idea, nevertheless contributed to the misunderstanding of the Ottawas in the historical writing.

For example, the middleman thesis is an integral part of Innis' *The Fur Trade in Canada*, a work which endeavoured to explain the importance of the river. Unlike Canada's first staple, codfish, the harvesting of furs required skills which the French and English lacked. Innis' thought verged, according to Carl Berger, "on a hard technological determinism," and for him the birchbark canoe and the beaver hunting techniques of the Algonquians were crucial for the development of the country itself.<sup>23</sup> Innis suggested that the fur trade "...was a line of contact between a relatively complex civilization and a much more simple civilization."<sup>24</sup> Innis took Cartier's rather simple explanations of Algonquian pleasure with French trade goods as proof that the stone age peoples of North America were desperate for the economic advantages of European

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<sup>22</sup> Marion I. Newbigin, *Canada: The Great River, the Lands, and the Men* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1926), v.

<sup>23</sup> Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 101.

<sup>24</sup> Harold Adams Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), 15.



technology.<sup>25</sup>

Like Innis, Canadian historian Donald Creighton appreciated the importance of the Canadian Shield and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence drainage system in the development of the nation: "They were the bone and the blood-tide of the northern economy."<sup>26</sup> During the seventeenth century, the Ottawas, above all other nations, travelled the lakes and rivers of this system. This made them the most likely to be cast as middlemen by historians working in the long shadow of Innis and Creighton.<sup>27</sup>

The ideas of Innis and Creighton gave the middleman thesis an impressive theoretical framework, and a few years after the publication of their works an American historian, George Hunt, enunciated the most detailed version of the Ottawa middleman thesis. He took a page from Parkman, another from Innis, and turned an entire nation into profiteers looking to avoid conflict:

These Ottawa, though a clever people, adept at intrigue and business, bore among the whiteman who knew them a reputation for brutal ferocity and utter cowardice.<sup>28</sup>

One can faintly discern the explanations of the Jesuits Allouez and Dablon, the cavils of Denonville, and the equivocations of Frontenac, but with Hunt's interpretation these

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<sup>25</sup> Innis, *Fur Trade in Canada*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> Donald Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937), 5.

<sup>27</sup> Creighton's historical writing owes a debt to Innis, but so then does the writing of most of the historians adhering to the middleman thesis. As Carl Berger has judged, the *Fur Trade in Canada* is one of those rare books which deserve to be described as seminal. See Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 97. In the case of the Ottawas, this influence is somewhat misguided.

<sup>28</sup> George Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study in Intertribal Trade Relations* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1940), 48.

observations took on a new and powerful meaning which no French official would have accepted.<sup>29</sup>

Hunt's thesis is well-known; the Algonquians and Iroquoians fought commercial wars in the seventeenth century. His interpretation takes the false middleman thesis to its logical conclusion: all Ottawa activities are understood in terms of commercial interest. For example, Hunt relies on Denonville's bitter assessments, in the aftermath of his 1687 campaign against the Senecas, to describe the Ottawas as a group which functioned as Algonquian Shylocks, exacting their pounds of flesh from their enemies as a means of intimidation and cruelty:

It was probably the only battlefield the Ottawa observed, voluntarily, in the seventeenth century, and their services consisted of opening the warm bodies of their enemies, slain by others, and drinking the blood.<sup>30</sup>

Hunt's "probably" can be taken at its real worth, for his knowledge of the Ottawas was limited to say the least. The Ottawas fought many battles in the seventeenth century, against the Iroquois and the Sioux. Evidently Hunt's knowledge of Ottawa military history was as limited as his understanding of French-Ottawa relations.

If Hunt's Ottawas were avaricious and parasitical and if their chief characteristic was "...a sort of cowardly and shrinking ferocity,"<sup>31</sup> Hunt was nevertheless impressed with their business acumen:

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<sup>29</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 51: 21; 54: 127; Denonville au ministre, 12 juin, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 59-63v; Denonville au ministre, 25 août, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 83-111; Frontenac au ministre, 25 octobre, 1696, AN, C11A, 14: 154-167.

<sup>30</sup> Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*, 49.

<sup>31</sup> Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*, 49.

But if they were not very brave they were very wise, having always an eye on the main chance; and with the fall of the Hurons they acquired a power out of all proportion to their military ability, becoming the Phoenicians of the Upper Lakes.<sup>32</sup>

The curious, backhanded respect illustrates the duality of Hunt's main thesis: the Ottawas were indeed Parkman's "savages of a lower grade" but they were also representatives of Innis's "simple civilization." Hunt was inclined to regard the Ottawas with implicit admiration. Cruel they may have been, but according to Hunt the Ottawas were also clever enough to profit from their role as intermediaries between the French and the peoples of Lake Superior and beyond.

Hunt's economic characterization of the Ottawas is misguided. Commerce took place in order to sustain alliances and to mitigate the threat of warfare in a delicately balanced and dangerous environment. To cast the Ottawas in the role of middlemen, with all of the attendant charges that such a depiction carries, is to misrepresent their society and their motivations for trade and cultural interaction. Profit, as Hunt understood the term, made no sense to the Ottawas or their neighbours. Vestigial elements of Charlevoix, Parkman, Innis, Creighton, and Hunt, even though these interpretations were flawed, were carried forward by the middleman thesis to influence historians writing the history of the Great Lakes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus, the idea of Ottawa as trader permeates the historiography. A number of subsequent historians of the Great Lakes have adhered to the salient features of Hunt's analysis. In her influential *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, Helen Hornbeck

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<sup>32</sup> Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*, 49.

Tanner, for example, identified the same sources of conflict (trade rivalry between the Iroquois and the Hurons, Ottawas, and other Algonquians of the Great Lakes) and she too cast the Ottawa as middlemen.<sup>33</sup> Thomas Elliot Norton, in a discussion of the peace conferences of 1700 and 1701, called the Ottawas "...a people more inclined toward business than warfare."<sup>34</sup> A more sensitive approach, that of Francis Jennings, allowed for the play of more complex forces. In rejecting a "simplistic economic explanation" in general terms however, Jennings still relied on the middleman thesis for his explanation of the Ottawa motivations for their relations with the French and English. The English traders who were led to Michilimackinac in 1685 "...made a great impression on the Huron and Ottawa tribes with their cheap goods."<sup>35</sup> Again, while other nations are given credit for more complex motivations, historians have doomed the Ottawas to the fate of simple middlemen.

Those scholars who have made the Ottawa Nation the central focus of their historical investigation have relied on the persuasive and powerful ideas of Innis and Hunt to an overwhelming degree. The first substantial study of the Ottawa Nation was published as a series of articles in the *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* by an American

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<sup>33</sup> Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 29-31.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Elliot Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 20.

<sup>35</sup> Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 172 and 189.

scholar named Robert F. Bauman.<sup>36</sup> For Bauman the arrival of Europeans meant the advent of European-style capitalism amongst the peoples of the Great Lakes: "...the greed of the capitalist set in."<sup>37</sup> He continued, in this fashion, to outline the Ottawa position in the fur trade. At first they were "sub-middlemen" who controlled the western Great Lakes while the Nipissings controlled the trade of the north.<sup>38</sup> Later, in a passage which owes a great deal to Hunt, Bauman succinctly explained his primary thesis:

The Ottawas, veteran traders in their own right and experienced by their apprenticeship to the Hurons, almost immediately stepped into the position vacated by the dispersal of the latter, and for a time assumed command of the French-Indian trading empire. In 1654, a large fur fleet manned by Ottawa and remnant Huron Indians made it painfully clear to the Iroquois that the trade they had long strived for, by treaty and by war, was more remote than ever.<sup>39</sup>

Bauman assumed, as did Hunt, that the struggle between the Ottawas and the Iroquois Confederacy was for control of the fur trade. His work was influenced by the same biases and interpretations which influenced the others, and for the same reasons. Thus, trade is regarded as the salient feature of the Ottawa economy and the other aspects

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<sup>36</sup> Bauman was commissioned by the Cleveland law firm of Harrison, Spangenburg, and Hull to write a report on the history and rights of the Ottawa Indians. Although intended for publication as a multi-volume history of the Ottawas, Bauman's study was not completed and the first parts were published irregularly in the *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* from the autumn of 1958 to the summer of 1964. He titled his series "The Ottawas of the Lakes" but his subtitles "Fur Trade Mastery," "The Iroquois Fur Trade Dilemma," "Ottawa Fleets and Iroquois Frustration," "The Heyday of the Ottawa Supremacy over the Great Lakes Fur Trade," and "The Ottawa Trading System" are more indicative of his economic interpretation.

<sup>37</sup> Robert F. Bauman, "The Ottawas of the Lakes, 1615-1766," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 30 (Autumn 1958): 203.

<sup>38</sup> Bauman, "Ottawas of the Lakes," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 31 (Winter 1958): 44-45.

<sup>39</sup> Bauman, "Ottawas of the Lakes," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 32 (Summer 1960): 90.

(ultimately the much more crucial aspects) of the economy of the Lake Huron region are ignored.

A more balanced and rigorous interpretation may be found in the Master's thesis of Canadian anthropologist Leo Waisberg. His title, "The Ottawa: Traders of the Upper Great Lakes," however, suggests a sympathy for the conventional middleman thesis. For Waisberg, the Ottawas were "...an important collection of native American middlemen." Waisberg's main interest is Ottawa trade motivations and his thesis is an examination of the ways in which those motivations evolved over the seventeenth century. Waisberg is persuaded that the Ottawas exercised "...an actual assumption of property or control over the 'Ottawa' River routes."<sup>40</sup> While Waisberg considers the environment and culture, his main arguments concern market forces, refugees, and the conflated nature of the Ottawas as he understands them. Although his work is clearly more comprehensive than any of the others, it is perched on the same tenuous limb, and it is too concerned with the middleman theory.

The most recent historical study to consider the Ottawas is Richard White's *The Middle Ground*. White rejected the "old tribal history" with its simplistic accounts of cultural assimilation or cultural survival. Instead he charted the creation of a new world built from the ashes of the old Great Lakes world, "a process of mutual invention."<sup>41</sup> According to White, the Iroquois raids of 1649 destroyed the old world forever and

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<sup>40</sup> Leo G. Waisberg, "The Ottawa: Traders of the Upper Great Lakes" (M.A. thesis, McMaster University, 1977), 182.

<sup>41</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 50.

turned the peoples of Upper Great Lakes into refugees, trying to put the shattered fragments of their world back together. For White then the Ottawas were not an identifiable people, but rather a name for those Algonquian refugees who traded with the French.<sup>42</sup>

Working from the accounts of the Jesuits, traders, and from the official French correspondence, historians have attempted to piece together the migrations and movements of the Great Lakes' nations.<sup>43</sup> French writers who lived in the Great Lakes offer clues, but the works of a few people, with an imperfect understanding of the region, an imperfect command of the languages, and an imperfect knowledge of the history and cultures of the people in an area larger than the realm of France can hardly be considered adequate. To paraphrase Inga Clendinnen, (an Australian historian who confronted a similar problem) alien traders, soldiers, and zealots rarely made sensitive ethnographers, even when they had an understanding of the whole region.<sup>44</sup>

The *Jesuit Relations*, which were such a rich source for the ethnohistorians Conrad Heidenreich, Elizabeth Tooker, and Bruce Trigger in their studies of the Huron Indians are not as useful for a study of the Ottawas and the other Algonquians of the

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<sup>42</sup> White, *Middle Ground*, 105.

<sup>43</sup> Ever since the publication of Emma Helen Blair's translation of Perrot in 1911, the Ottawas have been presented as migrating nomads rather than a confederacy with a distinct and carefully planned economic strategy. This is a result of the same style of accretion as the middleman thesis; it is a construct teetering on a rotten foundation. For examples of the careful - but ultimately futile - attempts to trace the movements of the Ottawas see: Emma Helen Blair, ed. *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1911), 189, n. 140; Tanner, *Atlas*, 30; White, *Middle Ground*, 1-49 *passim*.

<sup>44</sup> Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in the Yucatan, 1517-1570* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 131.

Great Lakes because of the different nature of settlement patterns and economic strategies these groups employed.<sup>45</sup> Just as the Jesuits were attracted to the Hurons for their seemingly "civilised" (read *French*) custom of cultivation and their complete lack of uncivilised and apparently aimless meandering, so have scholars been attracted to the Hurons because of the richness of the primary source materials. Students of the Algonquian peoples have no such luxury, and though the awareness of the problem is abundantly evident, solutions have been wanting. Tracing the movements of the Ottawas amounts only to tracing those movements which were observed by a fur trader named Nicolas Perrot and a handful of Jesuit missionaries.

Other sources indicate a different pattern. Some of the Ottawas did settle, for a time, in Chequamegon Bay. Most, however, remained in the Lake Huron region in their ancestral homeland around the gateways regions of eastern Manitoulin Island, Bawating, and Michilimackinac. The Jesuit Gabriel Druillettes was the first French observer to note the Ottawa strategy he saw at Michilimackinac in 1671:

It is perfectly situated in the strait connecting the Lake of the Hurons and that of the Illinois, and forms the key and the door, so to speak, for all those peoples of the South, as does the Sault for those of the North; for in these regions there are only those two passages by water for very many nations, who must seek one or the other of the two if they wish to visit the French settlements.<sup>46</sup>

Druillettes was clearly aware of the gateways principle, even if he saw its importance

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<sup>45</sup> Conrad Heidenreich, *Huronian: A History and Geography of the Huron Indians, 1600-1650* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 28-42; Elisabeth Tooker, *An Ethnography of the Huron Indians, 1615-1649* (Syracuse: Syracuse university Press, 1991), 9-12; Trigger, *Aataentsic*, 27-45; and Bruce G. Trigger, *The Huron: Farmers of the North*, 2nd ed. (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990), 15-24.

<sup>46</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 157.



from the blinkered perspective of the French.

Just as Champlain's difficulties in ascending the Ottawa River in 1613 provided evidence for the middleman thesis, the observations of two Jesuits, Father Claude Allouez and Father Claude Dablon, contributed to the confusion regarding the meaning of the term *Ottawa*. These missionaries accounted for the use of the word *Ottawa* as it related to both the people and the river. Writing in 1667, Father Allouez explained why the term *Outaouacs* was sometimes used incorrectly:

The Outaouacs claim that the great river belongs to them, and that no nation can launch a boat on it without their consent. Therefore all who go to trade with the French, although of widely different nations, bear the general name of Outaouacs, under whose auspices they make the journey.<sup>47</sup>

Like all of the French who lived for a time in the *pays d'en haut*, Allouez used the term correctly. In other words, he understood it to refer to the specific nations (he referred to Outaouacs, Kiskakouamacs, and Outaouasinagoucs) with whom he had contact.<sup>48</sup> He felt compelled to explain why the term had a wider usage among the people of the St. Lawrence colony who had little knowledge of the peoples of the Great Lakes region.

Similarly, Father Claude Dablon differentiated between the "common" use of the term and its correct usage. He, too, provided evidence of a sense of influence in the use of the term. In 1670 he claimed that the Ottawas were the first to make the trip to Montreal (in this he was mistaken; the Hurons were the first people to make the trip from Lake Huron to the French colony), and therefore their "...name afterward remained

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<sup>47</sup> Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901), 51: 21.

<sup>48</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 51: 21.

with all the others."<sup>49</sup> Allouez's and Dablon's brief observations allowed scholars to propagate a number of misleading theories about the Ottawas. For example, White cited Allouez as an authority for his argument that French officials used the term generically to denote "traders." White's depiction of the Great Lakes during the French regime is a bleak one of lost traditions, horror, and upheaval. Old national affiliations were destroyed and replaced by "refugee villages."<sup>50</sup> There is no room in such an interpretation for individual nations resisting change and finding strength in their culture and in the rhythms of their daily lives. In White's interpretation, the peoples of the Upper Great Lakes lost their history:

As war and disease reduced populations and forced the amalgamation of previously distinct peoples, the survivors seemed to cling to their traditions. But they were like infants sucking the breasts of their dead mothers; tradition could no longer sustain them.<sup>51</sup>

According to White, refugee traders tried to create a new world out of the ruins of the old by spreading European goods further and further into the interior of the continent.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, White's insistence on the refugee model led him to appropriate the word Ottawa for all of the peoples of the Upper Great Lakes who were allied to the French. In a section inspired by Allouez's observation, White argued that the term *Ottawa* was a generic word for trader:

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<sup>49</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 127.

<sup>50</sup> White, *Middle Ground*, 16-17.

<sup>51</sup> White, *Middle Ground*, 57.

<sup>52</sup> White, *Middle Ground*, 105-110.

The "Ottawas" were perhaps the most famous middlemen of the late seventeenth century. but the name *Ottawas*, as used in the late seventeenth century, does not necessarily designate any specific tribal group. During much of the seventeenth century, *Ottawa* was the generic French name for any western Indian who travelled east to trade with the French.<sup>53</sup>

People from many different nations came to trade furs at Montreal and they were not all called Ottawas. For example, Pierre-Esprit Radisson, who knew the differences, referred to "a company of the Sault" which included some of the "Sorcerers" (Nipissings) and a party of Ottawas, all in the St. Lawrence in the summer of 1661.<sup>54</sup> The French use of the term *Ottawa* is evidence of Ottawa influence, not of a world in which old affiliations no longer had meaning.

White also accepted the notion that the Ottawas (and in this case he used the term to refer specifically to the Ottawa Nation) traded at Montreal in an attempt to keep a middleman's profit.<sup>55</sup> This assertion is contradicted by the evidence of other nations accompanying the Ottawa canoe fleets. White accounted for this contradiction by claiming that the Ottawas only invited other nations to join them on their way to trade because they were afraid of the Iroquois who awaited them in the Ottawa River valley, and "...they had no desire to face the danger alone."<sup>56</sup> According to White, the Ottawas did not have an "exclusive" claim to middleman status, and their "purely

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<sup>53</sup> White, *Middle Ground*, 105. It is not clear how White can make such a claim since the only two documented explanations of the use of the term are the two found in *Jesuit Relations*.

<sup>54</sup> Arthur T. Adams, ed., *The Explorations of Pierre-Esprit Radisson* (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1961), 112-115.

<sup>55</sup> White, *The Middle Ground*, 32. White's observations here leave no doubt as to his faith in the idea that the Ottawas were middlemen.

<sup>56</sup> White, *The Middle Ground*, 106.

economic interest" was to increase traffic along the Ottawa River in order to collect gifts as a form of toll.<sup>57</sup> There is no evidence of toll collection by the Ottawas on the Ottawa River at this or any other time.

Another example of the problematic interpretation of Allouez and Dablon is found in Peter Schmalz's recent history of the Ojibwas. Schmalz was unable to find specific references to Ojibwas in the sources he used. He appropriated the term Ottawa (which is easy to find in all of the French documents) without justification. Where he encountered the term *Ottawa* he inserted "including the Ojibwa," or "mainly Ojibwa," after the reference.<sup>58</sup> Schmalz changed the sense of the documents in order to suit his purpose. For example, after quoting a section from Nicholas Perrot, Schmalz explained, "Ottawa is the term used here but it is safe to assume that these were mainly Ojibwa."<sup>59</sup> By taking the broadest possible definition of the term Ottawa, that of generic middlemen, Schmalz was able to claim aspects of Ottawa history for another nation. Such an approach is misleading and detrimental to an understanding of the history of the Great Lakes region during the French regime.

A more useful approach to the study of the Ottawas has been suggested recently by the Canadian historian, Denys Delâge. Like White, Delâge argues for a more balanced approach to the study of the Great Lakes region in the seventeenth and

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<sup>57</sup> White, *The Middle Ground*, 106. White's source for this claim is the quotation from Allouez cited above. Allouez says nothing at all about expecting gifts from anyone using the river. As the Ottawas lived further west, it is difficult to imagine how they could have done this in any case.

<sup>58</sup> Peter S. Schmalz, *The Ojibwa of Southern Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 19 and 31.

<sup>59</sup> Schmalz, *Ojibwa*, 271.

eighteenth centuries. He noted that "New France in the Great Lakes" never really existed: "Native sovereignty was still intact and no Indian nation recognized French rule over them."<sup>60</sup> Like White, Delâgé considered the ways in which Europeans and Native Americans experienced processes of cultural exchange. Unlike White, however, Delâgé argued that within a general framework of alliance, these processes should be examined individually, with consideration given to all aspects of the encounter.<sup>61</sup>

Within his interpretation, Delâgé gave special consideration to the Ottawas, whom he considers the "principal intermediary of the French."<sup>62</sup> In his work, intermediaries are not presented as mere middlemen, but rather as representatives of the nations of the west.<sup>63</sup> Although in his own work Delâgé was primarily interested in the commercial aspects of the cultural exchange, he suggested the impossibility of considering commerce without understanding all the other aspects of the alliances between the individual nations of the Upper Great Lakes and the French.

From the uncritical assessment of the *Jesuit Relations* and the works of the French travellers, from the interpretive analyses of scholars writing on the economic development of Canada, and from the neglect of the ways in which the Ottawas

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<sup>60</sup> Denys Delâgé, "War and French-Indian Alliance." *European Review of Native American Studies* 5 (1991), 20.

<sup>61</sup> Delâgé is most interested in the differing colonial ideologies of the European countries and in the differing responses of the nations of eastern North America. His main contribution is his study of the Dutch and their economic system. His argument that all of the various facets of the alliances between Europeans and Indian nations must be considered is what makes his work a valuable model for the study of the nations of the Great Lakes. Denys Delâgé, *Le Pays renversé* (Québec: Boréal, 1985), 339-347.

<sup>62</sup> Denys Delâgé, "L'Alliance franco-amérindienne 1660-1701." *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 19 (1989), 13.

<sup>63</sup> Delâgé, "L'Alliance," 13-14.

understood their world, historians have continued to label the Ottawas as middlemen in the fur trade. In a sense the Ottawas have been overlooked. While other nations have been the focus of intense ethnohistorical study, the Ottawas have been relegated to the role of ambiguous, conflated middlemen. Those who have attempted to understand their history have been overwhelmed by the historical construct. After all, there was an important trade in furs, and the French did not have contact with all of the peoples of the Great Lakes; someone had to have acted as middlemen. This is nothing more than a syllogism, but in order to eliminate it a careful examination of the economy of the Lake Huron region must now be undertaken. Without such an examination, the Ottawas would be doomed to remain Hunt's middlemen or White's refugees.

The Ottawas of Lake Huron were neither Parkman's "savages of a lower grade" nor Hunt's "Phoenicians of the Upper Lakes." They were certainly not White's refugees, contemplating the ruins of their old ways. Indeed, it is difficult to find evidence that supports the creation of a middle ground because, with the exception of the two small French forts and the few missions, the region changed little over the one hundred and fifty years of the French-Ottawa alliance. French forces simply became a part of the Ottawa gateways defensive system, a system which had existed long before the French came to the Upper Great Lakes. Many of the French and Canadians who lived on Ottawa territory became Ottawas in all but blood and the history of their families. For the duration of the French-Ottawa alliance, the Ottawas remained in firm control over their ancestral home and life continued much the same as it had done for centuries.

## **Chapter One: The Ottawa Ethnogenesis in Northern Lake Huron.**

Northern Lake Huron, like most of the rest of the Great Lakes region, owes the features of its topography to the retreat of the Laurentide Ice Sheet 11,000 years ago. As the massive glacier melted, it left soils of sandy loam and clay till which supported a vast array of trees and plants. More importantly, the glacier left the enormous fresh water lakes which moderated the temperatures of the surrounding region, making possible the growth of a rich and diverse forest. Nowhere was the Great Lakes forest so diverse as in the region of northern Lake Huron where the boreal forest of the north met the broadleaf forest of the south. The people who came to live in this region enjoyed a much greater resource base than their neighbours to the north and south.<sup>1</sup>

The present chapter will describe the way in which northern Lake Huron came to be populated by the people who would become the Ottawa Nation, the resources available in the region, and the most important ways in which the Ottawas used their resources. The various uses which the Ottawas found for the flora, fauna, and minerals of their home reveal the ways in which the Ottawas understood their world, and the ways in which they identified its necessities. The process of adaptation is best described as one of ethnogenesis. As the Anishinabeg people moved into the Upper Great Lakes around the year 1000, they encountered people who had lived the region since the end of the Late Wisconsinian glaciation.<sup>2</sup> People learned from one another's methods of resource use, and eventually the older cultures merged with the newer ones

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<sup>1</sup> R. Cole Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 1: 1, 17, 17a.

<sup>2</sup> J.V. Wright, *Ontario Prehistory: An Eleven Thousand Year Archaeological Outline* (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1972), 11.

to form new societies. These new societies continued to adapt to the particularities of their regions; gradually they developed as separate nations each pursuing different economic strategies and the process of ethnogenesis was complete. The people who lived in the region of northern Lake Huron, who were descended from both the Paleo-Indians of the Great Lakes and the ancient Anishinabeg from eastern North America, became known as the Ottawa Nation.<sup>3</sup>

By now, historians are well acquainted with the causes of Native instability in the era of European exploration and settlement.<sup>4</sup> It is equally important, or even more important, to understand the ability of some Native Peoples to resist those forces. The first step toward such an understanding is to explain how a particular people came to inhabit their region and the second is to examine the geography of that region. In the case of the Ottawas, this is best achieved by listening to the Ottawa's own descriptions of their ethnogenesis in the Lake Huron region and to their descriptions of how they perceived and identified the necessities of their world. It also means relating their culture to resources of their natural environment. Here the historian may profit from the ethnohistorical technique of reading the reports of the archaeologists who have reconstructed so much of the pre-contact Great Lakes economy. The present chapter is

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<sup>3</sup> The four groups of the Ottawa Nation (the Kiskakons, the Kamigas, the Nassauakuetons, and the Sinagos) are considered together in the present discussion because their own processes of ethnogenesis were identical.

<sup>4</sup> Denys Delâge made an important contribution to this field with his study of French-Huron relations, *Le Pays renversé*. Delâge does not restrict the geographical limits of his study to North America, but rather, he explains the process of change with reference to the economy of the North Atlantic world in the seventeenth century. Like Fernand Braudel, Delâge is not interested in the "mediocre accidents" of history. Instead, he is interested in charting the grand underlying movements which eventually transformed the Huron world. His model works well for Huron society, the nation he chose to examine, but is less applicable for the Ottawas whose economy was not affected by the same forces. Denys Delâge, *Le Pays renversé*, 152-172.



concerned with two vital sources: Ottawa oral tradition, and the archaeological record. The object is to describe the first two aspects of the ancestral home: the sense of place, and the adaptation to the available resources. In the following chapter the ways in which the Ottawas controlled the access points, or gateways, into Lake Huron will be studied.

Unlike their agricultural neighbours the Hurons, the Ottawas moved frequently from site to site and over great distances. Thus, while the maps of Huronia are reasonably accurate depictions of the Huron civilization in the early seventeenth century, the maps depicting the Ottawas showed only those Ottawa settlements for which there was a report.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, it is far more accurate to see the Ottawas as they saw themselves, as a people who understood their world in terms of the Lake rather than as a people who identified with a specific piece of territory. The Ottawa sense of territoriality was limited to the delineation of family hunting and sugaring areas, but their sense of place and their understanding of an ancestral home included the broad expanse of northern Lake Huron.<sup>6</sup> Ancestral home is understood to mean the region (whether small like Huronia, or large like the northern Lake Huron area) where a nation lived, exercised authority over the resources, and controlled the main access points for a period of several generations.<sup>7</sup> For the Ottawas who wrote down aspects of their oral

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<sup>5</sup> For example, see Samuel de Champlain, "Carte de la Nouvelle France," Collection d'Anville, Section des Cartes et Plans, Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>6</sup> Etymologically, the term territoriality makes little sense for the Ottawa Nation. Spiritually, economically, and even historically, the Ottawas identified with the water of Lake Huron rather than with any given stretch of its shore.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Bishop, "Territoriality among Northeastern Algonquians," *Anthropologica* 28 (1986): 43.

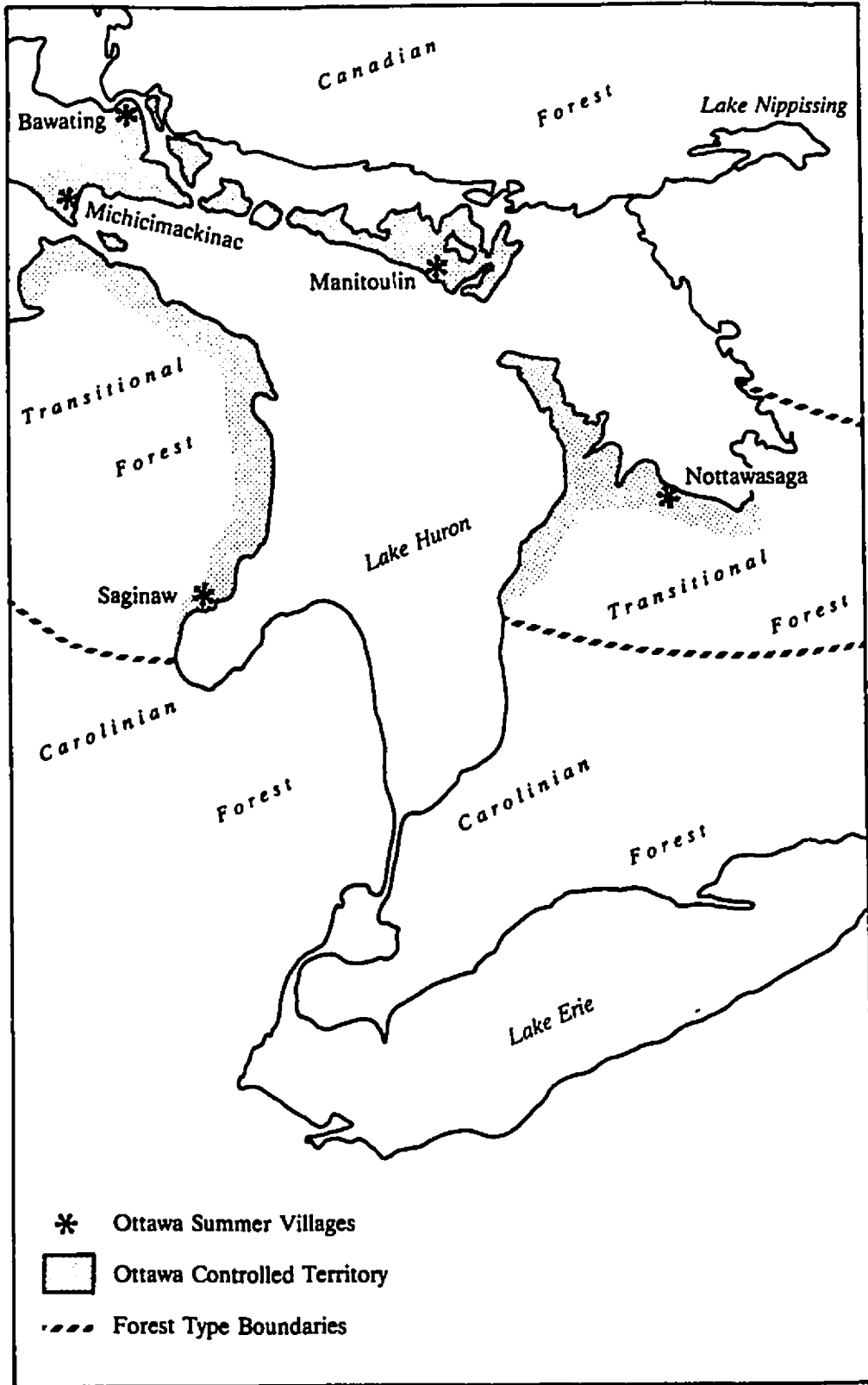


Figure 1: Ottawa Summer Village Sites In The Early Seventeenth Century

tradition in the nineteenth century, Lake Huron had been their ancestral homeland for hundreds of years in one sense, and for thousands in another sense. They were the descendants of the Anishinabeg peoples who came from the east, but also of the peoples who had lived in the Lakes for thousands of years.

To gain a sense of the Ottawa presence in the Lake Huron region, it is appropriate to begin with the oral histories of the Ottawas themselves. Andrew Blackbird, a hereditary Ottawa chief or ogima as the Ottawas called their chiefs from Arbre Croche, Michigan, recorded his history in 1887 and provided a detailed written account of the Ottawa migrations as related to him by his father.<sup>8</sup> Blackbird began his account of the Anishinabeg migrations around 1000, when the people who would become Ottawas ascended the Ottawa River valley:

Very many centuries ago, before the discovery of the American continent by the white people, the traditions of the Ottawas say they lived along the banks of one of the largest tributaries of the St. Lawrence, now known as the Ottawa River. The Ottawas spread over the country around the head waters of this stream, subduing all other tribes of Indians which they happened to encounter, except the Chippewas and Stockbridge Indians.<sup>9</sup>

Blackbird's inclusion of the Mahicans (to whom he refers as "Stockbridge Indians") lends credence to his history.<sup>10</sup> The Mahicans, like the Ottawas, were enemies of the

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<sup>8</sup> Blackbird (also known as Macketebenessy) was born in the Bkejwanong region but moved to the Ottawa village at Arbre Croche near Traverse City, Michigan after Bkejwanong was opened to American settlement in the late 1820s. Many of the Ottawas in the area moved north to Arbre Croche at that time, while others moved to Manitoulin Island. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 79.

<sup>10</sup> The Mahicans came to be known as Stockbridges because of the Stockbridge mission in Massachusetts where they lived after they were decimated by the Mohawks. See T.J. Brassler, "Mahican," in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians: Northeast* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 15: 208-211.

Five Nations Iroquois. This would have made them natural allies of the Ottawas as Blackbird claimed. In 1887 when Blackbird wrote his history, the Mahicans were far less numerous and had moved from their mission at Stockbridge, Massachusetts to the Menominee reservations in Wisconsin.<sup>11</sup> He would have had no other way of knowing of their location hundreds of years earlier than by the oral tradition of his family. While the Ottawas were in the Ottawa River region, they would have come into direct contact with the Mahicans who lived directly across the Saint Lawrence.

From the valley of the Ottawa River, the Ottawas migrated along the Mattawa River to Lake Nipissing, where they remained for a period of time:

The tradition gives no reason why the Ottawas continually moved towards the northwest at this early period; but it is, however, supposed that it was on account of their deadly enemies, the Iroquois of New York, as they were continually at war with the six nations of Indians.<sup>12</sup>

The Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy was an enemy of the Ottawa nation before the French came to North America. It was the Iroquois who drove the Anishinabeg people out of the region of the lower Ottawa River at the time of the migrations.<sup>13</sup>

As the Ottawas moved along the Mattawa River (presumably to avoid the threat

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<sup>11</sup> Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 143-146.

<sup>12</sup> Blackbird was uncertain of the reasons for the migration and he said so. Whenever he made an assumption he was careful to warn his reader that he was moving beyond the strict relation of the tradition. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 81.

<sup>13</sup> There were only five nations in the Iroquois Confederacy until 1722 or 1723 when the Tuscaroras were formally admitted. Blackbird's error regarding the number of Iroquois confederates at the time need not concern his readers, as he had informed them of his brief venture into the realm of supposition. The tradition is not wrong; his interpretation may have been. In any case there is further strong evidence for the accuracy of the tradition and for Blackbird's faithful rendition of his family's history. David Landy, "Tuscarora Among the Iroquois," in *Handbook of North American Indian* ed. William C. Sturtevant, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 15: 519.

posed by the Iroquois) they came across a large lake, "Ke-tchi-ne-bissing," where they established themselves:

Here the Ottawas concluded to stop and occupy the surrounding country. Therefore they pitched their tents and formed a great village. They continued to reside around the lake for untold ages. And here too they had many hard battles with the Iroquois; but the Iroquois were not able to conquer them or drive them from their country. But at last the Ottawas became discontented with the place. They concluded that the place was haunted by some presiding deity who was not favourable to them. They probably obtained this idea through having sometimes great disasters in war with the Iroquois at this place.<sup>14</sup>

The notion of a malevolent spirit pushing the Ottawas away from Lake Nipissing deserves to be treated with credence. The beliefs expressed in the oral tradition reflect the way in which the Ottawas understood their world, both at the time of the migration and over the centuries of relating the history. One's sense of place was determined by a sense of spiritual appropriateness.<sup>15</sup>

The Ottawas continued moving "towards the setting sun" and eventually they reached the shore of eastern Lake Huron:

Here they discovered a great island which is now called Manitoulin, but formerly, the Ottawa Island. Here the Ottawas remained for many centuries.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 82.

<sup>15</sup> Blackbird knew his readers would be European and he understood the difficulty of explaining Ottawa beliefs to a sceptical and critical audience. Nevertheless, he explains the story unapologetically: "It may be considered as purely fictitious, but every Ottawa and Chippewa to this day believes it to have actually occurred." Again, the oral tradition itself is accurate. If the Ottawas believed in a malevolent force which drove them away from Lake Nipissing, then the reader must also accept the story regardless of the unlikelihood of the event. The malevolent spirit is known as the Windigo. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 82; also see Mentor L. Williams, *Schoolcraft's Indian Legends*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1991), 169-174.

<sup>16</sup> Blackbird, *History of the Ottawas*, 85.

The focus of the tradition is highly selective, and Blackbird did not add detail to the account. The tradition he related identifies migrations and wars as the most noteworthy events, and other than the story offered as an explanation for the move away from Lake Nipissing, it resembles a medieval chronicle more than a critical and interpretive account. In this sense it is all the more useful for the present task of explaining the Ottawas' sense of place in Lake Huron.

Up to the settlement of Manitoulin, Blackbird's account is the only Ottawa oral history of the migration into the area which would evolve into their ancestral home. With their arrival at Manitoulin Island, another author takes up the narrative and provides an account from a different branch of the same oral history. Francis Assikinack, like Blackbird, was from Arbre Croche. Unlike Blackbird, his family moved from Michigan to Ontario in the large migration to Manitoulin Island in the 1830s. His narrative, written in the 1850s, is based on the Manitoulin tradition and was separated from Blackbird's tradition by half a century.<sup>17</sup>

Assikinack's rendition of the oral tradition reinforces and elaborates Blackbird's. In a sense however, his telling of the story is incidental and is given very much as an afterthought to his discourse on Ottawa customs and etymology. He discusses Manitoulin for the interest he has in its name:

I have often been asked by white people to explain the meaning of the word *Manitoulin*, the name of the large island on the north-west side of Lake Huron, and said to be so called by the Indians, according to geographical writers. As far as I know, there is no such word in the languages spoken by the Odahwahs, Ojibwas or any of the surrounding

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<sup>17</sup> *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. "Assikinack, Francis." This profile is not completely accurate. Assikinack was born at l'Arbre Croche and moved to Manitoulin at the age of six.

tribes. *Manitoulin* may be a Huron word: but, not being acquainted with the Mohawk, which, I understand nearly resembles the Huron or Iroquois language, I can not say positively, but so far as I can see by their alphabet, and printed books in their language, they never make use of the letter L, which is also wanting in the Odahwah and Ojibwa alphabet, besides F, R, V, and X.<sup>18</sup>

Like Blackbird, Assikinack related his history with precision and with respect for the inviolability of the oral tradition. Like Blackbird he was careful to relate the tradition as he had learned it without imaginative elaborations.

Assikinack's account of the Ottawa settlement of Manitoulin included an estimation of the timing of the arrival of the new people:

The Indian name for the island is *Odahwah-minis*, that is to say Odahwah Island, because it was occupied by the Odahwah Indians about the time that America was discovered in the fifteenth century; and according to their tradition, it was from this place the tribe sent a party of warriors to Montreal, when they heard extraordinary people had arrived at that place, who had many things to sell for all those who wished to trade with them.<sup>19</sup>

The Ottawa sense of place, and Assikinack's sense of an ancestral home are well illustrated in this brief passage. Assikinack believed the time of settlement to have been around the early years of the fifteenth century, something of a conservative estimate.<sup>20</sup> He also noted the centrality of the island in the new geographic and

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<sup>18</sup> Manitoulin and Michilimackinac are French versions of the Ottawa words Manitowaning and Michimakinong. The letter L in these words was added by the French who had difficulty pronouncing these names. Francis Assikinack, "Social and Warlike Customs of the Odahwah Indians," *Canadian Journal of Industry, Science, and Art* 3 (1858): 306.

<sup>19</sup> Assikinack, "Customs of the Ottawas," 307.

<sup>20</sup> Archaeological evidence, which will be discussed later, indicates an earlier Ottawa presence on Manitoulin Island. The introduction of a new cultural phase, the Juntunen phase, around 1200 AD in the Upper Great Lakes, announces the arrival of new influences which may have been brought about by the arrival of Algonquian speaking peoples from the east. See Charles E. Cleland, *Rites of Conquest: The History and Culture of Michigan's Native Americans* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 23-27; Tanner, *Atlas*, 24-28;

political order which was being established in the Great Lakes. This centrality was also acknowledged by the French who realized that Manitoulin, or Ekaentoton as it was known to the Hurons, was the gathering place for the Ottawa peoples and their allies when important group strategies were to be decided and executed.<sup>21</sup>

The Ottawa tradition of Blackbird and Assikinack is supported by the Ojibwa oral tradition. Indeed one of the great problems of the historiographical conceptualization of the Great Lakes region is best explained by reference to William Warren's *History of the Ojibway People*. Warren, writing in 1852, transcribed the oral tradition of his mother's people, the Ojibwas of the Upper Great Lakes. He provided a crucial explanation of the migration of the Ottawas and their allies into the region which also helps to explain the differences between the various nations:

It is comparatively but a few generations back, that this tribe have been known by their present distinctive name as Ojibway. It is certainly not more than three centuries, and in all probability much less. It is only within this term of time, that they have been disconnected as a distinct or separate tribe from the Ottaways and Potta-wat-um-ies. The name by which they were known when incorporated in one body, is at the present day uncertain.<sup>22</sup>

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David S. Brose, "Late Prehistory of the Upper Great lakes Area," in *Handbook of North American Indians* ed. William C. Sturtevant, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 15: 573-574.

<sup>21</sup> An anonymous map of Lake Huron labels Manitoulin as *Ekaentoton Isle: Lieu d'assemblée de tous les sauvages allans en traite a Montreal*. This map is part of a series of nine maps which exist in manuscript in the Bibliothèque du Service Historique de la Marine in Vincennes, France. Trigger attributes them to Claude Bernou, while Conrad Heidenreich believes that if Bernou is the author, he may have copied them from some lost maps of La Salle. See Trigger, *Aataentsic*, 798; Conrad E. Heidenreich, "Mapping the Great Lakes: The Period of Exploration, 1603-1700," *Cartographica* 17 (1980): 48; Claude Bernou, "Lac Huron ou Karegnondi ou Mer Douce des Hurons," Bibliothèque du Service Historique de la Marine, Recueil 67 - 208 (4044b), Amérique Septentrionale, Canada, no. 48.

<sup>22</sup> William W. Warren, *History of the Ojibway People* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984), 81.



Although Warren appeared to be unaware of the name "by which they were known" he had used it already "the ancient An-ish-in-aub-ag."<sup>23</sup>

These Anishinabeg were the people whom he described as coming from the east, from the "salt water" to the Saint Lawrence, to Lake Huron and finally to Lake Superior. The traditions of the Ojibways and the Ottawas are the same, save for some few details. This is not to say that the Ottawas and Ojibwas are the same people. They adapted to two different geographical environments over the period from their arrival in the Great Lakes around 1000 to the time of contact, and if historians want to learn more about the sources of strength and stability in the Great Lakes world, their differences are worth studying.

The most important difference concerns the environments of the three regions settled by the three divisions of the Anishinabeg. Northern Lake Huron lies in a transitional zone between the Carolinian forest in the south and the Canadian forest in the north.<sup>24</sup> Of the Anishinabeg peoples who migrated into the Great Lakes region, those who became known as Ojibwas occupied the Canadian forest to the north of Lakes Huron and Superior. Those who went west to the Carolinian forest of southern Lake Michigan came to be known as the Potawatomis. Those who remained in Lake

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<sup>23</sup> Warren, *History of the Ojibwa*, 81.

<sup>24</sup> The exact boundaries of these three biotic provinces are not clearly drawn. Fitting and Cleland argue that Manitoulin and the Onenditiagui, or Bruce Peninsula, should be classified as Canadian, as should Michilimackinac. However, the southeastern mixed forest, the main feature of the Carolinian-Canadian transitional zone, covers Manitoulin Island and extends even further northward to the Precambrian rocks of the Canadian shield. See James E. Fitting, and Charles E. Cleland, "Late Prehistoric Settlement Patterns in the Upper Great Lakes," *Ethnohistory* 16 (1969): 290 and J.S. Rowe, *Forest Regions of Canada*, (Ottawa, 1973), 93.

p. 6.

*Sauvage de La 1<sup>re</sup> Nation*  
*outaouaks.*

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Figure 2: An Ottawa Man with a Tobacco Pipe From the "Codex Canadensis" of Decard de Granville, ca. 1700. The Ottawas regarded themselves as the people of the east. This man has painted an image of the sun, symbol of the east, on his chest.

Huron, the Ottawas, adapted to the transitional Canadian-Carolinian forest. Within this transitional zone, there were many different ecosystems, some more closely related to the boreal, Canadian forest, others usually found in the broadleaf, Carolinian forest. In general, the Michilimackinac region resembled the northern boreal forest, and the Nottawasaga region showed the influence of the southern broadleaf forest. Manitoulin Island, however, lies in the heart of the transitional region and showed both influences.<sup>25</sup>

Warren related the story of the separation of the Anishinabeg into three different and distinct groups according to the oral tradition of the Ojibwas. In his discussion he underlines the importance of the distinctions between Ojibwas, Ottawas, and Potawatomis:

The final separation of these tribes took place at the straits of Michilimackinac from natural causes, and the partition has been more and more distinctly defined, and perpetuated through locality, and by each of the three receiving distinctive appellations.<sup>26</sup>

Warren described an evolutionary process which took place over a number of years as different groups of the Anishinabeg migrated further west while others remained in the vicinity of Lake Huron. Generations of historians have nevertheless overlooked this story. This is unfortunate since the force of geography (or "locality" as Warren would

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<sup>25</sup> Fitting and Cleland, "Prehistoric Settlement," 291. Fitting and Cleland maintain that the boundaries of this region should be delineated on a "more-or-less basis rather than as an either-or situation." In fact, Cleland argues elsewhere that the Canadian biotic province itself should be seen as a transitional zone between the Carolinian and Hudsonian provinces. He also notes that the Ottawas were able to raise crops in the entire region and that the modifying effect of the lake waters makes it possible to consider Mackinac as a Canadian-Carolinian transition zone. See Cleland, *Prehistoric Animal Ecology*, 5, 74, and 76. Most importantly Fitting and Cleland conclude that "The Ottawa are perhaps the best example of an adaptation to this environment."

<sup>26</sup> Warren, *History of the Ojibwa*, 81-82.

have it) played a tremendous role in the distinct development of these three branches of the Anishinabeg.<sup>27</sup> By a reading of their oral tradition, one can gain an insight into the Ottawa sense of their ancestral home and their place in it. The salient features of this mental map are the ways in which the Ottawas came into the region and the centrality of Manitoulin Island as a hub of Ottawa activity around the Lake. Underlining these features is the nexus between their culture, the water, and the importance of their island base. Like other people who live on islands, the Ottawas developed a strong affinity with the water. It provided them with their most important staple and it protected them from their enemies.<sup>28</sup>

What Warren described, and what has remained a source of confusion, was a stage in the process of the ethnogenesis of the three different nations, the Ottawas, the Ojibwas, and the Potawatomis. As groups of Anishinabeg people from the east moved into the region, they encountered other cultures which had existed in the Great Lakes for thousands of years.<sup>29</sup> The processes which took place can not adequately be

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<sup>27</sup> Of late historians of the American Indians have obscured these differences by focusing their enquiries on 'pan-tribalism' as a means of explaining change. This type of approach is critical of the old tribal paradigms, and yet there is much to be learned by studying the differences between the nations of the Upper Great Lakes. For examples of the pan-tribal approach see, Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xviii-xxiv; and White, *Middle Ground*, 19-20.

<sup>28</sup> Warren's observations about those Anishinabeg people who stayed in Lake Huron, the Ottawas, owe something to the oral tradition, and something to his own experiences as a fur trader in the Upper Great Lakes. His perceptions on the nature of the fur trade lead him to draw conclusions about the nature of the Ottawa economy which are not entirely accurate. Similarly, his observations about the Potawatomis leave much to be desired. Clearly he is operating outside of the realm of the Ojibwa tradition with which he is familiar and after the separation he can only make a few rather popular remarks about the Ottawas as traders and the Potawatomis as "keepers of the fire." Warren, *History of the Ojibway*, 82.

<sup>29</sup> Archaeological evidence shows new forms of pottery and new technologies which were introduced at the time, but it also reveals evidence of conflict, such as fortifications and earthen defence works. For a good example of this type of archaeological research see James E. Fitting and Richard Zurel, "The Detroit and St. Clair River

described as the simple assimilation of one culture into a more dominant culture; this would be too simplistic. In each case, powerful environmental forces influenced the process of assimilation. Together, these forces created new cultures in three unique processes of ethnogenesis: the Ottawa culture of northern Lake Huron, the Ojibwa culture of Lake Superior, and the Potawatomi culture of southern Lake Michigan. Technologies from the peoples of the Great Lakes (who had in turn been influenced by other peoples) merged with technologies from the people who came from the east, whom the tradition calls the Anishinabeg. This is how the Ottawas early history must be understood.

According to Blackbird, Assikinack, and Warren, the Ottawas arrived at Lake Huron at some point before the Europeans first came to North America.<sup>30</sup> The Anishinabeg people who came from the east evolved differently according to the peoples and resources they encountered in their new homes. Those of the Anishinabeg who stayed in Lake Huron, and who became the Ottawa Nation learned from the peoples whom they met in the region and adapted to a system of resource exploitation which would change little over the next eight hundred years. They had a separate experience from their relatives who went north to Lake Superior, or west to Lake Michigan. In order to understand those differences it is necessary to examine the

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Area," in *The Late Prehistory of the Lake Erie Drainage Basin*, ed. David S. Brose (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, 1976), 246.

<sup>30</sup> Archaeological evidence corroborates their assertions, and places the arrival of a new cultural influence in the region around 1000. For example see Fitting and Zurel, "Detroit and St. Clair," 246.

natural environment and the specific resources which the Ottawas learned to exploit.<sup>31</sup>

The Ottawas ancestral home stretched in an arc across northern Lake Huron from Nottawasaga Bay in the east to Saginaw Bay in the west.<sup>32</sup> Two things distinguish this area. First, the area has a remarkably rich biological diversity, much greater than the regions to the immediate north and south. Across northern Lake Huron, the lake effect moderates the temperatures and provides a habitat for an unusually wide range of species of plants and animals that otherwise would not survive. Northern species of plants and animals which are sensitive to extreme heat and southern species sensitive to extreme cold thrived in the varied ecological zones of northern Lake Huron.<sup>33</sup> Second, northern Lake Huron is accessible by three main water access points, or gateways. The Ottawa summer villages were located or near these three locations, Nottawasaga, Bawating, and Michilimackinac. These locations enabled the Ottawas to control the movement of people in and out of the Lake and beyond. The eastern gateway region of eastern Manitoulin Island, the Onenditiagui Peninsula, and Nottawasaga Bay is the logical place to begin a discussion of the Ottawa settlements.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> I am indebted to Charles Cleland of Michigan State University for offering his suggestions on this aspect of the dissertation. For a discussion of his approach, see Charles E. Cleland, *The Prehistoric Animal Ecology and Ethnozoology of the Upper Great Lakes Region* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1966), 13.

<sup>32</sup> The French geographer Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville located the Ottawas along the length of Manitoulin Island in 1656. This is reasonably accurate but their ancestral home also included the areas to the east and west of Manitoulin. Sanson, "Le Canada, ou Nouvelle France," 1656.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of the lake effect see Val Eichenlaub, Jay R. Harman, Fred V. Nurnberger, and Hans J. Stoble, *The Climate Atlas of Michigan* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 4-5. For a discussion of the biodiversity of the northern trans Lake Huron region, see Environment Canada, *The Great Lakes: An Environmental Atlas and Resource Book* (Toronto: Centre for Inland Waters, 1988), *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> Archaeological evidence and a wealth of cartographic and hydrographic evidence supports the Ottawa occupancy of these regions. There is also an undeniable logic to the Ottawa settlement patterns at the three gateways regions. The archives of the Marine, Service Hydrographique, and especially the subseries 1 JJ.

At the time of contact with the French in 1615, the principal Kiskakon village was located on Nottawasaga Bay, within a few kilometres of the Tionnontaté villages.<sup>35</sup> The Kiskakon Ottawas were closely allied with the Tionnontatés, an Iroquoian people whose culture was similar to that of their Huron neighbours, and the two communities profited from this relationship.<sup>36</sup> The principal Sinago Ottawa village was located at the Mindemoya River outlet on Manitoulin Island. There were also a number of Kiskakon and Sinago winter hunting camps and summer fishing stations located on the islands and shores of the region.<sup>37</sup> These sites were occupied at different times of the year, according to different uses, but there was always a strong

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Correspondance, inventaires, et mélanges; 2 JJ. Papiers d'hydrographes; and 6 JJ. Cartes contain the collected documents - and the inventories of those documents - of the French Hydrographic Service. Papers in these collections were meticulously gathered by the cartographers in France from every possible source in order to draw maps as accurately as possible. The inventories were upgraded annually, and it is therefore possible to examine the extent of French knowledge of the settlement patterns of all of the peoples of eastern North America.

<sup>35</sup> The Plater-Fleming site in the Tionnontaté country on the shores of Nottawasaga Bay is an example of an Ottawa occupation in the region of the eastern gateway. This site is evidence of their close alliance with the Tionnontatés and it contains a number of trade items which prove the existence of a diplomatic trade network between the two groups. For example, imported cherts, exotic lithics, modified bear bones, and beavers were all associated with the Ottawas and not with the Tionnontatés, are all found at Plater-Fleming. Charles Garrad, "The Plater-Fleming BdHb-2 Site: A Review," *Arch-Notes* 89-3 (May-June, 1989), 17-18. Also see Chris J. Ellis and Neal Ferris, eds. *The Archaeology of Southern Ontario* (London, Ontario: Ontario Archaeological Society, 1990), 459, fig. 14.2.

<sup>36</sup> The Tionnontatés referred to themselves as the Tionnontataronons, or People of the Hills in reference to the hilly terrain of the Nottawasaga region. The Ottawas called them Tionnontatés and the French called them Petuns, or Tobacco People. See Charles Garrad and Conrad E. Heidenreich, "Khionontateronon (Petun)," in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 15: 394-397.

<sup>37</sup> J.V. Wright, "The Glen Site: An Historic Cheveux Relevés Campsite on Flowerpot Island, Georgian Bay, Ontario," *Ontario Archaeology* 35 (1981), 45-59; William Fox, "The Hunter Site BdHh-5: A Multi-Component Odawa Fishing Camp on Frenchman Point, Sauguen Reserve," 1987. Report on file, Cultural Heritage Branch, Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Recreation, Toronto, Ontario; Rosemary Prevec, "The Hunter Site, BdHh-5," 1988. Report on file, Cultural Heritage Branch, Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Recreation, Toronto, Ontario.

Ottawa presence in the area.<sup>38</sup>

The main Sinago village at the mouth of the Mindemoya River was the spiritual centre of the Ottawa world.<sup>39</sup> In the first half of the seventeenth century, all of the four confederate Ottawa nations gathered there for annual councils.<sup>40</sup> The purpose of the meetings was to reaffirm ties and to discuss matters of concern to the whole Nation. The Sinagos were not as numerous as the Kiskakons or the Kamigas, but they had a special status within the Ottawa Nation based upon the spiritual importance of their home on Manitoulin Island.<sup>41</sup> The Sinago village at Providence Bay was the centre of

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<sup>38</sup> For example, the Glen Site, located on an island off the northern coast of the Onenditiagui Peninsula (now called the Bruce Peninsula) and to the south of Manitoulin, was the location of an important fall fishing station. The site was occupied in the autumn as members of the large villages on Manitoulin profited from the spawning runs of the trout. The Shebishikong site in the Georgian Bay was a winter hunting camp. There are differences in opinion amongst archaeologists regarding the cultural identifications of a number of these sites. The Ojibwas and Nipissings who lived to the north of Lake Huron occasionally encountered the Ottawas in this region, just as the Sauteurs encountered them at Michilimackinac. In general, there is agreement over the Ottawa occupation of the fishing sites, but as the Ojibwas depended on hunting, there is less to distinguish the Ottawas from the Ojibwas at the hunting sites. Archaeologist David Brose prefers to consider Shebishikong as an Ottawa occupation because of the historical evidence which places the Ottawas in this region. Fitting and Cleland, "Prehistoric Settlement Patterns," 299; and Wright, "The Glen Site," 57.

<sup>39</sup> The Dunk's Bay site, located at the very tip of the Onenditiagui, is a different kind of Ottawa occupation. Here, there is evidence of a fishing station, but this site appears to have had a religious importance as well. Evidence of the White Dog Ceremony, which was a part of the initiation rites of the Midewiwin Society, has been uncovered by the archaeologist Rosemary Prevec. Rosemary Prevec, "A Dog From Dunk's Bay," *Kewa* 87-9 (1987), 10.

<sup>40</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 18: 231; 50: 279; and 55: 157.

<sup>41</sup> The Jesuit Jacques Marquette paid special tribute to the important spiritual position of the Sinago Ottawas: "The Nation of the Sinagaux Outaouacks is very far removed from the Kingdom of God, because of its extreme attachment, above all the other Nations, to indecencies, sacrifices, and jugglery. They turn prayer to ridicule, and scarcely will they hear us talk of Christianity." *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 171; see also *Jesuit Relations*, 57: 203; 61: 131; Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 97-98; Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 85; and Assikinack, "Customs of the Ottawas," 307.



the eastern gateway region.<sup>42</sup>

In the west, the Nassauquetons and the Kamiga Ottawas maintained a large summer village at Michilimackinac, the gateway between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. As in the east, there were a number of ancillary sites along the western shore of Lake Huron, which were occupied for brief periods of time throughout the year.<sup>43</sup> At the time of contact with the French, the Ottawas occupied several villages in this region from Bawating in the north to Saginaw Bay in the south, but the Michilimackinac region was not yet beginning to rival Manitoulin as the centre of Ottawa civilization. By the latter half of the seventeenth century, Michilimackinac would indeed replace Providence Bay as the most important centre of Ottawa political

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<sup>42</sup> Archaeological evidence reveals evidence of trade; ceramics and stone tools from the entire Great Lakes region are present. The variety of goods is the chief attribute of this Ottawa village, suggesting that Providence Bay was the centre of an intricate and widespread network of exchange. Materials from Providence Bay support the lacustrine orientation of the Ottawas. Faunal assemblages on Manitoulin are extensive and like other Ottawa sites they are dominated by fish remains. Here, however, the remains consist of the spring spawners like sucker and walleye, with fewer of the autumn spawners like the trout and whitefish. Evidently, this explains the importance of the fishing stations at Dunk's Bay. The other faunal remains indicate the centrality of this village. The remains of a number of species including bear, moose, beaver, and snowshoe hare reveals Providence Bay to have been the centre of Ottawa life in the summer season. Ferris and Ellis, *Archaeology of Southern Ontario*, 463-472; Thor Conway, "The Providence Bay Site - An Ottawa Village on Manitoulin Island," March, 1987, Report on file, Cultural Heritage Branch, Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Recreation, Toronto, Ontario; Rosemary Prevec, "Providence Bay Faunal Report-BkHn-3," 1986, Report on file, Cultural Heritage Branch, Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Recreation, Toronto, Ontario; and Thor Conway, "The Providence Bay Site, BkHn-3," November, 1988, Report on file, Cultural Heritage Branch, Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Recreation, Toronto, Ontario. I am indebted to archaeologist Rosemary Prevec for her insights into the nature of Providence Bay.

<sup>43</sup> Summer hunting and fishing sites have been identified by archaeologists at Spring Creek, Hamlin Lake, Bear Creek in the Manistee, part of the Schultz site, Hodges, and several small camps in the Muskegon River Valley. There are also a number of winter hunting camps such as at the Headquarters site, the Goodwin-Gresham site, and a number of smaller occupations in the Boardman, Manistee, and Muskegon River valleys. Fitting and Cleland, "Settlement Patterns," 295-296; James E. Fitting, "Settlement Analysis in the Great Lakes Region," *Southwestern Journal of Archaeology* 25 (1969), 371-372.



life, although the latter site would retain its spiritual significance.<sup>44</sup>

Like the Ottawa sites in the eastern gateway, those in the western region were used for different purposes: summer sites were used for trade and fishing, winter camps for hunting and trapping. The Ottawa villages in the Michilimackinac region were larger and more permanent than the fishing stations of their Ojibwa neighbours who lived to the north at Bawating. The Ojibwas did not attempt to grow corn or other crops and spent the summer as they spent the winter, in pursuit of fish and game. The Potawatomi villages to the south of Michilimackinac were larger agricultural settlements which were occupied throughout the year.<sup>45</sup> The Ojibwa economy was based on hunting and fishing and the Potawatomi economy was mainly agricultural.<sup>46</sup> The economy which the Ottawas developed in northern Lake Huron involved fishing, hunting, gathering, horticulture, manufacture, and trade in a greater balance than either of their Algonquian neighbours.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Among the many accounts of Ottawa settlements in this region are: Charles E. Cleland, ed. *The Lasanen Site: An Historic Burial Locality in Mackinac County, Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Museum, 1971), 140-144; Richard I. Ford, "Corn from the Straits of Mackinac," *Michigan Archaeologist* 20 (June 1974), 97-100; and James E. Fitting, "Patterns of Acculturation at the Straits of Mackinac," in *Cultural Change and Continuity: Essays in Honor of James Bennett Griffin*, Charles E. Cleland, ed. (New York: Academic Press, 1976), 321-333. This region will be the subject of closer examination in the discussion of the French alliance.

<sup>45</sup> Fitting, "Settlement Analysis," 370-371. Ojibwa settlements reveal the emphasis on hunting and fishing in their economy. The Juntunen site on Bois Blanc Island was within site of a number of Ottawa villages and yet the differences between the sites are marked. For examples of the Ojibwa settlement patterns see, David S. Brose, *The Archaeology of Summer Island: Changing Settlement Systems in Northern Lake Michigan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1970), 217-219; and Christopher C. Hanks, *The Foxie Otter Site: A Multicomponent Occupation North of Lake Huron* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1988), 69-75.

<sup>46</sup> Fitting, "Settlement Analysis," 370-371.

<sup>47</sup> The Ojibwa and Potawatomi economies were not limited to their principal activities, but these nations were less complex than the Ottawas. The complexity of the Ottawa economy is directly related to the rich biodiversity of the northern Lake Huron region.

While the ancestral home of the Ottawas was located in the broad arc across northern Lake Huron, they maintained a presence in other regions of the Upper Great Lakes as well. There were Ottawa fishing sites along the southern shore of Lake Superior, and Ottawa hunting camps as far east as Lake Nipissing.<sup>48</sup> The most critical region, however, was the southern gateway into Lake Huron at Bkejwanong, the "Place Where the Water Divides," in the straits between Lake Huron and Lake Erie. This region was not occupied as intensively as the others, and it less well known, but nonetheless, there is plenty of evidence to support an Ottawa presence. In the Bkejwanong region between Lake Huron and Lake Erie, there is evidence of the introduction of a new cultural pattern sometime in the middle of the woodland period, probably around 1300 or later.<sup>49</sup> This indicates the same process of ethnogenesis as was seen in the Manitoulin and Michilimackinac regions. In this process one group of people is assimilated into another, just as the dominant society adapts to the new environment and accepts some of the technologies of the cultural adaptation which had been established by the autochthonous peoples.<sup>50</sup>

Southern Lake Huron had a strategic value, but it was also an important source

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<sup>48</sup> Ellis and Ferris, *Archaeology of Southern Ontario*, 459.

<sup>49</sup> There is evidence, for example, earthworks and other defensive structures, that the people living in the region resisted the newcomers' arrival. See James E. Fitting and Richard Zurel, "The Detroit and St. Clair River Area," in *The Late Prehistory of the Lake Erie Drainage Basin* David S. Brose ed., (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, 1976), 246.

<sup>50</sup> Characteristics of the Ottawa fishing camps further to the north (such as pottery styles and the relatively high variety of goods) are found in the fishing camps of the Lake St. Clair area. David S. Brose, "An Initial Survey of the late Prehistoric Period in Northeastern Ohio," in *The Late Prehistory of the Lake Erie Drainage Basin* David S. Brose ed., (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, 1976), 47; and Fitting and Zurel "Detroit and St. Clair," 234.

of resources . Ottawa men fashioned stone tools and weapons from cherts which they quarried at Kettle Point in southern Lake Huron.<sup>51</sup> Even though the Iroquois threat had made living in this region dangerous, the Ottawas maintained a small but relatively constant presence at Bkejwanong.<sup>52</sup> When the Sinago ogima, Cuingouessi, went to Quebec in 1698 he told Frontenac that the Ottawas had lived at Detroit beyond living memory.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the Jesuit Paul Raguenu claimed that some of the Ottawas lived to the south of Lake Huron.<sup>54</sup> Finally a letter from a French fur trader named Villermont mentions the Ottawa village of Desaguadeno near the place where Tonty and Cadillac were going to establish their fort.<sup>55</sup> Taken together, the documentary sources and the archaeological sources offer firm proof of an Ottawa presence in the region of the southern gateway, although it was clearly less important for their strategy than the other regions.

By 1200, about five thousand people lived in the region across the northern part of Lake Huron. They called themselves Ottawas but they identified more closely with

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<sup>51</sup> Lithics, or stone tools, from the Ottawa sites in the northern part of the Lake also indicate an Ottawa presence in the southern gateway. Kettle Point cherts taken from a source near the mouth of the St. Clair River are found throughout the Ottawa sites in the north. Exchange can not account for this as the Ottawas made their own tools and cherts were hardly considered to be an exotic item. The Ottawas frequented many sources around Lake Huron. Ferris and Ellis, *Archaeology of Southern Ontario*, 468.

<sup>52</sup> Blackbird's own family was from the Detroit region and had been there at a time before "...intercourse had been opened between the French and the Ottawas and Chippewas on the straits of Mackinac." Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 93-94.

<sup>53</sup> "Relation," 20 octobre, 1698, Archives Nationales, Colonies, C 11 A, 15: 22-27.

<sup>54</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 33: 150.

<sup>55</sup> The name "Desaguadeno" is likely a reference to the mud flats in the region. "Desa" is the Ottawa prefix meaning flat. I am grateful to Mary Black Rogers for her help with this translation. "Villermont à Toinard," 1 janvier, 1702, Archives Nationales, Marine, 2 JJ 56, fol. X.

the people of their own summer village. Fifteen hundred Kiskakons lived at Nottawasaga Bay, near the villages of their Petun allies. To the northwest of the Kiskakons, the one thousand Sinagos lived near the mouth of the Mindemoya River on Manitoulin Island. Further west, at Michilimackinac, there were almost two thousand Kamiga Ottawas and to the south, on the north shore of Saginaw Bay, there were seven hundred Nassauquetons.<sup>56</sup> The process of ethnogenesis did not only involve migration and cultural assimilation, however; it also involved cultural adaptation to the environment. The second part of this chapter will examine the geography and resources of northern Lake Huron and the specific ways in which the Ottawas evolved as a people by their adaptations to the richness of their environment.

The environment of the Nottawasaga region was similar to that of Lake Nipissing and the Ottawa River valley. The area from the north shore of Lake Ontario to the north shore of Lake Huron has been characterized as the southeastern mixed forest, a transitional environmental zone between the boreal forest to the north and the broadleaf forest to the south. The northern limit of the broadleaf forest runs just north of Manitoulin Island, along the Canadian Shield, which corresponds with the northern limit of Indian agriculture.<sup>57</sup> The Tionnontatés and their Huron relatives were agricultural people, and they taught the Ottawas the technique of growing crops. The

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<sup>56</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 44: 245; 61: 69; 61: 103.

<sup>57</sup> Rowe, *Forest Regions*, 93.

Ottawas used what they learned from the Tionnontatés on a smaller scale.<sup>58</sup>

Horticulture, the tending of small garden plots of beans, which the Ottawas called *miscoutaysemin*, corn *annecheemis*, and squash *emitagosheeskettamov* constituted a minor aspect of the Ottawas subsistence economy.<sup>59</sup> The northern part of the Ottawa ancestral home was a marginal area for horticulture.<sup>60</sup> There were usually 140 frost free days (the minimum for raising corn), but the caprices of nature could easily upset the delicate balance and ruin a season's crop.<sup>61</sup> Even the hardy northern flint corn grown by the Ottawas was susceptible to the variations in the climate, particularly during the "Little Ice Age" of the seventeenth century.<sup>62</sup> Still horticulture was practised with some measure of success and it provided an impetus for a semi-permanent settlement which was occupied throughout the period from the spring to the late fall by at least some of the members of the community. Corn was an important

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<sup>58</sup> There was an ecological basis for trade between the Ottawas and the Petuns, but the Ottawas did not have to trade if they could grow their own corn. For a discussion of the introduction of agriculture in eastern Lake Huron see Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 118-125; 166.

<sup>59</sup> All of the translations from English into Ottawa are taken from a manuscript Ottawa-English Dictionary which is included with the *Letter Book of the Indian Agency at Fort Wayne, 1809-1815* held in the Manuscript Collections of the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan. This dictionary appears to be the work of an officer who preceded the author of the *Letter Book*, John Johnston, and who left it for him as a practical guide. I am indebted for this reference to John Harriman of the Clements Library.

<sup>60</sup> The Jesuits remarked on the suitability of the soil at Michilimackinac for the raising of corn, and Lahontan and Perrot both mention the Ottawas as the most northern group cultivating the soil. *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 159 and 54: 163; Lahontan, *Voyages*, 1: 142; and Perrot, *Memoire*, 51.

<sup>61</sup> D.W. Moodie and Barry Kaye, "The Northern Limits of Indian Agriculture in North America," *The Geographical Review* 59 (1969): 51-53.

<sup>62</sup> Joan A.M. Lovisek, "Ethnohistory of the Algonkian Speaking People of Georgian Bay - Precontact to 1850" (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1991), 62-66.

part of the Ottawa diet, second only to fish as a staple.<sup>63</sup>

The resources of the transitional forest shaped the Ottawa economy more than the soil and climate of the region. The southeastern mixed forest consists, as its name implies, of conifers such as balsam fir and eastern white pine, and deciduous trees such as ash, basswood, birch, elm, hemlock, hickory, red maple, sugar maple, red oak, and white oak. In the region of Manitoulin and the Georgian Bay, the boreal forest makes its presence felt, and fewer of the broadleaf trees are present. On the hills and upland areas, basswood, beech, and sugar maples still dominate, but on the rocky outcroppings there are more balsam firs, jack pines, and white birch trees. In the poorly drained, low-lying swamp areas, red maples, black ash, and eastern white cedar are most prevalent. Finally, the sandy soils above the shorelines support white spruce.<sup>64</sup>

Ottawa adaptations to this forest were several. They found it a source of food, fuel, raw materials, and spiritual inspiration.

The transitional forest occupied by the Ottawas was an important source of food, but it was not their only supply of food. Unlike the Ojibwas to the north and the Potawatomis to the south, the Ottawas practised a diffuse economic strategy rather than a focal subsistence economy. While the Ojibwas specialized in hunting and fishing and the Potawatomis specialized in cultivation the Ottawas hunted, gathered, fished, and

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<sup>63</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 153.

<sup>64</sup> Cleland, *Prehistoric Animal Ecology*, 7-10.



raised crops.<sup>65</sup> This gave them a level of complexity, adaptability, and flexibility over their neighbours.<sup>66</sup> This meant that the Ottawas were much less susceptible to the caprices of nature. As fish and animals migrated, as the climate shifted, and as plants died, the Ottawas were able to exploit other aspects of their broad resource base.<sup>67</sup>

This resource base included a number of animals and plants which were more common in the transitional forest than they were to the north or south. The transitional forest supported black bear, raccoon, woodchuck, chipmunk, red squirrel, beaver, muskrat, porcupine, snowshoe hare, white-tail deer, and moose.<sup>68</sup> The southern range of the moose, the snowshoe hare, and the porcupine was within the transitional forest. Similarly, the raccoon, the deer, and the chipmunk had their northern range within the transitional forest. This variety made the Ottawa home a favourable hunting territory. It also ensured a level of contention as different groups attempted to claim the rich hunting territory. Shortages of one species or another were less acute in a zone which supported a large number of species.<sup>69</sup>

Like the trees of the Canadian-Carolinian forest, the animals they sheltered were

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<sup>65</sup> These characterizations are not absolute, there is some evidence that certain Ojibwas were able to practise horticulture on rare occasions and there is ample evidence for Potawatomi hunting. On the whole, however, the Ojibwas may be accurately depicted as hunters, fishers, and gatherers; while the Potawatomi economic strategy did emphasize horticulture. See Cleland, *Prehistoric Animal Ecology*, 69; R. David Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 4.

<sup>66</sup> Cleland, *Prehistoric Animal Ecology*, 44.

<sup>67</sup> Cleland, *Prehistoric Animal Ecology*, 38.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Asa Yarnell, *Aboriginal Relationships between Culture and Plant Life in the Upper Great Lakes Region* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1964), 8.

<sup>69</sup> Cleland, *Prehistoric Animal Ecology*, 78.

of great variety. For the Ottawas this was both good and bad; good because it meant that they did not have to fear shortages of one animal or another, and bad because all of their neighbours did. For example, if moose were scarce one year, the Ottawa could hunt for deer. Their Ojibwa neighbours to the north did not have the luxury of this choice. The opposite was also true because the northern range of the deer and the southern range of the moose overlapped in the Lake Huron region.<sup>70</sup> Unfortunately the occupation of this relatively rich ecological zone, bordered by other nations competing for the same resources, led to conflict.<sup>71</sup>

The animals which ranged south into the Canadian-Carolinian forest included the caribou *ateck*, but the animals which were found more commonly in the northern area of the Lake Huron region included the moose *monse*, the snowshoe hare *caetageena*, and the porcupine *cauk*. The northern limits of the raccoon *heassiabaun*, and the deer *wauwaukeash*, were in the transitional forest. The southern part of the region was the habitat of a large number of different animals. In fact, when Antoine Laumet, better known as Lamothe Cadillac, proposed the establishment of a fort at the straits between Lakes Huron and Erie, he used the number and variety of fur bearers in the region as his most persuasive argument.<sup>72</sup> In addition to those listed above, these included: fox

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<sup>70</sup> Yarrowell, *Aboriginal Relationships*, 8.

<sup>71</sup> The Ottawa response to this threat brought about by Nature's bounty will be discussed in the next chapter, for the present it is sufficient to describe the animal life and the Ottawas use of this vital resource. Cleland, *Prehistoric Animal Ecology*, 79.

<sup>72</sup> At Michilimackinac the trade was mainly in beaver, which the Ottawas knew as *amik*, but at Cadillac's Fort Pontchartrain at Detroit, the trade included a variety of skins which the French called *menues pelleteries*.

*waugoshan*, elk *meacheawoi*, lynx *makcheki:she*, and gray squirrel *seaneego*.<sup>73</sup>

Turkeys *macsissae* and passenger pigeons *meimee*, were also hunted by the Ottawas in the southern part Lake Huron.<sup>74</sup>

Throughout the Lake Huron region Ottawas hunted black bear *mucqua*, wolf *makengan*, mink *shangouis*, otter *neekik*, marten *waukeeshans*, and muskrat *shescong* for their furs and their flesh.<sup>75</sup> The beaver *amikwa*, however, remained the most important animal in the Ottawas' economic strategy.<sup>76</sup> It was hunted throughout the year, but the most intensive beaver hunting period was in the winter, when the beaver's coat was the heaviest and when the animals were in their lodges. The French trader Nicolas Perrot described the hunt in detail:

The peoples of the north hunt for beaver in the winter, with an ice pick and a net made from cords of hide. They begin by breaking into the lodge where this animal has taken refuge. Next they break down the dams which the beaver has carefully built in order to hold water in the marsh. After they have allowed the water to drain away over night, the net, which is made as a snare, is lain over the open end of the passage and made only as large as the hole which the beaver must necessarily pass, for all other routes of escape are blocked by ice and the dams which the beaver built in the autumn. The animal is therefore forced to abandon its lair, or to repair the breach which has already been made; for this net,

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<sup>73</sup> "Extraite d'un memoire de Lamothe Cadillac sur son projet d'etablissement au Detroit," 20 octobre, 1699, Archives Nationale, Colonies, C 11 A, 17: 101-103; Also see Cleland, *Prehistoric Animal Ecology*, 6.

<sup>74</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 48: 119.

<sup>75</sup> Cleland, *Prehistoric Animal Ecology*, 8.

<sup>76</sup> An analysis of mammalian fauna at Saint Ignace, north of the straits of Mackinac, in the seventeenth century reveals the importance of the beaver as a part of the Ottawas' subsistence strategy. Of the identifiable remains 159 beavers were found, compared to the remains of 41 deer, 38 black bears, 23 moose, 23 martens, 15 snowshoe hares, 14 otters, and 6 mink. There were many other species which were less well represented. There were also a large number of dogs which, like the beaver remains show evidence of butchery, and heat alteration, exactly as though they were slaughtered and roasted. See, Beverley A. Smith, "The Use of Animals at the 17th Century Mission of St. Ignace," *The Michigan Archaeologist* 31 (December 1985): 105-106.

as has been stated, already occupies the passage, and it is shaped as a purse with a drawstring. When the beaver attempts to descend to the bottom of the water he is caught, and the man waiting on the ice senses the movement in the net and pulls it in and strikes the beaver over the head. They always capture it in this way; and such is the manner in which beaver are taken.<sup>77</sup>

Of all of their hunting techniques, the beaver hunt was the most elaborate and well planned.<sup>78</sup>

Compared with other hunting expeditions, beaver hunting was fairly successful, but this hunt took an inordinate amount of patience and care. The beaver hunt was always preceded with a dream in which the hunter imagined himself killing his prey. This dream was followed by a ceremony in which the Ottawa hunters burned a beaver bone to ensure success in finding beavers in their lodges.<sup>79</sup> When the hunters reached the lodges they would carefully tap on the ice and then remain still for hours listening for signs of activity. Beaver hunting required a great knowledge of the life cycle of the prey in order to conserve the species within a particular hunting territory.

In the dead of winter when the deep snow made it difficult to move across the

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<sup>77</sup> Nicolas Perrot, *Memoire sur les moeurs, coutumes, et religion des sauvages de l'Amerique Septentrionale* (Leipzig et Paris: Librairie A. Franck, 1864), 52-53. "Les peuples du nord font l'hyver la chasse du castor avec une tranche et un filet de cordes de peaux. Ils commencent premièrement à rompre la cabanne où cet animal se retire. Ils deffont ensuite les escluses, qu'il a soin de faire pour se conserver l'eau du marest. Après les avoir fait écouler pendant la nuit, on a ce filet qui est fait comme un sac, de la largeur de l'endroit où il doit nécessairement passer: car il n'y en a pas d'autre, la glace, et les escluses qu'il a faites dans l'automne, ne luy permettant plus de monter ny descendre, il est contraint d'abandonner sa demeure, ou de reparer la brèche qu'on y desjà fait; car ce filet, comme il a esté dit, occupe le passage, et sa figure est comme celle d'une bourse avec un maître qui se tire pour le fermer. Le castor voulant donc descendre au fond de l'eau, entre dans ce piège qui lui est tendu, et l'homme posté sur la glace le sentant pris, tire le filet et lui casse la teste. On le retend tousjours de mesme; c'est la manière dont les castors se prennent." For another detailed account of the importance of the beaver in the Ottawa economy see Baron de Lahontan, *Nouveaux voyages de M. Le Baron de Lahontan dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, (Amsterdam: François l'Honoré, 1705), 1: 155-163.

<sup>78</sup> Cleland, *Prehistoric Animal Ecology*, 164.

<sup>79</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 6: 215.

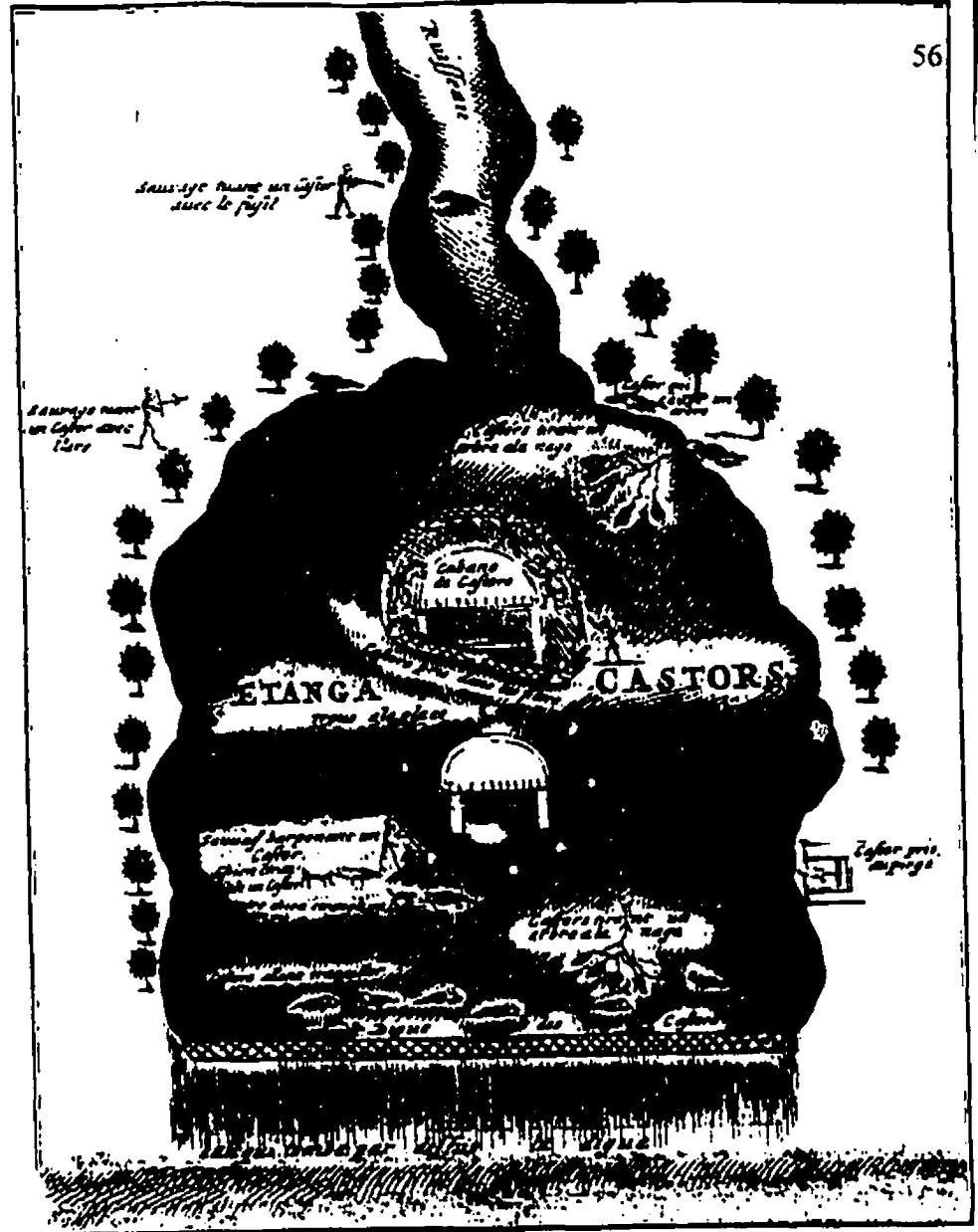


Figure 4: Like Perrot, Baron de Lahontan was fascinated by the elaborate beaver hunting techniques of the Ottawas. This illustration is from the *Nouveaux Voyages*.

forest, Ottawa hunters laid snares to capture small game. At other times of the year, the Ottawas tracked large game, either overland or from their canoes in the case of the moose. Deer hunting required the participation of a large number of hunters who frightened the deer into enclosures, either by yelling and making noise or by waving flaming torches.<sup>80</sup> Ottawa men took moose and deer throughout the year, depending more on availability than according to a precise strategy. Black bears were sometimes taken during the winter, but it was more difficult to find them at this time as they were in hibernation.<sup>81</sup>

It was much more common to hunt for black bears in the autumn when they were reaching their maximum weight. Although every hunt had its ceremonies, the preparation for hunting the bear, easily the most dangerous prey in the transitional forest, was the most elaborate. Before setting out on the hunt, the hunters gave a feast of whitefish and corn which they served but did not eat. According to the *coureur de bois*, Nicolas Perrot, the hunters fasted and dreamed for as long as eight days at the end of which time they embarked on their expedition.<sup>82</sup>

Ottawa hunters normally had a sense of where the bear was located before they set out. On the morning of the hunt the party coloured their faces black and put their

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<sup>80</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 63.

<sup>81</sup> Lahontan, *Nouveaux voyages*, 1: 85-86.

<sup>82</sup> Perrot, *Mémoire sur les moeurs, coutumes, et religion des sauvages de l'Amérique septentrionale*, R.P.J. Taillan, ed., (Leipzig et Paris: Librairie A. Franck, 1864), 65. This eight day fast seems excessive and it is unlikely that the hunters would have the necessary strength to face such a formidable quarry after such a long period of self-deprivation. Perrot is likely exaggerating, as he was wont to do. See also Lahontan, *Nouveaux voyages*, 1: 86.

carefully arranged plan into effect. Once each man was in his proper station in a large circle around the area where they believed the bear was located, they searched for evidence of its presence and slowly tightened the circle. When the bear was located, the hunters killed it and immediately breathed tobacco smoke into the mouth of the animal and said:

Do not have an evil thought against us, because we have killed you. You have intelligence and you see that our children are suffering from hunger. They love you and wish you to enter into their bodies. Is it not a glorious thing to be eaten by the children of captains?<sup>83</sup>

This speech was given to appease both Mucqua, the spirit master of all the bears, and Oussakita, the spirit master of all the animals and birds of the forest.<sup>84</sup> Ottawa hunters took special care to use all of the parts they could and to dispose of the few waste parts according to a strict ceremony. Some of the bones were reserved for the next bear hunt. When Ottawa hunters returned from a successful bear hunt, a great feast was held to which the whole community, any visitors, and near neighbours were invited. It was a time of great excess, but Nicolas Perrot's claim that some of the guests died from overindulgence, while others barely recovered, was an exaggeration.<sup>85</sup>

Birds, small mammals, and turtles were also an important part of the Ottawas' subsistence strategy. Ducks *meesheships*, cranes *chachauks*, geese *neecacks*, falcons *miggissee*, and passenger pigeons, *meimee*, were favourite prey of the Ottawas who used

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<sup>83</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 67: 157.

<sup>84</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 67: 159.

<sup>85</sup> While Perrot is generally a faithful recorder of what he saw with his own eyes, he occasionally exaggerated things which he evidently did not understand, or did not approve. Perrot, *Memoire*, 68.

their bows to shoot these birds.<sup>86</sup> Ottawa hunters also caught turtles *meeshiehan*.

They quietly paddled their canoes within range of a turtle sunning itself on a rock or log and then would scoop it into a net fastened to the end of a long pole. These were the same nets used in the whitefish fishery.<sup>87</sup>

Although the most obvious use of the animals of the Canadian-Carolinian forest was as a source of food, the Ottawas also used the bones, antlers, and shells of their prey to make tools and weapons, and they used the hides for clothing.<sup>88</sup> Ottawa women cut and notched antlers to make harpoons for fishing. They fashioned bones into fish hooks, knives, weaving shuttles, projectile points, leather and birch bark punches, and scrapers. Women used shell, bone, and antlers to make beads, combs, bracelets and other decorative items.<sup>89</sup> Animals were an important part of the way in which the Ottawas understood their environment and their place in northern Lake Huron. Animal bones played an important part in the spiritual world; a hunter would treat the bones of his prey with due ceremony and a craftswoman would take special care to fashion tools which would please the spirit masters with the beauty of their

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<sup>86</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 48: 119; Smith, "Animals of St. Ignace," 110.

<sup>87</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 48: 129.

<sup>88</sup> Ottawa women made robes from beaver pelts and they made leather cloaks, breech cloths, mocassins, and leggings from moose hides. The leather garments were usually decorated with typical Ottawa symbols, such as the sun, the medicine wheel, and Michipichy. *Jesuit Relations*, 53: 247; Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, ed., George M. Wrong, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1939), 102; Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 97-98; Penney, *Great Lakes Art*, 71-80.

<sup>89</sup> Smith, "Animals at St. Ignace," 116-117; also see Lyle M. Stone, *Archaeological Investigation of the Marquette Mission Site* (Mackinac Island: Mackinac Island State Park Commission, 1972), 19. The other important resource for the fabrication of tools and weapons was chert. The Ottawas knew a number of chert sources around Lake Huron and they visited them according to their needs. See Betty E. Eley and Peter von Bitter, *Cherts of Southern Ontario* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1989), 4.



design.<sup>90</sup> The Ottawas had access to a wider variety of animals, but their use of them was no less careful than the Ojibwas to the north who had access to fewer species of animals.

Besides providing shelter for these animals, the trees of the Canadian-Carolinian forest also provided shelter for a variety of smaller plants for which the Ottawas found a large number of uses. Again, the plants were most important as a source of food. In the late summer, the Ottawas gathered hazel nuts, fire cherries, black berries, bear berries, blue berries, strawberries, sumac berries, Canada plums, grapes, and acorns.<sup>91</sup> Later, in the autumn, they gathered beech nuts and in the winter they searched for the nut stores of chipmunks and deer mice. In the spring they gathered pepperrroots and elderberries.<sup>92</sup> Those Ottawas who lived further to the south, at the straits between Lake Huron and Lake Erie, also gathered chestnuts, walnuts, hickory nuts, and butter nuts.<sup>93</sup> The Ottawas used plants for infused drinks, for medicine, for charms, and for smoking. They also used plants to make dyes and cord.<sup>94</sup> Their knowledge of the plants possible uses gave their economy an additional dimension and helped to stave off

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<sup>90</sup> Stone, *Marquette Mission Site*, 19, 25-27; David W. Penney, ed., *Great Lakes Indian Art* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 9-20.

<sup>91</sup> Yarnell, *Aboriginal Relationships*, 35; Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 44; Lahontan, *Mémoires de l'Amérique septentrionale*, (Amsterdam: François l'Honoré, 1705), 2:59-67; Perrot, *Mémoire*, 52.

<sup>92</sup> Yarnell, *Aboriginal Relationships*, 39.

<sup>93</sup> Yarnell, *Aboriginal Relationships*, 44.

<sup>94</sup> Yarnell, *Aboriginal Relationships*, 44. For the definitive study of plant use in the Upper Great Lakes region, see either the exhaustive lists and appendices in Yarnell's book, or Alma R. Hutchins, *Indian Herbalogy of North America* (Boston: Shambhala, 1991), *passim*.

the threat of starvation.<sup>95</sup>

The best known adaptation to the Great Lakes forest was the collection of sap from sugar maple trees *sinnaumish* in order to make sugar.<sup>96</sup> Sugar kept in its bark containers for a whole year, and it was available at the leanest season of the year, early spring.<sup>97</sup> The collection of the sap was an important social event on the Ottawa annual round. In the early spring families, who had separated for the winter hunting, came back together to their own particular sugar bushes.<sup>98</sup> This reunion each spring was an important part of the rhythm of their daily lives, and the sugar produced was an important element of their complex subsistence strategy.<sup>99</sup> More importantly, maple

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<sup>95</sup> The threat of starvation loomed large on long voyages. It was on these occasions that a knowledge of edible plants was critical. *Jesuit Relations*, 48: 129-131; and Lahontan, *Mémoires*, 2: 59-67.

<sup>96</sup> Lahontan, *Mémoires*, 2: 61.

<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately the wood and bark implements used to collect the sap have not survived and archaeologists can not prove that the Ottawas and other peoples made sugar. Nevertheless historical evidence supports the fact that sugar was an important subsistence resource for the Ottawas. Margaret B. Holman, "The Identification of Late Woodland Maple Sugaring Sites in the Upper Great Lakes," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 9 (1984): 64.

<sup>98</sup> Holman, "Maple Sugaring Sites," 65-66; Yarnell, *Aboriginal Relationships*, 188; Lahontan, *Mémoires*, 2: 61.

<sup>99</sup> This interpretation has been challenged by archaeologist Carol Mason who maintains that sugaring was a post-contact phenomenon. Mason accuses Holman of skirting the fundamental issue of: "...whether or not Indians made maple sugar at all prior to European contact." According to her argument, if the Indians of the Upper Great Lakes did make sugar from maple sap prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the Jesuits and French officials would have made mention of it:

During years of peering into Indian homes, watching them at work, and even trying their hands at Indian subsistence techniques themselves, the Jesuits would have noticed maple sugaring if it were there to be noticed. The same can be said of government officials; they were all ready and eager to discover anything in Indian subsistence that could be turned to their advantage.

For Mason, maple sugar was only another trade commodity, and it had no value in the interpretation of the cultural adaptation of peoples in the Upper Great Lakes. She even rejects the oral tradition which holds that Nunabush made the sugar into sap in the trees in order to make it more difficult to process. This she dismisses as one of those "'traditional' stories with horses, guns, and Europeans in them." Carol I. Mason, "Prehistoric Maple Sugaring Sites?," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 10 (1985): 149-151; Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 72.

sugar symbolized the Ottawa adaptation to their environment. It was difficult and time consuming to harvest the sap and to boil it into sugar, but the effort was considered worthwhile and it served as a reminder to the Ottawas of the value of labour.<sup>100</sup>

Maple sugaring was something of a mystery to the French missionaries and explorers who first reached the region of the Upper Great Lakes.<sup>101</sup> In the *Jesuit Relations* for 1671 Father Henri Nouvel recounted an experience involving sap. In the late winter of 1671, Father Henri Nouvel left the Amikwa Ojibwa on the north shore of Georgian Bay and travelled to a village of Sinago Ottawas on Manitoulin Island. Shortly after his arrival he was called to attend a sick young man:

...for whose salvation Providence was more watchful than I. For having inadvertently baptized him, not with natural water, but with a certain liquor that runs from the trees toward the end of Winter, and which is known as 'Maple-water,' which I took for natural water.<sup>102</sup>

Clearly Nouvel, like other French observers had no idea of the uses of maple sap.

Ottawa families had specific sugar bushes which they attended at the end of their winter hunts. The Jesuits and other Frenchmen would not have accompanied the Ottawas on their sugaring expeditions and therefore would not have understood the process.<sup>103</sup> It

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<sup>100</sup> Every year at the maple sugaring time, Ottawa elders would tell the children that the sap used to flow out of trees as pure sugar. One year, Nanabush found all of his people lying at the base of trees, mouths open, gorging themselves on maple sugar, while their other chores went unfinished. To correct this wanton abuse of nature's bounty, Nanabush changed the sugar into sap. Williams, *Schoolcraft's Indian Legends*, 65-83; Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 159-161.

<sup>101</sup> Margaret B. Holman, "Historic Documents and Prehistoric Sugaring: A Matter of Cultural Context," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 11 (1986): 128.

<sup>102</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 56: 101.

<sup>103</sup> According to the Ottawa oral tradition, families had clearly defined hunting and sugaring territories which were respected by all of the members of the group. The Jesuits had only a slight knowledge of these places as they did not accompany the Ottawas on their winter hunts. After trying, and failing, to keep up with the

is critical to remember such incidents, for they serve to remind of the imperfect knowledge of the French writers and of the assumptions which they drew from their observations.

The Ottawa cultural adaptations to the trees of the Canadian-Carolinian forest did not end with the extraction of maple sap; the wood itself had hundreds of uses. For example, the woody, interior bark of the basswood tree *wegokeemish* was found to make excellent cord.<sup>104</sup> This cord had numerous decorative functions, but it also had practical purposes. For example it was used in the fabrication of fish drying and cache racks, in weaving bags and baskets, and in sewing together rush mats, and bark wigwams. It was even used for the fishing nets themselves. Ottawa men used the different varieties of ash *pougauk* in the manufacture of snowshoe frames, balls and sticks for the game of lacrosse *haggattaway*, paddles, bows, arrows, fish spears, toboggans, and cradle boards.<sup>105</sup> Ash can be easily bent and was therefore the most practical wood for these objects. Ladles and the mortars and pestles that were necessary to render many of the nuts edible were made from maple wood. Elm *aneep* bark was

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Montagnais, the Jesuits preferred to send missions to sedentary peoples, like the Hurons, or ones, like the Ottawas, who had permanent villages where missions could be established. As the Ottawas did not reside in their villages year round, however, the Jesuits' knowledge of their lives is somewhat less complete than Mason believes. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 33.

<sup>104</sup> Yarnell, *Aboriginal Relationships*, 26; Lahontan, *Mémoires*, 2: 59-64.

<sup>105</sup> The game of *haggataway*, which the French called lacrosse was a team sport involving the male members of two villages. It was generally played when the Ottawas got together to celebrate the Feast of the Dead or to hold a council meeting involving all of the nations of the confederation. To manufacture the stick, a player would select a piece of ash wood about two metres in length. The player would then bend the end of the stick by means of hot water and with this hooked end, he would fashion a small net of leather mesh. In a game, the player would catch the ball in this net and pass it a player on his team or take a shot at the opposing goal. Perrot, *Mémoire*, 43-46; *Jesuit Relations*, 10: 185-187; 14: 155-179.

used for boxes, baskets, and covers for Ottawa wigwams. Hickory *meeteekwauhaun* saplings and branches provided the poles.<sup>106</sup>

In all of the Canadian-Carolinian forest, however, there were no trees more important or more sacred to the Ottawas than the white birch *wigwau* and the northern white cedar *keezick*. From the white birch the Ottawas made vessels of all kinds. They made containers for maple syrup which would preserve the liquid for an entire year. They made boxes, wigwam covers, and buckets of the fine white bark. From the inner bark, they extracted dye. From the fibrous bark of the cedar, the Ottawas wove rope, twine, nets, bags and mats.<sup>107</sup> Above all else, however, the white birch and the northern white cedar provided the raw material for the Ottawa canoes, the most important product in the Ottawa world.

If Iroquoian culture is best understood as the culture of the longhouse, then Ottawa culture is best understood as the culture of the canoe, the *weegwawscheemaun*. The rhythms of their daily lives, the annual cycles, and all of their economic and diplomatic functions depended on the canoe. It was at once the source of their power, and their best means of cultural preservation. The white birch trees and the northern white cedars grew in profusion in the Canadian-Carolinian forest where the Ottawas lived, but not to the south where their rivals the Iroquois were located. The white birch bark, collected in late winter, was stretched over ribs cut from white cedars and then sewn together with long, thin flexible roots *wattap* which were cut from spruce

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<sup>106</sup> Yarnell, *Aboriginal Relationships*, 185-192; Lahontan, *Mémoires*, 2: 59-64.

<sup>107</sup> Yarnell, *Aboriginal Relationships*, 186-188.

*caucaukuwish* white cedars, red cedars *mipquanwauk*, tamaracks *mooneebaunemish*, and from pine *chingwauk* trees. The pitch to seal the seams was obtained from white pines, and spruce trees.<sup>108</sup> A bundle of birch bark pieces, a few lengths of *wattap*, and a birch bark bucket of pitch was the only repair kit needed.<sup>109</sup>

Canoe construction was one of the most important aspects of Ottawa life, and it was primarily a female activity.<sup>110</sup> The Ottawas began the construction of their canoes when the first thaw came in late winter, or when the sap began to flow and loosened the bark from the tree.<sup>111</sup> Ottawa women inspected various stands of white birch trees, looking for bark that was not marked by knots or other blemishes. When they found suitable trees, the women would peel the bark from them by making long vertical cuts with a sharp flint knife. Often they would climb neighbouring trees in order to gain access to good sections of bark too high to reach from the ground. Once the bark was cut, the women would carefully use the flint knife to peel it away from the tree. While the others gathered rolls of bark, one of the women would make a small

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<sup>108</sup> Yarnell, *Aboriginal Relationships*, 186-188.

<sup>109</sup> An excellent illustration of how a canoe was repaired can be found in the Jesuit Paul Le Jeune's Relation of 1634. Le Jeune was being taken to Quebec on 5 April, 1634 by a party of Hurons and Ottawas. Not surprisingly, there were ice floes in the Saint Lawrence, and soon the canoe in which Le Jeune was a passenger hit one of them. Fortunately the Ottawas were able to paddle their canoe to a nearby island: "When we set foot upon the shore, the Savages seized the canoe drew it out of the water, turned it upside down; lighted their tinder, made a fire, sewed up the slit in the bark; applied to it their resin, a kind of gum that runs out of trees; placed the canoe again in the water and we reënbarked and continued our journey." Le Jeune's terse style imitated the rapidity of the repair job. *Jesuit Relations*, 7: 195. See also Edwin Tappan Adney and Howard I. Chapelle, *The Bark Canoes and Skin Boats of North America* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1964), 14-26.

<sup>110</sup> Men were responsible for certain aspects of the construction, they cut the cedar wood for the frame, but most of the work was done by Ottawa women. *Jesuit Relations*, 2: 77; 20: 81.

<sup>111</sup> If the trees were too cold, Ottawa women would soften the birch bark by pouring heated water along the trunk of the tree. Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages*, 1: 35.

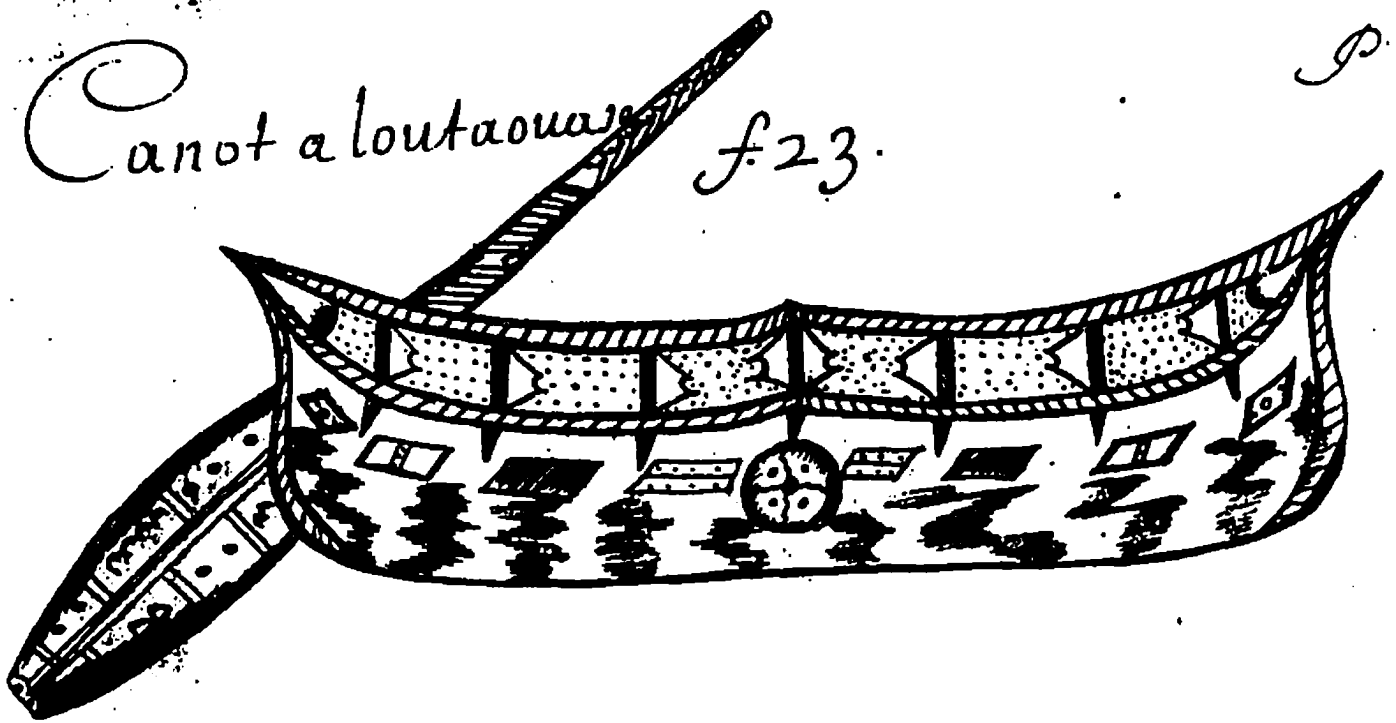


Figure 5: The wig: *auscheemaun*, or Ottawa birchbark canoe, was the most important aspect of their cultural adaptation to the Lake Huron environment. This illustration from the "Codex Canadensis" shows a typical medicine wheel design.

torch by wedging some damaged bark into the end of a split stick of wood and gently heat each roll of bark until it could be rolled into a tight bundle which could be easily carried. These bundles were put away until assembly of the canoe itself could be started in the warmer weather.<sup>112</sup>

The woman who took charge of the operation selected a grassy site near the shore where the construction would take place and assigned the various teams their tasks. A group of men would be sent in search of northern white cedar trees to be used for the ribs, sheathing, headboards, and gunwales of the canoe, and a group of women would go in search of black spruce trees whose roots would be used to sew the birch bark rolls together and whose gum would be made into pitch to make the canoe stitching watertight.<sup>113</sup> These work parties would be sent to locate suitable trees well in advance of the planned assembly in order to prepare the trees. If the men could not find enough cedars which had been knocked over by wind or by flood they girdled suitable trees in order to dry the wood.<sup>114</sup> When the women located suitable spruce trees they stripped off a strip of bark in order to allow the tree to bleed resin when the temperature rose.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 69: 99-101; Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages*, 1: 35-36; Jacques Rousseau et Guy Béthune, *Voyage de Pehr Kalm au Canada en 1749* (Montreal: Pierre Tisseyre, 1977), 916-917; Adney and Chapelle, *Bark Canoes*, 24; Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in the Fur Trade, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980), 61.

<sup>113</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 2: 77; 20: 81; 69: 83-85.

<sup>114</sup> To girdle a tree the work party would cut a ring of green bark from the base of the tree with a flint knife. Around the top of this ring the workers would plaster wet clay to protect the wood from the fire which they would then build around the base. After the fire had been allowed to burn, the work party extinguished it and knocked all of the charred wood from the base of the tree. This process was continued until the tree fell.

<sup>115</sup> Adney and Chapelle, *Bark Canoes*, 16-17; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 61.



The work parties assembled after allowing enough time for the cedar trees to die and for the spruce trees to produce resin. Ottawa men took great care in splitting the cedar wood. Dry, well-seasoned cedar would split cleanly even with the flint axes which the Ottawa men used for the task. The work party would split a cedar log into eighths and then split a number of narrow boards from each eighth. Meanwhile the women scraped the spruce resin into birch bark containers. The women's next chore was to dig out the roots of the tree. As the black spruce thrives in soft, moist ground, this task was not too difficult and with the aid of a sharpened stick Ottawa women were able to dig out the shallow roots quickly. The roots of this tree are no thicker than a pine needle but they grow to great lengths, some as long as five metres. Both work parties carried their materials back to the building site where the resin was heated to make pitch, and the cedar boards were bent with hot water to make the ribs, sheathing, gunwales, and headboards of the canoe.<sup>116</sup>

At the work site the men employed scrapers to fashion the gunwales, ribs, and sheathing out of the cedar. The women stretched the birch bark over the frame and sewed it together using the *wattap* and bone needles. The woman master builder fitted the gunwales in place along the frame, and the women who had collected the materials immediately lashed the frame in place using *wattap*. The canoe was then turned over and the women applied the pitch along the seams. The job was finished by the master builder who fitted the ribs, sheathing and headboards. The finished canoe had a higher bow and stern than the canoes of people who travelled along rivers. The Ottawas took

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<sup>116</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 20: 81; Adney and Chapelle, *Bark Canoes*, 17; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 61.

their canoes into open water on Lake Huron and they needed the additional sea worthiness provided by the high bow and stern.<sup>117</sup>

Unlike most Algonquian peoples, the Ottawas decorated their canoes. After applying the pitch to the seams, the master builder poured water to test for leakage. When the rough red-coloured winter birch bark was moist it could be scraped to reveal its natural white. Ottawa women either left the designs white, or they applied dyes to colour them. Their favourite designs were medicine wheels, the sun, or Michipichy the spirit of the water. Sometimes they cut images of animals into the canoes, either to denote their nation (Kiskakon bears, Kamiga suckers, Sinago squirrels), or to bring luck in the hunt. All of these symbols had important meanings for the Ottawas who built these canoes. The sun referred to the east, which was the Ottawa place on the medicine wheel. Michipichy was the spirit of the water, where the Ottawas spent so much of their time and where they drew strength as a people.<sup>118</sup>

For the Ottawas of Lake Huron, fishing was the most important aspect of their economic strategy, and their canoe skills enabled Ottawa men to become the most efficient fishermen of the Great Lakes.<sup>119</sup> According to the Ottawa creation story, as

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<sup>117</sup> Adney and Chapelle, *Bark Canoes*, 17.

<sup>118</sup> Penney, *Great Lakes Art*, 59; Adney and Chapelle, *Bark Canoes*, 53; See also the illustrations in the *Codex Canadensis*, an anonymous collection of illustrations from 1680. These illustrations depict many aspects of Ottawa life including their canoes. A reproduction of this work is available in the Canadiana Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum. *Les Raretés des Indes "Codex Canadensis"* (Paris: Librairie Maurice Chamond, 1930), 17-18.

<sup>119</sup> Archaeological evidence from the Marquette Mission site, from the Juntunen site, and from a number of other sites in the Great Lakes illustrates, more fish was consumed throughout the year than meat. Smith, "Animals at St. Ignace," 119; and Charles E. Cleland, "The Inland Shore Fishery of the Northern Great Lakes: Its Development and Importance in Prehistory," *American Antiquity* 47(October 1982): 772.

soon as Michabou created the world, Ouissaketchek, the spirit master of the fish and animals of the water, invented fishing by watching a spider weave a net.<sup>120</sup> Unlike the animals of the Canadian-Carolinian forest, fish stocks were predictable.<sup>121</sup> Fish were available at specific times of the year, in specific areas, and in great quantities.<sup>122</sup> While the Ottawa cultural adaptation to their environment can be explained partially by their use of animal resources, it can be explained substantially by their knowledge of the migrations and spawning periods of the fish resources of northern Lake Huron.

There were two important fishing seasons: the spring spawning season which lasted for about two months until the onset of warm weather, and the fall spawning season which lasted only a few weeks just before the onset of freezing temperatures.<sup>123</sup> In the spring the Ottawas took lake sturgeon *namuc*, channel catfish *mauneamaig*, white sucker *namaybin*, and walleye *ocauso*.<sup>124</sup> Some species, like smallmouth bass *achigan*, yellow perch *tauey*, and northern pike *kinongé* were available throughout the year. In the fall, which despite its shorter duration was the more

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<sup>120</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 201.

<sup>121</sup> As archaeologist Charles Cleland observes: "Of these pursuits [fishing and hunting] fishing was by far the most important subsistence venture from early spring until late fall." Cleland, "Inland Shore Fishery," 772.

<sup>122</sup> Cleland, "Inland Shore Fishery," 768.

<sup>123</sup> Cleland, "Inland Shore Fishery," 775.

<sup>124</sup> The most important consideration was the depth of water in which the fish could be found. For example, lake trout spend the summer months in depths of over twenty metres, but in the fall they swim in the shallower water in order to spawn. The same is true of lake whitefish. Yellow perch and smallmouth bass, however, live in shallower water, usually in about four metres, for most of the year. W.B. Scott and E.J. Crossman, *Freshwater Fishes of Canada* (Ottawa: Fisheries Research Board of Canada, 1973), 82-89, 208-213, 220-229, 269-277, 286-287, 356-363, 538-543, 604-610, 728-734, 755-761, and 767-774.



important period, they took lake trout *namagoons*, lake herring *okeaawis*, and above all lake whitefish *autickamaig*.<sup>125</sup>

Fishing was an important spiritual activity as well as the most important economic activity. During the last weeks of November, a time the Ottawas called *Bnakwiig*, or "Leaves-fall," and just before the onset of the winter freeze, or *Gishkading*, the Ottawas took their canoes into the deep water to cast their nets for the whitefish.<sup>126</sup> This was an exceedingly dangerous activity, but it was one which gave the Ottawas great skill in the art of canoeing and great respect for the power of the Lake. This respect was manifested in the spirit world of the Ottawas and to understand their sense of this power, it is necessary to examine the metaphorical levels of meaning in the stories of the lake's importance to them.

According to Nicholas Perrot, who lived among the Ottawas in the late seventeenth century, the pantheon of the Ottawa spirit world was dominated by the god of water, Michipichy, the Underwater Panther, a creature of great power which dwelled in an underwater fortress in the Lake.<sup>127</sup> Michipichy could summon a storm with the swish of his immense tail and he could cause high winds by drinking. When the Ottawas travelled they made an offering to Michipichy in order to assure good weather and to

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<sup>125</sup> The word *autickamaig* is a composite made from the word *ateck* or cariboo, and *gumee* or water. The analogy is clear; the whitefish run was like the passing of an immense herd of cariboo. During the spawning period, an Ottawa fisherman could expect to land 150 whitefish or 800 lake herring in one single day of fishing. *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 149-151; Williams, *Schoolcraft's Indian Legends*, 212-214. Smith, "Animals at St. Ignace," 102; and Cleland, "Inland Shore Fishery," 766-765.

<sup>126</sup> Richard Rhodes and Ben Ramirez-shkwegnaabi, "The Ottawa Calendar," in *Papers of the Twelfth Algonquian Conference*, William Cowan ed., (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1981), 135.

<sup>127</sup> Perrot, *Mémoire*, 19-20; and David S. Brose, *Ancient Art of the American Woodland Indians* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985), 127 and 180.

protect them from the dangers of the voyage:

In the voyages which they have to make, whether short or long, they speak their invocations in this manner, "Thou, who art the master of the winds, favour our voyage and give us calm weather." They spoke these words while smoking a pipe and blowing tobacco smoke into the air. Before undertaking any long journeys, however, they make certain to kill some dogs, which they then hang from a tree or from a pole. Sometimes, they also hang the cured skins of elks, moose, or deer as an offering to the sun or to the Lake, to ensure good weather.<sup>128</sup>

Although the Ottawas feared this creature, they felt a certain sense of allegiance to it.

Their sacrifices were meant as individual gifts, given for an individual favour. Above all other people of the Lakes region, the Ottawas painted Michipichy's image. They decorated their canoes, deerskin bags, and their woven pouches with its image, and they painted it on rock faces in different areas in the region.<sup>129</sup> While other Great Lakes peoples certainly acknowledged Michipichy's power, the Ottawas had a greater need for his care and aid as they travelled more often, and over greater distances, than did their neighbours.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> "Dans les voyages qu'ils ont à faire, soit petits ou grands, voicy leur maniere de parler dans les invocations: Toy, qui es le maitre des vents favorise nostre voyage et donne nous un temps calme. Cela se dit en fumant une pipe de tabac dont ils jettent la fumée en l'air. Mais que d'entreprendre des voyages un peu longs, ils ont soin de casser la teste à des chiens, qu'ils pendent à un arbre ou à une perche. Ce sont quelquefois aussy des peaux d'élans passées, de biches ou de chevreüils, qu'ils voient au soleil ou au lac pour obtenir du beau temps." Perrot, *Mémoire*, 20. Also see, *Jesuit Relations*, 67: 161.

<sup>129</sup> Penney, *Great Lakes Art*, 10, 56-58. Contemporary work suggests the decoration of birchbark items as well, but these have not survived.

<sup>130</sup> There are several mentions of Michipichy in the *Jesuit Relations*, but the most complete belongs to Father Marquette on his voyage through the Illinois country. The image he describes is of unknown origin, (Marquette expresses disbelief that an Indian could paint so well) but it resembles closely the images on the Ottawa artifacts depicting a cat with a huge tail and a human face. *Jesuit Relations*, 59: 139-141; see also 50: 265; 54: 155-157; and 67: 161. Selwyn Dewdney and Kenneth E. Kidd maintain that a number of peoples in the Great Lakes, including the Ottawas, were the authors of the rock paintings, see Selwyn Dewdney and Kenneth E. Kidd, *Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 167. If one examines the artwork of the Ottawas, one can not miss the prominence of Michipichy's image.

In summary the Lake was the source of the Ottawas' most abundant and important resource, and it was the source of their power, for their autumn fishery, so vital to their very existence, called for a level of canoeing skill which made them famous as the "*meilleurs canoteurs*" of the Great Lakes.<sup>131</sup> Like other peoples who live on islands, the Ottawas felt a certain sense of security at home and they drew a sense of power from this security. Their mastery of the rough waters of Lake Huron gave them the ability to travel with relative ease all over the Great Lakes. This ability was unique among the nations of the region.<sup>132</sup>

The French missionaries and explorers who first came to the Upper Great Lakes region were impressed by the extent of the Ottawa fishery. The Jesuits, evidently pleased to report on the industrious nature of these people (and no doubt happy by the centrality of this very Christian activity), commented at length on fishing in the Great Lakes and the affluence of the fishery at Michilimackinac:

This spot is the most noted in all these regions for its abundance of fish, since in Savage parlance, this is its native country. No other place, however it may abound in fish, is properly its abode, which is only in the vicinity of Michilimackinac.<sup>133</sup>

The Jesuits were especially pleased about the fishery at Michilimackinac because it

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<sup>131</sup> In 1663, the Jesuit Ménard was taken into the deep water of Lake Huron to fish for lake whitefish during the fall spawning run. He reported that the waves on Lake Huron were as big as those on the ocean and at times there was so much snow that he could not see his companion seated in the bow of the canoe. These were the conditions the Ottawas braved each year in their canoes. *Jesuit Relations*, 48: 129; see also Perrot, *Mémoire*, 84.

<sup>132</sup> The French documents are full of references to the Ottawas' malaise on their long voyages. See for example, Perrot, *Mémoire*, 134. A number of Ottawas accompanying DuLuth and Perrot to Niagara in 1684 were concerned about the possibility of their women, children, and elders starving if they did not return to Michilimackinac in time for the autumn fishing. Perrot was annoyed by this attitude and considered the Ottawas to be cowards.

<sup>133</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 157.

ensured an Ottawa presence there for at least part of the year. There was no prospect more distressing to the Jesuits than that of tracking after the Ottawas on their seasonal rounds.<sup>134</sup>

Father Louis André reported in August of 1670 on the importance of fish as a staple for the Ottawas at Michilimackinac:

In short the abundance of fish, and the excellence of the soil for raising Indian corn, have ever proved a very powerful attraction for the tribes of these regions, the greater number of whom live only on fish, and some of them on Indian corn.<sup>135</sup>

Lahontan, Perrot, and Cadillac also commented with awe on the numbers of whitefish at Michilimackinac, using words such as "daily manna," "prodigious quantity," and "great fat fish" to describe both the abundance and its importance as a staple.<sup>136</sup>

Fishing techniques were every inch as intricate and careful as beaver hunting techniques. Depending on the species and the conditions, the Ottawas used a number of different fishing techniques: the gill net, the dip net, hooking, and spearing. Ottawa men employed these techniques in ice fishing as well as in open water fishing. Father Claude Dablon found the dip net style, which he witnessed at Bawating in the autumn of 1669, to be the most dramatic of all of the techniques:

Dexterity and strength are needed for this kind of fishing; for one must stand upright in a bark canoe, and there, among the whirlpools, with muscles tense, thrust deep into the water a rod, at the end of which is

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<sup>134</sup> "...we embrace the opportunity to instruct them and train them in Christianity during their sojourn in this place." *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 131; also see *Jesuit Relations*, 51: 71.

<sup>135</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 159.

<sup>136</sup> Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages*, 1: 145; Perrot, *Memoire*, 179; Cadillac, "Relations d'évenemens," Archives Nationales, Colonies, C 11 A, 14: 78.



fastened a net made in the form of a pocket, into which the fish are made to enter.<sup>137</sup>

In gill net fishing, nets were weighted with sinkers, marked with floating buoys, and set in the deep water of the Lake by men in canoes.<sup>138</sup> Fish swimming into these nets were caught by the gills.<sup>139</sup>

Several conclusions can be drawn from the Ottawas' adaptation to the fish resources of their environment. In the first place, fishing added another dimension to the Ottawa economy, in fact the most significant element.<sup>140</sup> Second, fishing made the canoe critical to the Ottawa economy, and canoe skills became a vital part of the Ottawa life. Third, fishing fit nicely into the seasonal round of the Ottawas' annual cycle. It took place at two specific periods of the year, every year. Finally, fishing, like canoe manufacture, was an activity which required the cooperation of the entire community. Women wove the fibres from which the men fashioned nets. Men set the nets and hauled in the catch while women collected firewood, built the smoking racks,

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<sup>137</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 131.

<sup>138</sup> The different fishing strategies were selected depending upon the depth of the water where the fish were located. Gill nets were used in deeper water, and the other techniques were used where the fish could be seen near the surface. Archaeological evidence proves that the gill net fishery was the most important of all the methods. Cleland, "Inland Shore Fishery," 774-775.

<sup>139</sup> Cleland, "Inland Shore Fishery," 774. It should be noted that there is some debate amongst archaeologists as to the use of the gill net and the importance of fishing. In response to these criticisms, Cleland points out an important truth: "...this resource is the *only* predictable and abundant food source in the region." See, James B. Petersen et al., "Netting Technology and the Antiquity of Fish Exploitation in Eastern North America," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 9 (1984): 205; Susan Rapalje Martin, "A Reconsideration of Aboriginal Fishing Strategies in the Northern Great Lakes Region," *American Antiquity* 54 (1989) 594; and Charles E. Cleland, "Comments on 'A Reconsideration of Aboriginal Fishing Strategies in the Northern Great Lakes Region' by Susan R. Martin," *American Antiquity* 54 (1989): 606.

<sup>140</sup> Two men in a canoe could expect to catch 150 whitefish in a single day. *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 149-151.

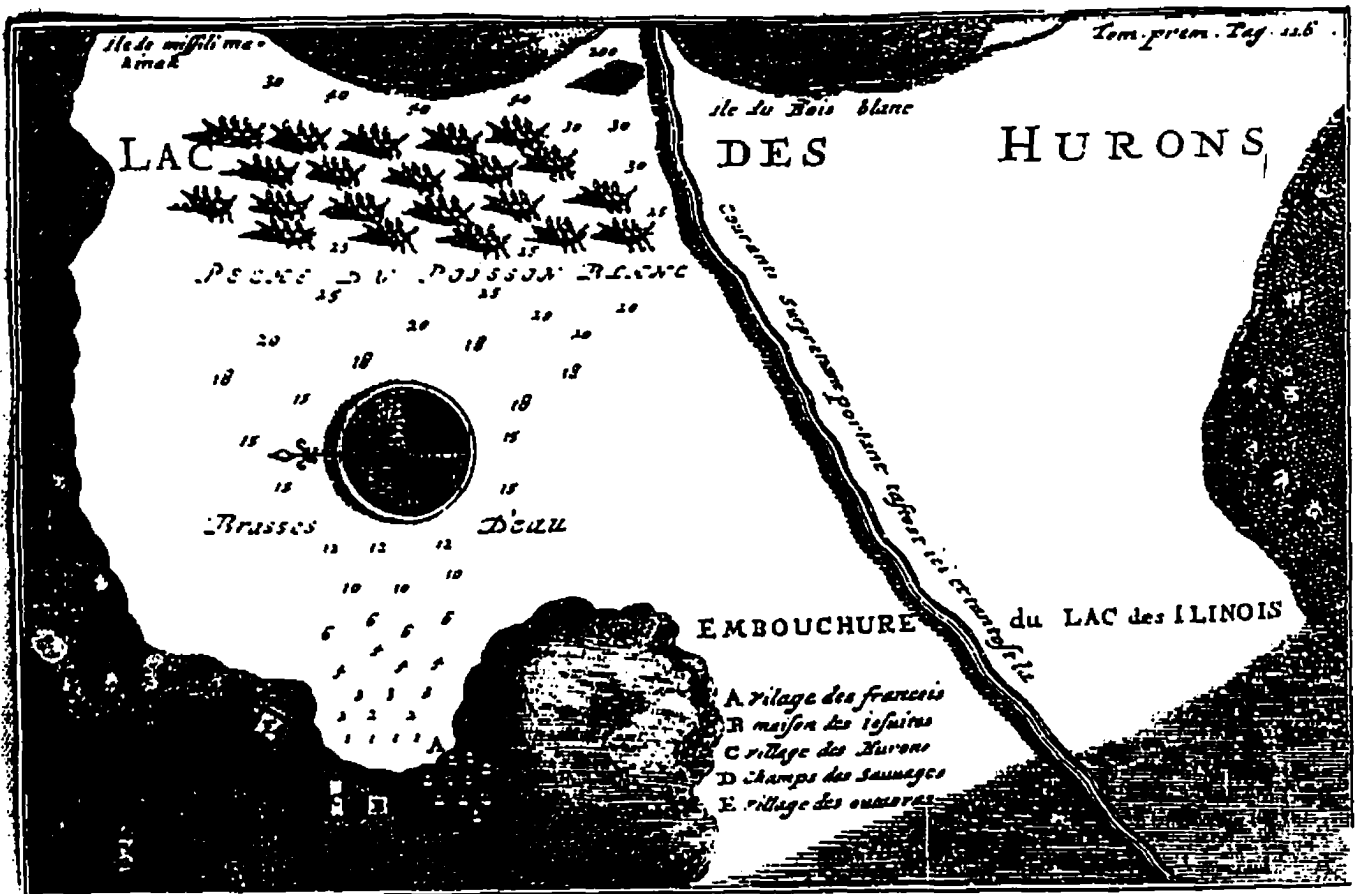


Figure 7: This illustration from the Labontan's *Nouveaux voyages* depicts an entire Ottawa village taking part in the autumn whitefish fishery at Michilimackinac. This annual activity was vital to the survival of the entire Ottawa nation.

cleaned and smoked the fish.<sup>141</sup>

The least important but best known aspect of the Ottawa economy was trade and manufacture. The first description of Ottawa trade comes from Champlain. In 1615 Samuel de Champlain wrote a description of the Ottawa economy based upon his observations and conversations which he had with the Ottawas themselves. He was most impressed with the diversity of the economic activities which these people undertook:

The majority of them plant Indian corn and other crops. They are hunters who go in bands into various regions and districts where they trade with other tribes distant more than four or five hundred leagues.<sup>142</sup>

Champlain was not as impressed with the trading as with the great distances the Ottawas could travel in their birch bark canoes. Champlain was interested in finding the route to Cathay; he was not particularly interested in Ottawa trading activities. Nevertheless, his countrymen would soon take a keen interest in trading and before long the French would be vitally interested in using the Ottawas' trading networks.

Although the trade in beaver pelts became the best known aspect of the Ottawa economy, Champlain was more impressed by their industriousness in weaving reed mats. He may have visited them at a time when the women were involved in weaving.

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<sup>141</sup> Cleland, "Inland Shore Fishery," 779.

<sup>142</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 97-98. In the French original the word used is nation. This reveals Champlain's knowledge of the confederate system, but it also indicates that some other nations - such as the Saulteurs and Mississaugas - which speak the Ojibwa rather than the Ottawa language, may have been considered as partners in the confederation at certain times. Not all of the nations are said to have planted crops. The extent of Ottawa influence over these groups was indeed considerable.

or he may have been commenting on the number of mats which they possessed.<sup>143</sup> In either case his overall impression of the Ottawa village life was one of well ordered activity and industry. Champlain's contemporary Sagard was impressed with the same features of Ottawa village life. He too felt that the mat weaving was the Ottawas most important industry and their principal trade item. He visited the Ottawa village on the shore of Nottawasaga Bay which he felt was located to enable the Ottawas to profit from their trade with the Hurons and Petuns. He made no mention of the exchange of furs, however, but commented on the exchange of mats:

I saw there [in the Ottawa village] many women and girls making reed mats extremely well plaited, and ornamented in different colours. These they traded afterwards for other goods with the savages of different regions who came to their village.<sup>144</sup>

In a later section of his text, Sagard returned to his earlier interest in the domestic industry of the Ottawa women. Their mats were so well designed, proportioned, and coloured that he could find no fault with their weaving.<sup>145</sup> He also mentioned their skill in fabricating reed baskets and tobacco pouches which they decorated with porcupine quills.<sup>146</sup> Ottawa women dressed and softened skins "as well as we could do it here," made them into cloaks and painted them with elaborate designs "with very

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<sup>143</sup> Ottawa women wove mats from dried bulrushes as well as from the fibrous inner bark of the basswood tree. Certain fibres were dyed in order to create colourful designs, usually of Ottawa ododams. See Carolyn Gilman, *Where Two Worlds Meet: The Great Lakes Fur Trade* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1982), 7; and Ruth Bliss Phillips, "Dreams and Designs: Iconographic Problems in Great Lakes Twined Bags," in David W. Penney, ed. *Great Lakes Indian Art* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 52-69.

<sup>144</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 66.

<sup>145</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 102.

<sup>146</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 102.

good effect."<sup>147</sup> If anything can be stated with authority from the early accounts of the French, it is that the industriousness of the Ottawa women was the most remarkable aspect of village life.<sup>148</sup> Their material culture was already in demand from other groups and therefore they were not as dependant on French trade goods as has been imagined. It is true that there was an ecological basis for trade (the Ottawas sometimes required Tionnontaté corn or Ojibwa furs), but the Ottawas seem to have been able to exchange their manufactured mats for these items.

At the time of contact with the French, the Ottawas were an integral part of an elaborate trading network which reached from the Atlantic to the Great Lakes and beyond. This trading network was an inseparable part of diplomacy and trade must always be seen as a component of diplomacy.<sup>149</sup> From their privileged environment, their location on the frontier between the Algonquian and Iroquoian worlds, and their skills, the Ottawas' position in this system of exchange was a central one. Only the Hurons, who also inhabited a cultural frontier area, who also had a highly developed political confederacy, and who also lived in a particularly rich environment, were as well connected in the exchange system as the Ottawas. When the first French explorers and missionaries came to the Upper Great Lakes in the early seventeenth century, they were drawn to both the Hurons and the Ottawas by the influence these nations had over

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<sup>147</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 102.

<sup>148</sup> Their economy was thus even more diverse than the archaeological record has shown. Unfortunately, the manufactured goods of the Ottawas were not durable and knowledge of them is limited to these French descriptions and to a suggestive comparison with the decorated items of their nineteenth-century descendants. *Jesuit Relations*, 2: 77.

<sup>149</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 267.

the region.<sup>150</sup>

In summary, the Ottawa economy was much more diverse than the fur trade model allows. The Ottawas followed a seasonal rhythm, dictated by the environment, which gave sense to the world which they inhabited. In the early spring the family groups would gather at their own sugar bushes for the running of the sap from the maple trees. When they had made their sugar and cut their rolls of birch bark, they would return to their permanent villages and prepare for the spring spawning of the sturgeon and other fishes. During the spring most of the community was involved in the various activities associated in the labour intensive fishery. With the coming of summer, Ottawa women planted gardens and gathered berries. Small parties of men embarked on hunting and fishing expeditions or went in search of cherts for their stone tools. As autumn approached the harvest and the gathering of nuts and berries became more intensive. Finally for the last few weeks before the onset of winter, the entire community took part in the whitefish run. With the coming of winter, the Ottawa communities disbanded into small family hunting groups and retreated again to their hunting territories.

The Ottawas did not specialize in the exploitation of any one particular resource. In fact, it has been the object of the present chapter to show that they had an economy of unrivalled variety. The Ottawas had access to the richest fishing areas, the most varied forests and game, and they were able to cultivate the earth with a reasonable hope of success. Such a diffuse environmental adaptation offered unparalleled

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<sup>150</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 139.

economic security. There was, however, another side to the coin. Their neighbours were much less secure and attempted to gain a share of the resource base of the Ottawas' ancestral homeland.

Most importantly, the Ottawa Nation functioned as a cohesive unit. While the Ojibwas lived in small family hunting groups, and the agricultural Hurons, Petuns, and Potawatomis owed their allegiance to the village in which they lived all of their lives, the Ottawa Nation depended on the cooperation of all of its members. Some activities, such as horticulture and deer hunting required the cooperation of entire villages. Other occupations, such as beaver and bear hunting, canoe building, and mat weaving required the expert skills of certain specialists within a particular community. Certain activities, however, required the participation of the entire Ottawa Nation. In late November, when the whitefish were running, Kiskakons, Kamigas, Nassauakuetons, and Sinagos, would congregate at Michilimackinac to catch and process enough fish to sustain the entire Nation through the winter. This unity was the most important aspect of Ottawa strength and unity enabled them to resist the forces of change brought by the French.

## Chapter Two: Protecting the Gateways: The Origins of the Alliance.

Lake Huron, at the centre of the five Great Lakes, posed a problem for anyone wishing to travel from the Upper Great Lakes and beyond to the Lower Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River or vice versa. Lake Huron had five access points, or gateways, located at Bawating, Bkejwanong, Manitoulin, Michilimackinac, and Nottawasaga.<sup>1</sup> In the early seventeenth century the Ottawa Nation maintained important villages at three of these gateways: Manitoulin, Michilimackinac, and Nottawasaga. They also maintained a presence at Bkejwanong and kept a small village at Bawating. At each location, the Ottawas prevented the free movement of peoples by the use of force:

The members of the neighbouring tribes had no right to go beyond the limits of their respective districts on their hunting excursions, and encroach upon that belonging to others. Any hunter that was caught trespassing upon the rights of other tribes, or taking beaver in the rivers running through their lands, was in danger of forfeiting his life on the spot for his rashness, and had much to do to elude his pursuers, if he was fortunate enough to escape their deadly weapons in the first hostile encounter.<sup>2</sup>

The Ottawas guarded the gateways in order to protect the valuable hunting and fishing

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<sup>1</sup> Four of these gateways were easily controlled river or channel passages; Manitoulin was the exception. People in canoes could enter Lake Huron from Lake Nipissing through the many channels flowing from the French River. They could then traverse Georgian Bay and enter the Lake itself through the Main Channel between the tip of the Ononditiagui Peninsula and the southeastern tip of Manitoulin Island, or they could follow the North Channel along the northern coast of Manitoulin until they reached the Mississagi Strait at the west end of the Island. From this point they could turn south and cross the strait in the direction of Michilimackinac and Lake Michigan, or they could continue northwestward towards Bawating and Lake Superior.

<sup>2</sup> Assikinack, "Legends and Traditions," 117-118. The Ottawas were able to exercise control over the Bawating gateway as well, through their alliance with the Bawating Ojibwas. In April of 1679, Dulhut wrote a letter to Frontenac complaining of the Ottawa control over the Bawating gateway. Kinongé, the chief of the Kamiga Ottawas in the late seventeenth century, prevented the Crees and the Ojibwas of northern Lake Superior from passing through the rapids. Dulhut hoped to extend commercial relation to the Ojibwas - they had the best furs - but he was frustrated by the Ottawas who would not allow free passage through the rapids into Lake Huron. Dulhut à Frontenac, 5 avril, 1679, AN, C11E, 16: 2. For the restriction of movement see, Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, ed. and trans. G.M. Wrong (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), 99.



territories of northern Lake Huron from others. They did not seek to prevent contact between trading nations in order to realize a middleman's profit.

The Ottawa villages at the gateways developed naturally from their lacustrine orientation and from the way each of the four groups identified their particular role within the Nation. Protection of the gateways gave the Ottawas' power over their neighbours and they regarded their ability to control these accesses as the salient feature of their alliance building. For example, the Ottawas formed excellent relations with the Bawating Ojibwas and the Tionnontatés because these nations had an interest in preventing access at Bawating and Nottawasaga respectively. The Potawatomis, on the other hand, were able to control the gateway at Bkejwanong in southern Lake Huron, and by the early seventeenth century, the Ottawa relations with them were poor.<sup>3</sup>

To understand the Ottawa concern to control the gateways, one must consider the ways in which the four Ottawa groups understood their role within the Ottawa Nation itself, for each group was responsible for a different aspect of the overall policy. The alliances which the Ottawas maintained, and the way in which those alliances were reaffirmed through the Feast of the Dead, also help to explain the Ottawa objectives. Finally one can consider the way the French became part of the Ottawas' defensive strategy in the Upper Great Lakes. It is in the context of this strategy that the French-Ottawa alliance must be understood.

As the Anishinabeg people migrated into the region of northern Lake Huron,

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<sup>3</sup> Later, when the gateway at Bkejwanong became more important, the Ottawas would rekindle their relations with the Potawatomis. In the early seventeenth century, however, there was fighting between the Nassauakueton Ottawas at Thunder Bay and Saginaw Bay and the Potawatomis who lived further to the south. Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 97.

they settled in groups at the mouths of the rivers which flowed into Lake Huron. Those communities which settled in the Canadian forest used the rivers as sources of fish, and as transportation routes into the family hunting territories which they used in the hinterlands. Those communities which settled in the transitional forest found that they could practise horticulture, and felt it less necessary to travel inland to search for game. Horticulture enabled them to settle in larger communities and to use the rich fish resources of the Lake to their full potential.<sup>4</sup>

This lacustrine orientation of the four communities living in the transitional forest region of northern Lake Huron drew them together as one Nation, and distinguished them from their Ojibwa neighbours.<sup>5</sup> Ottawas encountered one another

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<sup>4</sup> The whitefish fishery was plentiful, but it was of short duration and in order to catch enough fish to feed everyone over the winter, the entire community had to participate in the annual fall spawning run. Those people who lived in small family hunting groups, rather than larger horticultural villages, did not have enough people to catch and prepare the amount of fish necessary even though there were fewer mouths to feed. Of the Ojibwas of northern Lake Huron, only the Bawating Nation was to build enough drying racks, and process enough fish to feed the entire community over the winter. Lahontan, *Voyages*, 1: 145; Perrot, *Memoire*, 179; *Jesuit Relations*, 51: 71; 54: 131, 149-151; 55: 157-159; Cadillac, *Relation des evenemens*, AN, C11A, 14: 78; Cleland, "Inland Shore Fishery," 774-779.

<sup>5</sup> In 1657, the French geographer Nicolas Sanson published a small atlas of North America entitled, *L'Amérique en plusieurs cartes et en divers traittes de geographie et d'histoire*. In his capacity of *Géographe ordinaire du Roy*, Sanson had access to the best sources of information, including the memoirs, correspondence, and inventories of the French marine service. In the middle of the seventeenth century, this collection included the *Jesuit Relations*, and the journals of Champlain and Gabriel Sagard. From these sources Sanson drew a map of northeastern North America entitled: *Le Canada, ou Nouvelle France, &c. Tirée de divers Relations des Francois, Anglois, et Hollandois &c.* In the map published in the atlas (but not in the map printed a year earlier) Sanson marked the name "Cheveux Relevés" across the northern part of Lake Huron, from Michilimackinac across Manitoulin Island all the way to the eastern shore of the Lake. The printed map of 1656 places the "Cheveux Relevés" on Manitoulin Island. Only the map in the manuscript copy of Sanson's atlas locates the Ottawas across the northern waters, islands, and shores of Lake Huron. In other words he located the Ottawas (the French called them the "Cheveux Relevés" until the 1660s when Allouez and Dablon clarified the term "Outaouacs" ) squarely in the middle of the water. Curiously, this is exactly the way cartographers of the Great Lakes region now choose to locate the Ottawas. See for example R. Cole Harris, ed., *The Historical Atlas of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 1: Plates 34 and 35. Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville, "Le Canada, ou Nouvelle France, &c.," Bibliothèque Nationale, Section des Cartes et Plans, Collection d'Anville, Ge. DD 2987 no. 8547; "Canada," Inventaire, Plans, Cartes, Dessains, et Descriptions, Archives Nationales, Marine, 1 JJ, 2: 2; Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville, *L'Amérique en plusieurs cartes et en divers traittes de geographie, et d'histoire* (Paris, 1657).



regularly on the Lake, while the Ojibwas living along the region's rivers were drawn deep into the interior where they never came into contact with people other than members of their own community. The abundant resources, frequent contact, as well as a shared culture and a shared economy, made the four Ottawa communities natural allies. From a very early date, the four communities joined together in order to defend their relatively rich region from the threat of encroachment by others.<sup>6</sup>

These four groups are distinguishable from their Algonquian neighbours in important ways. The Ottawa economy was more diverse than the Ojibwa economy, and the Ottawas took to the Lake in their canoes more often. The four Ottawa groups shared a language, but their neighbours could understand them.<sup>7</sup> Most important of all was the organization of the confederacy. While the Ojibwas further to the north had little organization beyond their hunting and fishing bands, the Ottawas held frequent policy meetings at the large villages on Manitoulin Island and at Michilimackinac.<sup>8</sup> They were able to act in concert and to devote their resources and their strength to

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<sup>6</sup> The Ottawa tradition does not give a specific date for the founding of the Nation. Warren believed that the founding of the Nation was simultaneous with the division of the three Anishinabeg peoples at Michilimackinac. Clearly the Nation was formed in the very early stages of the process of ethnogenesis which took place after the arrival of the Anishinabeg around the year 1000. Warren, *History of the Ojibway*, 81.

<sup>7</sup> The Jesuit Claude Allouez, who was the first Jesuit to live amongst the Ottawas, prepared a classification of the Ottawas and Ojibwas in his journal for the year 1667. The Outaouacs (Kamiga Ottawas), Kiskakoumacs (Kiskakons), and Outaouasinagoucs (Sinagos) were grouped together as one Nation, the Ottawas, "because they have the same tongue." Allouez spent his time at Bawating and Michilimackinac and evidently did not realize that the Nassauquetons who lived further south at Thunder Bay and Saginaw Bay on Lake Huron's western shore were a separate group. Had he done so he would have included them with the other three. *Jesuit Relations*, 51: 21.

<sup>8</sup> The Jesuits referred constantly to the Ottawa councils and they usually gave the location as Michilimackinac or Manitoulin. The greater, and more enduring, Jesuit presence at Michilimackinac biases their account in favour of that location. For examples of Jesuit references to Ottawa councils, see *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 279; and 64: 27, 31.

particular situations. When, for example, they perceived a threat in one region or in another, this region was reinforced.

The great council meetings which were held on Manitoulin Island made an impression on the French missionaries and explorers who visited Lake Huron in the seventeenth century, even though there was very little French presence on the Island.<sup>9</sup> In a number of the early maps, Manitoulin is given as the centre for council meetings and for assemblies for war and for trade. For example in Claude Bernou's map of 1680 "Lac Huron ou Karegnondi ou Mer Douce des Hurons," Manitoulin is called the, "Place of the assembly of the Indians who go to trade at Montreal."<sup>10</sup> In Coronelli's map of 1688 "Partie Occidentale du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France," Manitoulin is depicted as, "Manitoulin or Kaentoton, the place of the assembly of the Indians."<sup>11</sup>

The main villages on Manitoulin with their ceremonies and their assemblies

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<sup>9</sup> One of the most difficult problems confronting historians of Indian-White relations in the seventeenth century is the lack of a European presence in particular areas, and the concomitant lack of documentary evidence. In the case of Manitoulin, several Jesuits attempted, without success, to establish missions among the Sinago Ottawas who lived there. As these missions were failures, there was little impetus to include descriptions of them in the *Jesuit Relations*. Three Jesuits attempted to establish missions among the Sinagos on the Island. Joseph-Antoine Poncet de la Rivière spent the winter of 1648-1649 following a group of Sinagos on their winter hunt. In late August of 1670, Louis André left the Mission of Sainte Marie du Sault and visited with the Mississagis and the Amikwas before he established the Mission of St. Simon on Manitoulin Island. Like Poncet de la Rivière, he spent the winter of 1670-1671 among the Sinagos and some Kiskakons who had returned to Lake Huron from Chequamegon Bay. Like Poncet de la Rivière, André quickly concluded that he was accomplishing nothing. Two years later the Jesuit, Pierre Bailloquet, attempted to succeed where his two colleagues had failed. Bailloquet established the Mission of the Apostles to serve the Sinago Ottawas on Manitoulin and the nearby Mississagi and Amikwa Ojibwas. He was active in the region until 1679 when he left for the greener pastures in the Illinois Country. Although these missions all failed to win converts to Christianity, other Jesuits learned something of the Island from the Ottawas and Hurons and they wrote reasonable descriptions of Manitoulin Island. *Jesuit Relations*, 38: 235; 55: 133-137, 141-147; 57: 249-251; 59: 71, 217; 61: 69, 95.

<sup>10</sup> Abbé Claude Bernou, "Lac Huron ou Karegnondi ou Mer Douce des Hurons," 1680, Bibliothèque du Service Historique de la Marine, Recueil 67-208 (4044b), no. 48.

<sup>11</sup> Le Père Coronelli, 1688, "Partie Occidentale du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France," Bibliothèque Nationale, Section des Cartes et Plans, GE DD. 8578.

were the spiritual centres of Ottawa life.<sup>12</sup> Civilizations are not to be found in edifices and monuments, but rather in the shared identification of the necessities of the environment and in a cooperative strategy aimed at satisfying those needs. The gateways strategy needed a strong and effective central authority, and in the seventeenth century this authority was to be found in the assemblies on the southern shores of Manitoulin Island.<sup>13</sup> Nicolas Perrot notwithstanding, the Ottawas did not flee the Iroquois as refugees but continued to hold annual assemblies on Manitoulin. Acting individually, the four communities could never have managed to protect their resource base from external threats. Acting as a confederacy they succeeded in doing this until the fall of New France.

Although the Ottawa Nation was founded in order to defend the regional resources, it was less a political institution than an institution of the spirit. The four Ottawa communities identified themselves with a particular ododam, as they called their totems, which gave them certain attributes and responsibilities. The four Ottawa ododams contributed differently to the Nation as a whole according to their particular strengths and abilities. Unlike later groups which were composed of members different

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<sup>12</sup> Evidence of Manitoulin's centrality is also to be found in the oral tradition. Blackbird calls Manitoulin "Ottawa Island" and he makes it clear that it was the Ottawas' ancestral home and the birthplace of the legendary Ottawa warrior, Kaybenaw. Assikinack concurs, and calls the Island "Odahwah-minis" because of their presence there at the time of contact. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 85; Assikinack, "Social and Warlike Customs," 307.

<sup>13</sup> The Jesuit Claude Dablon, who was the Superior of the Ottawa missions from 1669-1671, commented that the Ottawas had an "incredibly strong attachment" to Manitoulin Island. Like the other Ottawa regions, Manitoulin was surrounded by rich fisheries and Dablon sensed that this was why the Ottawas were so attached to it. Another French writer who lived in the *pays d'en haut*, and who was familiar with the region, Nicolas Perrot, called Manitoulin "Ottawa Island." *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 143; Perrot, *Memoire*, 126.

ododams, seventeenth-century Ottawa communities usually consisted of one group.<sup>14</sup>

At the time of contact with the French, the four groups which comprised the Ottawa Nation inhabited four distinct regions of northern Lake Huron: the Kiskakon Ottawas lived in the region of Nottawasaga Bay, the Sinago Ottawas lived at the eastern end of Manitoulin Island, the Kamiga Ottawas lived around Michilimackinac, and the Nassaukueton Ottawas lived along the western shore of northern Lake Huron.<sup>15</sup> An Ottawa's first loyalties lay with the ododam, and at Michilimackinac where there were sometimes more than one ododam, signs and symbols denoted the different sections.<sup>16</sup>

Each Ottawa ododam took its characteristics from a specific animal and all of the members of the ododam believed themselves to be the descendants of this animal. Every animal had certain attributes which were shared by each member of the community. These attributes included character traits, but they also included specific

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<sup>14</sup> Francis Assikinack compared the Ottawa concept of ododams to European coats of arms. Assikinack, "Legends and Traditions of the Odahwah Indians" *The Canadian Journal of Industry, Science, and Art* 8 (March, 1858), 119.

<sup>15</sup> One of the most complete early sources which indicates the precise locations of the different peoples of Lake Huron is Paul Le Jeune's Relation of 1640. Le Jeune got his information from the explorer Jean Nicolet who travelled extensively in the Upper Great Lakes in 1634: "Sieur Nicolet, interpreter of the Algonquin and Huron languages, has given me the names of these nations, which he himself has visited for the most part in their own country." Nicolet located the Ottawas on Manitoulin Island and he located the Rassaoukouetons (an obvious error) on the other side of Lake Huron near the Pououtouatamis. Other reliable early sources place the Ottawas on Manitoulin and Michilimackinac. For example see Coronelli's *Partie Occidentale du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France*, printed in 1688, and Guillaume de l'Isle's *Carte du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France et des Decouvertes qui y ont été faites*, printed in 1703, placed the Ottawas in specific locations. Coronelli had the "Outtaouactz" living at Michilimackinac; de l'Isle placed the "Outaouiacs" along the north shore of Lake Huron. *Jesuit Relations*, 18: 229-233; P. Coronelli, "Partie occidentale du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France," Bibliothèque Nationale, Section des Cartes et Plans, Ge DD. 8578; Guillaume de l'Isle, "Carte du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France et des Decouvertes qui y ont été faites" Section des Cartes et Plans, Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>16</sup> At Michilimackinac, for example, members of all four Ottawa *Ododams* shared the same village. At those times carved bears, beadwork squirrels, painted suckers, hare figures mounted on posts, and the like, denoted the various sections of the village. Assikinack, "Legends and Traditions," 119.

responsibilities. In order to understand how the Ottawas perceived these responsibilities, it is necessary to understand the particular attributes of each ododam. Ottawa relations with their neighbours and the defence of their ancestral home cannot be explained apart from reference to the attributes of each ododam.

The Kiskakon Ottawas lived in the region of Nottawasaga Bay and they spent the warmer months of the year in villages near the Tionnontaté villages at the mouth of the Nottawasaga River.<sup>17</sup> The Kiskakons believed themselves to be the descendants of one woman; she herself had grown out of the paw of a bear.<sup>18</sup> The name Kiskakon (which translates into English as "Cut tail") was the Ottawa idiom for the black bear, or *mucqua*. The black bear possessed both strength and courage, and the Ottawas always chose their military leaders from the Kiskakons.<sup>19</sup>

The Kiskakons were the most closely related to the Tionnontatés and they maintained good relations with these Iroquoian people on behalf of the whole Nation. From their home in Nottawasaga Bay the Kiskakons controlled the eastern gateway into Lake Huron. A trail led from the Tionnontaté villages to the south along the height of land. This was the trail followed by the Iroquois warriors who came by foot rather than by canoe and the Kiskakon responsibility was to remain on guard for Iroquois war

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<sup>17</sup> This peninsula is now called the Bruce Peninsula, but it appears on the early maps under its Huron name, Onenditiagui. See Conrad Heidenreich, *Huron: A History and Geography of the Huron Indians, 1600-1650* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), map 13.

<sup>18</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 67: 157; Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 53-61.

<sup>19</sup> While each of the four *Ododams* had a military leader, the Kiskakon leader was generally in command of the whole force. Kiskakons such as Koutaoiliboc, Onaské, Mikinak, and Langlade were important military leaders over the course of the alliance. Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 60.



parties.<sup>20</sup> From their villages, the Kiskakons could also be called upon to assist the Sinagos who lived on the eastern end of Manitoulin.

Manitoulin Island, the centre of the Ottawas's ancestral home, was also the home of the Sinago Ottawas. Their main summer fishing villages were located at the eastern end of the Island, at Wikwemikong, Manitowaning, and at outlet of the Mindemoya River. The Sinagos believed themselves to be descended from a woman who came from a squirrel. According to Ottawa beliefs, squirrels had remarkable foresight and were well prepared to confront difficulties. They spent the warm months building caches of nuts in order to have something to eat during the winter.<sup>21</sup> The Sinago Ottawas identified with these attributes and saw in their fishing the same sense of preparedness as they admired in the squirrel. Other Ottawas admired the Sinagos for their foresight and the Sinagos became the spiritual leaders of the Ottawa Nation. Their particular responsibility was to stand guard over the rivers flowing from Lake Nipissing into eastern Lake Huron, and also to defend Ottawa spirituality against external threats.<sup>22</sup>

For example, in 1673 and again in 1678, delegations of Sinago Ottawas went

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<sup>20</sup> The name Nottawasaga means "Iroquois River Mouth." The Ottawas called the Iroquois of the Five nations Confederacy the Nodaway, which translates as the "People for whom we watch." Saga, more usually pronounced Sahging, means river mouth. Above Nottawasaga Bay, at a high point on the escarpment now called Nottawasaga Lookout, the Kiskakon Ottawas maintained a watching post. From this place, which they called Sahgimah-Odahkahwahbewin, Kiskakon scouts could view the Nottawasaga River and warn of the approach of Iroquois warriors. Assikinack, "Warlike Customs," 309.

<sup>21</sup> Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 60.

<sup>22</sup> When Champlain arrived at Lake Huron in the summer of 1615 he was greeted by a delegation of Kiskakons and Sinagos. He met the same people later at Nottawasaga. This indicates that the Sinagos had enough time to alert the Kiskakons of the approach of Champlain. Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 96-97.

from their homes in eastern Manitoulin to Michilimackinac to protest against the Kiskakon plan to convert to Christianity. For a time it seemed as though the Kiskakons would follow the example of their allies the Tionnontatés and convert to Christianity. Clearly the Sinagos were concerned about where the loyalties of the neophytes would lie, and the delegations which were sent were charged with maintaining the unity of the confederation.<sup>23</sup>

The Kamiga Ottawas lived at Michilimackinac, on the coasts and islands of the strait where Lake Michigan's waters flow into Lake Huron. According to Kamiga beliefs, they were descended from a woman who was descended from a *namayhin*, or white sucker. In the spring, when suckers spawn, the spirit master of these fish, Namepich, instructed one of the females to swim out of the water and onto the sand shore of a river. The sucker did so and laid her eggs in the sand where they were dried by the sun into the form of a woman, mother to the Kamiga Ottawas.<sup>24</sup>

Unlike the Kiskakons and Sinagos, the Kamiga Ottawas did not name themselves after their ododam; rather their name, which means sand or earth, referred to their creation story.<sup>25</sup> Like their ododam, Kamiga Ottawas were noted for their poise and their calm attitude. They were responsible for the protection of the Michilimackinac

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<sup>23</sup> This sort of interference with the business of winning Christian converts was exactly the kind of story which the Jesuits felt compelled to relate, and so the *Jesuit Relations* are full of such accounts. Whether this issue actually dominated Ottawa politics as much as the Jesuits would have their readers believe is impossible to know with certainty. *Jesuit Relations*, 57: 211-213; and 61: 131.

<sup>24</sup> The missionaries who heard this story did not understand the word *namayhin* as the sucker is a North American species. They substituted sucker with carp, a European fish. *Jesuit Relations*, 67: 157.

<sup>25</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 67: 157.

gateway, as well as for maintaining good relations with the Bawating Ojibwas. During the November whitefish run the Kamigas invited members of the other three groups to Michilimackinac in order to participate in the fishing.

The Nassauakuetons were the smallest of the Ottawa communities; they were also the least prominent. Their villages at Saginaw Bay and Thunder Bay on Lake Huron's western shore did not give them any responsibility for the protection of the gateways, although they were placed to intercept travellers who had passed through Bkejwanong on their way north.<sup>26</sup> The Nassauakuetons believed themselves to be the children of Michabou, the great hare. Because all of the Ottawas believed Michabou to be the creator of all nature, the Nassauakuetons took their name from the Thunder Bay River, which forked (Nassauakueton means Forks People) into three big rivers just before it flowed into Thunder Bay.<sup>27</sup>

The Ottawas nearest neighbours were the Ojibwas who lived to the north, along the northern coast of Lake Huron and in the Lake Superior region. In the early seventeenth century, the Ojibwas were much more numerous than the Ottawas, but they

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<sup>26</sup> The mouth of the Tawa River, where the Nassauakueton village was located, was just behind a long point of land extending into the Bay. This point was the landfall for canoes crossing the open waters of the Bay. On clear days the Nassauakuetons could see canoes approaching the point from a great distance. On inclement days no one attempted the long crossing. In the early seventeenth century parties of warriors from the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy visited the region of Bkejwanong regularly so the Nassauakuetons were responsible for making sure that the Iroquois were not allowed to pass unnoticed in order to attack the Ottawas at Michilimackinac. *Jesuit Relations*, 18: 231.

<sup>27</sup> Today the forks of the three rivers (the North Branch, the Thunder Bay, and the South Branch) are not as evident as they were in the early seventeenth century. The land around the forks has been flooded by the construction of a large dam.

were also more scattered throughout the river valleys of the north.<sup>28</sup> Ojibwa-speaking peoples lived in the eastern Lake Huron region in the various river valleys: the Shebeshkong, the Shawanaga, the Magnetawan, and the channels of the French River. Along the North Channel of Lake Huron, Ojibwas lived in the Mississagi and Spanish River valleys and at Bawating, where the waters of Lake Superior flowed over the rapids into Lake Huron.<sup>29</sup> The Ojibwas were unable to use their numbers to influence other nations. The riverine orientation of their economy pulled them into the interior of the region where they were remained isolated from one another.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The exact population statistics for the Ottawas at contact must remain unknown. The problem is simple; French estimates were based on imperfect knowledge. A Jesuit at St. Ignace could only guess at the number of Ottawas at Detroit or on Manitoulin, although he would have an accurate idea of how many were at his mission. As people moved from place to place, the estimates become even more problematic. Champlain encountered 300 warriors in 1615, which would indicate a population of at least 1200 in the Manitoulin-Onenditiagui gateway, based on the ratio of one adult male of every four people. Some historians have interpreted this as the entire population, but Champlain was not in all places at all times and could only speak about the people he met at the eastern gateway. According to the Jesuit Jean Enjalran, the Kiskakons alone accounted for at least 1300 people in 1680, and they were usually located, by then, around Michilimackinac. An estimate of 2500 to 3000 is therefore more accurate, although there is little evidence for the number of people at Detroit, before the French moved into this region. Travellers mention only one village, of 300 'hommes.' See Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 43; *Jesuit Relations*, 61: 103; and "Villermont à Toinard," 1 janvier, 1702, *Archives Nationales*, Marine, 2 JJ 56, X: 13.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Le Jeune, writing in 1640, reported that Nicollet had encountered seven Ojibwa groups living in northern Lake Huron in 1634. These were: the Ouasarini or Bullhead People who lived just north of Huronia in the Shebeshkong region; the Outchougai or Heron People who lived in the Magnetawan River system; the Achiligouan or Black Bass People, who lived in the French River system; the Nipissings or Sorcerers who lived along the north shore of Lake Nipissing; the Amikouai or Beaver People who lived along the Spanish River; the Oumisagai (Mississagis) who lived along the Mississagi River; and the Baouichtigouaian (Bawating) or Rapids People who lived at Bawating. *Jesuit Relations*, 18: 229-233.

<sup>30</sup> The interpretation of the sources available to French hydrographer Nicolas Sanson was uncommonly prescient. His contribution reveals little of the obsessive desire to place nations into geographically specific locations. This attempt at extreme precision was like trying to make good prints from poor negatives; it was ultimately futile, misguided, and served to tell the historian rather more about the cartographer than the peoples figured in the map. When the cartographer had no references to aid in the accurate drawing of the map, his only recourse was to inscribe "*gens de terres*," or "*gens de bois*." For the duration of the French regime, these two imaginary nations migrated further and further to the west. Coronelli went so far as to describe the economy of the elusive "*gens de terres*." These people: "...pass their lives hunting in the forests and do not cultivate the earth at all." Coronelli, "Partie Occidentale du Canada," Section des Cartes et Plans, Bibliothèque Nationale, Gc. DD 8578.

Normally the relations between the Ottawas and their various Ojibwa neighbours were good. Ojibwa territories were clearly delineated and there were few conflicts over resources. The Ojibwas fished along their rivers for species such as trout and sturgeon which came into the rivers to spawn, or which lived all year in rivers and streams.<sup>31</sup> The Ojibwas riverine orientation drew them into the interior, away from Lake Huron and competition with the Ottawas. Ojibwa hunting territories were often deep in the forest, around the small inland lakes which supported large numbers of beaver and other game.<sup>32</sup>

The Ottawas had little need for the goods of their neighbours, but their neighbours had a great need for the products which the Ottawas were able to procure. For example, the Ojibwas did not practise horticulture and so they were interested in obtaining corn, beans, and squash from those of their neighbours who did.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the Iroquoians of the eastern shore of Lake Huron were neither the most skilled hunters of the region, nor were they occupying the best hunting grounds. The Ottawas were able to furnish the Iroquoian peoples of this region with their wants as well. By trading with the Ojibwas and the Iroquoian Hurons and Tionnontatés the Ottawas received the one thing which their rich environment could not provide, the security which came from having good relations with one's nearest neighbours.

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<sup>31</sup> For example, the Jesuit Louis André who spent the first weeks of September 1670 among the Mississagis noted the abundance of sturgeon in the Mississagi River. This river is still noted for its sturgeon even though their numbers have been attenuated by over fishing. *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 135.

<sup>32</sup> La Potherie noted that the Ojibwas of northern Lake Huron only left their "native country" in the summer months in order to pick blueberries along the shore of the Lake. Bacqueville de La Potherie, *Historie de l'Amérique septentrionale*, (Paris: Nyon, 1753), 2: 63.

<sup>33</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 33: 67.

Trade was conducted through the vehicle of the Feast of the Dead. Originally a Huron custom, the Ottawas were invited to attend and quickly spread the practice throughout the Great Lakes region.<sup>34</sup> The Feast of the Dead helped to cement and maintain the Ottawas alliance network:

After taking the resolution [to celebrate the Feast of the Dead], they send delegations of their people to all of the neighbouring villages which are allied with them, and even to those of a distance of one hundred leagues, to invite them to attend this feast.<sup>35</sup>

Perrot's observations reveal the extent of the network. Those who were invited invariably came for the act of mourning the dead. This was not only a shared healing process, it was also a most important act of diplomacy, the most powerful display of respect and support which can be shown.<sup>36</sup>

The Feast of the Dead involved a certain standard ritual. For example, in the late summer of 1670, Father Louis André attended a Feast of the Dead at Ouiebitchiouan Island, just off the coast of Manitoulin. This particular Feast was given in honour of a chief of the Amikwas who had died some three years earlier and was attended by over fifteen hundred Ottawas and Ojibwas. The programme at these Feasts was similar. The men played baggataway and the women prepared a feast which would not be eaten until after dark. By waiting until dark to eat, the participants symbolically allowed the dead first choice of all the dishes which were laid out at the usual time for

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<sup>34</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 10: 279-305. See also Trigger, *Aataentsic*, 171-173 for a discussion of the archaeological evidence for the spread of this Iroquoian goods throughout the Great Lakes.

<sup>35</sup> "Après l'avoir resolu, ils envoyent des députez de leurs gens dans tous les villages voisins alliez, et mesme éloignez de plus de cent lieues, pour les inviter d'assister à cette feste." Perrot, *Mémoire*, 38.

<sup>36</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 137.

the evening meal. At the climax of the Feast a worthy person was given the name of the deceased as a show of respect.<sup>37</sup> The guests were fed specific dishes and they made gifts of certain customary items.<sup>38</sup>

The point of the Feast of the Dead was not solely to exchange goods: the Ottawas had no need of the elaborate ceremony if all they were interested in were profits. They could quite easily have exchanged goods without the elaborate Feast of the Dead. The meaning of the Feast went much deeper than the level of commerce and the laws of the market. The Feast was a carefully planned diplomatic event which was designed to renew old alliances and to ensure peace in the region. People who shared one another's most spiritual and solemn moments were less likely to challenge the Ottawas' authority over the region's resources and its gateways.

At the time of contact with the French, the Ottawas' most important allies were the Tionnontatés, an Iroquoian speaking people who lived just to the east of the Ottawa settlements in the Onenditiagui Peninsula and on the shore of Nottawasaga Bay.<sup>39</sup> While the Ottawas appear to have been on good terms with the Hurons and the Neutrals, they had a special relationship with the Tionnontatés or Petuns as the French

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<sup>37</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 137.

<sup>38</sup> Perrot was quite shocked at the extent of giving and he remarks at length on the sacrifices of all of the participants. In the final analysis, however, Perrot's own perspective, as a French fur trader, is of little interest. His own instinct was to complain about the waste or to look for the ulterior motives of the Ottawas who traded worthless trinkets for valuable robes of *castor gras*. Perrot, *Mémoire*, 39.

<sup>39</sup> When Champlain first came upon the Ottawas in the summer of 1615 he found them to be allied with the Tionnontatés against the "Fire-People" who lived to the south, on the other side of the Lake. Throughout the French documents, there are references to the bonds between the Ottawas and the Tionnontatés who were sometimes simply called Hurons. As we have seen above from the archaeological evidence, the Ottawas had settlements adjacent to the Tionnontaté villages. See Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 96-101.

called them.<sup>40</sup> This relationship was important for the Ottawas because it exposed them to an Iroquoian society, an experience which neither the Ojibwas nor the Potawatomis had.<sup>41</sup> The gateways strategy thus involved a cultural frontier, just as it involved an environmental frontier. By their symbiotic relation with the Tionnontatés, the Ottawas were exposed to new technologies, but the relationship was much more profound. It was based on mutual defence and the Ottawas were able to profit from the Tionnontatés' contacts with the Hurons and the Neutrals.<sup>42</sup>

The Tionnontatés were an Iroquoian and agricultural people who lived just to the east of the Hurons on the shore of the Nottawasaga Bay in the rich flatland which extended from the Niagara Escarpment to the shore. Their environment was a rich one with a growing season longer than that of the Huron areas, located a day's journey to the east. Although they resembled the Hurons in almost every way, relations between the Hurons and the Tionnontatés were difficult. The Jesuits noted the manner in which the Hurons firmly prevented the Tionnontatés from travelling through Huronia.

Evidently the two groups were competing for the same fish resources on Georgian Bay,

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<sup>40</sup> The Tionnontatés were known to the French as the Petuns, from a Brazilian word meaning Tobacco. None of these names are used commonly in English as the Tionnontatés and Hurons were lumped together and came to be known collectively in English as the Hurons or the Wendats.

<sup>41</sup> The Nipissings had a similar relationship with the Hurons, but the other Algonquians had little direct contact with the Iroquoians. See, *Jesuit Relations*, 8: 71-73.

<sup>42</sup> The Ottawas had direct trade relations with the Huron Confederacy as well, particularly with the Attignawantan Hurons. The Attignawantans blocked the Tionnontatés from membership in the Huron Confederacy because they resented the latter group's privileged position with the Ottawas. The Ottawas were clever enough to avoid falling into the trap of Huron internal politics by trading moderately with both groups and by respecting the integrity of Huron territoriality. Ottawas wishing to cross Huronia never failed to obtain permission from the chief of the village of Quicnonnascaron who held the title "master and overlord of the roads and rivers." The Ottawas expected other peoples to respect their gateways, and they respected the Huron right to enforce the same policy in their region. Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons* G.M. Wrong ed., (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), 87; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 173-175.



and the Hurons were able to protect their fishing areas because of their greater size and their elaborate political organization.<sup>43</sup> The Tionnontatés, however, had two advantages over the Hurons: the particular microclimate of their region allowed them to grow tobacco (an important and valued trade item) in abundance; and their close ties with the Kiskakons prevented the Hurons from taking a more aggressive posture towards them.<sup>44</sup>

The Kiskakon winter camps at the Tionnontaté villages enabled them to pursue a number of important aspects of their gateways strategy. In the first place it gave them a continual presence in the strategic region of the Nottawasaga Bay. In the early seventeenth century, the Nottawasaga area was the most vital of all the Ottawa gateways because of the threat from the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy who would pass this region on foot if they had intended to invade the Ottawa country. By maintaining this presence the Kiskakons were well placed to hear of any important occurrences (such as the arrival of Champlain and his party) and they were able to keep abreast of all of the important developments in the Iroquoian world.<sup>45</sup>

In the second place, the Kiskakon Ottawa presence among the Tionnontatés provided them with access to trade goods which helped to diversify their resource base.

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<sup>43</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 20: 203-205; 21: 177.

<sup>44</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 20: 43-45; 38: 235; Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 6: 248; and Sagard, *Long Journey*, 158.

<sup>45</sup> This trail is clearly marked (Chemin par ou les Iroquois vont aus Outaoüacs) in an anonymous collection of the manuscript maps dating from 1680. These maps are in the collection of the French Marine History Service in Vincennes, France. Lac Ontario ou de Frontenac, 1680, Service Historique de la Marine, Recueil 67, no. 47; Lac Huron ou Karegnondi ou Mer Douce des Hurons, 1680, Service Historique de la Marine, Recueil 67, no. 48; Garrad, "Plater-Fleming," 17-18.

The Kiskakons were able to grow corn, beans, squash, and tobacco. The presence of the Hurons and the Neutrals to the east and south meant that the Kiskakons were able to trade with those nations as well, and to maintain the good relations that were associated with the establishment of alliances and the concomitant trade networks. In this sense, the Ottawas had a positive influence on the relations between the three different Iroquoian confederations who lived to the north and west of Lake Ontario. By providing goods and by maintaining a strong regional presence at Nottawasaga Bay, the Kiskakons helped to prevent the jealous, internecine warfare which was to characterize the Iroquoian world towards the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>46</sup>

Just as the Ottawas inhabited a transitional environment between the Canadian and Carolinian forests, so did they inhabit a region which straddled the frontier between two different cultural groups, one Algonquian, and the other Iroquoian. Just as they perfected their cultural adaptation to the environment, the Ottawas adapted their foreign relations to accommodate both Algonquian and Iroquoian peoples. In the context of the Kiskakon villages at Nottawasaga Bay, this adaptation took the form of a defensive alliance with the Tionnontatés. The Tionnontatés welcomed the alliance with the

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<sup>46</sup> Tooker offers the motivation for Iroquoian warfare that is already familiar to readers of George Hunt: the Five Nations wanted access to more furs and they were prepared to eliminate their Iroquoian cousins, the Huron Neutrals, and Tionnontatés in order to get them. Richter's analysis considers the social functions of warfare. He is more sensitive to the ways in which the Iroquois themselves understood the role of warfare in their culture. In particular, he draws attention to the notion of revenge war and the idea of the mourning war. In either Tooker's more eurocentric view, or Richter's Iroquoian view, the presence of the Ottawas prevented warfare from raging in Huronia and in the whole region between Lake Ontario and Lake Huron. Simply put, the Ottawas provided furs which kept the Hurons, Neutrals, and Tionnontatés clothed and gave them something to trade with the French in order to establish their own alliances, and they kept the diplomatic channels open. The Ottawas had a vested interest in peace in the region and they made certain to keep relations civil through ceremonies such as the Feast of the Dead. Elizabeth Tooker, "The Iroquois Defeat of the Hurons: A Review of the Causes," *Pennsylvania Archaeologist*, 33 (July 1963), 116-117; and Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 40 (1983), 532-533.

Ottawas for three important reasons: they provided political leverage against the Hurons; there was a strong ecological basis for trade between the Ottawa Nation and the Tionnontatés; and the Kiskakons provided security against enemies such as the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy. For their part, the Ottawas looked beyond the symbiotic advantages of trade between a principally agricultural people with a much more economically complex people. The Ottawas gained security in the enrichment of the diversity of their economy, an Iroquoian military ally, and an extension of their influence which helped to maintain stability in the region. When the French arrived in northern Lake Huron, the Ottawas soon came to regard them as they regarded the Bawating Ojibwas or the Tionnontatés, as allies who could help to protect the gateways. In order to understand the French alliance with the Ottawas, it is necessary to understand how the French were incorporated into the Ottawas' strategy.<sup>47</sup> In spite of their advanced technology, the French were unable to impose their will on the Ottawas. There were never enough French in the Upper Great Lakes to force the Ottawas to accept French authority.

The first French explorer to visit the Ottawas in their own country was Samuel de Champlain, and his visit marks the beginning of the French-Ottawa alliance. In the last days of the month of July in the year 1615 Champlain travelled from Lake

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<sup>47</sup> Those who would have us approach the topic from the other direction, or those who seek to emphasize the compromises on each side, greatly overestimate the power of the French and underestimate the resiliency of the Ottawas' gateways policy. White, *Middle Ground*, 32-33; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 820-824.

Nipissing to Lake Huron by way of the French River.<sup>48</sup> After an easy paddle through the deep channel, Champlain and his companions reached the Lake which he called "Attigouautan" and crossed through the eastern gateway into the domain of the Ottawas.<sup>49</sup> Although this event heralded the arrival of the French in the country of the Upper Great Lakes, its significance lies more in the Ottawa party sent to greet the expedition: for this was the first time the French approached an Ottawa gateway:

We met with three hundred men of a tribe named by us the *Cheveux-relevés*, or "High Hairs," because they had them elevated and arranged very high and better combed than our courtiers, and there is no comparison, in spite of the irons and methods these have at their disposal. This seems to give them a fine appearance. They wear no breech cloths, and are carved about the body in divisions of various patterns. They paint their faces with different colours and have their nostrils pierced and their ears fringed with beads. When they leave their homes they carry a club.<sup>50</sup>

A more striking description of a people is not to be found in all of Champlain's writings.<sup>51</sup> The Kiskakon and Sinago Ottawas, forewarned of his arrival by their gateways defence network, were ready for him and they spared no effort in their desire to impress.

Once Champlain had crossed the frontier out of the country of the Nipissings and

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<sup>48</sup> The original Ottawa name for the French River was likely the Nipissing River, but there is no record of the name. It quickly became known as the French River as this was the route of the French who followed in Champlain's wake.

<sup>49</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 42-43.

<sup>50</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 43-44.

<sup>51</sup> "Cheveux-relevés" means High Hairs. Champlain was referring to the hairstyle of the Ottawa men who shaved the hair from the sides of their heads leaving only a crest of hair running down the centre from the forehead to the crown. Their remaining hair was then made to stand erect by applying oil. Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 97.

into the ancestral homeland of the Ottawas, he was given a taste of their strategy.

Fortunately for Champlain, the Ottawas were prepared to welcome him as a friend and possible ally even though their knowledge of the French was exceedingly limited. They knew that the French had powerful weapons, and they wanted to obtain these weapons in order to maintain the status quo in the region.

Champlain described the meeting as cordial, "I visited them and gained some slight acquaintance and made friends with them."<sup>52</sup> From the Ottawa perspective, and in the context of their defence strategy, the meeting represented the beginning of the alliance between the two groups.<sup>53</sup> Champlain offered the ogima a present of an axe and was amazed at the reaction of the Kiskakon ogima to his gift. Although Champlain claimed to place no special significance in the present, the Ottawas understood the

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<sup>52</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 44.

<sup>53</sup> When Champlain first met the Ottawas, or *Cheveux relevés* as he called them, they told him of their war with the Asistaguerouïon, or the "fire-people." The Asistaguerouïon (also called the Assistaranon) was the Tionnontaté word for the Potawatomis. The identification of this nation has presented ethnohistorians with a difficult problem. The Potawatomis are also known as the "fire people," but because of their later alliance with the Ottawas, there has been some hesitation to accept this possibility. Others have suggested that "Assistaranon" should be considered as a collective term referring to all of the Algonquian speaking peoples living in the area to the south and west of Lake Huron. Still others see this conflict as the precursor to the Fox Wars of the early eighteenth century and claim that the Foxes were known to the Ottawas as the Assistaranon. Biggar himself felt that the "Asistaguerouïns" were Mascoutens, a nation closely related to the Fox. He also notes the use of the Iroquoian term rather than the Ottawa term. The inclusion of the explanation the "fire-people" however, leaves no doubt to their true identity as Potawatomis. The Potawatomis, like other peoples struggling in the hard conditions of the "little ice age" had to seek new hunting territories and had encroached on territory the Ottawas were prepared to defend. Sagard offers a plausible explanation for the Ottawas' use of the Iroquoian language. The Hurons, he argues, spoke only Huron. He speculates as to why: "[The Hurons] neither know nor learn any language other than their own, whether from indifference or because they have less need of their neighbours than their neighbours have of them." He does not consider the alternate reason of Ottawa language proficiency. As the smaller of the two partners, and as the one which was more used to cultural adaptations as they ranged over the Upper Great Lakes region, the Ottawas became adept at speaking several dialects and languages. Sagard, *Long Journey*, 73; R. David Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 3; Trigger, *Ataentsic*, 319; Kintetz, *Indians of the Western Great Lakes*, 261, 308; and Ives Goddard, "Mascouten," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, 15: 668.

deeper symbolic meaning of the present. The Kiskakon ogima, "was as happy and pleased with it [the axe] as if I had made him some rich gift."<sup>54</sup>

After he had offered the present, Champlain asked the ogima to describe his country. In order to help Champlain to understand the Ottawas territory, the man took a stick of charcoal and a piece of birch bark and drew a map. Finally, when Champlain (no doubt a little overwhelmed by the number of Ottawas who had been called to greet him) asked his host why they had come to this place. The Kiskakon ogima told him quite naturally that the mouth of the channel was where they came to pick and dry blueberries, an important summer subsistence activity.<sup>55</sup>

Within these few observations recorded by Champlain are a number of clues which suggest the nature of the Ottawas' initial reaction to the French. There are a number of minor questions, but none can be answered effectively until the reasons for Champlain's friendly reception are understood. When Champlain presented himself at the shore of Lake Huron, the 300 Ottawa men who had been sent to meet him had three choices. They could have turned him away and sent him back to the St. Lawrence, as Tessouat's Algonquins of the Ottawa River Valley had done in the summer of 1613. Alternatively, they could have killed him and all of his party in their slow and methodical way as a means of discouraging further visits. Finally, they could have welcomed him in the friendliest manner. Why they chose this third option is the

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<sup>54</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 44.

<sup>55</sup> The chief understood Champlain's question to mean why have you come to exert your authority over this territory as this is clearly what they were doing. In this case the answer is an example of the forthright way in which the Ottawas defined and understood their environment. Late July is blueberry season in the region, and Champlain had already mentioned eating them. Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 44.

question which must be answered.

According to the followers of Harold Innis the question of the Ottawas' acceptance of Champlain's presence has a simple answer: the Ottawas welcomed Champlain because they were eager to lay their hands on valuable French trade goods.<sup>56</sup> The reaction of the ogima to Champlain's gift of the axe appears to prove this theory, and indeed, the Ottawa trading network already included French goods which they had been given by their Huron and Tionnontaté allies.<sup>57</sup> While such goods created an interest, the Ottawas had little need for them. Their environment was relatively rich and they had strong spiritual connections to the objects which they already used. Ottawa bone tools honoured the animals from which they were made and their stone tools represented the important relationship which existed between the Ottawas and the land where the stone was quarried.<sup>58</sup> European steel represented the

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<sup>56</sup> Kinietz, *Indians of the Western Great Lakes*, 245.

<sup>57</sup> Trigger, *Ataentsic*, 299. In 1615 European goods had a very high value because of their novelty and their scarcity. The Ottawas would have used European technology, but they did not have a reliable source.

<sup>58</sup> To illustrate this point, it is useful to compare the material of the French with the material culture of the Ottawas, for example, an important trade item with an important indigenous item. An iron kettle had an undeniable utility, but in the grand scheme of the Ottawa world view its significance was slight compared to a vessel made from birch bark. The bark vessel was made from the wood which defined the Ottawas' very existence and gave them their strongest sense of communal identity. Birch bark also represented the Ottawas' important relationship with Lake Huron. The birch bark vessel was made from the same material as the canoe, sacred wood from trees which had a life in this world and in the supernatural world. Kettles were alien and though an important trade item, they lasted for a relatively long period of time and families needed a limited number. European goods were useful and for a while their novelty sparked an interest, but they could not compete with Ottawa goods in terms of the different levels of spiritual meaning with which their own goods were possessed. Among the conservative Ottawas, this meaning remained significant. Historians who have studied the fur trade have often overlooked the spiritual significance of material culture. They have also overlooked the utility of goods which were designed and adapted over centuries for a particular environment. While copper kettles and iron knives and axes were easily substituted for clay and stone, many other items were useless to people who spent a great deal of their time in canoes. It was simply too difficult to transport heavy and bulky European goods when Ottawa goods could be fashioned easily out of materials which nature provided in abundance. Note that the French who came to the *pays d'en haut* quickly rid themselves of their French woollen clothing (which became soaked when the first wave broke over the canoe) in favour of the skins worn by the Indians. For

new relationship they were developing with the French but the steel had no spiritual significance.<sup>59</sup>

Trade with the French, from the moment Champlain presented the Kiskakong with the axe, had an important military function. The Ottawas' real need was to protect their environment and their resource base from others, and their welcome of Champlain has to be seen from this vantage point. Champlain, though he did not know the Ottawas, had fought in too many campaigns with other Algonquians to be ignorant of their ideas about trade and their interest in defence. It was no accident that he presented their ogima with an axe, as he knew the symbolic meaning the axe held. This meaning would not have been lost on the seventeenth-century reader. To the French mind as to the Ottawa mind, the gift of an axe symbolized the establishment of a military alliance. Champlain's rich present was not the sharp iron blade and its wooden handle; it was the good faith and desire to help the Ottawas in their wars and in the preservation of their rich environment. Champlain's contemporaries, schooled in the art of metaphor, would have tried to make sense of the exchange in terms of their own experience.<sup>60</sup> They would have little difficulty accepting the alliance aspect of the

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evidence of the Ottawa belief in the worth of their own goods and the spiritual aspect of their material culture, see Sagard, *Long Journey*, 101-102.

<sup>59</sup> The important traditions recorded in the relations of Ottawa hunting and fishing illustrate the significance of the materials from which tools were fashioned. From the Ottawas's perspective, these relationships were critical to the way in which they identified the necessities of their world. If the spirit masters were angered the hunting and fishing would be poor and starvation would follow. See for example, Perrot, *Memoire*, 51-69.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 20-21 and Robert Mandrou, *Introduction to Modern France, 1500-1640: An Essay in Historical Psychology* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1975), 149-152. Darnton emphasizes the commonalities of experience which would have helped the readers of Champlain's account to understand the symbolic value of the axe. Mandrou discusses the rise of capitalism and the stimulation given by American wealth to European



exchange, while historians have focused on the commercial aspect. The gift of the axe was seen by the Ottawas as proof of Champlain's commitment to aid them in their wars and to provide French goods which would give them a military advantage over their neighbours. Gabriel Sagard, a Recollect contemporary of Champlain, drew the connection between the gift of a weapon and the establishment of an alliance:

When they engage in war, or prepare to invade their enemies' country, there will be two or three of the elders or more daring captains who will undertake to lead them on the occasion, and they go from village to village to explain their intention, giving presents to some in these villages in order to persuade them and procure their aid and support in the war, and in this way are like generals in command of armies.<sup>61</sup>

Presents had many functions, but as the Feast of the Dead illustrates, and as Sagard and Champlain both understood, when presents were exchanged between two different peoples, the exchange was seen as a pledge of military support. Champlain had realized this ever since his first expedition against the Iroquois in 1609 when the Hurons and Algonquians asked him to fire his arquebuses as a sign of his friendship and alliance with them.<sup>62</sup>

From the first moment of contact the Ottawas expressed pleasure at the prospect of Champlain's friendship. They had undoubtedly heard of the power of his weaponry and were anxious to benefit from the military advantage it would give them. At the same time they worried about the possibility of Champlain delivering his weapons to

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commerce. He concludes, nevertheless, that state authority was a much greater force than the market on the people of seventeenth-century France. Champlain's own motivations were not commercial; rather his interest lay in expanding France's sphere of influence. Commerce was but an element of this sphere.

<sup>61</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 151.

<sup>62</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 2: 70-71.

other nations in the Upper Great Lakes. When he left the French River, the Kiskakons asked him to visit them at their village at Nottawasaga, something he wanted to do in any event.<sup>63</sup> Champlain's interest in the Ottawas' friendship is clear enough; he wished to avoid the problems he encountered when Tessoüat refused to allow him to continue on his way in the summer of 1613. The 300 Kiskakon and Sinago warriors could easily have prevented him from passing, in spite of his arquebuses. Second, Champlain wanted to trade, and it was his policy to foster good relations with the various peoples whom he encountered in order to enhance his trading prospects.

Champlain's next visit to the Ottawas was in late February of 1616 following a period of convalescence. He met the Kiskakons at Nottawasaga near some of the villages of their Tionnontaté allies with whom Champlain had just visited. Those whom he met were spending the winter in the company of the Tionnontatés, a common practice and part of their gateways strategy.<sup>64</sup>

Champlain formed an impression of the Ottawas, but he really did not completely understand their system of government or the vital importance which they attached to defending the gateways into Lake Huron. He knew that the Ottawas had ogimas "who take command in their own districts," but he had only a vague idea of where those districts were and he had no knowledge of the ways in which the Ottawa ogimas organized the confederacy.<sup>65</sup> Champlain's attenuated account of Ottawa

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<sup>63</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 2: 70-71.

<sup>64</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 96-97.

<sup>65</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 97-98.

government is explained and corroborated in Sagard's history. Sagard, more eloquent than Champlain, took greater care in probing the depths of the systems of government and exchange which he found curious but which he deemed worthy of enquiry:

The chiefs among the savages are usually old rather than young, and they take rank by succession as royalty does here, on the understanding that the son of a chief continues to practise the virtues of the father, for otherwise they do as was done in olden times, when these tribes originally elected their sovereigns. Yet a chief has no absolute authority among them, although they pay him respect, and the tribe is led by entreaty, advice, and example rather than by commands.<sup>66</sup>

Both Champlain and Sagard held a certain admiration for this system of government, at least those aspects which they understood. Their observations and those of the French who followed them to Lake Huron gave the French some sense of Ottawa policy. Unfortunately, it took the French a long time to understand the ways in which the Ottawas identified the necessities of their world.

Ideas about government and religion, as central as they were to the alliance between the French and the Ottawas, were poorly understood by Champlain, and indeed these ideas were to remain a source of friction for as long as the alliance was to last.

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<sup>66</sup> Some historians have dismissed the observations of Champlain and Sagard, and argue that the Ottawas had only the most turbid of political systems. W. Vernon Kinitz, for example, felt that Champlain was being vague because he had little or no information on which to form an opinion of Ottawa political life. Not wanting to criticize Champlain, Kinitz noted that the "vagueness" was "probably" not his fault. "It seems," continued Kinitz, "certain that the political system was very vague. Evidence of this is found in the lack of influence of their ogimas with their people - reported by the French on numerous occasions." Kinitz has overlooked a number of important issues. In the first place he failed to appreciate the reluctance of his authorities to discuss the egalitarian nature of Ottawa political life. Even the most cursory glance at the absolutist regimes of Louis XIII, Louis XIV, and Louis XV, would have made it abundantly evident that the promotion of such ideas was anathema. Those commenting on the customs of the Algonquians and Iroquoians were not philosophes, but rather men in the employ of the King. Secondly, the "lack of influence" notion is indicative not of a state of anarchy, but rather of a state of political participation. Ottawa people did not slavishly obey the directives of their chiefs. Indeed, their chiefs did not attempt to lead in an authoritarian manner. To argue that this must necessarily mean political disorder, is to define political disorder as the lack of authoritarian rule. Finally, Kinitz has overestimated Champlain's ability to comprehend the subtleties of meaning conveyed to him by his Ottawa informants. Kinitz, *Indians of the Western Great Lakes*, 248; Sagard, *Long Journey*, 148.

Our understanding of the problem of language is critical, for the historian is forced to walk a narrow and slippery path between the hydra-headed evils of generalization, assumption, and artifice on one side, and chaos and despair on the other. Although the Bishop of Ávila's famous aphorism that language is the perfect instrument of empire rings true, language is an imperfect instrument for the study of imperialism as it conceals historical truth in a web of misunderstanding, hidden agendas, and wilful deceptions. In this deleterious atmosphere, symbols - such as Champlain's axe - are more reliable indices of meaning than are the interpretations of missionaries and colonizers.

Language difficulties operated in both directions, and the best way to form an appreciation of the problem is to listen to the complaints of the French as they attempted both to convey meanings and grasp concepts which were outside of the normal realm of the experience of one group or the other. Sagard, for example, confronted this frustration repeatedly:

And as sometimes they could not make me understand their conceptions they would explain them to me by figures, similitudes, and external demonstrations, sometimes in speech and sometimes with a stick, tracing the object on the ground as best they could, or by movement of the body.<sup>67</sup>

Sagard wondered why they did not simply advance their ideas through speech, but he himself provides his own answer. There were simply no French words to convey adequately the different levels of understanding expressed by words such as *Kiskakon*, *Kamiga*, or *Sinago*. These words, translate roughly into "cut tail" (which in turn was an

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<sup>67</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 73.

Ottawa idiom for the bear), sand, and "squirrel" but for the Ottawas they also referred to three of the four ododams. They identified specific groups of people who shared the same language, were culturally adapted to the same environment, and who were politically linked as component groups of the Ottawa Nation.

Sagard himself was aware of the problem, but he evidently considered it from his own perspective. He was annoyed with the seemingly indirect and frustrating efforts of his informants to explain their world to him, and he was equally frustrated by their failure to grasp the most fundamental components of his world:

For their language is very poor and defective in words for many things, and particularly so as concerns the mysteries of our holy religion, which we could not explain to them, not even the *Pater noster*, except by paraphrases; that is to say, for one of our words we had to use several of theirs, for with them there is no knowledge of the meaning of sanctification, the Kingdom of Heaven, the most Holy Sacrement, nor of leading into temptation.<sup>68</sup>

But French was notably poor and defective in words concerning the mysteries of the Ottawa religion such as *Michipichy*, *Nanabush*, or *Manitou*.<sup>69</sup> More importantly, the Ottawas were unable to convey the ideas which these words helped to explain. For example, the Feast of the Dead, and the metaphor of the path of life, were as alien to the French as the "most Holy Sacrement" was to the Ottawas.<sup>70</sup>

If one leaves the world of politics and religion, however, the ground becomes

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<sup>68</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 78.

<sup>69</sup> All Ottawa words are taken from the "Ottawa-English Dictionary" which is appended to the *Letter Book of the Indian Agency at Fort Wayne, 1809-1815*, held in the Manuscript Division of the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan.

<sup>70</sup> For an excellent discussion of the problems of communication see, James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 108-111.

much firmer. The French accounts of the Ottawa economy and society are more authoritative and reliable because they describe activities which the French perceived with their own senses. When Cadillac wrote of the consumption of whitefish at Michilimackinac, for example, he was speaking with *connaissance de cause*. He had tasted whitefish enough to last him to the great beyond.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, when Father Le Mercier wrote that men with bodies of solid bronze could not withstand the rigours of the portages, the paddles, and the menu, during the trips with the Ottawas to the *pays d'en haut* his fellow Jesuits must have grimaced at the memory.<sup>72</sup> Champlain's vivid description of his first encounter with the people whom he called the *Cheveux-relevés* falls into the same category.

One area which French observers had no difficulty understanding was the Ottawa economy. Frenchmen who wanted to come to the *pays d'en haut* to realize profits in the beaver trade had to adapt to a different way of doing business than the one with which they were familiar in France. The Ottawas traded specialized materials which were unavailable in certain regions, or which were the result of a particular skill of one group or another. There is absolutely no evidence of peoples buying low from some arcane "more distant tribe" and selling high for a "profit." In fact, as Sagard emphasizes, such a thought was alien to the commerce of the region:

As to liberality our savages are praiseworthy in the exercise of that virtue in proportion to their poverty for when they visit one another they make presents mutually, and in order to show their politeness they do not willingly bargain, and are satisfied to take what honestly and reasonably

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<sup>71</sup> "Relation d'évenemens" 1695, Archives Nationales, Colonies, C 11 A, 14: 78.

<sup>72</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 51: 71.

is offered them despising and blaming the proceedings of our merchants, who will bargain for an hour to cheapen the price of a beaver's skin.<sup>73</sup>

Profit was a concept alien to the way in which the Ottawas identified the necessities of their world. So far from being Hunt's "Phoenicians" of the Great Lakes, with the attendant images of luxury and excess which such a characterization brings, the Ottawas actually had a rather ascetic character, or as Sagard noted, one which reminds of the Spartans.<sup>74</sup>

Sagard was quite insistent on his Spartan metaphor. He described practices which were reminiscent of the Spartans' educational beliefs and he made direct reference to Spartan authorities, such as King Theopompos.<sup>75</sup> For example, the Spartans taught their children to be tough by letting them loose on the poor Helots to survive by cunning. Tricks and crimes were accepted, as long as the miscreants were not discovered, in which case they were punished severely. The same method was accepted by the Ottawa children, for whom there was ignominy in being caught, but pride in being clever enough to escape detection.<sup>76</sup> Their moderation and their sententious, laconic speech were other qualities which Sagard noted and which he hoped

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<sup>73</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 140. Note that each exchange system must be examined according to its own rules and to the interests of the participants and that works which try to apply the trades of particular regions at particular times must not be used as general rules for all intercourse between Europeans and Indians. The point here is that if there were Indian middlemen, they were neither the Ottawas, nor their exchange partners in the economy of the seventeenth-century Great Lakes.

<sup>74</sup> Sagard makes several references to the Spartans, and in fact was quite influenced by the classics in his writing. Such generalizations were intended to render the peoples of North America comprehensible to European readers. See Olive Patricia Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1984), 17-22.

<sup>75</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 151.

<sup>76</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 132.

would help his readers to understand this people's character by grounding it in the context of an ancient civilization.<sup>77</sup> He even mentioned the "Spartan character" of the equipage of the ogimas in an effort to underline this metaphor.

Most significantly, however, Sagard identified an ascetic quality in all of the peoples of the Great Lakes, which appealed to his own Franciscan values:

They have no law-suits and take little pains to acquire the goods of this life, for which we Christians torment ourselves so much, and for our excessive and insatiable greed in acquiring them we are justly and with reason reproved by their quiet life and tranquil dispositions.<sup>78</sup>

Although Sagard's characterization is something of a misleading generalization, his choice of the Spartans from all the peoples of the classical world, remains an interesting one, particularly when the Ottawas have been cast as Phoenicians in the historical writing on the Great Lakes.

Ottawa feasting was of great interest to the French explorers who came to the Upper Great Lakes. Like other aspects of Ottawa culture upon which they commented, feasting must be explained within the larger context of its social, political, and economic significance. The greatest of all the Ottawa feasts was one of Huron origin, the great Feast of the Dead, and it had a strong political function within the Ottawas' trading and alliance system.<sup>79</sup> Most importantly, it gave the different members of the alliance the occasion to renew their pledges of support for one another through the medium of common mourning and the gift exchange which was so valuable to the ceremony.

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<sup>77</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 140.

<sup>78</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 192.

<sup>79</sup> Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 3: 162-163.



Other feasts were given for a variety of reasons including ceremonies of the hunt, the reassembly of the village community after the winter hunting and sugaring, the arrival of a company of allies, or the assembly of the council. On all of these occasions gift giving was an important part of the programme. Gifts were given as symbols of goodwill when there were disagreements to be resolved. For example, when certain of the younger Ottawa men were anxious for war, gifts were given to them as an appeasement if the council decided for peace.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, gifts were given at feasts held in honour of prisoner exchanges, peace treaties, or when parties of traders crossed through a region controlled by one nation or another.<sup>81</sup> In this manner, feasts were used in order to facilitate the system of exchange. The French traders who came to the region had to enter into this world of feasts and presents, and they had to abandon their old ways of haggling over prices.

The last point raises an important consideration because trade also had, it must be admitted, an economic purpose. As hunting peoples needed to obtain corn and as agricultural peoples needed to augment their supplies of furs, symbiotic trade relationships were maintained throughout the Great Lakes and into the regions to the east and to the west. In the seventeenth century, with the arrival of the alien people from the east, the eastern region of trade acquired a new importance and the Ottawas and Hurons benefitted from their control over the accesses from the Upper Great Lakes region into the St. Lawrence.

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<sup>80</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 266.

<sup>81</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 151 and 266.

To understand the nature of the alliance requires a consideration of the manner in which these two peoples identified their needs. Both the Hurons and the Ottawas enjoyed a relative security and this instilled in them a conservative attitude towards change. Controlling the accesses to their homeland was a vital measure taken to enhance their sense of security. The Hurons controlled access to the east much as the Ottawas did. When Hurons wished to make the journey to the St. Lawrence they were obliged to ask permission of those who had authority over the route, in other words the gatekeepers. While Sagard was in Huronia, the gatekeepers were two brothers, Onoratandi and Auoindaon at the northern village of Queunonascaran.<sup>\*2</sup> Trading expeditions, or indeed expeditions of all kinds, needed the blessing of the gatekeepers before they were allowed to embark.<sup>\*3</sup>

The Ottawa alliance with the Hurons and the Tionnontatés was understood to comprehend the seamless web of trade, travel, and military support. The most critical feature of the alliance was the freedom of movement which the partners allowed one another. The policy of restricting access was not limited to one's own people, but rather it extended to include others:

...and since each means to be master in his own country, they allow no one of another tribe of savages to pass through their country to go to the trading unless they are recognized as master and their favour secured by a

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<sup>\*2</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 99.

<sup>\*3</sup> Bruce Trigger suggests that these "Masters and Overlords of the roads and rivers" as Sagard described them controlled the trade. This is only partially true. Sagard clearly indicates that they controlled all access and he specifically refers to warriors. There were many reasons why voyages were necessary; trade was only one. War parties, diplomatic envoys, parties sent to collect resources, and spiritual voyages were other reasons why journeys were undertaken. To emphasize trade is to bias the interpretation of the gatekeepers function in favour of a purely economic interpretation. Trigger, *Aataentsic*, 298.

present. No difficulty is made of this by the others; without it they might be hindered or an injury done to them.<sup>84</sup>

Because the Hurons were located so near the eastern gateway, and because they were numerous, politically organized, and established, the Ottawas needed to secure them as allies. To have them as enemies would have endangered the Ottawas's ability to defend themselves against threats from the east. Because the Hurons were principally an agricultural people, the alliance was a natural and mutually beneficial one. From the moment the French secured these two nations as allies, they became partners in a system of mutual defence and trade. This system was designed as a means of conserving the particular cultural adaptations to the region of the Upper Great Lakes region. It was not designed to enable its members to reap trade "profits" as middlemen in the fur trade. Champlain's axe was not the symbol of the first commercial transaction, but rather the symbol of his willingness to lead his people into an alliance which would secure them access into the Upper Lakes in exchange for French military technology. As this technology was now in the hands of the enemies of the Hurons and Ottawas, such possession was critical for their survival.

Under the aegis of the gateways strategy, the Ottawas developed a diverse and relatively rich economy. Both Champlain and Sagard remarked on the material culture of the Ottawas and both were impressed. Industry and well-designed techniques of adaptation were the sources of the Ottawas's economic strength and their society was moderate (or Spartan as Sagard would have it) rather than excessive. Thus Ottawa

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<sup>84</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, 99.

civilization, on the eve of the dramatic changes which would come with the alien influences of the Europeans, may be characterized as a resilient and thriving polity with reserves of strength and an effective plan for resisting change and preserving their cultural adaptation to their environment.

### Chapter Three: Challenges from the Iroquois and the Jesuits

Before 1649 little changed in the Upper Great Lakes region. Champlain and those explorers and missionaries who followed him to Lake Huron introduced new technologies and new diseases, but neither iron nor smallpox had the power to change the fundamental elements of the Ottawa way of life. There were simply not enough French visitors to disrupt patterns which had evolved over hundreds of years.<sup>1</sup> Small groups of Ottawas accompanied the Hurons and Tionnontatés to the French settlements in the St. Lawrence Valley, but such long trips were not a departure from usual Ottawa practice. Every summer, groups of Ottawa men and women made long trips to Chequamegon Bay in western Lake Superior and to the Bkejwanong region, south of Lake Huron. A summer trip to the new French town of Montreal was a new experience, but it was not a fundamental change to the cyclical rhythms of Ottawa life.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Very few Europeans visited the Upper Great Lakes in the seventeenth century, and before 1649 most got only as far as the missions at Huronia. Two French explorers may have visited the region: Etienne Brûlé and Nicolas de Vignau. Unfortunately, little is known of their travels or the reliability of their accounts. The first well-documented trip was made by Jean Nicollet in 1634. Nicollet was the first French explorer to reach Green Bay in western Lake Michigan. In September of 1641 the Jesuits Charles Raymbault and Isaac Jogues accompanied a group of Ottawas and Tionnontatés to Bawating where they witnessed the whitefish fishery. Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 2: 295-307; 4: 151-204; *Jesuit Relations*, 8: 247, 257, 267, 295; 23: 225, 275-283.

<sup>2</sup> In many ways the trip to Montreal was easier than the trip to western Lake Superior. In late spring, after the spring fishing season was over, Ottawas, Hurons, and Tionnontatés would assemble at one of the Sinago villages on eastern Manitoulin Island. They paddled their canoes, laden with furs, northeast until they reached Giwshkwebi Island where they turned north to head through the Shibabiyag Islands. Depending on the strength and direction of the wind, the fleet would either continue to paddle northward, in the shelter of Meshkodeyang Point and Kanigandibe Point, or it would turn northeast and head across the open water to Kokanongwi Island and the north coast of Lake Huron. The fleet then navigated the archipelago along the north coast of Lake Huron until it reached the Voyageur Channel of the French River, and headed inland. From the French River the fleet would follow the south coast of Lake Nipissing (avoiding the Nipissings who lived on the north shore of the Lake) until it reached Cross Point. Here another decision had to be made. On a windy or stormy day, the fleet could hug the coast of South Bay and then continue along the east coast to the Mattawa Portage at the North Bay. On a fine day, the fleet would simply cross the open water to the North Bay. After crossing the swampy portage route, the fleet would reassemble at the Mattawa River where it would embark for the short trip to the Ottawa River. After entering the Ottawa River the trip was a direct one, although presents would have to be given to the Algonquins at Allumette Island, and the rapids would have to be portaged. The trip to western Lake Superior

The continued vigilance at the gateways and the diverse nature of the Ottawas' cultural adaptation to the Upper Great Lakes environment left them well equipped to overcome the strange new threats.

Apart from Champlain and Sagard, the only Frenchmen to visit Lake Huron in the first half of the seventeenth century were the Jesuit missionaries and their *dommés*. French merchants were content to allow the Hurons and Tionnontatés to deliver shipments of beaver furs to Montreal. Occasionally some Ottawas accompanied these fur fleets and in so doing kept open the lines of communication which had been established by Champlain and Sagard. For their part, the Jesuits were content to concentrate their missionary efforts in Huronia among a settled, horticultural population, but occasionally they too met with Kiskakon Ottawas from nearby Nottawasaga Bay. Again the lines of communication were kept open, if only barely.

This situation changed dramatically in 1649, however, with the destruction of Huronia. With no Hurons to carry furs to Montreal and a mission in smouldering ruins, fur traders and Jesuits alike turned their attention to the Ottawas and the limited contacts of the first part of the century blossomed into a full alliance with the Ottawas replacing the Hurons as France's most important ally in the west. The object of the present

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involved only lake travel and fleets could be wind-bound for days on many uncomfortable stretches of the rugged Lake Superior coast. Biggar, *Works of Champlain*, 1: 259-284; Carte faite par Louis Jolliet, 1679, Bibliothèque Nationale, Section des Cartes et Plans, GeCC 1275 B. (179); Lac Ontario ou de Frontenac, n.d., Service Historique de la Marine, Recueil 67, no. 47; Lac Huron ou Karegnondi ou Mer Douce des Hurons, n.d., Service Historique de la Marine, Recueil 67, no. 48; Jacques-Nicolas Bellin, Carte des Lacs du Canada, 1742, Service Historique de la Marine, SH 207, no. 3; François Vachon de Belmont, Carte du cours du Saint Laurent, 1680, Bibliothèque Nationale, Section des Cartes et Plans, Collection d'Anville, GeDD, 2987, no. 8662, [this is a copy of René de Bréhant de Galinée's map of 1670]; Conrad Heidenreich, "Mapping the Great Lakes: the Period of Exploration, 1603-1700," *Cartographica* 17 (1980), 45; Eric Morse, *Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada / Then and Now* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 48-70.

chapter is to illustrate how the Ottawas managed to defend their way of life from the Iroquois invaders and to show how the French were made to adapt to the Ottawa way in the Upper Great Lakes. From the very beginning, the alliance took an Ottawa rather than a French form.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to 1649 the Ottawas were protected from Iroquois attack by the Huron and Tionnontaté villages to their east. Similarly, the presence of these Iroquoian groups prevented much contact between the Ottawas and the French. In many ways this was an advantageous situation. European disease was not a devastating problem for the Ottawas until the end of the century when French traders travelled to the *pays d'en haut*.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, until the moment of the Iroquois assault in the spring of 1649, the expansion of the French halted at Huronia. Even the bold Jesuits, so anxious to force their views on the entire world, were pleased to rest in Huronia for a time; they had no desire to preach *in partibus infidelium*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Succinctly put, this means that the French went to live among the Ottawas and not the other way around. Moreover, those French who lived in the *pays d'en haut* lived much like their Ottawa hosts. This would be true for the duration of the alliance.

<sup>4</sup> The Hurons and Algonquins, on the other hand, suffered terribly from an outbreak of smallpox in 1639. The Hurons were more susceptible to outbreaks of disease because they lived in close proximity to one another, and because they had much closer ties to the French. There are a number of references to disease in the French documents and the Ottawas were afflicted with *la rougeole* (measles), *la petite vérole* (smallpox), and *la fluxion de poitrine* (pneumonia) on a number of occasions. Archaeologists have found evidence of disease among the Ottawas, but in these cases the disease killed members of one family hunting group, not entire villages. There is no evidence of the horrific epidemics such as the ones which devastated Huronia in the winter of 1639-1640 however. Ronald J. Mason, *Rock Island: Historical Indian Archaeology in the Northern Lake Michigan Basin* (Kent Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986), 151-153; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 588-601; *Jesuit Relations*, 15: 237; 16: 53, 101, 155, 217-219; 19: 77-79, 89, 123; 21: 131.

<sup>5</sup> The first Jesuit missionaries to go into the Upper Great Lakes were Isaac Jogues and Charles Raymbault who left Huronia in late September of 1641 and arrived at the rapids which would become known as Sault Ste. Marie 17 days later. They were given a cordial greeting by the Ottawas and Ojibwas whom they met there and, according to their interpretation of events, were invited to return. No other Jesuit would accept this invitation until Father Ménard did so some twenty years later. In other words there was absolutely no Jesuit presence

European technology helped the Ottawas to accomplish the same tasks they were already accustomed to perform, but there is no evidence that new technology changed the Ottawas' economic adaptations beyond improving their efficiency. The real threat of the new technology existed only in its military potential. This was already a problem for the Iroquois and the peoples of the east coast, but it would not be a problem for the Ottawas until after the fall of the Huron Confederacy. The Ottawas were free to follow the rhythms of their daily lives without suffering the trauma of having an alien technology being forced on them through the medium of exchange. Iron made the Ottawas more efficient hunters, fishers, planters, and artisans, but they retained the methods their parents had taught them.<sup>6</sup> Trade, in spite of its relative importance in the historical writing on the fur trade, did not confer an economic vassalage on the Ottawas.<sup>7</sup>

There is no doubt about the portentous changes which were wrought by the Iroquois assault on Huronia in 1649. The warriors of the Five Nations Iroquois

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amongst the Ottawas. See *Jesuit Relations*, 23: 225-227.

<sup>6</sup> It is impossible to detect any differences in the descriptions of fishing, hunting, planting and so on written by Nicholas Perrot, Bacqueville de la Potherie and others later in the century, and those of Sagard written in the early part.

<sup>7</sup> For a long time, the fur trade has exercised a considerable influence on historical writing, but in the case of the Ottawa economy, exchange played a severely limited role. In fact, the Kiskakon Ottawas who made the trip to Montreal in June of 1654 came to enlist French aid in the ongoing struggle against the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy. In the 1650s and 1660s, the era of "the great fur fleets" coming down the Ottawa River to Montreal was also the period of the greatest threat from the Iroquois. Even then the Ottawas had to be persuaded to come to Montreal by their Tionnontaté allies in 1654 and by men like Médard Chouart des Groscilliers in 1660. By 1668 with the establishment of the mission at Bawating, and certainly by 1671 with the opening of the mission at Michilimackinac, French *coureurs de bois* were well established in the *pays d'en haut*. Their way had been made clear by the defeat of the Iroquois by the Carignan-Salières Regiment. The *coureurs de bois* would not have been able to ply their trade if the Ottawas had been more enthusiastic about making the trip to Montreal with furs. *Jesuit Relations*, 41: 77-79; 44: 111; 45: 161-163; 46: 119-121; 48: 117, 237; 49: 163.



Confederacy effectively destroyed the Huron economy and put the security of the entire region in doubt. Succinctly put, the surviving Hurons could no longer occupy their rich transitional forest environment, nor could they profit from the use of its resources. Unfortunately the Huron economy was not one which could be easily reassembled; the peculiarities of the environment which made Huronia such a prosperous region were not duplicated elsewhere in the Upper Great Lakes.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the Hurons were in grave danger of succumbing to total cultural capitulation. Many of the surviving Hurons accompanied the Jesuits on a long and difficult pilgrimage which wended its way through the St. Lawrence valley to refugee villages.<sup>9</sup> Others, especially those of the Tionnontaté Confederacy, joined their old allies the Kiskakon Ottawas and followed them into northern Lake Michigan, western Lake Superior, and eventually to Michilimackinac.<sup>10</sup>

The destruction of Huronia was a serious blow to the Ottawa Nation in general and to the Kiskakon Ottawas in particular. The Kiskakons were forced, by the threat of renewed Iroquois attacks, to abandon their ancestral home in Nottawasaga Bay in order to take refuge with the Sinagos on Manitoulin Island. Had they been on their own, they likely would have split into groups and settled individually at the Sinago villages at Manitowaning, Wikwemikong, and the outlet of the Mindemoya River, the Kamiga

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<sup>8</sup> For a much more thorough and focused discussion of this problem see Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 771. Trigger notes that the Jesuits wished to take the Hurons to Manitoulin - out of harm's way - but the Hurons knew too well that they could not raise corn on the island.

<sup>9</sup> Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 789-819.

<sup>10</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 56: 115.

villages at Bawating and Michilimackinac, and the Nassauakueton villages at Thunder Bay and Saginaw Bay. The presence of the Tionnontaté refugees, however, made this impractical. There were too many mouths to feed and too few areas where the Tionnontatés could practise horticulture. As allies, the Kiskakons would not abandon the Tionnontatés and their specialized needs. Instead, the two nations set out in search of a suitable refuge until Nottawasaga could be safely inhabited again.<sup>11</sup>

The Iroquois assault on Huronia damaged the Ottawa economy, but the actual harm done was minimal. Trade with the Tionnontatés had been limited to tobacco and surplus food crops which the Ottawas could normally grow for themselves at Michilimackinac. The Nottawasaga Bay fishery was not nearly as important to the Nation as the fisheries at Bawating and Michilimackinac, and in any event the Sinagos still had easy access to the best fishing areas of the Nottawasaga region from their villages on eastern Manitoulin Island. The Iroquois warriors were still a threat, but they were not nearly as capable of driving off the Ottawas and Ojibwas as some historians

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<sup>11</sup> Some historians argue that all the Ottawas, or even all of the Algonquian peoples of the Upper Great Lakes, were made refugees by the Iroquois invasion of Huronia. To support this interpretation, those who would cast all of the Algonquians as refugees refer to a few passages from the account of Nicholas Perrot. They complain of the difficulty of reconstructing this shattered world, but they have not asked a number of critical questions. In the first place, and in the specific case of the Ottawas, one must ask how the Iroquois destroyed the Ottawas' economy. It was based (as has been demonstrated) on fishing and diversification rather than on the fur trade with the Hurons. The second question concerns the federate nature of the Ottawa political system. One must admit that those Kiskakons who were living in the Tionnontaté region were displaced, but they would have been able to move to Manitoulin, or to Michilimackinac, or to the Sault without any significant difficulty. In fact, by modifying their cultural adaptations they could move virtually anywhere in the Upper Great Lakes where they could fish. Finally, the question of the Iroquois ability to strike hammer blows throughout the west must be called into question. After their Pyrrhic victory over the Hurons, the Iroquois were in no position to chase thousands upon thousands of Algonquians out of the Great Lakes. They were scarcely able to return unscathed to Iroquoia, and they were never able to repeat their triumph of 1649. The logistics of these so-called "hammer blows" remain to be examined in greater detail. For example, how did the Iroquois, without canoes, chase the Sinagos from Manitoulin Island? The short answer is that this was totally impossible. Perrot, *Memoire*, 83-103; *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 133; White, *Middle Ground*, 1-19.

argue.<sup>12</sup> After the Pyrrhic victory over the Hurons, the warriors of the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy lost their ability to strike "hammer blows" against the Ottawas and Ojibwas of the Upper Great Lakes. The Ottawa villages in particular were well beyond the reach of the Iroquois who had neither the canoes nor the supplies necessary to reach Manitoulin Island, or Michilimackinac.<sup>13</sup>

For the warriors of the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy to drive the Ottawas out of their ancestral home three things were necessary: the basis for the Ottawa economy would have to be destroyed; the Ottawa villages would have to be rendered indefensible; and the Ottawa warriors would have to be soundly defeated in battle. The Iroquois were unable to accomplish any of these requirements. They could no more prevent the whitefish from running in the autumn, than they could walk across the water to Manitoulin Island.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Historians, knowing the problems which the Ottawas encountered in the eighteenth century, have taken the proleptic view that the Ottawas, like their Huron and Tionnontaté allies, were driven from their ancestral homeland and forced to live as "refugees" desperately attempting to reconstruct the fragments of their shattered culture. The most forcibly argued version of this interpretation is to be found in Richard White's *The Middle Ground*. White's idea bears quotation in full as it neatly summarizes the nature of the problem: "To write a coherent story of the Iroquois hammer striking Algonquian glass, historians have traced the blows of the hammer. When they have featured the victims of the Iroquois, they have written about other Iroquoians (the Hurons, Tionnontatés, Neutrals, and Erics) because these groups either had Jesuit missionaries or lived beside neighbours that did. They have not concentrated on the shattering Algonquian world, because it is hard to tell the story of fragmentation. And in any case, the very events grew very vague as the Iroquois blows fell farther and farther west among peoples the French barely knew. When the French did come to know these peoples, the blows were still falling and the story seemed only chaos." Bruce Trigger also portrays the Ottawas as "refugees" in his discussion of the Hurons in the Upper Great Lakes. White, *The Middle Ground*, 2; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 820.

<sup>13</sup> When the Iroquois warriors attempted to reach Michilimackinac by way of the Mackinac Trail in 1654, starvation forced them to sue for peace. Perrot, *Memoire*, 81-82.

<sup>14</sup> The Ottawa situation must not be compared with the Huron situation. For accounts of the fall of Huronia, see Keith F. Otterbein, "Why the Iroquois Won: An Analysis of Iroquois Military Tactics," *Ethnohistory* 2 (Winter 1964), 56-63; Keith F. Otterbein, Huron vs. Iroquois: A Case Study in Inter-Tribal Warfare," *Ethnohistory* 26 (Spring 1979), 141-152 and Trigger, *Aataentsic*, 724.

In order to understand why the Ottawa economy was not susceptible to an Iroquois attack, it is instructive to look at those aspects of the Huron economy which rendered it vulnerable. By drawing this comparison, the reasons for the Huron failure become quite clear, as does the inapplicability of the Huron model on the Ottawa case. The general reasons for the Huron weakness are well known: the Jesuits had weakened the Hurons ability to defend themselves by creating divisions between "Christians" and "Pagans", and they had inadvertently attenuated Huron numbers through disease.<sup>15</sup> Neither missionary zeal nor disease affected the Ottawas in any real way in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Specific reasons which contributed to the Hurons manifest inability to defend themselves in the face of the Iroquois assault are less obvious. In general they may be traced to the nature of their defensive strategy. Huronia was a well delineated, permanently settled region whose defence required constant vigilance and well-built fortifications to guard against the possibility of invasion. During the first part of the seventeenth century, the defence of Huronia became a more pressing problem. The Iroquois, the enemies of the Hurons since the 1570s, were prepared to escalate the level of violence in the conflict. A number of factors led to this including the mourning war (a form of warfare which was designed to avenge dead warriors so their souls could be at peace, and to restore the demographic imbalance caused by war by replacing young men) which developed out of the Seneca blood feuds, the availability of European weapons from the Dutch, Onondaga-Mohawk rivalry over military prowess, and the

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<sup>15</sup> Trigger, *Aataentsic*, 709-722.

increasingly precarious position of the Five Nations themselves.<sup>16</sup> Surrounded by enemies and confronted by all of the attendant problems of European contact, the Iroquois were desperate to improve a situation which seemed untenable. The most obvious means was to create an escape route to the west of Lake Ontario. To do this they would have to destroy their old enemies, the Huron Confederacy.

The Hurons lacked a coordinated defence network (like the Ottawas' gateways system) and this enabled the Iroquois raiding parties to conquer one Huron village at a time. The Ottawas had another advantage over their Iroquoian neighbours, mobility. Unlike the Huron Confederacy and the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy, both of whom were tied by horticulture to a particular piece of land, the Ottawas could avoid such a disastrous conflict by climbing into their canoes and quietly paddling out of harm's way.<sup>17</sup>

Ottawa mobility, and particularly their canoe skills, gave them a source of strength which the Hurons did not possess, but the Hurons did realize what this meant immediately after the attack on Huronia:

During the two months, or thereabouts, since we have come to this Island, God has rendered us such effectual succour that we believe ourselves to be in a complete state of defense, so that the enemy, despite all he can do, is little dreaded by us in our Intrenchments; but he holds sway on the Mainland near our Island, and consequently reduces us to a state of

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<sup>16</sup> Useful discussions of the Iroquois mourning war are to be found in Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 40 (1983) 528-559; and Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 32-38.

<sup>17</sup> Perrot was careful to note this in his work: "...des Outaouais et des Saulteurs, qui estoient bien meilleurs canoteurs que les Hurons." Perrot, *Memoire*, 84.

famine more terrible than war.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, the Hurons were safe at Sainte Marie II because it was an island, and the Iroquois were not capable of launching an assault across even a narrow body of open water. The Hurons, however could not feed themselves because their main staples were not available. The Ottawas knew the security of this first consideration, but they did not fear the second. They were quite capable of sustaining themselves throughout the region of the Upper Great Lakes because they were intimately familiar with the waters and their resources.<sup>19</sup>

The Iroquois posed no direct threat to the Ottawas. Michilimackinac and Manitoulin were well beyond the reach of the Iroquois warriors both in terms of area and distance. The Iroquois warriors lacked the means to attack the Ottawas by water and they lacked the ability to find enough Ottawas to engage in a damaging confrontation. The Ottawas' relationship with the waters of the Upper Great Lakes (including the fish resources and the canoe routes) enabled them to slip deftly away from the attack that destroyed Huronia, and to find enough to eat even while they were travelling. The Hurons had "neither hunting, nor fishing, nor grain," and were forced to "scatter hither and thither in quest of acorns and roots."<sup>20</sup> The Ottawas faced no such catastrophe and by the summer of 1652 they were prepared to counter-attack the

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<sup>18</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 34: 223.

<sup>19</sup> Iroquois elm bark canoes were unwieldy, heavy, and seldom used for long voyages. When the Iroquois warriors attempted to invade the Ottawa country in 1653, they came on foot by way of the Mackinac trail through the lower peninsula of Michigan. Perrot, *Memoire*, 81-83; Belmont, "Cours du St. Laurent," 1680, Bibliothèque nationale, Section des Cartes et Plans, Collection d'Anville, GeDD 2987, no. 8662.

<sup>20</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 34: 225. The Jesuits may have taken some comfort in their axiom that *Non ex sole pane vivit homo*. The Hurons clearly did not.

Iroquois.<sup>21</sup>

The fact remains, however, that the Iroquois destruction of Huronia was a blow to the Ottawa Nation. The French *coureur de bois* Nicholas Perrot,<sup>22</sup> who lived in the *pays d'en haut* in the late seventeenth century among the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés at Michilimackinac reported the events following the destruction of Huronia directly from what he was told by Kiskakon elders.<sup>23</sup> Perrot had a good knowledge of the location of the Ottawa villages, but he was mistaken in his belief that all of these villages were abandoned. Perrot was told that the Kiskakons abandoned Nottawasaga, so he assumed that all of the Ottawas did the same:

This defeat caused terror among the Ottawas and their allies at Saginaw, Thunder Bay, Manitoulin and Michilimackinac. They went to dwell together among the Hurons, on the island which is called Huron Island.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly the defeat of their old partners the Hurons caused the Ottawas some discomfort, and they were particularly alarmed at the breach in the eastern gateway into Lake Huron. It is hard to imagine why the defeat should have caused terror. The Ottawas were out of harm's way and they knew it. As later events were to prove, the Ottawas

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<sup>21</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 38: 131.

<sup>22</sup> Perrot had come to Canada in 1660 as a *donné* of the Jesuits and he soon learned how to profit from the his ability to speak the Ottawa language. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. Perrot, Nico'as.

<sup>23</sup> Perrot's information came from the mouths of the Kiskakon Ottawa elders at Michilimackinac and the *Jesuit Relations*. Perrot, *Memoire*, 81.

<sup>24</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 80. "Cette deffaitte donna l'épouvante chez les Outaouïas et leurs alliez, qui estoient au Sankinon, à l'Anse au tonnerre, à Manitoaletz, et à Michilimackinac. Ils furent demeurer ensemble chez les Hurons dans l'isle qu'on appelle l'isle Huronne." Thorough archaeological exploration has been done on all of the island at the mouth of Green Bay which were called the Huron Islands. It proves beyond a shadow of doubt that only a small number of Ottawa and Tionnontaté people were in this region in the early 1650s. Mason, *Rock Island*, 213-217.

did not fear the Iroquois as enemies.<sup>25</sup>

After the campaigns in the region to the west of Lake Ontario, the Iroquois warriors concentrated their energy on attacking the Ottawas:

The following year [1653], the Iroquois sent an expedition of 800 men to attack the Ottawas; but these nations, persuaded that the Iroquois would be informed about their location, and that the Iroquois would not miss the chance to make a second attack, took the precaution of sending out a scouting party, as far as the old country from which the Hurons had been driven.<sup>26</sup>

The Sinago scouts at Nottawasaga perceived the approaching Iroquois and immediately sent word to the Ottawa village at Michilimackinac. This element of the gateways strategy worked exactly as it had been designed "...they were always careful to keep scouts on watch, so as not to be surprised, and the scouts saw the enemy in time."<sup>27</sup>

The Iroquois could not find any Ottawas in the area of Nottawasaga and resolved to attack Michilimackinac the next summer.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Another French authority, Bacqueville de la Potherie, sheds some light on Perrot's curious observation. He too notes the Ottawa "terror" but he places it in a different period, the 1660s: "All the Outaouak peoples were in alarm. While we were waging war with the Iroquois, those tribes who dwell about Lake Huron fled for refuge to Chagoüamikon, which is on Lake Superior; they came down to Montreal only when they wished to sell their peltries, and then trembling [with dread of the enemy]." La Potherie was familiar with Perrot's account, and he may have simply have misunderstood the passage in the *Memoire*. On the other hand both Perrot and La Potherie may have mistaken Ottawa forays into Lake Superior as flights away from the Iroquois menace. In order to ascertain the truth it is necessary to probe more deeply into Perrot's account for he has a great deal more to say about this so-called flight and the ways in which the Ottawas employed their gateways defense strategy. La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 85-86.

<sup>26</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 81. "L'année suivante [1653], les Iroquois détachèrent encore huit cents hommes pour y aller; mais ces nations persuadées qu'ils seroient informez du lieu de leur établissement, et qu'ils ne manqueroient pas de faire une seconde entreprise, se précautionnèrent en envoyant un party de leurs gens à la découverte, jusqu'à l'ancien pays d'ou les Hurons avoient estez chassez."

<sup>27</sup> "...car ils avoient tousjours soin de tenir du monde à la découverte pour n'estre pas surpris, qui les découvrirent véritablement. Perrot, *Memoire*, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 82.



The second Iroquois attempt was no more successful than the first. The Iroquois warriors were desperate to force the Ottawas away from Lake Huron in order to make the area safe for Iroquois settlement. An important motive for the attack against the Hurons had been to open an area where the Iroquois could relocate if the pressures from the English forced them out of their homeland to the south of Lake Ontario. With the Ottawas firmly entrenched in Lake Huron, the Iroquois knew they could not live in peace in the Hurons' former country. By driving the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés out of Nottawasaga Bay, however, the Iroquois had only succeeded in angering the Kiskakon Bear. Now they would have to kill it or face the consequences of failure.<sup>29</sup>

By 1654 the Iroquois warriors were weakened, overextended, and unable to mount a campaign which would defeat the Ottawa Nation.<sup>30</sup> Without birchbark canoes, the Iroquois were unable to move swiftly enough to undertake long voyages from Iroquoia into the country of the Upper Great Lakes.<sup>31</sup> For the Ottawas such

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<sup>29</sup> Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 60-65.

<sup>30</sup> Perrot makes a final reference to the notion of an Ottawa flight out of their ancestral homeland, in a curious chapter entitled "The Flight of the Ottawas and the Hurons into the Mississippi Region." This chapter raises more questions than it answers. In spite of what he has related in the previous chapter, Perrot now mentions the Ottawas trip to the Saint Lawrence in the month of August of 1656. The arrival of the Ottawas and their furs is noted in the *Jesuit Relations* to have been the cause of great joy in the colony, where there had been grave concern over the defeat of the Hurons and the repercussions this would have on the commerce in fur. Perrot, confronted with this fact in the *Jesuit Relations*, was compelled to adjust his history to accommodate the arrival of the Ottawas from the *pays d'en haut* laden with furs, and his earlier assertion that the Iroquois had driven them from their homes in the Lake Huron region in the years 1650 and 1651. "Their arrival caused the country universal joy, for they were accompanied by fifty canoes, laden with goods which the French came to this end of the world to procure." *Jesuit Relations* 42: 219; "Perrot, *Memoire*, 80-83.

<sup>31</sup> The elm bark canoes of the Iroquois were too heavy and unwieldy to use on long journeys. The Mohawks sometimes used birchbark canoes which they captured from the Hurons, but without access to the birch trees which grew in profusion in the Ottawa country, but not to the south in the Iroquois country, they were unable to make necessary repairs. The Iroquois elm canoes were adequate for spear fishing in calm waters, but they were of little use for anything else. Joseph-François Lafiteau, *Moeurs des sauvages américains, comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* (Paris: Saugrain l'ainé, 1724), 2: 216; Perrot, *Memoire*, 80-83.

voyages were annual occurrences, but for the Iroquois they were rare and momentous occasions. By the time the Nassauakueton scouts perceived the Iroquois force approaching Saginaw Bay, the invading army was suffering from hunger and were forced to conclude a peace settlement on the spot:

The enemy was already lacking provisions, because, on the route which they had taken to the Upper Country, they had found very little game. Deliberations were held and a treaty of peace was proposed.<sup>32</sup>

The peace treaty, held at the Nassauakueton village at Saginaw Bay, was to be a simple exchange of prisoners for food and blankets and the Iroquois warriors were in a weak enough state to accept these poor terms gladly.<sup>33</sup> The Nassauakuetons, however, decided to make use of their position of strength and made a bid to eliminate this force for good by trading poisoned bread. A Huron woman who lived with the Nassauakuetons but whose son had been captured and adopted by the Iroquois discovered the plot and surreptitiously warned the Iroquois not to take the Ottawa provisions.<sup>34</sup>

The Iroquois warriors left Saginaw quietly and immediately, but Nassauakueton scouts, who had been assigned to watch the enemy, noted their departure and kept the army under surveillance. Before the Iroquois warriors could reach Michilimackinac, the scouts sent word of the approaching army, giving the Kamiga Ottawas time to gather

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<sup>32</sup> "L'ennemy manquoit desjà de vivres, parceque, dans la route qu'ils avoient tenu jusqu'alors, il ne s'estoit rencontré que très peu de bestes. On parlementa, et l'on proposa de traiter un paix ensemble." Perrot, *Memoire*, 82.

<sup>33</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 82.

<sup>34</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 82.

their forces and those of their Sinago Ottawa and Bawating and Mississauga Ojibwa allies. When the exhausted Iroquois force attempted to cross the Straits of Mackinac, they were attacked and soundly defeated by the combined forces of the Ottawas and Ojibwas.<sup>35</sup> The remainder of the Iroquois war party was forced to retreat to the south where they were met by hostile nations of the Illinois Confederacy. All things considered, the entire campaign proved to be a dismal failure for the Iroquois, and a success for the Ottawas who defeated the invaders with relative ease.

While the Sinagos, Kamigas, and Nassauquetons remained safe in their villages the Kiskakon Ottawas had been forced to abandon their village in Nottawasaga Bay and this is the move to which Perrot and La Potherie referred. The Kiskakon problem was to find a new home which would accommodate the specific requirements of their needs, as well as those of their Tionnontaté allies. In other words their task was to find an uninhabited place with good fishing and hunting possibilities, and with a suitable climate for horticulture. These requirements were not easily filled. Most of the best locations in the Upper Great Lakes were already occupied and those which were not, like Bkejwanong and Nottawasaga, were too close to the Iroquois menace. Although the population density of the Upper Great Lakes region was relatively sparse, people needed large areas in order to preserve the renewable resources. The best settlement locations, river outlets, were always claimed by one group or another, and any attempt

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<sup>35</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 83.

to settle would lead to confrontation.<sup>36</sup>

For a year, the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés had lived on Manitoulin Island among the Sinagos, but there were simply too many people for the Sinagos to accommodate.<sup>37</sup> Manitoulin Island did not have adequate resources to sustain the 1800 displaced people. In the spring of 1651 the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés had migrated west, passing through the straits at Michilimackinac on their way to a small group of uninhabited islands at the entrance to Green Bay in Lake Michigan.<sup>38</sup> The Kiskakons and Tionnontatés then lived on Rock Island for two years in a village with a palisade where they grew corn, beans, squash, and even some tobacco.<sup>39</sup>

Rock Island proved to be unsuitable even for temporary habitation. The local Winnebagos were hostile, and the fishing and horticulture were relatively poor. After

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<sup>36</sup> River outlets were preferred for settlement for two reasons: in the first place they offered easy access to the hunting grounds of the interior; and secondly they provided some of the best fishing possibilities in the Great Lakes. Several native Great Lakes fish are anadromous, in other words they live in the deep water of the Lakes, but spawned in rivers and streams. Lake trout and sturgeon, were easily caught as they made their way upstream to spawn. The Mississagi River, for example, was a preferred location for sturgeon fishing. *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 135.

<sup>37</sup> There were about 1300 Kiskakons and 500 Tionnontatés. The average Ottawa village consisted of 400 people. Michilimackinac was the exception. There were about 2000 people living there. *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 213; 61: 103.

<sup>38</sup> Rock Island, the location chosen by the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés was not occupied in 1651, but the Potawatomis had maintained a village there during the 1640s. Like the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés, the Potawatomis had been fleeing from the Iroquois. Their villages in the region to the south of Lake Huron had been destroyed in 1641 by an Iroquois war party who forced them to move north. The Potawatomis managed to win territory from the Winnebagos in the region at the head of the Bay allowing them to leave the uncomfortable Rock Island sometime in the late 1640s. These dates have been confirmed by an authoritative archaeological study by Ronald Mason. David R. Edmunds, *Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 5; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 31-32; Ronald J. Mason, *Rock Island: Historical Indian Archaeology in the Northern Lake Michigan Basin* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986), 212-213.

<sup>39</sup> Mason, *Rock Island*, 213-217; *Jesuit Relations*, 41: 77-79; 44: 245-247; 55: 101-103; Perrot, *Memoire*, 81.

two years the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés moved again, this time northwest to Chequamegon Bay on the southern shore of Lake Superior. They arrived at Chequamegon in the summer of 1653 and found the area much better suited to their needs; the fishing was excellent and the climate was acceptable for horticulture.<sup>40</sup>

Chequamegon Bay had another advantage. Lying off the coast from Chequamegon Point was a small group of islands. In times of danger, the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés could simply climb into their canoes and take refuge where the Sioux, who lived to the west, could not follow them.<sup>41</sup> The Kiskakons and Tionnontatés lived prosperously at Chequamegon for the next eighteen years until the Sioux finally managed to drive them back to Michilimackinac in 1670.<sup>42</sup>

While the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés established themselves at Chequamegon Bay, the Iroquois continued their attempts to drive the Sinagos, the Kamigas, and the Nassauakuetons from Lake Huron. The "Relation of 1655-1656" mentions the torture of 15 Iroquois prisoners at the hands of the Ottawa, for example.<sup>43</sup> This is proof of the continuation of hostilities, but scarcely evidence of endemic warfare on a grand scale. In January of 1658, however, a large Iroquois force embarked upon a campaign against the Ottawas. According to a Mohawk delegation at Montreal, a force of 1600 Iroquois

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<sup>40</sup> In 1670 the Jesuit Claude Dablon reported from the Mission of Sainte Marie du Sault at Bawating on the fishery at the Mission of St. Esprit at Chequamegon. He noted that whitefish, trout, and lake herring could be taken throughout the year, but that in the autumn the numbers of fish were prodigious. *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 151; 56: 117.

<sup>41</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 223.

<sup>42</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 133, 171; 56: 117.

<sup>43</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 42: 109.

warriors had been dispatched to the *pays d'en haut* to take vengeance on the Ottawas for the death of thirty Iroquois the year before.<sup>44</sup> Although a state of open warfare existed, the *Jesuit Relations* for the years from the late 1650s through the 1660s (the very period when the Ottawas were said to have been dispersed) contain yearly references to the Ottawa fur brigades,<sup>45</sup> evidence which suggests the notion of refugees and dispersals is neither appropriate, nor accurate.

The term refugee, once applied to the Ottawas by Perrot, has assumed a powerful meaning.<sup>46</sup> Nicholas Perrot, for all of his qualities, was decidedly not a historian. His interpretation of the material in the *Jesuit Relations* and his account of the history related to him by the Kiskakon elders is deeply flawed by oversimplification and his unwillingness to read, or to listen, critically to the information which he was given.<sup>47</sup> For example, when the Kiskakon elders told him of the destruction of Huronia and of the western movement of the peoples who had lived in the region of Nottawasaga Bay, he took this to mean the entire Ottawa Nation.<sup>48</sup> Such an interpretation suited him as

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<sup>44</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 44: 205.

<sup>45</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 45: 161-163; 46: 119-121; 47: 307; 48: 117; 49: 161-163; and 50: 177.

<sup>46</sup> The Ottawas have been called refugees in the historical writing almost as often as they have been called middlemen. Neither term is appropriate. For example see White, *Middle Ground*, 1-49.

<sup>47</sup> According to Perrot the Ottawas embarked upon a journey of unprecedented ambition from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi region, which he calls *la Louisianne*. Fear of the Iroquois (though he does not care to elaborate on this reason) was given as the Ottawa motivation for abandoning their home. Perrot then gave a long and detailed account of the peregrinations of the Ottawas among the Sioux. This account emphasized the uneasiness of the relations between the two groups and it made specific reference to the Sioux's lack of European weaponry. The account concludes with the Ottawa arrival at Chequamegon. "...les Outaouäs, craignent de n'estre pas assez forts pour soustenir les incursions des Iroquois, qui estoient informez de l'endroit où ils avoient fait leur establissement, se réfugièrent au Micissypy, qui se nomme à présent la Louisianne." Perrot, *Memoire*, 85-88.

<sup>48</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 81.

it allowed for the portrayal of the Iroquois as the villains in the story. The Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy was New France's enemy, and Perrot wished to portray this enemy in the most dramatic terms possible. In order to accomplish this, he exaggerated his portrayal of the conflict between the Ottawas and the Iroquois and he deliberately avoided the most important question. He did not ask his Kiskakon sources how the Iroquois could have chased the entire confederacy to the western end of Lake Superior.<sup>49</sup>

The migration of the Kiskakons and the Tionnontatés to the west was, in one sense, a flight from danger as Perrot describes it. This flight, however, was not a symptom of a world shattered into fragments. Rather the flight was a response designed to keep the Kiskakon and Tionnontaté societies intact and able to sustain themselves.<sup>50</sup> The Ottawa concept of territoriality was quite different from the French concept. The Ottawas identified with Lake Huron, but they also had a special regard for Lake

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<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Perrot knew of contradictions between his account and the rendition given in the *Jesuit Relations*. For example, he knew that while the Jesuits reported the annual arrival of the Ottawa fur brigades, he was following Ottawa migrations much further west. His solution to this problem was to avoid the inclusions of dates. To be fair to Perrot, it would have been difficult for him to obtain dates from the elders. Perrot, *Memoire*, 80-83.

<sup>50</sup> The main problem, however, with the term "refugees" is a conceptual one. Perrot, like other French observers was obsessed with the European ideas of territoriality. He constructed a false and arbitrary world of borders and boundaries and then attempted to place nations within certain limits. His definition of the term "refugee" reflects this bias. When peoples moved out of the regions he had assigned them, especially in reaction to external pressures, they became refugees. Unfortunately his assignments are flawed. Both his Eurocentric attitude and the definition stemming from that attitude have made their way into the thought of contemporary historians. For example see Richard White, *The Middle Ground*, 11: "This clustering produced refugee centers that occupied a strip running north-south between the western Great Lakes and the Mississippi. As refugees moved west to avoid the Iroquois hammer, they encountered an anvil formed by the Sioux, a people whom the Jesuits called the Iroquois of the West. Antagonized by refugee aggression, the Sioux proved more than capable of holding their own against the Hurons, Petuns, and the various Algonquian groups that opposed them." White's sources for this assertion are Perrot, the *Jesuit Relations*, and Radisson. Perrot and the Jesuits, as we have seen had only a fragmentary knowledge of the history of the west at this time. As for Radisson, there is nothing at all about refugees on the pages cited by White.

Superior, which they regarded as a divinity.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the Kiskakons knew that their presence would be resented by the Sioux and the Winnebagos. The Kiskakon elders explained their concept of territoriality to Perrot, and how they attempted to get along:

Each of these men had to themselves a particular country where they lived with their wives and multiplied, little by little. They lived in peace until they became too numerous. As they multiplied over time, they separated from one another in order to live at their ease, and they became, by dint of getting along, neighbours of peoples unknown to them, and whose language they did not understand.<sup>52</sup>

It was dangerous to upset the balance which had evolved over the centuries in the Upper Great Lakes. The Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy discovered this when they attacked Huronia. To a lesser extent, the Ottawa Nation discovered this when the Kiskakons went to Chequamegon. Eventually the Ottawas were drawn into a number of conflicts with the Sioux and the Outagami peoples of the west.<sup>53</sup>

According to the Ottawa definition of territoriality, individual families had the right to collect sap at certain sugar bushes and to hunt in certain parts of the forest. The entire village had the right to exploit particular berry patches, or to fish in a specific fishery. The Nation itself claimed the right to control the gateways into Lake Huron. These notions imply control of a vast region, rather than possession of a well delineated,

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<sup>51</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 265.

<sup>52</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 8. "Chacun de ces hommes avoient à eux un pays particulier, où ils demeuroient avec leurs femmes, qui se multiplièrent peu à peu. Ils véçurent en paix jusqu'à ce qu'ils devinrent plus nombreux. S'estant donc dans la suite des temps multipliez, ils se séparèrent pour vivre a leur aise et devinrent, à force de s'entendre, voisins de gens qui leur estoient inconnus et dont ils n'entendaient point le langage."

<sup>53</sup> See Chapter Seven.



constantly occupied territory. Nevertheless, Chequamegon Bay was beyond the limits of the Ottawas' territory even in the broadest interpretation of the term.

In summary, the extent of the Iroquois impact on the Ottawa civilization has been greatly exaggerated, largely because Perrot's account was based on interviews which he had held with certain Kiskakon elders at Michilimackinac. The Kiskakons were always the closest to the French from the moment of contact and throughout the French - Ottawa alliance. As Perrot talked to Kiskakon elders he wrote the details of what he happened to learn about events which happened to interest him. Occasionally, if he became deeply interested, he wrote in some detail. About events which failed to arrest his sympathies, he wrote little. Had Perrot been among the Kamigas or Sinagos on Manitoulin Island, he would have heard and recorded a completely different account of the events following the destruction of Huronia. To these people the disruption of the alliance with the Hurons and Tionnontatés meant temporary economic difficulty and a threat to regional security, but it was not disaster. History's bias in favour of those whose stories were recorded is evident in the case of the Ottawa "flight." A few hundred Iroquois warriors, who had neither canoes nor the skill to navigate them and who had outrun their supply lines, were totally unable to chase the Ottawa Nation from their ancestral home on Manitoulin Island all the way to the western end of Lake Superior.

The Jesuit missionaries were no more successful than the Iroquois warriors in disrupting the way of life in northern Lake Huron. As with the Iroquois assault, however, the effects of Jesuit activity have been greatly, and gravely, exaggerated.

Jesuit missionaries did live among the Ottawas, and missions were established on Manitoulin Island, at Bawating, at Chequamegon, and at Michilimackinac, but these missions were even less successful than those in Huronia. In spite of some interesting similarities in the ways in which the Jesuits and the Ottawas defined the necessities of their worlds, the Ottawas rejected the Jesuits and the beliefs which they attempted to impose upon the peoples of the Great Lakes.<sup>54</sup>

By the time they turned their attention to the Ottawas in the 1650s, the Jesuits had already learned several lessons from their experiences with the Micmacs, Algonquins, and Hurons. The most important of these lessons was the necessity of finding an appropriate location from which to preach. Areas which were inhabited year after year, for long periods at a time, and which ensured a captive audience were the most appropriate. In the Ottawa country these areas were the fisheries of Bawating, Michilimackinac, and later Chequamegon Bay.<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately for the Jesuits, Ottawa spirituality in the 1650s was not under the same pressures as Huron spirituality had been under during the 1630s and 1640s, and from the moment the first missionaries proposed

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<sup>54</sup> Again the historian must overlook tempting (but ultimately confusing) comparisons between the situation in Huronia and the situation further west in the Upper Great Lakes. *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 133, 171; 56: 99-101; 57: 203; Tanner, *Atlas*, 36-37.

<sup>55</sup> By the 1670s there were four Ottawa Missions: the Mission of Sainte Marie du Sault at Bawating which was founded in 1668; the Mission of Saint Ignace at Michilimackinac founded in 1671; the Mission of Saint François Xavier at La Baie des Puants or Green Bay founded in 1669; and the Mission of the Apostles on the North Channel of Lake Huron, which was founded in 1679. This last replaced the completely unsuccessful Mission of Saint Simon which was located amongst the Sinagos of Manitoulin Island. The Mission of Saint Esprit, at Chequamegon was largely shut down by the departure of the Kiskakons and the Tionnontatés in the spring of 1670. Although the Jesuits referred to these four under the common title of the Ottawa Missions, the Ottawas proper were not the only nation targeted by the Jesuits. The Ojibwa nations living along the northern part of Lake Huron, the Tionnontaté Hurons, and the Illinois peoples around Lake Michigan were also part of the Jesuit conversion programme. *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 133-137, 141-143; 56: 99-101; 57: 203, 249-251; 59: 71, 217; 61: 69, 95, 103.

living in the Upper Great Lakes, the Ottawas opposition began.

Few in number, the Jesuits had set themselves a daunting task in the Ottawa missions. That they failed in their objective of converting the Ottawas to Christianity is not a surprise. That they attempted this effort at all tells a great deal about Jesuit zeal and determination. Huronia was a well delineated space inhabited throughout the year by a sedentary population; the "Ottawa Country," as defined by the Jesuits, consisted of a rugged wilderness, sparsely populated and greater in total area than France itself. Until the 1670s, Jesuit influence, and even Jesuit comprehension of the lands beyond Huronia and across the Upper Great Lakes region, was completely inadequate. Few in number, and faced with a spirited indifference to their message, the Jesuits had little effect on the Ottawas. Jesuit presence, although clearly annoying, was tolerated only out of regard for French military power. As long as the Ottawas thought the French would support them militarily, they were prepared to accept the Jesuits and other minor irritants.<sup>56</sup>

By the middle of the seventeenth century the Jesuits were acquainted with the nations of the Ottawa confederacy, and with the various Ojibwa nations in Northern Lake Huron, but their knowledge of these peoples was limited. On the eve of the Iroquois invasion, the Jesuit Paul Raguenaud prepared an account of the different peoples of the Upper Great Lakes. Although he knew who these different peoples were, he had

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<sup>56</sup> It has been argued that the Hurons would have gladly rid themselves of the Jesuits, and their destructive power, but for their dependence upon European trade goods. Other than weapons, the Ottawas had no such needs - indeed the Hurons probably had none either - but they were concerned to keep French arms on their side against their Iroquois enemies. See Trigger, *Ataentsic*, 596; Neal Salisbury, "Religious Encounters in a Colonial Context: New England and New France in the Seventeenth Century," *American Indian Quarterly* 16 (Fall, 1992), 504.

no idea where they lived:

On the South shore of this fresh-water sea [Lake Huron], dwell the following Algonquin Tribes: Ouachaskesouek, Nigouaouichiririk, Outaouasinagouek, Kichkagoneiak, and Ontaanak, who are all allies of our Hurons. With these we have considerable intercourse.<sup>57</sup>

Raguenau was obviously familiar with these different nations, and he understood them to be distinct from one another, but he knew little else about them. Among these people, lamented Raguenau, there was enough work for many lifetimes, but the Ottawas would as soon kill a missionary as listen to his message: "a single person is capable of murdering you when he pleases, without dread of being punished by anyone in the world."<sup>58</sup>

There had been some Jesuit exploration of the Upper Great Lakes before the fall of Huronia (Isaac Jogues and Charles Raymbaut journeyed as far as Bawating in late September of 1641), but travel to the region proved to be difficult, and the Jesuits were hesitant to make the journey to the heart of the Ottawa country.<sup>59</sup> In the first place, the Jesuits needed the help of the Ottawas and Ojibwas to cross the open water of Lake Huron by canoe. Such help was not given enthusiastically. In fact, the Ottawas were hostile to the Raymbaut's request for transportation. It was the Hurons who finally persuaded the Ottawas to take Raymbaut to Bawating. Jogues then had to go along as

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<sup>57</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 33: 151. Raguenau is referring to the four Ottawa Nations as well as to the Otter people, or Nikikouets of the Ojibwas.

<sup>58</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 33: 155.

<sup>59</sup> Jogues and Raymbault left Huronia in late September of 1641 and reached Bawating in seventeen days after traversing the North Channel of Lake Huron. By the middle of October all of the Bawating Ojibwas, and a number of Kamiga Ottawas were present to take part in the whitefish run. The two Jesuits estimated that 2,000 people were present. Raymbault questioned the Ottawas and Ojibwas about the peoples of Lake Superior and he was told of the Crees and the Sioux, as well as other Ojibwa nations. *Jesuit Relations*, 23: 225.

he was a missionary to the Hurons and he could act as a translator for the expedition. Second, in the 1640s, the Jesuits were not enthusiastic to extend their work. They had more than enough converts to be won and souls to be cared for among the sedentary Hurons. Those who had tracked after the Montagnais and Algonquins in deep snow had no desire to repeat the experience with the highly mobile nations of the Upper Great Lakes. Rather than take the task themselves, the Jesuits at the Huron mission attempted to excite others, newly arrived from France, to heed the calling.<sup>60</sup>

The Jesuits in Huronia attempted to excite their fellow missionaries to heed the call by reporting on the evidence of a strong Ottawa spirituality. Of all the peoples of the Upper Great lakes, the Ottawas were always presented as being particularly given to feasting and other such "heresies." Paul Raguenaу, for example, described them thus:

The Ondataouaouat, who are of the Algonquin race, are in the habit of invoking almost always in their feasts him who has created the Sky, - asking him for health and a long life; for success in their wars, in the chase, in fishing, and in all their trading; and with that object they offer him the meats that are eaten at the feast.<sup>61</sup>

What Raguenaу found especially offensive was the Ottawa belief that different deities were responsible for different elements. Although he did not use their Ottawa names, Raguenaу noted that the Ottawas sacrificed tobacco to the "spirit" who made the sky [Kitche Manitou], to the "spirit" who dominated the waters [Michipichy], and others

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<sup>60</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 33: 225.

<sup>61</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 33: 227.

including the "spirit" who sent the winter [Keewatin].<sup>62</sup>

An Italian Jesuit, Francesco-Giuseppe Bressani, continued Raguenu's theme:

A nation of Algonquins nearer to the Hurons, called the Ondatauauat, invokes at almost every feast the maker of Heaven, asking him for health, long life, and favourable results in their hunting, fishing, wars, and trade; but they believe the genie who has created the Heaven is different from the one who has made the earth, and from the author of Winter, who dwells toward the North, whence he sends the snows and the cold, as the genie of the waters sends tempests and shipwrecks.<sup>63</sup>

Bressani had clearly heard the same stories, likely from the same sources, as Raguenu.

Jesuit knowledge of the Ottawas or their beliefs was more limited than their condemnation of Ottawa heresy. At least Bressani, unlike Raguenu, knew where some of the Ottawas lived. He described Manitoulin as the largest of the islands in Lake Huron and mentioned that some "barbarians" called Ondatauauat lived there.<sup>64</sup>

After Jogues and Raymbaut, and after the brief mentions by some of the missionaries in Huronia, the Jesuits had little to say about the Ottawas save for the reports of their convoys arriving in the Saint Lawrence.<sup>65</sup> The next Jesuit missionary to attempt contact with the Ottawas in the Upper Great Lakes was the veteran missionary, René Ménard, who left the St. Lawrence with a company of Ottawas late in

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<sup>62</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 33: 227. It is difficult to know whether the Ottawas were offering tobacco to Keewatin, the spirit of the North, or Bebon, the spirit of Winter. Raguenu is not specific.

<sup>63</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 38: 15.

<sup>64</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 38: 235.

<sup>65</sup> Another Jesuit, Joseph-Antoine Poncet de la Rivière, a friend of Marie de l'Incarnation and a survivor of the Iroquois torture ritual, was likely the Jesuit who spent the winters of 1648-1649 and 1649-1650 among the Ottawas on Manitoulin where he established the short-lived and unsuccessful Mission of St. Pierre. There are only a few brief remarks about this mission, hardly a surprise considering its lack of success. Lucien Campeau, however, says nothing of Poncet's work among the Ottawas, and makes only passing notice of his work in Huronia. See *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. "Poncet de la Rivière, Joseph-Antoine."

the year 1660. Ménard claimed to have made some progress. Specifically, he baptized an unspecified number of dying children and three elderly Ottawas during the winter of 1660-1661. He had to baptize the children "by stealth" as their concerned relatives hid them whenever he paid a visit to their wigwams. Of the adults, two were men and the third a widow. One of the men evidently made a death bed conversion while his relatives looked on in various states of horror and pity. The other was blind and also died after receiving the Christian faith. The woman was christened Anne and she alone appears to have been of sound mind and body. She found the Christian ideal of chastity to have been the most attractive element of her new faith and she evidently succeeded in remaining pure in the midst of, "...unceasing abominations wherewith those infamous wretches glory in constantly defiling themselves."<sup>66</sup>

Ménard accomplished virtually nothing. As Jerome Lalement noted:

Except these Elect, the Father found nothing but opposition to the Faith among those Barbarians, owing to their great brutality and infamous polygamy.<sup>67</sup>

Lalement was taking liberties with the truth in suggesting that there was an elect at all. Some poor children, whose relatives had not been sufficiently vigilant in protecting them from the death which the Hurons assured them followed baptism, and a few invalids is scarcely evidence of successful proselytization.

After these sporadic and fruitless efforts, concentrated missionary activity among the Ottawas began in earnest. The Hurons would never again be a suitable focus of

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<sup>66</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 48: 125-127.

<sup>67</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 48: 127.

field work for the Jesuits, save for the Tionnontatés living with the Kiskakons at Chequamegon Bay. Jesuit interest turned to the Ottawas, a people who one could expect to find in their villages during the warmer months of the year. The Jesuit Claude Allouez had arrived in New France in 1658 and he immediately applied himself to mastering both the Huron and the Ottawa languages. In 1663, he was appointed by Bishop Laval as vicar general to the *pays d'en haut* and ordered to leave the following year. When he attempted to embark with the Ottawas who had come to Montreal that summer of 1664, he was refused passage:

The Outaouats, to whom every kindness had been shown, would not take any of his packages or any of his people in their canoes.<sup>68</sup>

With the means to carry neither altar-bread nor wine, Allouez could not leave the St. Lawrence.

His departure the following year on 8 August, 1665 was only marginally more successful. Four hundred Ottawas, Ojibwas, and Tionnontatés had come to Trois-Rivières that summer, and Frontenac appealed to them to take Allouez with them on their return trip to Chequamegon Bay. On this occasion he made it as far as the Rivière des Prairies in the Upper St. Lawrence before his canoe was damaged on some submerged rocks, and he was unceremoniously abandoned to fend for himself.<sup>69</sup> His prayers were seemingly answered, however, and a party of Ottawas returned to save him from death by starvation, exposure, or Iroquois war expeditions. Evidently, the concern over angering Onontio was greater than the nuisance of transporting Allouez, his altar-

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<sup>68</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 177.

<sup>69</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 251.



bread, his two-year supply of wine, and his portable altar from Trois-Rivières all the way to Chequamegon.<sup>70</sup> For a people whose environment forced them to be practical, transporting such heavy luxuries made no sense.

Allouez's account of the Ottawa people provides a useful glimpse into their spirituality and their reasons for rejecting the Christian teaching of the Jesuit missionaries. Like Raguenaud and Bressani before him, Allouez was offended by the spiritual world of the Ottawas. The long descriptive account he provided was meant to illustrate the state of heresy and savagery in which these people lived.<sup>71</sup> As Allouez questioned what he saw around him, he learned more and more about ideas which he considered to be perverse, but nevertheless enthralling. His description is full of the censures one encounters throughout the *Jesuit Relations*; yet in its attention to detail and in its attempts to explain, it is clearly the work of a man who felt a certain horrified fascination.

Unlike the work of his confreres, Allouez's description was entirely based upon his own experiences and discussions with the Ottawas of Michilimackinac. He attempted to find terms of reference with which to help his readers to understand the strange and complex beliefs of his hosts. Like so many other learned missionaries from Sagard on, Allouez compared these beliefs with the pantheism of the ancient Greeks and Romans:

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<sup>70</sup> Allouez made Pointe du Saint Esprit on 1 October 1665. This destination tells the historian - as do his later relations - that he was among the Kiskakon Ottawas who lived with the Tionnontaté Hurons. While members of the other three confederates were sometimes present, Chequamegon was home to the Kiskakons for a period of time in the 1660s. See *Jesuit Relations*, 52: 203-205; 54: 153.

<sup>71</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 273-295.

There is here a false and abominable religion, resembling in many respects the beliefs of some of the ancient Pagans. The Savages of these regions recognize no sovereign master of Heaven and Earth, but believe there are many spirits - some of whom are beneficent as the sun the Moon, the Lake, Rivers and Woods; others malevolent as the adder, the dragon, cold, and storms. And ... general, whatever seems to them either helpful or hurtful they call a Manitou, and pay it the worship and veneration which we render only to the true God.<sup>72</sup>

Like the others, Allouez mentioned the ceremonies which were celebrated at the beginning of important expeditions and he complained of the specific sins of gluttony and idolatry which he identified as the principal features of Ottawa ceremonies.<sup>73</sup>

More importantly, Allouez's account emphasized the centrality of water to Ottawa spirituality. Mastery of the lakes and rivers of their homeland was of vital interest to the Ottawa strategy to defend their way of life and to furnish their needs. It was also a prominent feature of the spiritual world described by Allouez. The ceremonies took place at the beginning of a journey, and all journeys in warm weather were made by water. There are several other references, indeed almost every aspect of the description mentions water. For example, Allouez noted the sacrifices made to Michipichy: "During storms and tempests, they sacrifice a dog, throwing it into the Lake. 'That is to appease thee,' they say to the latter; 'keep quiet.'"<sup>74</sup> On rivers, Ottawa paddlers offered tobacco to particular eddies and rapids. While fishing they conformed to a strict treatment of the fish, in order not to offend the spirit masters, and

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<sup>72</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 285.

<sup>73</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 285-287.

<sup>74</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 287.

while sturgeon fishing, they made special prayers to Michipichy.<sup>75</sup> Allouez was critical of their belief in Michipichy, "a certain fabulous animal which they have never seen except in dreams,"<sup>76</sup> and yet his own beliefs required him to have faith in things which he had not seen and his own religion also placed a great significance on water.

The Ottawa underworld also shared certain aspects with the Christian underworld, but it was more real and less imaginary. It was not located in some mysterious underground inferno, but rather at the bottoms of the lakes and rivers. Just as the French carved demons on the walls of their cathedrals, so did the Ottawas paint the images of Michipichy on the granite walls of cliffs. Often the Ottawas could detect evidence of the underworld at the bottom of lakes. In fact, in the clear waters of eastern Lake Superior, small pieces of copper could be seen from the canoes lying under some eight or nine metres of water:

They say also that the little nuggets of copper which they find at the bottom of the water in the Lake, or in Rivers emptying into it, are the riches of the gods who dwell in the depths of the earth.<sup>77</sup>

The incorporeal world was not separate from the geography of the region, and lakes and rivers were the most significant elements of the region as far as the Ottawas were concerned. Allouez, whose faith required him to believe in more mysterious concepts, had a difficult time understanding the close and often obscure divisions between this world and the next.

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<sup>75</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 289.

<sup>76</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 289.

<sup>77</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 289.

In the final analysis, Allouez could be said to have been impressed by the strength of the beliefs held by his hosts, and the important part which spirituality played in daily life. He was particularly impressed by the vision quests held before important undertakings:

I have seen with compassion men who had some scheme of war or hunting pass a whole week, taking scarcely anything. They show such fixity of purpose that they will not desist until they have seen in a dream what they desire, - either a herd of moose, or a band of Iroquois put to flight, or something similar, no very difficult thing for an empty brain, utterly exhausted with hunger, and thinking all day of nothing else.<sup>78</sup>

Although impressed with the courage and asceticism of these people (qualities which the Jesuits themselves strove to maintain), Allouez still felt compelled to scoff at such endurance on the "account of these ridiculous deities."<sup>79</sup> He pondered at length on the seeming incongruity existing between the austere vision quest and the "libertinism" which he called the "fountain-head" of Ottawa religion.<sup>80</sup> As a Jesuit, sure of his own convictions, Allouez lacked the ability to comprehend Ottawa spirituality as the sum of all of its parts. He could see no further than individual acts which he considered shameful, indecent, and profligate.<sup>81</sup>

If the Ottawas were "very far removed from the Kingdom of God"<sup>82</sup> there was much work to be done and Allouez was determined to succeed. His approach was one

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<sup>78</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 291.

<sup>79</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 291.

<sup>80</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 291.

<sup>81</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 291.

<sup>82</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 171.

with which all of the Jesuits in the Canadian mission field would have agreed:

We must follow them to their homes and adapt ourselves to their ways, no matter how ridiculous they may appear, in order to draw them to ours. And as God made himself man in order to make men Gods, a Missionary does not fear to make himself a Savage, so to speak, with them, in order to make them Christians. *Omnibus omnia factus sum.*<sup>83</sup>

Allouez felt he had one point in his favour. Of all four Ottawa confederates, the Kiskakons seemed the least hostile to the Christian religion. With their Tionnontaté Huron allies, they had a much longer exposure to the Christian message than the other three nations.<sup>84</sup>

Indeed, this exposure appeared to pay dividends when, in the "Relation of 1667-1668," Father Le Mercier was able to report Allouez's mass conversion of all of the Kiskakons who had gone west from Nottawasaga Bay to Chequamegon Bay. All was not as it seemed to Father Allouez, and even the report of the conversion provides a strong whiff of trickery:

After several trials, it pleased his Divine Majesty to show pity to one nation in particular that desires every member of it, to embrace the Christian Faith. It is one of the most populous; it is peaceful and an enemy to warfare, and it is called the *Queuës coupées*; but it is, besides, so addicted to raillery that it had, up to that time, made child's play of our faith.<sup>85</sup>

This claim of a mass conversion of the Kiskakons could represent a number of things: a Jesuit exaggeration; an Ottawa plan to appease Onontio; an example of the religion of

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<sup>83</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 51: 265.

<sup>84</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 50: 205.

<sup>85</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 52: 205. *Nota bene*: "*Queuës coupées*" or cut-tails is the literal translation of the Ottawa word Kiskakon which is an idiom for bear.

the leader being the religion of the people, or *cuius regio, eius religio* as the Jesuits put it; a sincere mass conversion; or an elaborate hoax. Allouez, as events would prove, had been duped and the "child's play" he complained of was not over by any means. The Kiskakons had simply become more elaborate in their deception.

In 1668, after three years of labour among the Ottawas, Allouez was joined in the *pays d'en haut* by two other Jesuits, Claude Dablon and Jacques Marquette.<sup>86</sup> They came to establish missions among all of the "Ottawa Nations" in order to repeat Father Allouez's apparent success with the Kiskakons. To this end, Dablon (who had been named the "Superior of the Ottawa Missions") went on a canoe journey through Lake Superior with Allouez in order to become familiar with the extent of his new responsibility. Marquette spent a year at the Mission of Sainte Marie du Sault at Bawating before he canoed west to take Allouez's duties with the Kiskakons at Pointe du Saint Esprit at Chequamegon Bay. He remained there until hostilities with the Sioux made it uncomfortable for the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés to stay. By 1671, Marquette had followed them to the Mission of Saint Ignace located just to the north of the Straits of Mackinac. By 1671, Marquette was at Saint Ignace, Allouez and Gabriel Druillettes were at Bawating, and Louis André was on Manitoulin Island. Father Henri Nouvel (named Superior of the Ottawa Missions to replace Dablon who had been promoted to Superior of New France) was on his way west that summer. The next year saw the

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<sup>86</sup> Marquette's profile in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* is in error when it claims he "founded" the Mission at Pointe du Saint Esprit. Allouez had been there some eight years earlier. Marquette made a number of references to Allouez in his letter to Le Mercier of 13 September 1669 when he first arrived at Chequamegon in the middle of the corn harvest. He had been with Dablon at Sault Ste Marie prior to venturing further west. *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 169-177; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. "Marquette, Jacques."

establishment of a fourth "Ottawa" mission as Louis André travelled to Green Bay where he founded the Mission of Saint François-Xavier.<sup>87</sup> The interest the Jesuits were now showing in the region was mirrored by the metropolitan government and in 1671 the Sieur de Saint Luson was sent to claim the entire region for France. If any of the Kamiga Ottawas at Bawating understood Saint Luson's intention, they simply ignored him.

The correspondence from the Ottawa Missions in the early 1670s differed little from the early observations of Father Allouez. Marquette complained that the Sinago Ottawas on Manitoulin Island were, "very far removed from the Kingdom of God."<sup>88</sup> The Kamiga Ottawas at Michilimackinac, and particularly those closely affiliated with the ogima Kinongé, were criticized for being, "superstitious to an extraordinary degree" and hardening themselves against the teachings that were offered them.<sup>89</sup> The Kiskakons, however, continued to be portrayed as the enlightened Ottawas. They continually resisted the offers of the "Kaentoton People" or Sinago Ottawas to join them on Manitoulin Island and the Jesuits approved of this because they regarded Manitoulin as the centre of heresy.<sup>90</sup>

The Mission of Saint Ignace at Michilimackinac was becoming the most important of all the Missions in the *pays d'en haut* as it was near the Kiskakon,

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<sup>87</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 57: 203.

<sup>88</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 171.

<sup>89</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 173.

<sup>90</sup> Claude Dablon and the other Jesuits continually referred to "Kaentoton," or Manitoulin Island as a dystopia of debauchery, polygamy, and idolatry. The Sinagos who lived there were feared by the Jesuits because they exercised a strong influence over the other Ottawa nations. *Jesuit Relations*, 57: 213.

Kamiga, and Tionnontaté villages.<sup>91</sup> The actual Mission consisted of a small log chapel and a small log cabin where the Jesuits and their *domés* lived. The mission was located to the west of the Island of Michilimackinac, on the eastern shore of the Michigan Upper Peninsula. The Tionnontaté and Kiskakon villages were located nearby, while the Kamiga village was located across the straits on the northern tip of the Lower Peninsula. While the Mission grew in stature, internal conflicts between the Christians and the non-Christians continued to find their way into the relations of the Jesuit missionaries. The Jesuits were eager to commend the efforts of the young Kiskakon Ottawa ogima named Chikabikisi, whom the French called Joseph. He did not seem to feel the insults of his own people who ridiculed his love of chastity. The Jesuits were proud of this prominent Kiskakon Ottawa, but the Sinagos derisively called him "Captain Black Gown," in reference to his affiliation with the Jesuits. According to Dablon, it was Chikabikisi's influence which led to the mass conversion of the Kiskakons.

By 1679 the doubts over the sincerity of the Kiskakon conversion were becoming more pronounced and the Jesuit Superior of the Ottawa Missions, Father Henri Nouvel, decided to take positive action to reinforce the spirit of Christianity. He decided to erect a cross as a means of honouring the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés and symbolizing Christ's protection of them. At the end of the winter of 1679, as the Kamigas, Kiskakons, and Tionnontatés reassembled at Michilimackinac after their

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<sup>91</sup> Dablon claimed that there were 1300 Kiskakons and 500 Tionnontatés. Kamiga numbers were less sure as they divided their time between their villages at Michilimackinac and Bawating. Dablon referred to them only as itinerants. *Jesuit Relations*, 61: 103.



hunting and sugaring they held a general council meeting. Father Nouvel used this opportunity to present his proposal of erecting a large wooden cross at the entrance to the Kiskakon village. Kinongé, the Kamiga ogima, asked the entirely practical question, "Of what use is this cross?" but Chikabikisi defended the proposal, and the plan was approved.<sup>92</sup>

The cross was erected with little comment save for the remark made by one impertinent Kiskakon who thought it might be useful for crucifying prisoners the way the Sioux sacrificed men to the Sun.<sup>93</sup> And so, at two in the afternoon on Passion Sunday in the year 1679, the Jesuits, Ottawas, and Tionnontatés living at the Mission of Saint Ignace at Michilimackinac, came to honour their newly erected cross. As a gesture of good faith, and for added verisimilitude, the Kiskakons tied a lance piercing a sponge to the cross and then joined with the Jesuits in the singing of hymns. When the singing was over the Ottawas asked permission to fire a ceremonial volley with their French guns. Father Nouvel was touched by this seemingly devout gesture and granted them permission. The first volley knocked the sponge off the end of the lance. The second volley knocked the lance off the cross and regardless of some "strong words" from Nouvel and Father Pierson, missionary to the Tionnontatés.<sup>94</sup> Father Nouvel attempted to put a brave face on the entire incident by instructing his *dommés* to erect

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<sup>92</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 61: 133-135.

<sup>93</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 61: 137.

<sup>94</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 61: 139.

another cross. At least the Tionnontaté still wanted this Christian symbol.<sup>95</sup>

With the exception of the Kiskakon Chikabikisi and a handful of others, the Jesuits were unsuccessful in their bid to convert the Ottawas to the Christian faith. In spite of their shared Spartan values, the common links between the two religions, and the deep spiritual conviction of both groups, they could find no common ground. Ottawa beliefs were tightly woven into the fabric of the world they saw around them and the loss of these beliefs would only be possible if the whole society were to be torn apart. The Kiskakons had been uprooted from their home in Nottawasaga Bay, and they suffered the indignity of being forced from Chequamegon Bay, but these events had not caused them to forget their way of life. Much to the annoyance of the Jesuits, the Sinagos reminded the Kiskakons of their past and their responsibilities as Ottawas.

On the eve of Dulhut's arrival with soldiers and traders at Michilimackinac, the Ottawas had been touched by the French presence in the new world, but they had not been overwhelmed by it. The destruction of Huronia had created some problems for their economy, and it certainly forced the Kiskakons to abandon their summer villages in the region of eastern Lake Huron, but on the whole the Ottawa Nation continued to live as it always had. Chequamegon was to the west of their ancestral homeland, but its climate and resources were similar and the Kiskakons adapted quite well. The presence of the Jesuits was tolerated, but not welcomed. The Ottawas had not scattered to the winds and neither the Iroquois nor the Jesuits had changed the Ottawas' way of life. Neither the Iroquois warriors, nor the Jesuit missionaries had been able to change the

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<sup>95</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 61: 145.

Ottawas, but now the Ottawas would get their turn to exercise some influence upon the French. In this they were quite successful indeed.

## **Chapter Four: The Ottawas Encourage a French Post at Michilimackinac.**

By the summer of 1671 there were three important changes in the Ottawa Nation. First, the Kamiga Ottawas began to establish villages in the Bkejwanong region. This was the area of the straits between Lake Huron and Lake Erie which had been the Kamigas' home before the wars with the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy in the 1570s. Second, the Kiskakon Ottawas returned to northern Lake Huron from Chequamegon Bay in western Lake Superior.<sup>1</sup> Third, and closely related to the other two changes, Michilimackinac gradually replaced the villages on Manitoulin as the new centre of the Ottawa world. It was easier for the Nassauakuetons to send delegates there than it was to send them all the way to eastern Manitoulin Island, and without the villages to the east at Nottawasaga Bay, Michilimackinac became the geographic centre of the Nation. At the same time, the western gateways into Lake Huron took on greater importance as people from the west began to make contact with the French:

It [Michilimackinac] is situated exactly in the strait connecting the Lake of the Hurons and that of the Illinois [Lake Michigan], and forms the key and the door, so to speak, for all the peoples of the South, as does the Sault [Bawating] for those of the North; for in these regions there are only those two passages by water for the very many nations, who must seek one or the other of the two if they wish to visit the French Settlements.<sup>2</sup>

As the Iroquois threat diminished, the Ottawas turned their attention to the two western gateways. They no longer feared the Iroquois as much as they feared the risk of increased contact between the French and the peoples of the west: the Ojibwas and

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<sup>1</sup> Nottawasaga was still considered too dangerous to resettle because of the presence of Iroquois warriors north of Lake Ontario. *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 133; Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 157.

Crees of Lake Superior, and the Illinois, Potawatomis, Sioux, and Outagamis of Lake Michigan.

The problem for the Ottawas was to control the trade in arms in the west. The Iroquois already had a supply of European weapons from the English at Albany, and the Ottawas could not afford to be surrounded by potentially hostile forces all with the advantage of European arms. The best way to ensure control over the trade in European arms was to invite the French to settle at Michilimackinac in the heart of the Ottawa country. If the French could be persuaded to establish a base at Michilimackinac, the Ottawas would be able both to control the level of contact by other peoples of the Upper Great Lakes and to influence French policy in the region.

At the same time as the Ottawas were forming their plans at Michilimackinac, French officials in the St. Lawrence Valley were debating the merits of establishing a base in the *pays d'en haut*. French fur traders (and their partners in the government) were seriously concerned about the number of furs which the Ottawas carried to Montreal. In some years fleets arrived with more than enough furs for the trade, but in other years only a few Ottawas arrived with no more furs than were necessary for ceremony. Second, the French had come to depend upon the Ottawas for military assistance in the ongoing struggle against the Iroquois. Finally, certain French officials heeded the Jesuit request for greater "order" among the Ottawas. These officials hoped to prevent the trade in brandy and its horrifying results. The present chapter will explore both the French and the Ottawa motives for encouraging the establishment of a French base at Michilimackinac in the 1680s.

The first French concern was the lack of fur pelts. The French needed a replacement for the vanquished Hurons to supply the colony with furs. Unlike the Hurons who had come to trade annually at Montreal, however, Ottawa fur brigades arrived only sporadically in the St Lawrence settlements. Each year the Ottawas sent a delegation to visit with the French, but they seldom had more than a few furs. The first Ottawa fur fleet arrived in June of 1653 at Montreal with beaver pelts, but the principal purpose of this visit was to inform the French of the state of affairs in the Upper Great Lakes after the fall of Huronia.<sup>3</sup> The Kiskakons and Tionnontatés returned the next summer, again with fewer furs, but this time they agreed to take two young Frenchmen, Médard Chouart des Groseilliers and Pierre-Esprit Radisson, with them to the Upper Great Lakes.<sup>4</sup> According to Radisson, the purpose of the journey was, "to discover the great lakes that they heard the wild men speak of."<sup>5</sup>

Whatever Radisson's purpose may have been, the real need for exploration was made clear two years later when the two returned to the colony:

The two Pilgrims fully expected to return in the Spring of 1655, but those Peoples did not conduct them home until the end of August of this year, 1656. Their arrival caused the Country universal joy, for they were accompanied by fifty canoes, laden with goods which the French come to

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<sup>3</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 41: 77-79.

<sup>4</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 42: 219. There was some controversy regarding Radisson's participation in this voyage. He was quite young - only in his teens - and there is some evidence to suggest he was in the colony. On the other hand, he claimed himself to have been on this particular trip, and having made so many trips there is no logical reason for him to have fabricated the account. See *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. "Chouart Des Groseilliers," and "Radisson," and Arthur T. Adams, *The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson* (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1961), 239-258.

<sup>5</sup> *Explorations of Radisson*, 79.

this end of the earth to procure.<sup>6</sup>

The French who came to the colony to procure furs needed to be assured of a steady supply, and the three French ships which were in the St. Lawrence that summer were not disappointed. The historical significance of this passage lies in the "universal joy" and in the fact of the delayed return. Both illustrate important cultural differences and the nature of the evolving alliance. Unlike the Hurons who had previously furnished the French with furs, neither the Kiskakons nor the Tionnontatés were vitally interested in carrying furs on the long and dangerous trip to Montreal.<sup>7</sup>

Almost every year, Ottawa parties made the long canoe trip to Montreal.<sup>8</sup> Often they brought only a few furs, which were used more as part of the diplomatic protocol than as an economic exchange<sup>9</sup> Ottawas making the trip were not afraid of Iroquois raids, they simply did not need to trade the volume of goods expected by the French. Not surprisingly, they spent their time in pursuits which accorded with their own

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<sup>6</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 42: 219.

<sup>7</sup> This danger was constant. In fact, the very expedition which accompanied Radisson and Groseilliers to Montreal was attacked by a war party of Mohawk Iroquois at the beginning of their journey home. For a full account of this attack refer to *Jesuit Relations*, 42: 225-231.

<sup>8</sup> Historians have described the failure of the Ottawas to act as the Hurons had done in the past in terms of a reluctance to face the dangers of the Iroquois menace; yet this menace has been exaggerated here just as it was in the discussions of the *pays d'en haut*. In spite of the amount of work which has been done on the seventeenth-century fur trade, and all of different perspectives, there are no works which ask why the Ottawas traded with the French. One should not be surprised to find that the Ottawas made poor Hurons, but rather that they took furs to Montreal at all. The real question is why historians and anthropologists should have made this assumption in the first place. For example see, Trigger, *Ataentsic*, 820-821; and White *Middle Ground*, 104-105.

<sup>9</sup> When large fur brigades arrived in the colony they were invariably accompanied by French explorers. Smaller expeditions came according to different needs, mainly political, and they did not carry sufficient furs for the trade. For example, in late August of 1658, nine Ottawa canoes arrived at Montreal to report on the Iroquois raids in the *pays d'en haut*. The next summer, Groseilliers came to Montreal with about 300 Ottawas and a large quantity of furs. *Jesuit Relations*, 44: 111; and 45: 161-163. This pattern is consistent throughout the *Jesuit Relations*.

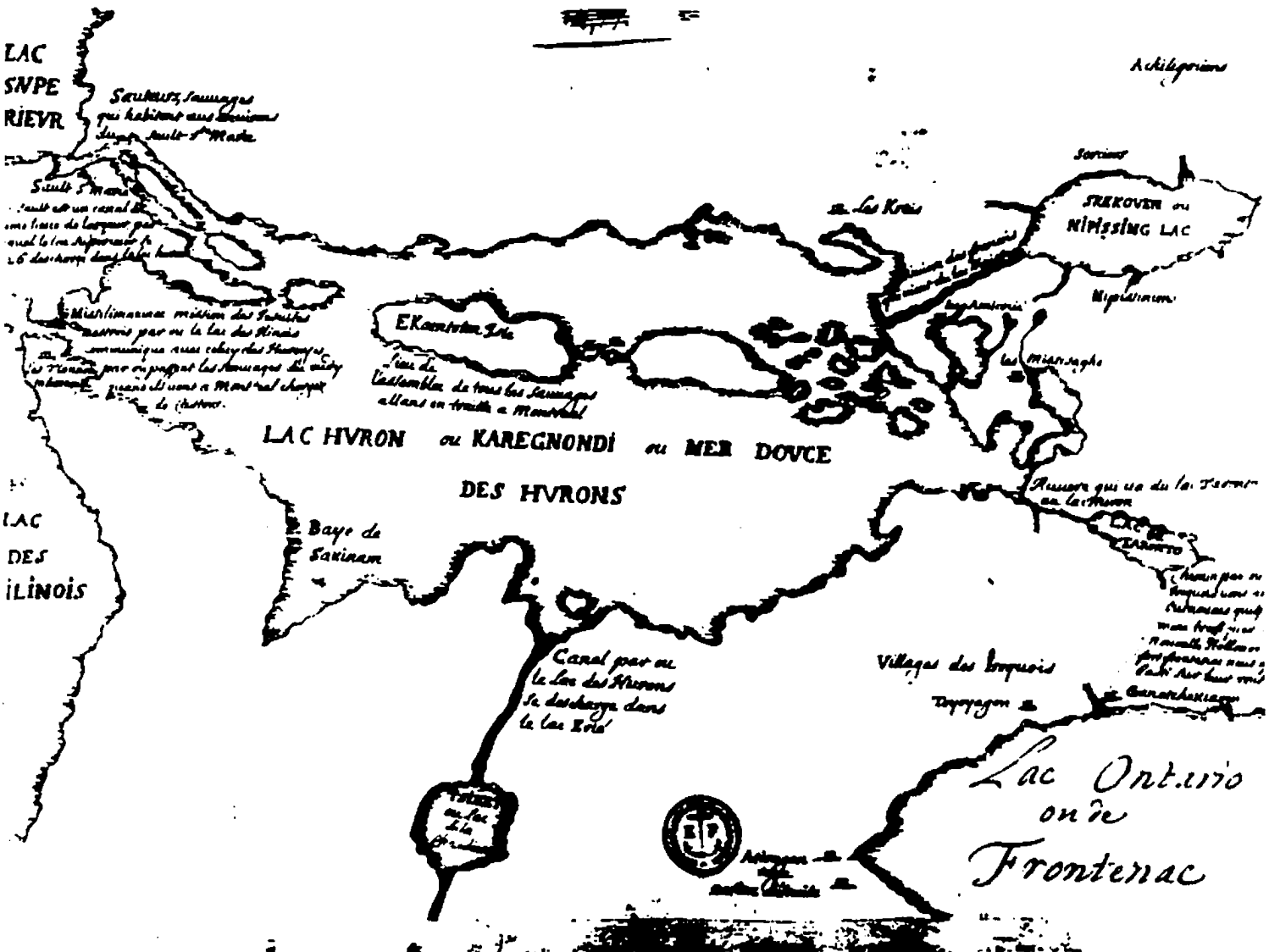


Figure 9: Claude Bernou's map of Lake Huron depicting the Ottawa village on Manitoulin as the point of embarkation for trips to Montreal. Bibliothèque du Service Historique de la Marine.



agenda. The French needed to find a means of obtaining furs on a more predictable basis in order to satisfy their own market demands. There were but two alternatives: a limited number of men could be sent annually to the *pays d'en haut* to carry the furs back to the colony, or a permanent French presence in the *pays d'en haut* could be established.

The presence of the Jesuits in the Lake Huron region had provided fur traders with a base from which to mount their ventures. Groseilliers himself was a good example of the manner in which the Jesuits opened the gate to colonial incursion. He was in Huronia by 1646 as a soldier assigned to help the missionaries and to assist in the security of the mission. This posting afforded him the opportunity to learn the rudiments of the Huron and Ottawa languages and to learn something of the resources and geography of the Upper Great Lakes region.<sup>10</sup> When the Kiskakons came to the St. Lawrence in 1653 and told of their journeys with the Tionnontatés, Groseilliers was well-placed to prepare for his expedition with them the following summer.

Even when Groseilliers and Radisson accompanied the Ottawas to the *pays d'en haut*, however, they could not compel the Ottawas to take furs to the St. Lawrence to trade with the French. As Champlain had discovered years before, and as Radisson and Groseillier were to discover fully in the summer of 1655, Frenchmen in the North American wilderness spoke with as much authority as Donnacona had in the halls of the *palais du Louvre*. The French explorers were unable to compel their hosts to return them to the colony and they had little influence over the number of furs which would be

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<sup>10</sup> *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. Chouart Des Groseilliers, Médard.

carried in a given year. As Radisson noted in his account of the "Auxoticiat Voyage," [Voyage to the Ottawas] about the only way to influence the Ottawa hosts was through military prowess:

We were then possessed by the Hurons and Ottawas, but our mind was not to stay in an island but to be known with the remotest people. The victory that we have gotten made them consent to what we could desire, and because we showed willing to die for their defence; so we desired to go with a company of theirs that was going to the nation of the Stairing hairs.<sup>11</sup>

With so little influence, the need for the French to establish a base in the *pays d'en haut* in order to ensure a constant flow of furs was becoming clear.

Jesuit activity in the regions of Michilimackinac and Bawating provided the French with the opportunity to establish such a base, and eventually in 1683, the French explorer Daniel Greysolon Dulhut arrived in command of an expedition of 15 French canoes to establish a French post at Michilimackinac.<sup>12</sup> Although the issue appears to have been the need to secure a steady supply of furs, the real reasons for the establishment of the post were fraught with ulterior motives, diplomatic concerns, and a series of *arrière-pensées*. Dulhut's new post was built for an array of reasons which

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<sup>11</sup> The term "Stairing hairs" refers to the Ottawas. Radisson's text was written in a curious and awkward form of English and it is difficult to follow. Stairing hairs is the translation for *cheveux relevés*. Radisson recounted a raid against a party of Iroquois in the region to the east of Manitoulin Island. Radisson himself was staying at a large Ottawa village on the island. The Ottawas were beginning to disperse for their winter hunting and he had no desire to be left on Manitoulin. The war party was sent to win revenge and the French were pleased with the opportunity to participate. His account leaves no doubt about the sorrowful nature of the mourning war. More importantly it shows the gratitude of the Ottawas for the French participation, an important aspect of the alliance. Adams, *Explorations of Radisson*, 88.

<sup>12</sup> La Barre mentions that Dulhut had established an official French presence in the *pays d'en haut* and he gives a long account of the reasons why such a post had been deemed necessary: the danger of the Ottawas taking their furs to Albany or Hudson's Bay, the Iroquois menace, the profiteering, and the *coureurs de bois* lawlessness. La Barre au ministre, 4, novembre, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 134-144v.

complicate the French-Ottawa alliance and which resist simple explanations. In order to understand the role of Michilimackinac in the alliance, it is necessary to confront the problems of private profit, of poor communications, and of the tangled web of French, English, Iroquois, and Ottawa interests in the *pays d'en haut*. One looks in vain for any middle ground; rather one finds a series of deceptions and a host of cautious and cunning strategies for self-preservation and self-promotion.

Ottawa policy in the 1670s was dictated by two concerns: the return of the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés to Lake Huron from Chequamegon Bay, and the desirability of exercising greater control over the French in the Upper Great Lakes region. The return of the Kiskakons posed a problem of over-crowding at Michilimackinac which could be solved within the Nation itself. The Kamigas effectively solved this problem by announcing their intention of re-establishing their village at Bkejwanong. The problem of influencing the French was not as easily solved. The French had their own ideas about expanding their influence, and the Ottawas had to act carefully in order to anticipate French plans.

Kinongé, the most prominent ogima of the Kamiga Ottawas, hoped to force the French to act according to Ottawa interests. Kinongé, called *Le Brochet* (the Pike), by the French was the central figure in the French-Ottawa alliance during the latter half of the seventeenth century. He had been outspoken in his opposition to the Jesuits and their plans to convert the Ottawas of Michilimackinac to Christianity. On the other hand he welcomed the prospect of a military alliance with the French, provided that the alliance would be on Ottawa terms.

He argued that the best way to control the French was to exploit their weaknesses, and their most evident weakness seemed to the Ottawas to be an insatiable desire for furs. The Ottawas would continue to supply the French with furs, but the furs coming from Lakes Superior and Michigan would be confiscated and kept at Michilimackinac. In other words the Ojibwas and Potawatomis who had been invited to take part in the Ottawa fur convoys in the past, would now be refused entry into Lake Huron and their furs would be taken from them by Kinongé and a compatriot of his whom the French called *Le Talon*. The subsequent lack of furs would force the French to establish a base at Michilimackinac where they would be much more tractable than they would be at Montreal where they could deal from a position of authority.<sup>13</sup>

Given the unpredictability of the Ottawa fur brigades, French involvement in the *pays d'en haut* was seen by the commercial interests as a necessity. With the presence of the Jesuit missionaries and their *donnés* (men like Groseilliers) in the Great Lakes, an opportunity existed for French merchants to base agents among the Ottawas in the hope of influencing the trade. Finally, within the St. Lawrence society a black market economy was beginning to flourish in response to the rigid *étatisme* of the colony; illegal fur trade profits were a powerful incentive.<sup>14</sup>

Officials in France, especially the minister of marine Colbert, worried about the effect of *habitants* climbing into canoes and stealing away into the vast Canadian

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<sup>13</sup> Dulhut à Frontenac, 5 avril, 1679, AN, C11E, 16: 2.

<sup>14</sup> Mémoire de Patoulet demandé par le ministre, 25 janvier, 1672, AN, C11A, 3: 274-279.

forest.<sup>15</sup> For Colbert, the expansion of the colonial economy depended upon the development of industries within the confines of the St. Lawrence Valley.<sup>16</sup> The trade in furs, he argued, was best left to the Indians who wished to transport their furs to Montreal where they could be shipped to Quebec and then to La Rochelle, Bordeaux, and Niort. Colbert had ambitious plans for lumbering operations, mineral exploration, and even for manufacturing projects such as shipbuilding. The activities of the *coureurs de bois* undermined his ability to realize his economic plans.<sup>17</sup> Officials in New France, however, realized that the Ottawas would not necessarily cooperate with Colbert's schemes. The Ottawas would act according to their own agenda, not one fixed in Versailles. Frontenac, when he assumed the post of governor general of New France, realized that the *coureurs de bois* played an important role in the colonial

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<sup>15</sup> From the first report of the intendant Talon, the minister of marine Jean-Baptiste Colbert expressed his doubts regarding the wisdom of expansion into the Great Lakes region. *Jesuit Relations*, 55: 104-114; Addition au présent mémoire, 10 novembre, 1670, AN, C11A, 3: 98-111; Colbert à Talon, 5 janvier, 1666, *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec, 1930-1931*, 43.

<sup>16</sup> Governor Frontenac argued that the Ottawas could not be made to replace the Hurons as carriers of furs. By now, Canadian historians are well aware of the machinations of Louis de Buade de Frontenac which led to the expansion of New France in the west. With no regard to the wishes of the minister of marine, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Frontenac encouraged expansion into the region of the *pays d'en haut*. Within the first year of Frontenac's tenure as governor-general, he ordered the construction of a fur-trading post at the place where the Cataracoui River flows into Lake Ontario. In this account all of Frontenac's rationale for the construction of the post is provided. He claimed the fort was necessary for a variety of reasons: to prevent an alliance between the Iroquois and the Ottawas; to promote French trade over English and Dutch trade; to establish better relations and greater influence over the Iroquois; and finally to help the Jesuits in their continuing struggle to convert the Iroquois. This was in direct contradiction of Colbert's plans. *Compte rendu du voyage du gouverneur Frontenac au lac Ontario, 1673*, AN, C11A, 4: 12-24v.

<sup>17</sup> Colbert's chief concern was to take all possible measures to increase the population of the colony. The illegal commerce in furs acted as a drain on the population of the Saint Lawrence and was therefore to be eliminated: "L'augmentation de la colonie doit estre la règle de la fin de toute conduite de l'intendant, en sorte qu'il ne doit jamais estre satisfait sur ce point, et doit s'appliquer incessamment à travers tous les expédiens imaginables pour la conservation des habitans et pour leur multiplication par les mariages, et pour y en attirer de nouveaux." Pierre Clément, ed. *Lettres, instructions, et mémoires de Colbert* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1861-1873), 2: 402.

economy and in French-Ottawa relations. He also used them to make himself a profit from the trade in furs.

In January of 1672 the intendant Talon's secretary, Jean-Baptiste Patoulet (a man cut from the same cloth as his director) wrote a memoir concerning the *coureur de bois* problem. In this memoir, Patoulet estimated that there were some 300 to 400 *coureurs de bois* and that their activities were destructive to New France on several fronts. They did not marry and this was detrimental to the augmentation of the colony's population, one of Colbert's critical concerns. They did not clear land in the St. Lawrence and this kept the value of seigneuries low. They were libertines who lived outside of the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. They were promiscuous and their example undermined Jesuit authority in the mission field. The Jesuits were at pains to contrast the Christian ideals they preached with the sexual activities of the "Christian" *coureurs de bois* and native women. Most importantly for the royal administration, the fur trade acted as a drain on military resources. Of the 3000 Canadians capable of defending the colony against English or Iroquois assault, one in ten was too far away to answer a call to arms.<sup>18</sup>

Skilled in the art of deception, Frontenac made an appearance of supporting Colbert's position. In September 1672 he issued a delusory prohibition against the illegal trade in furs. He seemed to be addressing the problem caused by the perceived drain on the colony's resources by applying what he termed: "...a prompt remedy to the harm caused by the *coureurs de bois*." He threatened those who supplied merchandise

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<sup>18</sup> Mémoire de Patoulet demandé par le ministre, 25 janvier, 1672, AN, C11A, 3: 274-279.

for the illegal fur trade with fines and with the confiscation of their goods. For those bold enough to carry these goods to the *pays d'en haut* the penalty was much stricter: the whip and for repeat offenders, the slave galleys.<sup>19</sup>

Frontenac was interested in these threats only as far as they hindered his rivals in the fur trade, for he too was involved in the highly lucrative business of exchanging weapons, blankets, brandy, and trinkets to the Ottawas in exchange for thick Lake Superior beaver pelts. As Canadian historian W.J.Eccles noted in his biography of Frontenac:

Frontenac always vehemently maintained that he was doing everything in his power to implement Colbert's policies. But he had not been in the colony long before letters began to reach the Ministry of Marine declaring that he was not only engaging in the fur trade for the profit of himself and his associates, but was striving to obtain a monopoly over a large part of it.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, all of Frontenac's actions with regard to the commerce in furs were designed with three goals in mind. Profit was the first. Inconvenience, difficulty, and confusion to his fur trade rivals and sometime partners (namely the cartel of Jacques Le Ber, Charles Bazire, Charles Aubert de La Chesnaye, and Philippe Gaultier de Comporté) constituted the second goal.<sup>21</sup> Persuading the minister of marine that his actions in these matters were strictly in accordance with the known wishes of the royal

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<sup>19</sup> "...apporter un prompt remède au mal que causent les coureurs de bois." Ordonnance du Frontenac, 27 septembre, 1672, AN, C11A, 3: 222-224v.

<sup>20</sup> W.J. Eccles, *Frontenac: the Courtier Governor* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1959), 78-79.

<sup>21</sup> Eccles, *Frontenac*, 146-147; also see *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. Aubert de La Chesnaye, Charles; Bazire, Charles; Gaultier de Comporté, Philippe; and Le Ber, Jacques.

administration was last.

Frontenac's principal agent in the *pays d'en haut* was a *coureur de bois* named Daniel Greysolon Dulhut, a man well qualified to inform his patron of the nature of the trade and of the intricacies of relations with the Ottawas. Frontenac was introduced to Dulhut through the explorer's brother-in-law, Louvigny, who was also an officer in the governor's guard. Nothing is known of their early arrangements, but this is hardly to be considered unusual for the two men were engaged in an activity which ran contrary to the letter and spirit of orders which Frontenac himself had decreed. In September of 1678, Dulhut and a small party of French and Ottawas, who had come to the St. Lawrence on their annual diplomatic mission, quietly left the colony for the *pays d'en haut*. Frontenac only reported this event in the next year - when events forced his hand. He decided that Dulhut was in the Great Lakes, "...to negotiate a peace between the four Ottawa nations and the nations of Lake Superior and the west, the present source of beaver."<sup>22</sup> In this same brief report Frontenac displayed his immense capacity for hypocrisy by calling for the death penalty for the *coureurs de bois*, "...the penalty of death for only one would so intimidate all the others that I would have much less trouble in making them return."<sup>23</sup> In such a manner did he attempt to satisfy his needs to confuse both his fur trade rivals and his official superiors.

One person who was not deceived was the intendant Jacques Duchesneau. In a

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<sup>22</sup> "...de faire la paix de toutes les quatres nations outaouaises avec celles du lac Supérieur et de l'ouest où à présent est la source du castor." Frontenac au ministre, 6, novembre, 1679, AN, C11A, 5: 8v.

<sup>23</sup> "...la punition de mort d'un seul intimida tellement tous les autres que j'eus bien moins de peine à les faire réunir." Frontenac au ministre, 6 novembre, 1679, AN, C11A, 5: 9.



series of letters to the minister he provided the details of the "*liens*" between Frontenac and his agent Dulhut.<sup>24</sup> Duchesneau forced the issue by intervening directly in Frontenac's business. One of the *coureurs de bois*, a man named Pierre Moreau (but who called himself La Taupine), who had made the trip with Dulhut, returned to the colony with an Ottawa fur brigade. Duchesneau immediately brought him to court to answer the charge of trading outside of the boundaries of the colony.<sup>25</sup> In his own defence La Taupine claimed that he had been sent by Dulhut, and he produced a letter from Frontenac which granted permission for the journey.<sup>26</sup> It was this intervention which forced Frontenac to refute the claims of the intendant and eventually to send Dulhut to France in order to answer Duchesneau's accusations.<sup>27</sup>

Frontenac had a number of answers with which to excuse his apparent contradiction of the edicts and orders against the trade. In the first place he was able to raise the spectre of European competition. The English and Dutch at Albany, and the English forts on Hudson's Bay were of concern to the officials in France and Frontenac knew this well. There was a real fear that the English would indeed be able to wrest the Ottawas away from the French alliance by their trade.<sup>28</sup> Of even greater concern

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<sup>24</sup> Duchesneau au ministre, 10 novembre, 1679, AN, C11A, 5: 38v; Duchesneau au ministre, 13 novembre, 1680, AN, C11A, 5: 166.

<sup>25</sup> Frontenac au ministre, 9 octobre, 1679, AN, C11A, 5: 6v-7. For a discussion of the events surrounding La Taupine's contretemps, see Eccles *Frontenac*, 88-89.

<sup>26</sup> Frontenac au ministre, 6 novembre, 1679, AN, C11A, 5: 6v-7.

<sup>27</sup> Frontenac au ministre, 2 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 269-269v.

<sup>28</sup> Duchesneau himself was forced to admit the dangers associated with English fur trade interests. In a long letter to the minister, Duchesneau outlined a number of different concerns including: renegade French *coureurs de bois* carrying their furs to Orange; the negotiations between the *coureur de bois* Jean Peré and Major Andros

was the evidence of serious trouble in the *pays d'en haut*. In an effort to shift the focus away from the trading of Dulhut and La Taupine, Frontenac emphasized the apparent turmoil at Michilimackinac. The Ottawas, according to the Jesuit Superior of the Ottawa missions Henri Nouvel, had killed a Seneca chief at Michilimackinac. This action threatened to destroy the fragile peace with the Iroquois.<sup>29</sup> The troubles for the French were real enough and in order to clarify the actual threats from English competition and from Ottawa policy, Duchesneau wrote a memoir on the peoples of the Upper Great Lakes, their trading habits, and the extent of English power.<sup>30</sup> His real motivation for writing the memoir was to prove that Frontenac had attempted to confuse the situation in the *pays d'en haut*.<sup>31</sup>

Even though the Ottawas were not interested in carrying furs to the French at Montreal, they made certain that other nations (more willing to act as Colbert's unwitting labour force) were not allowed to pass through Lake Huron with their furs.

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regarding the establishment of an English-Ottawa trade; and proposals for taking more furs to the English forts on Hudson's Bay. Duchesneau au ministre, 10 novembre, 1679, AN, C11A, 5: 32-70. Frontenac too made note of these problems in his report. Frontenac au ministre, 6 novembre, 1679, AN, C11A, 5: 12-16v.

<sup>29</sup> Frontenac au roi, 2 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 388.

<sup>30</sup> Mémoire du Duchesneau pour faire connoistre à monseigneur les nations sauvages desquelles nous tirons nos pelleteries, leur interests, les nostres, et l'estat dans lequel se trouvent présentement ces nations, 13 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5:307-315.

<sup>31</sup> Duchesneau also hoped to propose an alternate strategy for the colonial economy, one which did not involve French expansion into the *pays d'en haut*. If the Ottawas and their allies would carry furs to Montreal, Frontenac's self-interested plans would be thwarted and Duchesneau's reputation at court would be enhanced. The plan required Duchesneau to write a detailed description of the trade and of the peoples of the Upper Great Lakes. According to Duchesneau's description, these people did not require a permanent French establishment; they only required French goods which could be furnished by a limited number of traders holding annual *congés* or trade permits. As one can see by his memoir, however, Duchesneau's understanding of the Ottawas and the other allies was imperfect and he did not appreciate the strong desire of these people for a permanent French base in the *pays d'en haut*. Mémoire du Duchesneau, 13 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 307.

The Crees and Ojibwas of Lake Superior, and the Potawatomis, Illinois, and Outagamis of Lake Michigan could not fulfil the role of fur suppliers to the French for three reasons:

...they are too distant; they are not good canoeists; and the others [Ottawas]intimidate them from carrying their own furs so they can carry the trade and profit from it.<sup>32</sup>

The Ottawas (the intendant Duchesneau referred to them in his text as the "others") did prevent the peoples of Lakes Superior and Michigan from carrying their furs to the French in the St. Lawrence, but not in order to "profit from it." Duchesneau later contradicted his claim by noting that the Ottawa traders at Montreal: "...have no use for negotiations in that which we would sell them."<sup>33</sup>

Even the Bawating Ojibwas, the closest allies of the Ottawas, were not permitted

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<sup>32</sup> The Crees and Ojibwas who lived to the north and west of Lake Superior were indeed too distant to make the trip to Montreal by foot and, as people who lived mainly by hunting, they did not develop the canoe skills of the Ottawas and the Ojibwas of Lake Huron. Duchesneau's third comment, however, is an opinion not an observation, and as such requires some judicious re-appraisal. Duchesneau had never attended a feast of the dead and he had no idea how the trade operated in the *pays d'en haut*. He assumed, and this is the critical point, that the motivations for trade were the same for the Ottawas as they were for the French. By presenting the Ottawas as middlemen, he hoped to force the officials in France to see the merits of his plan for the colonial economy. "...qu'ils sont trop éloignez, qu'ils ne sont pas bons Canoteurs, et que les autres sauvages les intimident à fin de leur porter des marchandises et d'en profiter." *Mémoire du Duchesneau*, 13 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 307v.

<sup>33</sup> "...ils ne servent point des negociations qu'on leur veut vendre." Duchesneau's interpretation of the Ottawa trade has been the topic of much discussion. Some historians have taken issue with Duchesneau's observation regarding the Ottawas exclusion of others from the trade. Richard White, for example, suggests that the Ottawas invited others to make the trip with them because of cowardice. Although the Ottawas did invite others to travel with them on what White calls a "flirtation with death," cowardice is not a plausible explanation. In the first place, by 1681, the trip was not nearly as risky. The Iroquois would not pose a serious threat again for a few more years. In the second place evidence exists which shows that the Ottawas did exclude others, particularly the Ojibwas from making the trip to Montreal. Duchesneau knew nothing of the exchange networks which existed long before the French arrived in the Upper Great Lakes. He knew nothing of the ecological basis for trade, nothing of the critical social relationships, and nothing of the interrelationship between trade and status and ceremony. See, Gary A. Wright, "Some Aspects of Early and Mid-Seventeenth-Century Exchange Networks in the Western Great Lakes." *Michigan Archaeologist* 13 (1967): 181-197; and Gary A. Wright, "A Further Note on Trade and Gift Giving in the Western Great Lakes." *Michigan Archaeologist* 14 (1968): 165-166; White, *Middle Ground*, 106; *Mémoire du Duchesneau*, 13 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 308.

to make the trip to Montreal. In April of 1679 Frontenac's agent in the west, Daniel Greysolon Dulhut, wrote to the governor to tell him of the state of affairs in the Upper Great Lakes. He apologized for not having sent word sooner, but he claimed it was impossible to persuade any of the Bawating Ojibwas to make the trip to Montreal. The reason, he explained:

...they will not go unless they are escorted by the French and unless I promise them that the French will return with them to prevent them from falling into any traps which they believe have been laid for them by the other Indians.<sup>34</sup>

Dulhut made it clear that it was not the Iroquois whom the Bawating Ojibwas feared, but rather their own allies, the Ottawas.

The Amikwa chief Oumamin, who was the closest of all of the Ojibwas to the French, was Dulhut's source of information.<sup>35</sup> Oumamin told Dulhut that the Bawating Ojibwas could travel neither to Montreal nor to the western end of Lake Superior to trade for furs with other Ojibwa nations<sup>36</sup> and with the Crees. Dulhut was somewhat surprised at this reluctance especially, as he told Frontenac, since the Ojibwas were the "...the greatest and the most populous nation of all according to common

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<sup>34</sup> "...ils n'en feront rien qu'ils ne soient escortés par les françois et que je leurs promette que l'on les reconduira chez eux pour les empescher de tomber dans les pieges qu'ils croient que les autres sauvages leur tendroient." Dulhut à Frontenac, 5 avril, 1679. AN, C11E, 15: 2.

<sup>35</sup> Dulhut was repeating to Frontenac what he had learned from an Amikwa chief named Oumamin. Oumamin was a chief of the Amikwa or Beaver Ojibwa. Dulhut à La Barre, 12 avril, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 235-235v; and Dulhut à Frontenac, 5 avril, 1679, AN, C11E, 15: 2.

<sup>36</sup> Oumamin drew a distinction between the Bawating Ojibwas (or the Southeastern Ojibwa peoples living at Bawating and along the northern shore of Lake Huron) and the Ojibwas of Lake Superior.

opinion."<sup>37</sup> When Dulhut asked what the Bawating Ojibwas had to fear, he was told of the bad treatment the "Kristinons" and the "Monsonis" had received in the spring of 1678 at the hands of the Ottawas.<sup>38</sup> Oumamin had wanted to take his furs to Hudson's Bay, but he feared the Ottawas would do to him what they had done to the Crees the year before.<sup>39</sup> He was powerless because of the:

...bad treatment that the Ottawas led by le Brochet [Kinongé] and le Talon had given them, pillaging all of their furs the last spring, 1678.<sup>40</sup>

Oumamin claimed that they could do nothing unless accompanied by the French because they regarded the French as their "protecting god" who would prevent the Ottawas from pillaging them.<sup>41</sup>

Oumamin also complained to Dulhut that Kinongé, and the other Kamiga Ottawas at Bawating, not only prevented others from travelling, but that they lived

<sup>37</sup> "...la nation la plus grande et la plus peuplée de toutes suivant la commune opinion." Dulhut à Frontenac, 5 avril, 1679, AN, C11E, 15: 2.

<sup>38</sup> Oumamin is referring to the Crees and to the Monsone or Marten people of the Northern Ojibwa.

<sup>39</sup> In truth Oumamin had no strong desire to make the difficult trip to the Bay. From eastern Lake Superior to the Hudson's Bay was an exceedingly difficult canoe trip. The Ojibwas normally paddled upstream along the Michipicoten River to Whitefish Lake, Manitowik Lake, and then into Dog Lake. After paddling eastward across Dog Lake, Ojibwa paddlers would take their canoes out of the water and lift them across the "Height of Land" portage into Crooked Lake, and the James Bay watershed. At the eastern end of Crooked Lake, they followed the Missinaibi Portage into Missinaibi Lake and the Upper Missinaibi River. The Missinaibi became an important route in the fur trade but it was a difficult route to canoe. The Missinaibi River is 550km long with a total fall of 330 metres from the height of land to the James Bay. This severe drop gives the river a strong, swift current which made the return journey to Lake Superior very difficult. What made the return journey even more difficult was the low water level later in the season. In long stretches of the Missinaibi the water is too low to navigate and the Ojibwas travellers would have to push their canoes over the rocks. Radisson and Groseilliers were taken on this route by a party of Ojibwas in the summer of 1662. Eric W. Morse, *Fur Trade Routes of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 69; Adams, ed. *Explorations of Radisson*, 144; Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, *Canoe Routes of Ontario*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 50 and 55.

<sup>40</sup> "...à cause de mauvais traitement que les 8ta8ais conduit par le Brochet et le Talon leurs ont fait les aient tous piller le printemps passé, 1678." Dulhut à Frontenac, 5 avril, 1679, AN, C11E, 15: 2.

<sup>41</sup> "Dieu Tutelaire," Dulhut à Frontenac, 5 avril, 1679, AN, C11E, 15: 2.

under no such restrictions and could travel to Montreal, throughout Lake Superior, and even to the Illinois country in southern Lake Michigan. Oumamin added that the Ottawas had threatened the Ojibwas not to take their pelts to Hudson's Bay unless they wanted "their heads smashed."<sup>42</sup> Kinongé had thus reinforced the Bawating gateway by the late 1670s, at the very moment when the Frontenac was hoping to revive his fur trading operations in the west.<sup>43</sup>

What Oumamin described to Dulhut was simply the way in which the gateways strategy was being employed in the late 1670s by the prominent Kamiga Ottawas, Kinongé and Le Talon. They had not been adverse to inviting the different Ojibwa nations to come with them to Montreal, but now they strictly enforced their control over the vital gateways into Lake Huron. Thus, when the Crees tried to carry their furs through the gateway at Bawating, Kinongé and his warriors intercepted the Cree brigade, took all of their pelts, and forced them to return to their home north of Lake Superior.<sup>44</sup> Oumamin attempted to persuade Dulhut to help the Bawating Ojibwas to overcome the Ottawa obstacle. He knew the French, with their impressive arsenal, were the only possible allies for whom the Ottawas would allow safe passage. Dulhut refused to help Oumamin because he knew that the Ottawas were more powerful, and more useful to the French than the Ojibwa nations. His instructions from Frontenac

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<sup>42</sup> "...de peur d'avoir la Teste cassée," Dulhut à Frontenac, 5 avril, 1679, AN, C11E, 15: 2.

<sup>43</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 119-120.

<sup>44</sup> In his account, La Potherie mentions the extraction of "tolls" from those who would cross the Ottawa gateways. He mentions that the Nipissings were able to extract tolls from the Crees, Mississaugas, and other Ojibwas, but not from the Ottawas who accompanied them. La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 119-120.

were to establish strong contacts in the west. It would be better to treat with the Ottawas who, he realized, were applying pressure in order to encourage the French to open a fort at Michilimackinac.<sup>45</sup>

Kinongé's plan to encourage the French to establish a post at Michilimackinac, in the heart of the Ottawas' ancestral home, worked admirably. In spite of misgivings on the part of some French officials, like the minister of marine Colbert, Frontenac decided to establish an official French post in the region.<sup>46</sup> Before the fort could be built and a commander appointed, however, new problems distracted the French in the St. Lawrence settlements, problems which would underscored the French need for Ottawa military help.<sup>47</sup>

By 1681, the peace with the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy, which had been won by the presence of Carignan-Salières regiment in 1665-1666, was eroding as young Iroquois warriors proposed bolder and more belligerent solutions to the French problem.<sup>48</sup> Iroquois aggression in the region to the south of the Great Lakes was a growing concern for both the French and the Ottawas.<sup>49</sup> Without a strong military

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<sup>45</sup> Memoire du Sieur Dulhut, 2 juillet, 1679, AN, C11E, 16: 6.

<sup>46</sup> Frontenac au ministre, 6 novembre, 1679, AN, C11A, 5: 8-11; Mémoire de Duchesneau adressé au ministre, 13 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 320-323.

<sup>47</sup> American historian Daniel K. Richter attributes the Iroquois unrest of the late 1670s and early 1680s to "demographic carnage" and a series of "embarrassments" which brought the Iroquois and the French into conflict. Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 148-149.

<sup>48</sup> Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 148-149.

<sup>49</sup> Ever since the publication of George Hunt's *Wars of the Iroquois*, historians have explained Iroquois foreign policy in terms of the lack of beavers in the region to the south of Lake Ontario. According to Hunt, the Iroquois were desperate for beaver pelts in order to trade with the English. This explanation is only partly true. The Iroquois were surrounded by French and Algonquian enemies and by perfidious English allies to the east. They feared destruction at the hands of the French and Algonquians, and from the English they feared the loss

alliance between the French and the Ottawas, the intendant Duchesneau feared that the Iroquois would be able to destroy one nation at a time:

...if we allow them, the Iroquois will subjugate the Illinois and, in short order, will render themselves masters of all of the Ottawa nations, and will carry all of the commerce to the English in such a way that it will be absolutely necessary for us to make them allies or else to destroy them.<sup>50</sup>

Duchesneau hoped that the Ottawas would be able to lead the other nations of the west into a grand alliance to defeat the Iroquois once and for all.

In the summer of 1681 a specific event threatened to bring matters to a pitch. A delegation of the Illinois from southern Lake Michigan attended a Feast of the Dead which was hosted by the Kiskakons at Michilimackinac. The Illinois delegates had come to seek Ottawa support against the Iroquois and they had brought with them a Seneca chief named Annehat, whom they had captured during the latest Iroquois raid. Far from pledging their support for the Illinois delegation, the Kiskakons mocked their weaknesses and their past humiliations at the hands of the Iroquois. According to the Kiskakons, the Illinois were weak, and poor allies even if they had captured Annehat. To prove this the Kiskakons produced a young Illinois girl who had been a prisoner of the Senecas until her rescue by a group of Kiskakon warriors. Noncheka, the ogima of the Kiskakons and the war ogima of the entire Ottawa Nation, demanded to know what use the Illinois would be as allies if their warriors could not even protect their own

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of their ancestral homeland. Given these conditions it is not hard to imagine the strong motivation to pursue an aggressive foreign policy aimed at procuring European weaponry and territory. Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*, 48-49; and Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York: Norton, 1984), 84-112.

<sup>50</sup> "...si on laisse faire les Iroquois ils se soumettent les Illinois et en peu de temps ils se rendront Maîtres de toutes les nations des Outaouacs et porteront le commerce aux anglais de sorte qu'il est d'une nécessité absolue de nous les rendre amis ou de les détruire." Mémoire du Duchesneau, 13 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 313.



people from the Iroquois. Provoked by this insult, one of the Illinois delegates put the Seneca prisoner Annehat to death with regard neither to ceremony nor consequence. The Kiskakons, as hosts, were responsible for Annehat, and since they allowed him to be killed, the Senecas would hold them responsible. This was of great concern to the French who were trying to promote peace between the Ottawas and the Iroquois.<sup>51</sup>

The cause of the alliance was not helped at this juncture by Noncheke. Unlike many of the Kiskakons, he did not particularly admire the French.<sup>52</sup> His goal, and indeed his principal responsibility as the ogima of the Kiskakons, was to ensure that the Ottawa Nation was prepared to defend itself from the threats of its enemies in any eventuality. As the incident involving the unfortunate Annehat shows, Noncheke was a difficult ally. The Illinois delegates had hoped to impress the Ottawas with Annehat, but instead, Noncheke anticipated their plan to gain the upper hand in the negotiations, and he humiliated the Illinois in order to awe them with Kiskakon power. As difficult as he may have been as an ally, he was much worse as an enemy and Tonty at Michilimackinac advised Frontenac to keep this man as an ally at all costs.<sup>53</sup>

On 11 August, 1682, Noncheke led a fleet of 26 Ottawa canoes (along with

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<sup>51</sup> Mémoire du Duchesneau, 13 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 386.

<sup>52</sup> Frontenac learned of the murder through letters from the Jesuit Superior, Henri Nouvel, and from Dulhut's Italian cousin, Henri Tonty, who had gone to Michilimackinac in June of 1679 to join La Salle. The governor's response was to send a deputation to the Senecas to appease them and to ask them not to find fault with the Ottawas for the murder of their chief. Nouvel, who had recently been re-assigned, had a more radical solution. He proposed a French assault on the Senecas in order to prevent them from renewing hostilities with the Ottawas. In this correspondence, as in the other French documents, the Senecas were called by their Huron name, Tsonnontouans. Frontenac au roi, 2 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 390; Frontenac au ministre, 2 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 274-274v.

<sup>53</sup> Frontenac au ministre, 2 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 274-274v; Frontenac au roi, 2 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 390.

some Tionnontatés and Miamis) to Montreal. Upon their arrival, Noncheka's interpreter, a *coureur de bois* named Joseph Godefroy de Vieuxpont, asked the soldiers who had come down to the river to meet the Ottawas to send word to Frontenac in Quebec. Frontenac arrived in the evening of 13 August and went directly to the Ottawa camp which was located on the river, below the walls of the town. Frontenac was pleased to see Vieuxpont, one of his own men, and he asked the *coureur de bois* for a briefing on Noncheka's intentions. The meeting then opened formally in the traditional manner. Frontenac welcomed Noncheka and offered him presents. The assembly then ate the meal which the French provided and smoked tobacco. Finally, after smoking quietly for an hour Noncheka rose to his feet and told Vieuxpont to tell Frontenac that the deputation had much to say. Frontenac had already been recalled to France, but it seems he listened attentively enough.<sup>54</sup>

Noncheka began by telling Frontenac that he would speak on behalf of the Kiskakons because they bore the responsibility for the death of Annehat the previous summer at Michilimackinac. Noncheka felt compelled to come to Montreal in order to give Frontenac his account of the murder because he wanted the governor to be absolutely sure of the facts of the case. He wanted Frontenac to be able to hear the story from an eyewitness rather than from the evidence of the Iroquois who were not present at the murder. Noncheka told Frontenac the story Annehat's murder.<sup>55</sup>

After telling the story, Noncheka asked Frontenac to take pity on the Ottawas

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<sup>54</sup> Paroles échangées entre Frontenac et les alliés, août, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 5-12.

<sup>55</sup> Paroles échangées entre Frontenac et les alliés, août, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 5.

and claimed that the Iroquois were killing them. He reminded Frontenac repeatedly that he:

had come to hear Onontio's own voice, and to know what he would tell them to give them back their spirit; they asked to have his protection always; that he have pity on the state in which they found themselves and that he would permit them to trade the few pelts which they had carried with them.<sup>56</sup>

Frontenac understood the significance of trade in the alliance and he knew that if he granted Noncheka permission to begin the trade he would be pledging French military support to the Ottawas in their renewed hostilities with the Iroquois. The Illinois had inadvertently renewed hostilities between the Iroquois and the Ottawas, and now Frontenac's willingness to support his Ottawa allies was being tested by Noncheka.

Frontenac proceeded carefully when it was his turn to rise to his feet to speak. Instead of allowing the trading to begin, a sign that the French would support Ottawas without hesitation, he reminded all of the assembled Ottawas of the seriousness of their situation and required them to make amends to the Senecas. The Kiskakons, he suggested to Noncheka, would do better to think more about reconciliation with the

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<sup>56</sup> "Qu'ils sont venus pour entendre la voix d'onontio, et de scavoir ce qu'il leur dira pour leur refaire de l'Esprit; qu'ils le prirent de les vouloir tousjours proteger; qu'il ait pitié de l'état ou ils sont et leur permettre de traiter le peu de pelleteries qu'ils ont apportées." Paroles échangées entre Frontenac et les alliés, août, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 5v. There is a lively historiographical debate concerning the importance of kinship terms in the relations between the Algonquians and the French. The Ottawas certainly did want the French to act as the "father" in the relationship, but an Ottawa father and a French father acted quite differently. The Ottawa father was seen as the provider, while the French father was more authoritarian. The simplest explanation of the use of the term Onontio is historical. Onontio was actually a Mohawk word meaning great mountain. A Mohawk delegation had asked Charles Jacques Huault de Montmagny, the governor general of New France what his name meant. They translated great mountain into the Mohawk language and the name remained thereafter with all of the governors general. I am indebted to Professor Eccles for drawing this to my attention. See Francis Parkman, *Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV* (Boston:), 69; Richard White, *Middle Ground*, 36; Francis Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 193-194.

Senecas than help from Onontio.<sup>57</sup>

Noncheka ignored this suggestion and, in his deliberate tautological style, repeated his demand that Frontenac allow the trading to begin. Frontenac then asked Sataressi, the Tionnontaté chief, for his perspective. Sataressi felt that the blame for the affair lay with the Kiskakons whom he blamed for the renewed threat of violence in the *pays d'en haut*. Sataressi then turned to address Noncheka and asked him, in the presence of Onontio, to take Onontio's advice and appease the Senecas. Failure to appease the Senecas, Sataressi implied, would mean a dangerous escalation of violence.<sup>58</sup>

Having reached a stalemate, the conference recessed for a few days in order that the Ottawas might discuss the matter amongst themselves. When it reconvened on 18 August, the Kiskakons, Kamigas, and Sinagos had reached a consensus, for they were now willing to listen to Frontenac again.<sup>59</sup> He repeated his demand for the Kiskakons to appease the Senecas. In accordance with the spirit of the Iroquois mourning war, in which men killed in battle could be replaced by prisoners or slaves, Frontenac suggested that Noncheka offer the Senecas a number of men to replace their dead chief Annehat through a requickening ceremony.<sup>60</sup>

Noncheka, however, continued to insist on Kiskakon innocence in an affair

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<sup>57</sup> Paroles échangées entre Frontenac et les alliés, août, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 5v.

<sup>58</sup> Paroles échangées entre Frontenac et les alliés, août, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 8-8v.

<sup>59</sup> Paroles échangées entre Frontenac et les alliés, août, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 9.

<sup>60</sup> Paroles échangées entre Frontenac et les alliés, août, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 9-9v.

between the Senecas and the Illinois, and this time he was supported by the Miami chief, Alimakoué, who had been present at the Feast of the Dead and who had come to Montreal because the Iroquois threatened him as well as the Ottawas. This chief, who was in far greater danger from the Iroquois than were the Kiskakons, went further. He suggested, rather transparently, that the blame for all of these troubles lay with the Iroquois themselves. He urged Frontenac to use the French forces against the Iroquois to resolve the issue for good. In other words, Alimakoué was asking the French to behave as allies of the Ottawas and not as an impartial arbiter of the affairs in the Great Lakes.<sup>61</sup>

At this point Noncheke repeated Alimakoué's demand for French support and for the trade to begin. Two other prominent Ottawas, Oneské and Assougöisa, rose and told Frontenac that the discussion was over, and that all three of the Ottawa nations present supported Noncheke's stand. The Tionnontaté chief, Sataressi, evidently frustrated by Noncheke's intransigence immediately announced his intention of making a separate peace with the Senecas. He announced plans to send a delegation carrying wampum belts to the Seneca village of Tiohohattan in order to wash his hands of the whole affair.<sup>62</sup> Frontenac agreed to open the trade as long as the Ottawas promised not to attack any Iroquois on the way home to Michilimackinac. Noncheke agreed but it was a bad compromise for both men. As the Ottawas prepared to leave, Noncheke reassured Frontenac that they would harm no Iroquois they happened to encounter on

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<sup>61</sup> Paroles échangées entre Frontenac et les alliés, août, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 10.

<sup>62</sup> Paroles échangées entre Frontenac et les alliés, août, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 10.

the homeward journey to Michilimackinac. The meeting at Montreal had settled nothing. In fact Frontenac was still considering the matter when he wrote to the king in early November.<sup>63</sup>

Noncheka's unwillingness to compromise left Frontenac in a difficult position. He had already promised the Senecas that he would demand retribution from the Ottawas for the dead Seneca chief, Annehat, and he had failed. Worse still, Frontenac had lost some of his authority with the Ottawas. Those who attended the conference at Montreal were disappointed in his attempts to act more as a peacemaker than as a loyal ally. The common ground which held the alliance together was the mutual enemy, the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy. If the French began to treat the Iroquois as allies, the Ottawas would be quick to question the value of the alliance and Frontenac knew it.

The intendant Duchesneau was also quick to remind Frontenac of his promise to the Iroquois, and the risks to French dignity and authority. After Frontenac's mismanagement of the Kiskakon-Seneca contretemps, Duchesneau wrote to him to complain of the consequences to New France:

We must not do anything unworthy of our character and it is prudent of you not to expose yourself to their effrontery, but on the contrary we must maintain our dignity and our authority intact, and speak with certainty.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Frontenac's reaction to this cavalier attitude is hard to imagine. On the one hand he was prepared to welcome a problem at Michilimackinac for this would lend support to his case for having sent Dulhut and the others in 1678. He was now on the point of returning to France and he was sure to be questioned about that decision. On the other hand his lack of influence was troubling and he could not be faulted for desiring more tractable allies. *Paroles échangées entre Frontenac et les alliés*, août, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 10; *Frontenac au roi*, 2 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 390; *Frontenac au ministre*, 2 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 274-274v.

<sup>64</sup> "Et que d'ailleurs vous ne devriez rien faire d'indigne de nostre Caractère, qu'il est de vostre prudence de ne vous pas exposer a leur témérité, Mais au contraire de conserver nostre dignité, et vostre autorité toute entière et de leur parler avec seureté." *Duchesneau à Frontenac*, 28 juillet, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 28v.

Influence over the different nations was a boast which Frontenac would need if he were to return as governor-general. Even though Noncheka had his doubts about the effectiveness of Kinongé's plan to pressure the French, Frontenac was more convinced than ever of the need to establish a French post at Michilimackinac.

From Frontenac's perspective, the situation in the *pays d'en haut* was chaotic, and in need of a settling French presence. From the Ottawa perspective however, the chaos was rather more imagined than real. The Iroquois threat was real, but the Ottawas were safe enough on Manitoulin and at Michilimackinac from Iroquois threats. True, they were still having problems with the Sioux in the west. Ever since the Kiskakons had moved to Chequamegon with the Tionnontaté Hurons, relations between the Ottawas and the Sioux had been difficult. Again, the threat to the Ottawas was not as severe as the French imagined; indeed based on the paucity of sources, and the confused accounts which do exist, few French could fathom the muddy situation in the west. The Sioux could make things difficult for Ottawa expeditions in western Lake Superior or even in western Lake Michigan, but the Ottawa's ancestral territory was safe from Sioux incursions. Like the Iroquois they lacked the canoe skills to pose a serious threat to the Ottawas.<sup>65</sup>

Noncheka's refusal to allow Frontenac to have his way must be seen from the

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<sup>65</sup> The Sioux were hostile to the Ottawas for one very important reason; they feared the French military technology which the Ottawas possessed. The Jesuit, Jacques Marquette, put this succinctly: "...they fear the Frenchman because he brings iron into this country." *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 191. The French were more wary of the Sioux than were the Ottawas. Marquette referred to them as the "Iroquois of this country" and Father Nouvel among others recounted stories of Sioux attacks against French traders. They represented more of a threat to the French, who were interested in expanding their influence, than they did to the Ottawas, who were more concerned to protect their interests. Nouvel à La Barre, 23 avril, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 523-523v.

Ottawa perspective. If Frontenac perceived the Ottawas to be too compliant, he could have asked for more concessions such as more furs and greater access to the rich, heavy pelts of the Ojibwas of Lake Superior. If Noncheka had shown a fear of the Iroquois, Frontenac would have been able and willing to predicate further offers of French help and French weapons on the condition that the Ottawas allow him greater access to Lake Superior. With a French post at Michilimackinac, the Ottawas would be able to control French movement in the *pays d'en haut* much more effectively. Ottawa policy was dictated in accordance with one simple precept: the French must at all costs be kept off balance. One of the best ways for Noncheka to accomplish this was to threaten an alliance with the English.

By the spring of 1683, the French had been made to see the advantages of a permanent presence in the *pays d'en haut*. For the French, a post would serve several purposes. A military garrison would be able to intervene in troubles between the various allied nations. A French presence would deter the expansionist English from making incursions into the rich fur regions of Lakes Huron and Superior. A French presence would also help to prevent the English traders at the forts along Hudson Bay from drawing Ojibwa and Cree furs north. On a more base level, certain French officials realized that such a presence would be an extremely lucrative proposition for those fortunate enough to be sent.

The most important reason for the establishment of the post was Ottawa encouragement. A permanent French presence could be easily adapted into the gateways defensive strategy. For the Ottawas a French presence would ensure a steady



flow of French weapons into the heart of their ancestral homeland under Ottawa control. All of these reasons were important, but in the end the new governor, Joseph-Antoine Le Febvre de La Barre, sent Dulhut to Michilimackinac with specific orders to prevent the Lake Superior furs from being sent to the Hudson's Bay posts. The French may not have realized it, but they had played into Kinongé's stratagem.<sup>66</sup>

In 1683 Michilimackinac was at the centre of the Ottawa world, but at the very apogee of the French sphere of influence. Far from representing a "middle ground" between French and Ottawa cultures, the Ottawa village on the eastern tip of the upper Michigan peninsula was the heart of a way of life which had not changed dramatically in centuries. There were two villages (one of Kiskakon Ottawas, and another smaller village of Tionnontaté's) near the Jesuit Mission of St. Ignace, and a Kamiga Ottawa village on the northern tip of the lower peninsula.<sup>67</sup> The original French post was nothing more than a log house built adjacent to the Jesuit chapel at St. Ignace. It served to house the French officers while the men lived in the log cabins which also housed the *coureurs de bois*. Fort de Buade, the first fortified structure in the region, was not completed until 1690.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> The intendant Duchesneau was among those who feared the English more than any other threat to New France. He felt the Hudson's Bay Company posts would have to be destroyed or made redundant by the construction of French forts closer to the Ottawas and Ojibwas. La Barre agreed and sent Dulhut in the spring of 1683 with a small garrison and instructions to prevent the allies from taking their furs to the English. *Mémoire du Duchesneau*, 13 novembre, 1681, AN, C11A, 5: 320-323; La Barre au ministre, 4 novembre, 1683, AN, C11A, 6: 134-144v; Dulhut à La Barre, 12 avril, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 231-239.

<sup>67</sup> The earliest map of Michilimackinac shows the location of the Kiskakon and Tionnontaté villages and the locations of the French fort and the Kamiga village behind it.

<sup>68</sup> Louis de La Porte de Louvigny built Fort de Buade in response to the threat posed by the arrival of the English at Michilimackinac in 1686. *Frontenac au ministre*, 20 octobre, 1691, AN, C11A, 11: 233-235v.

The most important feature of life at the new French post was the absorption of French men into the Ottawa way of life. The French *coureurs de bois* who lived at Michilimackinac lived like Ottawas; they ate an Ottawa diet, travelled in Ottawa canoes, wore Ottawa garments, and after a time observed Ottawa customs. They learned Ottawa ways from the Ottawa women they married. The Ottawas, like their Iroquois enemies, suffered from a demographic imbalance in favour of women. Warfare had led to the deaths of many Ottawa young men and at the same time young Canadian men came to Michilimackinac as *coureurs de bois* with no women. Naturally enough, the young Canadians and Ottawas soon formed alliances of their own. Ottawa society highly approved of these marriages because they helped to restore the demographic balance to the Ottawa communities, and they also brought the *coureurs de bois* under increased Ottawa influence. The soldiers who came to the post soon came to the same realization as did the *coureurs de bois*. They saw the advantage of living as the Ottawas did, and many of the soldiers followed the example of the *coureurs de bois* and married Ottawa women.<sup>69</sup> For their part, therefore, the Ottawas welcomed the French not because of some prescient notion of future military support, but because the French, and particularly the young French Canadians, could help them to preserve their way of life

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<sup>69</sup> Duchesneau au ministre, 10 novembre, 1679, AN, C11A, 5: 38; Memoire de Denonville, 10 août, 1688, AN, C11A, 11: 233-235v; *Jesuit Relations*, 65: 239; Lyle M. Stone, *Fort Michilimackinac: An Archaeological Perspective on the Revolutionary Frontier* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1974), 348-356; Jacqueline Peterson, "Many Roads to Red River: Métis genesis in the Great Lakes region, 1680-1815." in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 40-41; Donald P. Heldman, "The French in Michigan and Beyond: An Archaeological View from Fort Michilimackinac Toward the West." in John A. Walthall, ed., *French Colonial Archaeology: The Illinois Country and the Western Great Lakes* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 201-207.

in the face of new threats.<sup>70</sup>

The need for an official French presence at Michilimackinac was further underscored by an event just prior to Dulhut's arrival in the spring of 1683. In the late winter of 1683 a prominent Bawating Ojibwa named Achinaga, his two sons, and an adopted Menominee arrived at Bawating with the beaver pelts from their winter hunting. Two unscrupulous *coureurs de bois*, Jacques Le Maire and Colin Berthot, met the four hunters and offered them a keg of French brandy in return for some of their furs. The Ojibwas agreed to the deal, promptly became intoxicated, and surrendered all the rest of their furs for another keg of brandy. The next day, Achinaga sought out Le Maire and Berthot and demanded the return of the furs, a demand which the two refused. Without further debate the sons took out their war clubs, beat the *coureurs de bois* to death, and retrieved their beaver pelts. The elderly Jesuit, Charles Albanel, was horrified at these events, but he lacked the authority to challenge Achinaga so he called upon Father Jean Enjalran at the Mission of St. Ignace at Michilimackinac. As soon as Dulhut arrived at the mission, Enjalran informed him of the murders and the two proceeded directly to Bawating where they found Achinaga and his sons in the custody of a respected *coureur de bois* named Jean Peré.<sup>71</sup>

This arrest caused nothing but trouble for Dulhut who began to discover the complexities of justice, polity, and family connections in the Upper Great Lakes.

Dulhut called a meeting in the wigwam of Kinongé, who had moved to Bawating with

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<sup>70</sup> As Axtell has observed, the "Indian defenders of the continent were more successful" than either the French or English in the "contest of cultures." James Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 302.

<sup>71</sup> Dulhut à La Barre, 12 avril, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 231-239.

many other Kamiga Ottawas in the 1670s in order to enforce control over the gateway. Dulhut explained to the assembled Ojibwas and Ottawas that he would have the Menominee and Achinaga's eldest son shot. The third accused murderer would go free in the interest of symmetry and good will. He then marched out of doors and, surrounded by four hundred Ottawas and Ojibwas, executed the two he had just condemned. Kinongé was shocked by Dulhut's action. The sentence had been passed in Kinongé's own wigwam rendering him responsible. The relatives of the two men would not allow the deaths to go unavenged. Dulhut clearly had no idea of the repercussions which would result from his actions.<sup>72</sup>

According to the custom of the Ottawas and the Ojibwas, Achinaga should have been given the opportunity to apologize to Dulhut and to offer him captives with which to replace Le Maire and Berthot. Dulhut's abrupt implementation of unceremonious capital punishment shocked the Ottawas and immediately threatened the alliance with the French. Several Ottawas, like Noncheka, opposed closer ties with the French and Dulhut's draconian justice certainly fueled the fire of anti-French sentiment which was beginning to grow. If Dulhut had hoped to awe the Ottawas, he chose an inappropriate means. Dulhut was not the commander the Ottawas had desired.

Meanwhile a more permanent commandant had been found for Michilimackinac, Olivier Morel de La Durantaye. The obdurate Dulhut's real talents, and indeed his interest, lay in exploration and La Durantaye, who had come to Canada as a captain in the Carignan-Salières regiment, was better suited for the command of a post, which still

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<sup>72</sup> Dulhut à La Barre, 12 avril, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 231-239.

consisted of only a few log buildings in a clearing by the Jesuit chapel.<sup>73</sup> The need for La Durantaye's military experience was made evident in the first year of his command. Louis-Henri de Baugy, who had accompanied La Durantaye to Michilimackinac in 1683 before continuing on to take command at Fort Saint-Louis-des-Illinois, sent an urgent request for help. The fort was under siege by a force of two hundred Iroquois.<sup>74</sup> The Jesuits in the *pays d'en haut* amplified the concerns of the French officials. If the siege were not lifted:

...the nations of these regions would become very insolent if the protection of the French were not necessary against the Iroquois.<sup>75</sup>

In the event, the Illinois defeated the Iroquois before La Durantaye's arrival and thus deprived him of the opportunity to prove the might of French arms to his sceptical allies.<sup>76</sup> Although La Barre's original intention in sending Dulhut to Michilimackinac had been to prevent the Ottawas from trading with the English, a new and useful purpose soon revealed its value. La Durantaye was well placed to petition the allies to join the French in ventures against the Iroquois. Just as the *coureurs de*

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<sup>73</sup> Verney, *Good Regiment*, 162.

<sup>74</sup> A contingent of 14 French traders including René Legardeur de Beauvais, Eustache Provost, Jean Desrosiers dit Dutremble, and François Lucas were surprised by the Iroquois war party on their way to the Illinois country. Their goods were seized and the letters which they were carrying for Baugy and La Durantaye were ripped to shreds, but their lives were spared. The Iroquois informed the group that they intended to attack the fort at Saint-Louis-des-Illinois. Relation d'un voyage au pays des Illinois, 28 mai, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 253-259v; Baugy à La Durantaye, 24 mars, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 519; Baugy à La Barre, 26 mai, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 520.

<sup>75</sup> "...les nations de ces quartiers deviendroient très insolentes si la protection des François ne leur étoit pas nécessaire contre les Iroquois." Enjalran à La Barre, 1 mai, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 525; Nouvel à La Barre, 23 avril, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 523v.

<sup>76</sup> La Barre au ministre, 9 juillet, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 284-286v.

*bois* had ensured a steady supply of furs to Montreal, so did La Durantaye's presence at Michilimackinac help to ensure the participation of Ottawas and Ojibwas in the campaigns against the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy. La Barre was convinced that the Iroquois were preparing to drive the French from the *pays d'en haut*. Frontenac, by this time back in France, had also been concerned about this possibility, and the new minister of marine, the Marquis de Seignelay, reluctantly gave La Barre permission to attack the Iroquois.<sup>77</sup>

In early July of 1684 La Durantaye received orders from La Barre to assemble a force of *coureurs de bois*, Ottawas, and Ojibwas for a new campaign against the Iroquois. By the middle of the month, La Durantaye had managed to assemble delegates from all of the Ottawa and Ojibwa nations of northern Lake Huron at Michilimackinac. La Durantaye did not find it easy to persuade the ogimas to participate in the proposed attack.<sup>78</sup> The wounds caused by Dulhut's terrible mismanagement of affairs still smarted. All of the allies who had come to Michilimackinac at La Durantaye's request were gravely concerned about the lateness of the season. A large campaign, such as the one which La Durantaye was proposing, should have been undertaken in June, after the spring fishing. A departure in July left no margin for error. If the campaign were a long one, if the western force had to wait

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<sup>77</sup> La Barre's official instructions directed him to reduce the Iroquois to obedience and to prevent them from attacking both the Illinois and the Ottawas. In other words, La Barre was told to intimidate the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy, but not risk open hostilities. After his arrival in Quebec, however, La Barre learned that his orders were impossible to obey. Instructions que le Roy veut estre mise du Sr. de la Barre, 10 mai, 1682, AN, B, 8: 103-104; Eccles, *Frontenac*, 158-159.

<sup>78</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 133-134.

for La Barre's army, or if the weather turned nasty and prevented a speedy return, there would not be enough men to participate in the autumn fishing. This would mean the risk of starvation for all of the Ottawas and for some of the Ojibwas of Lake Huron.<sup>79</sup>

From the Ottawa point of view, however, there were two points which made participation in La Barre's proposed campaign attractive. The first was the chance to destroy the offensive military capability of the Iroquois. Second, the chance to employ French arms and French soldiers in a campaign which would benefit the Ottawa Nation was a chance simply too good to refuse. After all, this was the very purpose of their alliance with the French. On 19 July, 1684, five hundred Ottawa and Ojibwa warriors and almost two hundred Canadian *coureurs de bois* and French regular troops left Michilimackinac bound for Niagara.<sup>80</sup> This fleet took the southern route to Lake Ontario, paddling along the western shore of Lake Huron, through Bkejwanong, and along the northern shore of Lake Erie to the Niagara River. After the long portage around the Niagara Falls, La Durantaye and Noncheka led the fleet to the outlet of the Niagara River in the first week in September. As they crossed into Lake Ontario they were met by a French barque which La Barre had sent from Fort Frontenac at

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<sup>79</sup> Perrot, *Mémoire*, 132-134.

<sup>80</sup> La Barre's reticence made itself evident even before he embarked on his futile campaign. His report to the minister in early July expressed his conviction that Dulhut and La Durantaye lacked the authority to persuade the Ottawas and Ojibwas to make the journey to Lake Ontario in order to engage the Iroquois. In his report to the king, however, he only mentioned that Dulhut would be able to raise an army of about one thousand *coureurs de bois* and allied Indians. La Barre au ministre, 9 juillet, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 284-286v; La Barre au roi, 9 juillet, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 287-288.

Cataraqui.<sup>81</sup> The news was terrible. La Barre and his force at Anse de la Famine were sick with the tertian ague, and they had acquiesced to all of the Iroquois demands including the promise to leave Iroquoia at once. Noncheka and the other Ottawas were outraged at what they considered to be La Barre's cowardice. They waited for no further explanations and turned immediately for home in order to take part in the autumn fishing.<sup>82</sup>

La Barre's abortive campaign of 1684 underscores the fundamental problem which was to plague the French-Ottawa alliance in the latter part of the seventeenth century: poor communications. This problem manifested itself in three distinct ways. First, it took far too long for La Barre to communicate his plan to La Durantaye at Michilimackinac. La Durantaye then needed additional time to request the presence of the delegations from the Nassauqueton Ottawas at Saginaw Bay, the Sinago Ottawas on Manitoulin Island, the Kamiga Ottawas and Bawating Ojibwas from Bawating, and the Mississauga and Amikwa Ojibwas from the North Channel. It took La Durantaye even longer to assemble the warriors from these nations with the Kamiga and Kiskakon Ottawas at Michilimackinac. The lateness of the season was made worse by the time it

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<sup>81</sup> La Barre's report reveals much about his lack of ability as a military commander. For a complete account of this campaign, see Eccles, *Frontenac*, 157-172. *Mémoire de La Barre concernant son expédition au lac Ontario*, 1 octobre, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 308-313.

<sup>82</sup> Unlike La Barre, who emphasized the difficulties of the campaign in his report, the intendant De Meulles lay the blame squarely on the governor's indecisive acts. In his critical reports he listed the specific failings of the affair: La Barre had an adequate force to vanquish the Iroquois, but he lacked the courage to command; La Barre's indecisive and recalcitrant nature led to unnecessary and fatal delays; and in the end De Meulles blamed the lack of provisions and the disease as the reasons for accepting the humiliating peace terms of the Iroquois. In the final analysis, De Meulles concluded that the Ottawas would now have no reason to respect the French. *De Meulles au ministre*, 10 octobre, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 388-391v; *De Meulles au roi*, 12 novembre, 1684, AN, C11A, 6: 394-395.



took to assemble the force.<sup>83</sup>

Communications between La Durantaye and the Ottawas and Ojibwas in northern Lake Huron were imperfect because La Durantaye had little knowledge of the Ottawa people and, therefore, no empathy with their circumstance. Like other French officials who had lived among the Ottawas in the Upper Great Lakes, La Durantaye eventually came to appreciate the ways in which the Ottawas identified the necessities of their world. In 1684, however, he was still learning and his experience in the *pays d'en haut* was limited. He knew the Ottawas only through the contacts he had made with their delegates at Montreal and his knowledge of their region was limited to the things he had seen since his arrival in 1683. He did not yet understand the cyclical nature of the Ottawa economy and therefore he was not fully aware of the critical importance of the autumn fishery. La Durantaye would have to learn to consider the Ottawa interests as well as his own if he were to report accurately on their willingness to participate as French allies.<sup>84</sup>

Finally, communications between the French and the Ottawas were hindered by the vagaries of French official policy. In the space of a few years the Ottawas were

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<sup>83</sup> Mémoire de la dépense faite par La Durantaye, 20 avril, 1685, AN, C11A, 6: 451-452v; Résumé d'un mémoire concernant les mesures prises par Denonville avec La Durantaye, Dulhut, et Tonty pour la guerre contre les Iroquois, 26 août, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 98-99v.

<sup>84</sup> La Barre was the victim of some bad advice when he formulated his plans for a campaign against the Iroquois. La Durantaye took part in a meeting which La Barre held shortly after his arrival in the colony held to provide him with the benefit of expert advice. La Durantaye assured La Barre that the Ottawas would participate in the campaign and yet, La Durantaye had never even been to Michilimackinac and he was basing his assumptions on what he had learned from Ottawas at Montreal. He was correct in his assumption that the Ottawas wanted to participate, but he had no idea of the conditions under which they would fight. Mémoire de l'assemblée tenu le 10 octobre, 1682, AN, C11A, 6: 68-70.

forced to contend with Frontenac's disingenuousness, Dulhut's draconian justice, La Barre's vacillations, and La Durantaye's inexperience. Each of these men represented official French policy and yet each asked something entirely different of his allies. Other than the constant demand for furs, there were no patterns or cyclical rhythms to the French world, and the Ottawas had a difficult time finding meaning in the requests of their French ally. The alliance was based upon common defence, but occasionally the French forgot this and gave the Ottawas cause to question French commitment to the goal of destroying the fighting capability of the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy.<sup>85</sup>

As the year 1684 drew to a close, the French-Ottawa alliance was in a state of crisis. The five hundred Ottawa and Ojibwa warriors who had accompanied La Durantaye on the futile mission to Niagara arrived at their homes in the middle of October. They had been in their canoes paddling without a break since 19 July, battling the winds of Lake Huron and Lake Erie and making the difficult Niagara portage twice, and even though they were accustomed to long voyages they were exhausted. Food was always scarce on long trips, and the large number of men who made this particular trip put a very heavy demand upon the resources available along the way. The paddlers arrived home tired, hungry, and disheartened by the futility of the entire voyage.

Nor was there any rest for the tired paddlers. As soon as they arrived at their home villages, they had to take to the lake to help catch enough whitefish to feed their

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<sup>85</sup> The officials in New France often took the Ottawas for granted. Officials in France, one large step further removed from the *pays d'en haut*, rarely asked themselves why the Ottawas or other allies would participate in French campaigns. Eccles, *Frontenac*, 171.

communities. As they battled the autumn gales on the waters of Lake Huron, the warriors turned fishermen must have had dark thoughts about their French allies and their failure to engage the Iroquois in battle. Those Ottawas who had stayed at home could not have been happy with the French either. With so many of the men away on the campaign, the summer hunting and fishing had been limited to what the boys and older men had been able to catch. The women and girls had been deprived of the help which they normally had in the heavier field work. The Ottawas had done without in the past when the crops failed or when hunting and fishing were poor, but the vicissitudes of nature were easier to accept than the failure of the French allies.

Matters were to get worse before they got better. In March of 1685 Louis XIV re-called La Barre to France for being humiliated by the Iroquois.<sup>86</sup> La Barre himself was not a great loss to the cause of the French-Ottawa alliance, but his replacement Jacques-René de Brisay de Denonville was not an improvement as far as the Ottawas were concerned. Denonville was a tough career soldier with an austere personality. His goal was to rebuild the defences of the St. Lawrence colony and he cared little for the Ottawas or the French post at Michilimackinac.<sup>87</sup> In 1685, his first year in office, Denonville sent a series of gloomy reports regarding the state of the colony's ability to defend itself. Like Colbert, Denonville did not approve of the forts in the west which

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<sup>86</sup> Le roi au sieur de Meulles, 10 mars, 1685, AN, B, 11: 96.

<sup>87</sup> Mémoire de Denonville sur l'état présent du Canada, 12 novembre, 1685, AN, C11A, 7: 178-186v; Eccles, *Frontenac*, 173-177.

he felt were both a burden on the colonial economy and a drain on the colonial defence.<sup>88</sup> Still, each French failure renewed the threat of Ottawa-English trade and Denonville wanted to find a way to prevent this from happening and close the western posts at the same time. A number of means were proposed, the most common being the construction of new forts at Niagara, at the Toronto portage, or at Bkejwanong, the area along the straits between Lakes Huron and Erie, an area the French called *le détroit*. Denonville understood that French-Ottawa communications needed improvement in order to keep the Ottawas satisfied with their French allies. He felt the best way to accomplish this was to build one Great Lakes post which was much nearer to the French. He did not consider whether such a post would be convenient for the Ottawas.<sup>89</sup>

Denonville came to believe that a fort located at Niagara would be best to prevent the English from travelling to the *pays d'en haut* and to dissuade the Ottawas from travelling to Albany. Niagara was a relatively short distance from Montreal:

...what I believe to be more useful to reach our objective, would be the establishment of a good post at Niagara.<sup>90</sup>

This may well have been ideal for Denonville's colonial defence plan, but the Ottawas wanted a strong French presence in northern Lake Huron, not on the southern shore of

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<sup>88</sup> Denonville was particularly concerned with the numbers of Canadian *coureurs de bois* who were too far away to defend the St. Lawrence settlements from Iroquois or English attack. *Mémoire de Denonville sur l'état présent du Canada*, 12 novembre, 1685, AN, C11A, 7: 178-186v; Denonville au ministre, 8 mai, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 6-20v; Denonville au ministre, 15 octobre, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 65-66.

<sup>89</sup> Denonville à La Durantaye, 6 juin, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 51-52; Denonville à Dulhut, 6 juin, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 53-53v.

<sup>90</sup> "...ce que je croirois de plus utile pour en venir a bout ce seroit d'establir un bon poste à Niagara." Denonville au ministre, 8 mai, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 10.

Lake Ontario in Iroquois territory.

According to Denonville, Niagara was the best location for a French post in the Lakes because French officials located there could prevent an alliance, based on trade, between the Ottawas and the English. Although the Ottawas liked to make the French fear that such an alliance was possible, it actually was not. The Iroquois and the various Algonquian peoples of the Atlantic coast had been hurt by the presence of the English and the Ottawas knew of their plight.<sup>91</sup> The Ottawas also feared Anglo-American expansionism. Among the Ottawas were individuals from several different nations who had lived along the east coast of North America. They told of dispossession, brutality, and settlers by the thousand.<sup>92</sup>

Finally the Ottawas were not convinced of the availability of English trade goods, particularly weapons. The most important part of the trade consisted of weapons, but as might be expected, the Ottawas were quite hard on their guns. The French ensured the Ottawas of a constant supply of powder and shot, and they also provided new weapons to replace those which had been damaged. By the 1680s,

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<sup>91</sup> A discussion of the English relations with the nations of the Atlantic coast and the Iroquois cantons to the south of Lake Ontario lies outside the limits of the present investigation. Succinctly put the English wished to subdue these peoples "to some semblance of civilized order." When this was not possible, the plan was of brutal simplicity, eliminate them. See James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: the Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 148; Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: Norton, 1975), 203-227. For evidence that the Ottawas recognized this danger (it was in their interest to conceal this worry from the French) see Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 79.

<sup>92</sup> Paroles qui doit être dites à l'Outaouais pour le dissuader de l'alliance qu'il veut faire avec l'Iroquois et l'Anglais, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 130-133. These instructions were given to Nicholas Perrot by Frontenac in the belief that the Ottawas were going to abandon the French alliance. This is good evidence of the cleverness of the Ottawa foreign policy deceptions.

*arquebusiers* or gunsmiths were sent to Michilimackinac to construct forges.<sup>93</sup> They made shot but also spent much of their time repairing damaged guns.<sup>94</sup> In the delicate environment of the Upper Great Lakes, poorly tooled muskets and knives of suspect quality could mean the difference between life and death.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, the Jesuits were able to prevent some of the worst abuses of the trade in alcohol, while the debaucheries in the English trade went on without hindrance.<sup>96</sup>

The Ottawa threat to abandon the French and to form an alliance with the English was a cleverly designed stratagem. An alliance with the English would mean an arrangement with the Iroquois which would allow them access to the region around the south of Lake Huron. This is precisely what the Ottawas and Ojibwas had been fighting against for centuries. Nevertheless, the appearance of a fleet of eleven English canoes at Michilimackinac in the autumn of 1685 caused panic among the French. Led by a Major Gregory, and guided by unnamed French renegades, this expedition eluded La Durantaye even though he had known of its existence ever since the English

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<sup>93</sup> *Etat des marchandises et munitions distribués en 1693 aux nations sauvages éloignées de la colonie*, AN, C11A, 12: 290. Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth-Century Montreal* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1992), 81; Gilles Havard, *La grande paix de Montréal de 1701* (Québec: Recherches Amerindiennes au Québec, 1992), 35.

<sup>94</sup> Guns were damaged by the Ottawas in a number of creative and fatal ways. Without an understanding of the weapons they employed, the Ottawas damaged them by submerging the end of the barrels in the water to shoot fish, by allowing the metal to rust, and by using the guns as tools to dig holes. La Durantaye, Dulhut, and Baugy devoted much of their correspondence to the need for military supplies as trade goods. For example see, Dulhut à La Barre, 10 septembre, 1684, AN, C11A, 301-301v.

<sup>95</sup> W.J. Eccles, "A Belated Review of Harold Adams Innis's *The Fur Trade in Canada*," in *Essays on New France* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 69-70.

<sup>96</sup> The correspondence of the Jesuits at Michilimackinac makes continual reference to the trade - which did exist - but both the Jesuits and certain officials in Quebec took measures to prevent the trade in *eau-de-vie*.

traders had called on the Senecas on the way across Lake Ontario. Denonville's immediate response to the presence of English traders in the *pays d'en haut* was to repeat his demand for French posts at Niagara or at Bkejwanong.<sup>97</sup>

The Ottawa stratagem of threatening the French by trading with the English was completely successful. An anonymous account written during the winter of 1685-1686 concluded that the biggest threat to the colony was the prospect of contact between the English and the Ottawas.<sup>98</sup> Denonville's correspondence underlined his new concern with the wishes of his Ottawa allies. He ordered Dulhut to prevent, by force of arms, any further incursions and he began plans to establish a post at Bkejwanong among the Kamiga Ottawas:

We know perfectly well of what importance it is to hold all of the passages which link the Ottawas to the English. This is what has determined us to build a fort at the strait which links Lake Erie and the freshwater sea or Lake Huron.<sup>99</sup>

La Durantaye sent Dulhut to *le détroit* with twenty men and he ordered him to prevent

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<sup>97</sup> According to some historians, an English presence at Michilimackinac would have ruined French authority in the west, and indeed the French feared this was true. Francis Jennings, for example, argues that: "There was no question in anyone's mind that the English at Michilimackinac would destroy French trade with the inland Indians, and with it the French empire in the west." The argument is presented in economic terms, with the Ottawas being greatly impressed with the cheap prices of the English goods. This is all beside the point. The Ottawas were interested only in intimidating their inconstant allies the French. There was never a realistic possibility of an Ottawa-English alliance. Denonville au ministre, 13 novembre, 1685, AN, C11A, 7: 104-104v; Denonville au ministre, 8 mai, 1686, AN, C11A, 8v; Perrot, *Mémoire*, 141; Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York: Norton, 1984), 189.

<sup>98</sup> *Mémoire sur le danger qui guette le Canada*, ca. 1685, AN, C11A, 7: 124-124v.

<sup>99</sup> "Nous connoissons parfaitement de quelle importance il est de tenir les passages qui communiquent des outaous aux anglais c'est ce qui nous a déterminé à faire un réduit au détroit du lac érié qui communique la mer douce ou lac huron." Denonville et Champigny au ministre, 6 novembre, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 6.

the passage of the English or Ottawas through the Bkejwanong gateway.<sup>100</sup>

Denonville then formally protested to New York governor Thomas Dongan, who replied that the English had gone neither to trade nor to entice the Ottawas to bring their furs to Albany. Gregory had been sent only to return some Ottawa prisoners who had been held captive by the Iroquois.<sup>101</sup>

Over the winter of 1686-1687 Denonville came to believe that he would have to redress the humiliation suffered by La Barre at l'Anse au Famine, or risk losing the Ottawas as allies. During that winter, the two most prominent Ottawa ogimas, Noncheka of the Kiskakons and Kinongé of the Kamigas, came by snowshoe to Montreal at Denonville's request. They told the governor that they were prepared to join the French in their campaign against the Iroquois, but they insisted on the campaign beginning earlier than La Barre's. They also warned Denonville that the Ottawas would not tolerate another failure. An Iroquois war party had attacked some Nassauakueton hunters on the route to Michilimackinac during the previous summer and the two ogimas told Denonville that the Ottawas could not afford to maintain the status quo with the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy. Either the French and Ottawas would defeat the Iroquois or the Ottawas would leave the alliance.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Denonville à La Durantaye, 6 juin, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 51-52; Denonville à Dulhut, 6 juin, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 53-53v.

<sup>101</sup> Dongan à Denonville, 9 septembre, 1686, AN, C11A, 9: 88. Dongan knew that all good lies contained an element of truth, but it is clear that Denonville did not believe him for a moment. The very next year, La Durantaye intercepted another party of English and Iroquois led by French renegades on their way to Michilimackinac. A small French contingent based at Detroit had kept the party under observation while sending scouts to alert La Durantaye. Mémoire de Denonville, octobre, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 112.

<sup>102</sup> Denonville au ministre, 8 juin, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 21-23; Mémoire de Denonville, octobre, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 112; Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 1: 515-516; Lahontan, *Voyages*, 1: 126-127; Perrot, *Mémoire*, 138-143.



Noncheka and Kinongé arrived back at Michilimackinac at the end of the winter and immediately sent word of the planned campaign to their allies, the Tionnontatés of Michilimackinac, the Ojibwas of northern Lake Huron, and the Miamis and Illinois of southern Lake Michigan. As warriors of these nations arrived at Michilimackinac, the Ottawas gave a demonstration of the way in which they protected the gateways. As each fleet approached Michilimackinac, Ottawa scouts hurried back to the villages to prepare a mock battle to greet their allies. The Potawatomis, who had not been told of the campaign by the Ottawa messengers, but who had learned of it from their Miami neighbours, were the last to arrive:

The fleet of the Pouteouatemis made its appearance at an eighth of a league from land, and the Outaoüaks, naked and without ornaments other than their bows and arrows, marched abreast and formed a sort of battalion. At a certain distance from the water they suddenly broke ranks, ...and began to shout *Sassakoue!* The Pouteouatemis, for their part shouted back, and aligned in battle formation, in order to land...Finally as the landing was made, the Outaoüaks rushed into the water, war clubs in hand; the Pouteouatemis at once darted forward in their canoes, and rushed out with their war clubs. All order was then lost as the Outaoüaks lifted the canoes out of the water, and carried them onto the land. Such was this reception which on a serious occasion would have cost much bloodshed.<sup>103</sup>

On this occasion, however the Potawatomis were invited guests and Noncheka conducted them to the Kiskakon village where all of the guests took part in the elaborate preparations for war, while the Ottawa men got in the last of the fish from the spring spawning run.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> The Ottawa cry *Sassakoue!* was given in order to let the Potawatomis know for sure that they were welcome. It means "I shout with joy." This episode is a good example of the way in which the gateways system functioned. La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 199-200.

<sup>104</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 200-201.

Before the Ottawas had got their spring fishing finished, however, La Durantaye informed them that they must prepare to depart. He was impatient to fulfil his orders in order to impress Denonville with his influence over the Ottawas. Not surprisingly Noncheka refused to depart, and told La Durantaye to wait while the Ottawas prepared their canoes for the journey to Lake Ontario. The French commander was furious with this delay, and he reminded Noncheka that it was the Ottawas who had asked to leave earlier in the season than they had done on La Barre's campaign. He left with the Tionnontatés who were not already at Bkejwanong and one hundred and sixty *coureurs de bois*, leaving a few behind to wait for Nicolas Perrot who was expected at the post any day.<sup>105</sup>

As it happened Perrot arrived at Michilimackinac on the very afternoon of the day of La Durantaye's departure. He was told by the *coureurs de bois* that La Durantaye had left for *le détroit* where he would wait for Perrot and any Ottawas the latter was able to persuade to take part in the campaign. Perrot, who knew the ways of the Upper Great Lakes, was then greeted by Noncheka who told him the reason for the delay:

Monsieur de La Durantaye had left in the morning with the French who had been unable to make the Ottawas resolve to accompany them on the campaign. As soon as the Ottawas saw me, however, they told me to wait for a few days, that they had the intention of accompanying the me, that their canoes were unfit, and when they were ready they would follow the French. I believed them and had the faith to wait for them for a

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<sup>105</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 141.

week.<sup>106</sup>

Noncheka's excuse was perfectly logical. The spring fishing was hard on the birch bark fabric of the canoes, and it would take some time to repair them properly for the long journey to Lake Ontario. Given that four hundred Ottawas and other Indian allies would make the trip, a week to repair the canoes was not unreasonable.<sup>107</sup>

Noncheka did not tell Perrot that he wanted time to discourage the Potawatomis from making the trip. The Ottawas were concerned about the Potawatomis' growing contacts with the French, and about the Potawatomi claims on Bkejwanong. Noncheka wanted to exclude them from Denonville's campaign and from further contact with the French. The Ottawas had welcomed the Potawatomis warmly, but now they attempted to discourage their participation:

Although they gave these newcomers [the Potawatomis] a friendly welcome, the Outaouaks did not at first know what measures to take in order to turn aside these newcomers from their campaign.<sup>108</sup>

Noncheka hoped to frustrate the Potawatomis by delaying, and in the event he was successful in so doing, but he also frustrated La Durantaye to the extent that the latter left Michilimackinac in a rage. Perrot, who knew the ways of the Upper Great Lakes,

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<sup>106</sup> "Mr. de La Durantaye en estoit sorty le matin avec les François qui n'avoient pu résoudre les Outaoués à se mettre en marche. Aussytost qu'ils me virent, ils me dirent de les attendre quelques jours, et qu'ils estoit dans l'intention de partir avec moy, que leurs canots n'estoient pas en estat, et que lorsqu'ils seroient prêts ils suivroient les François. Je les crus et les espéray pendant huit jours." Perrot, *Memoire*, 141.

<sup>107</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 141-142; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2:201-203; Champigny au ministre, 16 juillet, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 35-35v.

<sup>108</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 200.

understood Noncheka and was prepared to be patient.<sup>109</sup>

Meanwhile, La Durantaye arrived at Dulhut's fort at *le détroit* in the Bkejwanong region with thirty English and Iroquois prisoners whom he had captured on Lake Huron. Soon after La Durantaye's arrival, another party of English and Iroquois traders, this one again being led to Michilimackinac by French renegades, passed by the fort. La Durantaye, Henri Tonty, and Dulhut captured this party but when they returned to the fort they found many of the *coureurs de bois* intoxicated with the captured English rum. To make matters worse, some of the Tionnontatés had befriended the captive Iroquois and appeared to turn against the French. La Durantaye was in danger of being captured by his own prisoners when the Nassauakueton ogima Nansouakouet and his thirty warriors warned the Tionnontatés to remain with the French.<sup>110</sup>

Perrot, the Ottawas, Potawatomis, and the other allied Indians arrived at Bkejwanong shortly after this incident and together the whole fleet travelled to Niagara where they joined Denonville's army. The entire force, save for a garrison left to protect the French boats at Lake Ontario, then moved against the Seneca villages. The Senecas, alerted by the English, attempted a surprise attack on the advance army and were defeated, losing one hundred warriors as casualties. They had taken the precaution of sending away their families, however, and the French and their allies could do little

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<sup>109</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 141-142; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2:201-203; Champigny au ministre, 16 juillet, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 35-35v.

<sup>110</sup> Mémoire de Denonville, octobre, 1687, AN, C11A, ? : 12; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 201; Perrot, *Memoire*, 141-142.

beyond destroying the Iroquois crops.<sup>111</sup>

Denonville's campaign was a modest victory, but bad feelings between the allies were engendered. The Ottawas were annoyed with La Durantaye who had shown a lack of faith in them as allies. La Durantaye blamed the Ottawas for the close call he had suffered when the Tionnontatés at Bkejwanong had almost switched sides. Denonville was disgusted with the Ottawas for their behaviour on the battlefield. He had hoped that the Ottawas would put their fighting skills to good use by chasing after the fleeing Seneca warriors. Instead, the Ottawas gathered the wounded Senecas from the field and spent the evening torturing them to death and eating the hearts of those who remained stoic throughout their torments. Denonville now felt that the French should try to make peace with the Iroquois.<sup>112</sup>

In spite of these misgivings the Ottawas were hopeful that Denonville would honour his promise to return the following summer with a larger force.<sup>113</sup> Denonville estimated that a force of three thousand French soldiers would be adequate to force an Iroquois peace.<sup>114</sup> He would, however, receive only a small portion of that number.

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<sup>111</sup> The most complete account of this campaign is to be found in Denonville's report to the minister, but the intendant Champigny also noted some of the details of the logistics. See, Denonville au ministre, 25 août, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 61-78; Champigny au ministre, 16 juillet, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 32-38.

<sup>112</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 142-143; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 208-210; Denonville au ministre, 25 août, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 64-68.

<sup>113</sup> Denonville au ministre, 7 novembre, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 177-179.

<sup>114</sup> Mémoire à Seignelay, janvier, 1687, AN, C11A, 9: 250; Mémoire de Denonville, 1688, AN, C11A, 10: 200-205. Denonville was disgusted with the Ottawas for the cruelties which they inflicted on the Seneca prisoners. His attitude towards them was influenced forever by what must have been a horrific experience. Clearly Denonville had not seen this type of behaviour before and he did not understand that torture was a socially condoned aspect of warfare. To him it was merely horrific.

War loomed on the European horizon and France needed her armies for service in Europe. Louis XIV offered Denonville a force of three hundred soldiers. Far from going on the offensive in Iroquoia, Denonville was forced to conclude a peace settlement with the Iroquois.<sup>115</sup> As Canadian historian W.J. Eccles noted, the Protestant wind which blew for William and Mary, "also blew for the Iroquois."<sup>116</sup> Again the Ottawas were forced to contend with events beyond their control.

The Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy, as events were to prove, had no intention of ratifying the peace proposal. In early August 1689 some fifteen hundred warriors attacked the French settlements at Lachine, just west of Montreal. For the residue of the summer the attacks were continued and the French seemed helpless to prevent the slaughter. Frontenac, who had returned to replace Denonville, had assured Seignelay, the minister of marine, that the colony had not needed expensive help from France. He knew the political situation in France and he boasted that the colony would be vigorously defended by the militia and the Ottawa allies.<sup>117</sup> This suggestion pleased the officials in Versailles (as Frontenac had hoped it would) and the king ordered him to enlist Ottawa help in the defence of the colony.<sup>118</sup> The Ottawas, however, had ideas of their own. The separate peace of Denonville was a cause of great discontent, and those among the Ottawas who still resented La Barre's failure

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<sup>115</sup> Roi à Denonville, 8 mars, 1688, AN, C11A, 10: 20-22.

<sup>116</sup> W.J. Eccles, *France in America* (Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1990), 100.

<sup>117</sup> Observations sur l'état des affaires du Canada, 18 novembre, 1689, AN, C11A, 10: 321-323.

<sup>118</sup> Mémoire du roi au Frontenac et Champigny, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 141-145.

began to call for a new strategy. Anti-French sentiment was hardening into an anti-French faction.

The peace settlement was bad enough, but the events at Lachine gave the Ottawas cause to wonder about the extent of French power. The strongest voice of discontent now arose from a prominent Sinago Ottawa named Ocheepik whom the French called La Petite Racine.<sup>119</sup> The Sinagos had always been the least enthusiastic toward the alliance with the French. They were responsible for the spiritual well-being of the Nation itself and they equated the French with the zealous Jesuits. Ocheepik was a man in this tradition. He believed that the Ottawas must keep their relations with the French to a minimum: it was fine to trade furs for French weapons, but beyond that contact should be limited.

In the summer of 1689 Ocheepik had gone to Montreal to attend the French-Iroquois peace conference in order to report its outcome to the Ottawa council. Instead he bore witness to the terrible ferocity of the Iroquois attack and the pathetically inadequate French response.<sup>120</sup> He returned to Michilimackinac and made his report to the general council which was called upon his return. The French were weak, he argued, and he stressed their inability to coordinate a defence of the colony. The Iroquois warriors had been allowed to remain in the vicinity of Montreal for weeks and

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<sup>119</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 231-237.

<sup>120</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 231-237.

Frontenac's bold assertions could do nothing to end their reign of terror.<sup>121</sup> The Ottawa council resolved to set a moderate course. Two Seneca elders, Ottawa prisoners, were to be returned to their homes accompanied by a delegation of Ottawa ogimas. This gesture was designed to threaten the French.<sup>122</sup>

Frontenac's reaction to this information was immediate. Nicolas Perrot and Louis de La Porte de Louvigny were dispatched to Michilimackinac: Perrot to address the Ottawas, Louvigny to assume command from La Durantaye.<sup>123</sup> Perrot was charged with delivering Frontenac's specific appeal, the "Parole Which Must be Said to the Ottawas to Dissuade Them from the Alliance Which They Want to Make With the Iroquois and the English." Frontenac's text begins with a long harangue on the alliance from the French perspective using the father and children analogy which meant so much to the French and so little to the Ottawas. Any misunderstandings were the fault of La Barre and Denonville. As for the English, they were not faithful allies and Frontenac accused them of a number of crimes from dishonesty to eating their own "children," the Abenakis. Finally, Frontenac sought to reassure the Ottawas regarding French military

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<sup>121</sup> The Jesuit, Etienne de Carheil, was at the mission of St. Ignace and he attended the general council meeting. There is some question as to the amount of time the Iroquois warriors remained in the colony. Charlevoix says it was months, but the contemporary authorities say weeks. Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 1: 566-567; Frontenac au ministre, 15 novembre, 1689, AN, C11A, 10: 217-224v; Champigny au ministre, 16 novembre, 1689, AN, C11A, 10: 244-250v.

<sup>122</sup> Frontenac au ministre, 15 novembre, 1689, AN, C11A, 10: 217-224v; Champigny au ministre, 16 novembre, 1689, AN, C11A, 10: 244-250v.

<sup>123</sup> It would not have been beneath Frontenac to use the crisis in Ottawa relations as an excuse to post his man at Michilimackinac. There is no evidence of incompetence on the part of La Durantaye. The appearance at Montreal later that summer of a fur brigade of five hundred Ottawas carrying 100,000 écus worth of furs would indicate that Frontenac was back to his old tricks. Frontenac au ministre, 12 novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 86-88; Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 1: 566.



capability: "I am powerful enough to kill all of the English, and to destroy the Iroquois."<sup>124</sup>

Ottawa strategy was simple. They wished to force Frontenac to act as an ally, not a master. To apply pressure, the Ottawas tried to make Frontenac believe that they were on the verge of allying with the Iroquois.<sup>125</sup> The Ottawas treated their Iroquois prisoners as welcome guests and Ocheepik won more converts daily to his anti-French faction. Ocheepik's rhetoric made Carheil and Louvigny feel that they were on the verge of permanent exclusion from the entire region of the *pays d'en haut*. The Ottawas accorded the Iroquois greater civility in order to impress upon Carheil, and therefore upon Frontenac, "...the contempt they felt for our alliance and for your [Frontenac's] protection."<sup>126</sup>

The Ottawas' chief complaint was with the poor showing the French had made against the Iroquois, and the French knew it:

These [Ottawa complaints] may all be reduced to one prime reason, which is Onontio's protection on which they based all their hopes of being delivered from their enemies - was not what they had wrongly imagined it to be; that hitherto they had always thought the Frenchman was warlike through numbers, through courage, and through the number and diversity of the implements of war that he could make.<sup>127</sup>

In this brief observation, Carheil cut to the very heart of the problem which now

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<sup>124</sup> "Je suis assez puissant pour tuer l'anglais et pour détruire les iroquois." Paroles qui doit être dites à l'Outaouais pour le dissuader de l'alliance qu'il veut faire avec l'Iroquois et l'Anglais, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 130-133.

<sup>125</sup> Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 1: 566.

<sup>126</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 31.

<sup>127</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 54: 31.

confronted French-Ottawa alliance. The Ottawas needed the French to aid them in the successful application of their gateways defensive strategy. They threatened the French with their pretended intention of joining the Iroquois and the English, but this was an empty threat indeed. The Ottawa way of life would only be preserved by protecting their resources from the Iroquois and their ancestral territory from the English. The French could not understand this because on the colonial level they were too busy looking for profit, and on the metropolitan level they were fooled by Frontenac's self-interested reports. Difficulties in communication had not been resolved.<sup>128</sup>

In the early autumn of 1689 Kinongé of the Kamigas, Noncheka of the Kiskakons, Ocheepik of the Sinagos, and Nansouakouet of the Nassauakuetons met at Michilimackinac to discuss the future of their alliance with the French. Three successive French failures (La Barre's abortive campaign, Denonville's inability to continue the war against the Iroquois, and Frontenac's failure to defend his own settlements) had given the Ottawas cause to wonder about the extent of French power and the level of French commitment to the goals of the alliance. Ocheepik called for the sharp curtailment of relations and the eviction of the French from

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<sup>128</sup> Historians have not seen this because of their own reliance upon the perspective of their French authorities. Richard White, to give an example, is correct in his assertion that the "French-Algonquian alliance rested on a delicate balance of fear and temptation." He is incorrect, however, in his claim that it was the Ottawas who feared the French: "The Ottawas, in particular, never lost their fear that the French would abandon them." As events at Lachine proved, the French needed the Ottawas more than the Ottawas needed the French. Northern Lake Huron was much easier to defend than the St. Lawrence. Frontenac knew that the Ottawas were not afraid to lose the French as allies and he claimed that the Ottawas stayed in the alliance because of the diplomatic skills of Louvigny and Perrot. This claim is hardly surprising when one considers the active role they played in making profit for Frontenac and themselves. The Ottawas stayed in the alliance because it was the best of several poor options. Frontenac au ministre, 20 octobre, 1691, AN, C11A, 11: 233-247; White, *The Middle Ground*, 32-33.

Michilimackinac.<sup>129</sup> But Kinongé argued that an anti-French policy was impractical. He reminded the others that the French provided European weaponry, ammunition, and gunsmiths to repair damaged guns. He also reminded the others that Frontenac would be anxious to prove his worthiness as an ally and it would be prudent to provide him with the opportunity to do this. After much discussion Noncheka and Nansouakouet sided with Kinongé, and all four accordingly decided to continue Kinongé's policy of applying steady pressure upon the French by limiting the flow of furs to the St. Lawrence, and by threatening peace overtures to the Iroquois and the English.<sup>130</sup>

As part of the strategy agreed upon that autumn at Michilimackinac, Ocheepik led a delegation of Sinago Ottawas to the Seneca village of Tiotohatten in the winter, after the autumn fishing. Upon arrival at Tiotohatten, he delivered his message of peace and promised the Senecas that he would do his utmost to convince the three other Ottawa nations and the Tionnontatés to enter into a peace treaty with the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy.<sup>131</sup> The Senecas replied that such an offer was a matter for the consideration of the whole Confederacy and so they took Ocheepik and his delegation to Onondaga to present their peace proposal to the council of the Confederacy. On 3 February, 1690, a Seneca sachem addressed the assembly and repeated Ocheepik's offer of peace. The council's reaction was favourable and they asked Ocheepik to convince

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<sup>129</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, 64: 29.

<sup>130</sup> Although the Ottawas prevented other Algonquians from carrying furs through the gateways, they allowed the French and Canadian *coureurs de bois* to carry furs from Michilimackinac to Montreal. They did not want the supply of weapons to be cut. *Jesuit Relations*, 64: 25-27; Monseignat, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada, novembre, 1690*, AN, C11A, 11: 6.

<sup>131</sup> Peter Wraxall, *An Abridgement of the Indian Affairs*, Charles Howard McIlwain ed., (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 15; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 234.

the other three Ottawa nations to join in the peace process.<sup>132</sup>

Ochcepick had made it clear to the Five Nations that he spoke only for the Sinagos; this enabled the other Ottawa nations to remain uncommitted. It was incumbent upon Frontenac, who learned of Ochcepick's peace mission through La Durantaye at Michilimackinac, to act quickly to save the alliance before the other three Ottawa nations joined the Sinagos in forming a new alliance with the Iroquois.<sup>133</sup> Frontenac did not know that the peace mission was an Ottawa stratagem designed to put pressure on him to declare his intention to support the alliance and to desist from his peace initiative with the Iroquois.

For his part, Frontenac was indeed trying to prove his commitment to the alliance. After his re-appointment as governor of New France in April of 1689, he immediately cancelled Denonville's general policy of withdrawal from the *pays d'en haut*.<sup>134</sup> As part of his plan to rejuvenate the French-Ottawa alliance, he recalled Olivier Morel de La Durantaye from his command at Michilimackinac, and replaced him with Louis de La Porte de Louvigny, a capable commander who soon became popular with the Ottawa leaders. La Durantaye had never understood the Ottawas and their way of life, and while he was not personally responsible for the deterioration of

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<sup>132</sup> Wraxall, *Abridgement of Indian Affairs*, 15; Champigny, *Mémoire de ce qui s'est passé en Canada*, 1690, AN, F3, Moreau de St. Méry, 2: 243; Monseignat, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada*, novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 6; Frontenac au ministre, 12 novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 86-87; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 231-234.

<sup>131</sup> Champigny, *Mémoire de ce qui s'est passé en Canada*, 1690, AN, F3, Moreau de St. Méry, 2: 243; Monseignat, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada*, novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 6.

<sup>134</sup> Champigny, *Mémoire de ce qui s'est passé en Canada*, 1690, AN, F3, Moreau de St. Méry, 2: 243; Eccles, *Frontenac*, 199.

relations, he had done little to improve them.<sup>135</sup>

Louvigny and Nicolas Perrot set out for Michilimackinac in the early summer of 1690, but before they had reached the Upper Ottawa River the advance party of their fleet was attacked by a Mohawk war party lying in ambush at the mouth of the South Nation River. Eight of the Canadians were killed and the rest were forced to beat an ignominious retreat back down the Ottawa River to the main fleet.<sup>136</sup> Louvigny immediately seized the possibility to turn this setback to his advantage. He quickly organized a counter-attack and engaged the surprised Mohawks in battle. His force killed thirty of the Mohawks in the fight, and took four prisoners, including the Mohawk chief who had led the raid. He sent three of the prisoners back to Montreal, but kept the chief with him in order to impress the Ottawas.<sup>137</sup>

Louvigny continued on his journey until he met a group of Mississaugas fishing for sturgeon at the mouth of the Mississagi River in Lake Huron's North Channel. He asked these people if they had heard from the Ottawas, but the Mississaugas replied that the last news they had heard was that Ocheepik had gone to Onondaga and that they did not know whether he had returned.<sup>138</sup> Not knowing what kind of reception to expect

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<sup>135</sup> Monseignat, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada, novembre, 1690*, AN, C11A, 11: 22-24v.

<sup>136</sup> The South Nation River was a favourite ambush of the Mohawks. They could follow the river valley from Lake Ontario all the way to the Ottawa River with only a short portage and the river itself was slow and easily navigated even in clumsy Iroquois canoes. Champigny, *Mémoire de ce qui s'est passé en Canada, 1690*, AN, F3, Moreau de St. Méry, 2: 243; Monseignat, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada, novembre, 1690*, AN, C11A, 11: 14-15; Frontenac au ministre, 12 novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 86.

<sup>137</sup> Monseignat à Madame de Frontenac, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 14-15; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 233-325.

<sup>138</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 234.

from the Ottawas, Louvigny decided to send Perrot ahead in order to impress them with the news of the victory he had won over the sixty Mohawk warriors at the South Nation River. Perrot advised Louvigny to display the captured Mohawk chief in the bow of the first canoe and to have the French soldiers prominently display the scalps so that they could be seen from the shore.<sup>139</sup>

Perrot had witnessed the way in which the Ottawas had greeted the Potawatomis in the summer of 1687, and so he had an good idea of how an ally should be received. As the French canoes approached the Kiskakon village, he had all of his men shout "Vive le Roi!" and he waved the white flag of the Bourbon monarchy.<sup>140</sup> This was clearly the appropriate action for the Ottawas who had lined the shore shouted *Sassakoue!* just as they had done for the Potawatomis. Louvigny arrived a little later with the Mohawk prisoner seated in the bow of the first canoe, according to the Ottawa custom. As they approached land, the French soldiers cheered and waved the Iroquois scalps which they had fixed to their muskets and paddles:

When the canoes neared the village of the Outaouaks, they halted and the Iroquois was made to sing; a volley of musket-shots, to which the Outaouaks replied, was fired in order to accompany the singing. The fleet crossed in a straight line to the French village, but did not at once come to land. The Outaouaks hurried over in the battle array to the landing, while the Frenchmen in the canoes kept shouting and firing their muskets in the air, as did the Frenchmen of Michilimackinac. At last, Monsieur de Louvigni told his men to load their weapons with shot, and disembarked with them at them ready. The Outaouaks stood at a distance along the shore, without making any further demonstration.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 233-234; Frontenac au ministre, 12 novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 86-88.

<sup>140</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 234.

<sup>141</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 235-236.

Louvigny had made an impressive entrance, and it must have appeared to Noncheke and to Kinongé that the French were willing to act as better allies.<sup>142</sup>

Although Louvigny had made a good first impression on the Ottawas, he soon learned something of the complex politics at Michilimackinac. A Tionnontaté delegation came to Louvigny immediately after his arrival and asked that the Mohawk Iroquois chief be spared. Louvigny was on the point of granting this wish when the Kiskakons took great offense and said that now it would be necessary to put the man to death. They explained to Louvigny that the Tionnontatés had asked for clemency only to impress the Mohawks in the event of an alliance between the Five Nations and the Tionnontatés who were increasingly at odds with the Kiskakons. The Mohawk chief was put to death quickly after he proved unable to bear the pain of the torture inflicted upon him by the Ottawas.<sup>143</sup> Louvigny learned quickly to be wary of the traps such as the one into which Dulhut had fallen in 1679.

During the first week of Louvigny's command, he called the Ottawa ogimas to a meeting. Because there was still no French fort, he asked the ogimas to meet him in front of the house of the Jesuits, the most impressive of the French log cabins.<sup>144</sup> He distributed presents (guns, knives, and tobacco) to his hosts and then told them that he had a message from Onontio.<sup>145</sup> He spoke of the problems in the alliance, but said

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<sup>142</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 234-235; Frontenac au ministre, 12 novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 86-88.

<sup>143</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2236-237.

<sup>144</sup> Louvigny would not complete the French fort until the summer of 1691. Frontenac au ministre, 20 octobre, 1691, AN, C11A, 11: 235v.

<sup>145</sup> Frontenac, *Paroles qui doit être dites à l'outaouais*, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 130-133; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 238.

they were caused by misunderstandings and that Onontio would ensure that they would not be repeated. Louvigny then stressed that the French were a great and powerful nation and that the massacre at Lachine had been an unfortunate accident:

That those houses burned on the Island of Montreal by the Iroquois, and the few corpses that had been seen in the unexpected invasion which the latter had made there, should not persuade the Ottawas that all was lost in the French colony; that the Iroquois would derive much profit from a blow which was far more shameful than glorious.<sup>146</sup>

Ocheepik himself had seen the destruction, but Louvigny assured him that the French were a powerful and numerous nation and that this blow would not have any real effect on the colony other than the redoubling of the effort against the Iroquois.

Louvigny then showed his suitability as a commander of Michilimackinac.

Unlike La Durantaye who struggled with Ottawa concepts, Louvigny addressed the Ottawas in their own terms with the message which they had wanted to hear. He told them that:

The French nation was far more numerous than they imagined and that they must look upon it as a great river which never ran dry, and whose course could never be jammed by any barrier. That they ought to regard the Five Nations as five beaver lodges in a marsh which the French would soon drain and then burn them there. That they could be satisfied that the hundred women and children whom the Iroquois had carried away would be replaced by many soldiers whom the great Onontio the king of France would send to avenge them.<sup>147</sup>

Louvigny then returned to the text of the document which Frontenac had prepared for him and read: "I am powerful enough to kill all of the English and to destroy the

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<sup>146</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 238.

<sup>147</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 238-239.



Iroquois."<sup>148</sup>

When Louvigny finished his address, Ocheepik rose to his feet to answer. Instead of addressing Louvigny, however, he turned to the members of his own faction and said:

My brother Ottawas, purge yourselves of the hateful feelings and schemes which you have had for the French. Return to Onontio, who opens his arms and who is able to protect us again.<sup>149</sup>

Having said this he turned to Noncheka, Kinongé, and Nansouakouet and asked them to join with him in embracing the French. Each of the three ogimas stood and pledged to support the alliance. For the moment, Louvigny appeared to have succeeded in his mission, but appearances were deceiving at Michilimackinac and the Ottawas were not strictly honest with Louvigny. They were not prepared to accept Frontenac's arrogant offers of protection and they soon let Louvigny know this by sending a second delegation to the Iroquois.<sup>150</sup>

At the same time, another delegation left Michilimackinac for Montreal. Ocheepik led a fleet of five hundred Ottawas, Tionnontatés, and Ojibwas, who carried a huge shipment of furs on the journey. By the second week of August they arrived on the western end of the Island of Montreal.<sup>151</sup> They made camp outside of the gates to

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<sup>148</sup> "Je suis assez puissant pour tuer l'anglais et pour détruire l'Iroquois." Clearly Frontenac intended this document for the minister of marine as much as for the Ottawas. Frontenac, *Paroles qui doit être dite à l'outaouais*, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 132v; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 239; Eccles *Frontenac*, 230-231.

<sup>149</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 240.

<sup>150</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 241.

<sup>151</sup> There were two large shipments of furs to Montreal that summer. La Durantaye had returned from Michilimackinac with fifty five canoes of *coureurs de bois*. Frontenac au ministre, 12 novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 88.

the city and waited for Frontenac to come down from Quebec to meet them. Frontenac arrived with a delegation of Mission Iroquois (members of the Five Nations who had converted to Christianity and who lived near the French settlements), and held a meeting of all of these French allies.<sup>152</sup>

The chief of the Mission Iroquois demanded to hear Ocheepik's reasons for going on the peace mission to Onondaga. Ocheepik answered bluntly that the Ottawas knew that Denonville had conducted his own peace initiatives with the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy and that the Ottawas did not want to be excluded from this separate peace. He reminded the assembly that the Ottawas had taken the leading role in both La Barre and Denonville's campaigns and if the French made peace with the Iroquois, the Ottawas would bear the brunt of Iroquois vengeance.<sup>153</sup> Frontenac asked not to be compared with La Barre and Denonville and then promised the assembly that he would pursue the war against the Iroquois to the fullest of his ability.<sup>154</sup>

Ocheepik returned to Michilimackinac pleased with his accomplishments. Frontenac appeared ready to fight the Iroquois in the east, and now armed with the weapons which they had received for their furs, the Ottawas were prepared to engage the Iroquois in the west.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, Louvigny's presence would assure the

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<sup>152</sup> Frontenac au ministre, 12 novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 88.

<sup>153</sup> Monseignat, Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada, novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 24-28.

<sup>154</sup> Frontenac au ministre, 12 novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 88-89.

<sup>155</sup> The Ottawas received more French goods than any of the other nations allied to the French. The bulk of these goods consisted of weapons, or objects which could be used as weapons. For a good example of the trade items distributed in the west see, Etat des marchandises et munitions distribuées en 1693, AN, C11A, 12: 290.

Ottawas at Michilimackinac of a steady supply of the weapons and ammunition which they would need to pursue the war in the Upper Great Lakes, and the *coureurs de bois* could be employed as warriors. The Ottawas were finally prepared to regain the territory which they had lost to the Iroquois at Bkejwanong in the late sixteenth century.

While Ocheepik was meeting with Frontenac, Kinongé was discussing the new shape of the alliance with Louvigny at Michilimackinac. Kinongé told Louvigny that the Ottawas would no longer participate in campaigns planned by French commanders like La Barre and Denonville. These men had a poor understanding of warfare in the Great Lakes region and as a result their campaigns were unsuccessful.<sup>156</sup> From then on, the Ottawas would assume the lead in the fight against the Iroquois and they would invite the French, particularly the Canadian *coureurs de bois*, to participate with them as auxiliaries. The Ottawas trained the *coureurs de bois* to fight like the Ottawas and this benefitted both of the partners in the alliance because the French needed a militia to defend their St. Lawrence colony. All things considered Louvigny was pleased with the new shape the alliance was taking.<sup>157</sup>

Life changed slowly in the Ottawa villages since Radisson and Groseilliers had travelled to the Upper Great Lakes forty years earlier. The French were no more able to exercise authority from their modest base at Michilimackinac (it still consisted of only a

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<sup>156</sup> Louvigny à Frontenac, 30 juin, 1691, AN, C11A, 12: 140; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 238.

<sup>157</sup> Frontenac au ministre, 12 novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 86-88; Frontenac au ministre, 20 octobre, 1691, AN, C11A, 11: 234; Journal du voyage d' Augustin Lezardeur de Courtemanche au pays des Outaouais, 18 juin, 1691, AN, C11A, 205-207v.

few log buildings) than they were from Montreal. The post proved lucrative for certain French officials and it did provide the Ottawas with a steady supply of French weapons, but it had little other effect. True there were more Frenchmen in the *pays d'en haut* but these *coureurs de bois* lived like Ottawas and did not bring French ways into the Upper Great Lakes. The Ottawas were now in a much better position to dictate the terms of the alliance and to make the French comply with Ottawa wishes.

## Chapter Five: The Kamiga Ottawas resettle Bkejwanong, 1690-1701.

By the late seventeenth century the Ottawas planned to retake the Bkejwanong region in the area where Lake Huron's waters flow into Lake Erie.<sup>1</sup> The Iroquois were retreating from the regions to the north and west of Lake Ontario as disease lessened their numbers in the cantons<sup>2</sup> and as Ojibwa and Ottawa warriors thinned their numbers in military campaigns.<sup>3</sup> As the Algonquians pressed the attack in the west, the French and Canadians took the fight to Iroquoia. The French army and the Canadian militia were quick to employ newly learned Algonquian tactics as well as European technology.<sup>4</sup> The combination made them a formidable enemy in a method of fighting

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<sup>1</sup> By the late sixteenth century when the fighting between the Five Nations Iroquois and the Algonquians of the Great Lakes broke out, the summer villages in the region were abandoned, but not forgotten. There is but one brief reference in the Ottawa oral tradition to their old establishment at Bkejwanong. Andrew Blackbird, who published his book in 1887, made specific reference to his family's ancestry and their home in the region of Detroit sometime before the arrival of the French in the Upper Great Lakes region. Blackbird's timing of the event corresponds with the outbreak of hostilities between the Ottawas and the Five Nations Confederacy in the late sixteenth century. Blackbird, *History*, 93-94.

<sup>2</sup> A terrible smallpox epidemic in the summer of 1690 badly damaged the ability of the Five Nations to put warriors in the field. Monseignat, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada, novembre, 1690*, AN, C11A, 11: 38-40; Frontenac au ministre, 12 novembre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 90; *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus considérable au Canada, 27 novembre, 1690*, AN, C11A, 11: 42-42v; Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 173.

<sup>3</sup> While the Iroquois fought the Ottawas in a number of campaigns in the southern regions of Lake Huron, they were also engaged with Ojibwa nations in the region between eastern Lake Huron and western Lake Ontario. The few Frenchmen who witnessed these battles left no written record of their experience, but there exists a rich source of oral history concerning these encounters. An American historian, Leroy V. Eid studied the traditional accounts of Assikinack, Copway, Jones, Paudash, and Warren. He concluded that the combined Ottawa-Ojibwa force drove the Iroquois out of the region all the way beyond the Niagara River. This defeat led the Five Nations Iroquois to the Peace Settlement at Montreal in 1701. Using many of the same sources, a Canadian historian, Peter S. Schmaltz, arrived at the same conclusion. Neither Eid's nor Schmaltz's work is as useful as it might be since they failed to read the French documents. Both authors are confused about the differences between Ojibwas and Ottawas. See, Leroy V. Eid, "The Ojibwa-Iroquois War: the War the Five Nations Did Not Win." *Ethnohistory* 26 (Fall 1979): 297-324; P.S. Schmaltz, "The Role of the Ojibwa in the Conquest of Southern Ontario." *Ontario History* 76 (December 1984): 326-352.

<sup>4</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 3: 132.

which they called *la petite guerre*.<sup>5</sup>

When the Kiskakons had completed their move to Michilimackinac in 1671, a group of Kamiga Ottawas had moved south to their old home in the Bkejwanong area. It was still a dangerous place to live and many of the Kamiga Ottawas went to Bawating and Manitoulin waiting for the time when they could move south safely. Aside from the danger posed by Iroquois warriors, Bkejwanong was an extremely attractive site for Ottawa settlement. Southern Lake Huron lay within the Carolinian forest and provided a different resource base from the Transitional forest further to the north. The growing season was longer and the climate allowed for greater confidence in horticulture. The area between Lake Erie and Lake Huron supported abundant game and the fishing in the region was good.<sup>6</sup>

French travellers who passed through the straits in the seventeenth century never failed to comment on the richness of the resource base. They usually made special reference to the water fowl in the rich marshland along the banks of the rivers and in Wauwi-Autinoong, which the French called *Lac Sainte Claire*. Baron Lahontan, who passed through the straits in early September of 1687, was among the many French travellers who were impressed with the region:

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<sup>5</sup> W.J. Eccles, *France in America*, 103. Mastery of this style of fighting became famous throughout the French military and then throughout Europe. It was responsible for no fewer than four major treatises: Capitaine de Jeney, *Le partisan, ou l'art de faire la petite guerre avec succès* (La Haye: H. Constapel, 1759); Capitaine de Grandmaison, *La petite guerre, ou traité du service des troupes légères en campagne* (s.l.: 1756); Armand-François de La Croix, *Traité de la petite guerre pour les compagnies franches* (Paris: A. Baudet, 1752); Comte de La Roche, *Essai sur la petite guerre*, (Paris: Saillant et Noyon, 1770). I am indebted to Professor Pierre-Marie Conlon for directing me to these works.

<sup>6</sup> The warm, shallow waters of Wauwi-Autinoong made it an ideal habitat for two types of fish which figured prominently in the Ottawa diet: sturgeon and pike.

Nothing is more agreeable to the eyes than the banks and borders of this water; if you like the sun this countryside is a real garden planted by the hands of nature herself; a moment if you please, the term Garden is unknown, that of orchard is more appropriate; for there are fruit trees of all kinds: it is true that these fruits, not being at all cultivated, are more pleasurable to the eye than to the taste, but the prodigious quantity which exists makes a very good display. Stags and deer give themselves free rein along the shores.<sup>7</sup>

Antoine Laumet, also known as La Mothe Cadillac, also wrote of the rich resources of the region.<sup>8</sup>

Bkejwanong, as its Ottawa name implies, was also a vital gateway in the same manner as Bawating and Michilimackinac. Like the other gateways, Bkejwanong held a special place in the spiritual world of the peoples of Lake Huron. According to the tradition of the Ottawas and Ojibwas, Bkejwanong represented the centre of the Great Lakes world. It is the place which divides the two Lower or eastern Lakes, Erie and Ontario, from the three Upper or western Lakes, Huron, Michigan, and Superior. Beneath this obvious geographic centrality however lies a much deeper and more crucial meaning. The Ottawas and Ojibwas of Lake Huron understood the region of Bkejwanong as the *Anishnishaabe-aki* or the soul of their ancestral territory.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Rien n'est plus agréable aux yeux que la rive et que le bordage de cette eau; si vous aimez le Phebus ce Païsageest un vrai jardin planté par les mains de la nature; attendez si vous plaît, le terme Jardin est inconnu, celui de Verger est plus propre; car ce sont des arbres fruitiers de toutes especes: il est vrai que ces fruits n'étant point cultivés sont plus de plaisir à la vûë qu'au goût; mais la prodigeuse quantité qu'il y en a fait un très bel effet. Les cerfs et chevreuils se donnent carriere sur ces Rivages; on voit ces animaux symboliques des bons ou malheureux Maris s'y promener à grosses bandes." Baron de La Hontan, *Voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale* (Amsterdam: François l'Honoré, 1705), 133-134. Walpole Island, in the heart of the region, is an important centre for waterfowl and farming. See Nin-Da-Waab-Jig, *Minishenhying Anishnaabe-aki* (Walpole Island: Heritage Centre, 1987), 55.

<sup>8</sup> Mémoire de La Mothe Cadillac, 25 septembre, 1702, AN, C11A, 20: 130-136.

<sup>9</sup> Nin Da Waab Jig, *Walpole Island*, 1-4. I am grateful to Dean Jacobs, Director of the Heritage Centre of the Walpole Island First Nation, for his perspective on the history of his region.

For the Kamiga Ottawas living at Michilimackinac, Bkejwanong represented a gap in the circle of their life. They considered this place to be the soul of their territory, where waters and lives were purified in the oxygen-rich wetlands. Given this belief, the Iroquois presence at Bkejwanong was viewed as an abomination and a serious threat to the Ottawa perception of their world and their ancestral home. In order for the Kamiga Ottawas to complete their life's circle and to maintain the spiritual equilibrium of the entire Ottawa Nation, Bkejwanong had to be taken back within their sphere of influence.<sup>10</sup>

Water was the source of the Ottawas' most important resource, fish, and the means of their power to control the Lake Huron gateways. As such, water was the most important element in the Ottawa circle of life, and Bkejwanong was the place where the water of the entire Great Lakes region was purified. There were both ecological and spiritual justifications for this notion.<sup>11</sup> The warm shallow water of Wauwi-Autinoong

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<sup>10</sup> The process of ethnogenesis appears to have taken the same forms at Bkejwanong as it did further to the north. When the Anishinabeg people came into the region and encountered other cultures they adopted some of their technologies, particularly those ones which best suited local conditions. The people at Bkejwanong maintained close relations with their relatives along the coast of Lake Huron, and because there was a good ecological basis for trade, they became part of the Lake Huron trading network. Much of the material found at Michilimackinac comes from the Bkejwanong region. It is difficult to say with certainty whether the opposite is true because much less archaeological field work has been done in the southern area. For an overview, see Carl Murphy and Neal Ferris, "The Late Woodland Western Basin Tradition of Southwestern Ontario." in *The Archaeology of Southern Ontario to A.D. 1650*, eds., Chris J. Ellis and Neal Ferris, (London, Ontario: Ontario Archaeological Society, 1990), 189-278.

<sup>11</sup> For the Ottawas, there was a more spiritual reason for wanting to settle the Place where the Water Divides. Sometime in the thirteenth or early fourteenth century Anishinabeg people paddled their canoes along the eastern shore of Lake Huron to the region of Wauwi-Autinoong. These people encountered an older culture, one which had lived here for thousands of years. What resulted from this encounter is not exactly clear but the archaeological evidence suggests four alternative hypotheses: the older culture may have been destroyed; the older culture may have been defeated and then assimilated into the culture of the conquering newcomers in a process of ethnogenesis; the older culture may have been defeated and left the region; or the older culture may have abandoned its territory and moved elsewhere as a viable, independent culture. According to archaeologists who have studied the region, the second possibility is the most likely for a variety of reasons, including the



supported a rich variety of plant life which breathed oxygen into the water and which absorbed impurities. The Ottawas also believed that the water was purified spiritually by the act of passing out of the Upper Great Lakes and into the Lower Great Lakes. In other words, by flowing through its particular circle, the water itself began its course fresh and renewed.<sup>12</sup> Like the other gateways, Bkejwanong was not occupied throughout the year by the Ottawas in the manner in which the Hurons had occupied Huronia. The Ottawa presence was fluid here just as it was to the north. Villages were established in the spring and they were maintained until the autumn fishing. Like the other gateways the actual locations of the villages varied from year to year as firewood and other daily necessities became scarce. From the early 1670s however, there was a steady, warm weather Ottawa presence in the region. Because military campaigning and travel were undertaken in the warm weather months, the Ottawas did not need to stand guard over the gateways during the winter. The Ottawa presence in this region was not new, but rather a re-settlement of an old territory.<sup>13</sup> The Ottawa presence, like the

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continuation of pottery styles and subsistence patterns. James E. Fitting and Richard Zurel, "The Detroit and St. Clair River Area." in *The Late Prehistory of the Lake Erie Drainage Basin*, ed. David S. Brose, (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, 1976), 246-248. Another report concludes that the new people were not Iroquoians, as once thought but rather, Algonquian. David S. Brose, "An Initial Survey of the Late Prehistoric Period in Northeastern Ohio," in *Prehistory of Lake Erie*, 47. The first people living at Wauwi-Autinoong may well have been Iroquoians, see David M. Stothers, "The Western Basin Tradition: Algonquin or Iroquois." *Michigan Archaeologist* 24 (March 1978), 25-28.

<sup>12</sup> Nin Da Wab Jig, *Walpole Island*, 1-4.

<sup>13</sup> There are a number of references to an Ottawa presence at Bkejwanong in the French documents. For example, in 1648 the Jesuit, Paul Raguenaud, wrote of the Ottawas living to the south of Lake Huron. He mentioned the presence of five nations (he included two Ojibwa nations in his description) of Ottawas at Bkejwanong: "On the south shore of this fresh-water sea, or Lake of the Hurons, dwell the following Algonquin tribes: Ouachaskesouek, Nigouaouchiririk, Outaouasinagouek, Kichkagoneciak, and Ontaanak, who are allies of our Hurons." Although Raguenaud's spellings were unique, the names may still be discerned. He was referring to the Heron and Otter nations of the Ojibwa as well as to the Sinagos, Kiskakons, and Kamigas of the Ottawas. There is some question concerning what Raguenaud meant by "south shore." He was possibly referring to the

Ottawa interest, has been overlooked by historians who have given more weight to the French account, specifically that offered by Cadillac.<sup>14</sup> The effect of this one-sided account has been to deny Ottawa agency and to support the false notion that they were merely helpless refugees, and not a vibrant and influential nation.<sup>15</sup>

In the early 1670s, groups of Kamiga Ottawas and Tionnontatés began to establish villages in the Bkejwanong region.<sup>16</sup> For the Tionnontatés, an Iroquoian people, Bkejwanong represented an opportunity to recreate a way of life which had

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region of the Onenditiagui, but only the Kiskakons lived there. More likely, given the broad descriptions of the entire *pays d'en haut* which he gave elsewhere in his account, he was referring to the southern region of Lake Huron, Bkejwanong. It is quite unlikely that he mistook the word *shawano* which means south, for the word *ningobianong* meaning west, the only other direction in which the Ottawas lived. The Jesuit, Claude Dablon, also gave an indication of an Ottawa presence to the south of Lake Huron and his is more useful because it was written at the time when the Kamiga Ottawas were re-settling the region. Like Raguenaud, however, his description was vague: "Towards the south, on the other side of the Lake are the territories formerly occupied by the various Nations of the Hurons and the Ottawas, who had stationed themselves at some distance from one another as far as the famous island of Michilimackinac." Dablon had a much better knowledge of the Upper Great Lakes than his predecessor. In 1669, two years before he wrote this description, he embarked on a tour of the country of the Ottawa missions. He had been named Superior of the Ottawa Mission, and he felt it was his responsibility to know the extent of his domain. *Jesuit Relations*, 33: 151; *Jesuit Relations*, 40: 100.

<sup>14</sup> For example, W. Vernon Kinietz in his detailed study of the region, claimed that, "...when Cadillac built Fort Pontchartrain at Detroit in 1701, he induced some of the Ottawa to take up residence there." Kinietz's cited source is a translated copy of Louis-Antoine Bougainville's *Mémoire* of 1757. Bougainville was an officer in Montcalm's entourage who was commissioned to write a series of reports on Canada. He clearly took some of his information from Cadillac's *Mémoire* of 1702, but he says nothing at all about the Ottawas being induced to settle at Cadillac's new post. Kinietz assumed that Cadillac's claims were true. *Mémoire de Cadillac*, 1702, AN, C11A, 20: 130-136.

<sup>15</sup> Accounts of the settlement of Bkejwanong have relied heavily on the evidence provided by Cadillac. *Mémoire de Cadillac*, 1702, AN, C11A, 20: 130-136; Ida Amanda Johnson, *The Michigan Fur Trade* (Ann Arbor: The Michigan Historical Commission, 1919), 33-34, 40-41; Louise Phelps Kellogg, *The French Régime in Wisconsin and the Northwest* (Madison: Publications of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1925), 271-272; W. Vernon Kinietz, *The Indians of the Western Great Lakes, 1615-1760* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1940), 229; White, *Middle Ground*, 146; Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 210.

<sup>16</sup> Cadillac would complain years later that the Jesuits prevented the other three Ottawa nations from moving to his post, but the Jesuits really did not have this influence. *Cadillac au ministre*, 31 août, 1703, AN, C11E, 14: 153.

nearly disappeared almost fifty years earlier. Only the elders remembered Huronia and the way of life which existed there before it was shattered by the invading Five Nations warriors. At Bkejwanong the climate and the soil were ideal for the horticultural economy of the Tionnontatés and it is little wonder that they were pleased to go south.<sup>17</sup>

Now that Frontenac had agreed to attack the Iroquois in the east, and now that the Ottawas had a reliable source of French weapons and ammunition, the time was right to move onto the offensive. A new ogima, Sakima of the Nassauakuctons, emerged as the leader in the struggle in the area to the north of Lake Ontario. In the summer of 1691, a large Iroquois force came north in a final attempt to knock the Ottawas out of the conflict. The gateways system functioned exactly as it had been designed and the Ottawa scouts saw the approach of the enemy long before the enemy knew it was under observation. As a result, the Ottawas surprised and defeated the Iroquois in a large battle at Nottawasaga.<sup>18</sup>

The Iroquois inability to launch an assault against the Ottawas on Manitoulin

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<sup>17</sup> There is no question the Tionnontatés would have liked to have gone sooner, but the threat of Five Nations war parties was too great. Unlike Michilimackinac and Manitoulin, Bkejwanong was easily accessible by foot from the region south of Lake Ontario where the Iroquois cantons lay. They had only to cross the Niagara River and they could follow the shore of Lake Erie the entire distance. There were no large bodies of water to cross and the total distance to travel was not nearly as great.

<sup>18</sup> The Ottawa historian, Assikinack, attributed the victory to the skill and genius of the Ottawa war chief Sakima "the most celebrated warrior of the Odahwalis at that time." His description of the battle reveals both Sahgimah's strategy, and the difficulties faced by the Iroquois warriors which had prevented them from defeating the Ottawas ever since they had destroyed Huronia in 1649. The Ottawas called the Tionnontatés "Ninahdoways," which translates as "Our Iroquois" as distinct from "Macinahdoway" or "Bad Iroquois," a term reserved for the members of the Five Nations Confederacy. The term Nottawa itself means "People to watch for." The word "Sahging," which is now spelled "Saga" or "Saugeen" means "bay," or "river outlet." Assikinack related that the term "Iroquois Bay" referred to the place where the Iroquois launched their attack. Assikinack, "Warlike Customs," 308; Frontenac au ministre, 20 octobre, 1690, AN, C11A, 11: 234.

Island or at Michilimackinac prevented a repeat of their success in Huronia at the mid-century.<sup>19</sup> Small parties of Iroquois warriors came north on several occasions during the latter half of the century, but they were never able to mount an assault against the Ottawa villages. They contented themselves with raids against expeditions, or attacks on Ojibwa camps which they encountered in the northeastern corner of Lake Huron. Sakima knew that the Iroquois expected the Ottawas to be in their villages, so he placed his force on the mainland:

Instead of waiting for the Mohawks at the Island, he used to come and meet them at the Blue Mountains, hence that place is called to this very day *Sahgimah Odahkahwahbewin* viz., Sahgimah's watching place. The last time he met the enemy there he found them occupying his watching place.<sup>20</sup>

Like Kinongé at Bawating, Sakima was responsible for overseeing the Nottawasaga gateway even though the Ottawas no longer lived in the region.

Sakima realized that the Iroquois would return unless they were soundly defeated so when his warriors beat the invaders he used the occasion to ensure that the battle would not be forgotten:

Having placed his men in order, ready for the attack, he entered the camp alone, and removed the arms of the slumbering enemy. The Mohawks being without arms were, of course, slaughtered, except for a few who were spared on purpose. The Odahwahs cut off the heads of the slain, and fixed them on poles, with the faces turned towards the Lake. Sahgimah then selected a canoe, which he loaded with goods, provisions

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<sup>19</sup> An examination of Assikinack's description thus enables the historian to see not only why the Iroquois were defeated in the late seventeenth century, but also why they had never been able to drive the Ottawas from their ancestral homeland in spite of the grand claims of Nicholas Perro. and those who have accepted his words uncritically. For an example of a validation of Perrot's account see, White, *Middle Ground*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Assikinack, "Warlike Customs," 309.

and ammunition, put all the survivors in and told them to say when they got home that they had met Sahgimah on the top of the Blue Mountains, where he fixed the heads of their companions on poles with the faces turned towards the Lake, and that he declared his determination to fix in a similar manner, the head of every Mohawk that he might fall in with in that quarter.<sup>21</sup>

Sakima was not only protecting the eastern gateway on this occasion, he was protecting it in the future by employing psychological warfare tactics on the Iroquois raiders. The severed heads of the Iroquois warriors were turned to face Lake Huron in order that they might gaze upon the reason for their deaths for all eternity. Sending the prisoners home to tell the awful tale was not a usual procedure. Sakima would normally have taken the prisoners back to Manitoulin to be tortured, or for a requickening ceremony. By sending them back to Iroquoia he was reminding the Iroquois never again to offend in such a manner.

As the Ottawas defeated the Iroquois at Sahgimah-Odahkahwahbewin, the Ojibwas defeated Iroquois parties further to the east:

They [the Iroquois] became possessed of the country bordering the Ottaway River, and effectively barred their enemies from communication with the French who resided on the St. Lawrence. Their anxiety to open the road to the white traders, in order to procure fire-arms and their much coveted commodities, induced the Ojibways, Ottaways, Pottawatummies, Osaukies, and Wyandots to enter into a firm alliance. They sent their united forces against the Iroquois, and fighting severe and bloody battles, they eventually forced them to retire from Canada.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Assikinack, "Warlike Customs," 309.

<sup>22</sup> This struggle has found a place in the oral history of the Ojibwas, and it serves to illustrate the reasons for Ojibwa opposition to the Iroquois. William Warren recorded a manuscript of the history which he had learned from the elders of the Ojibwa nation in the winter of 1852-1853. He included a brief passage on the wars of the Ojibwas against the Iroquois which explains the Ojibwa motivation. William Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984), 146.

Like their Ottawa allies, the Ojibwas were primarily interested in obtaining weapons from the French. The Ojibwas feared that the Iroquois, who received weapons from the Dutch and English, might prevent the flow of weapons and ammunition into the *pays d'en haut*.

By the turn of the century the Ottawas, Ojibwas, and Algonquins had inflicted a series of damaging raids upon the Iroquois. There are few direct references to the fighting in the French documents because the French were not participating in the fighting in the *pays d'en haut*, at least not in an official capacity.<sup>23</sup> Most of the information which can be found in the documents comes from the complaints of the English. Bellomont, the governor of New York, wrote to Frontenac in the summer of 1698 following a conference which he had held with the Iroquois. He informed Frontenac of a terrible defeat suffered by the Onondagas at the hands of the Ottawas and the Algonquins.<sup>24</sup> The correspondence makes no mention of the Ottawas discussing any such victory. By this time they were petitioning the French for aid against the Sioux in the west.<sup>25</sup>

The Iroquois menace had forced the evacuation of the region, and Iroquois retreat made its re-establishment possible. By 1698 the Five Nations was reeling under the effects of endemic warfare on several fronts, and the movement of the Christian Iroquois from Iroquoia to the Jesuit missions in the St. Lawrence valley. According to

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<sup>23</sup> Some examples are. Champigny, *Mémoire instructif sur le Canada*, 10 mai, 1691, AN, C11A, 262-268; Frontenac au ministre, 15 septembre, 1692, AN, C11A, 12: 23-42.

<sup>24</sup> Bellomont à Frontenac, 13 août, 1698, AN, C11A, 16: 70v.

<sup>25</sup> Callière au ministre, 20 octobre, 1699, AN, C11A, 17: 37v.

the American historian Francis Jennings, the losses suffered by the Iroquois were staggering:

There can be no reasonable doubt that the Five Nations Iroquois had been beaten by the French and their Indian allies, and badly beaten...According to figures available to the Lords of Trade in London, the combined effects of war and conversion reduced the population of Iroquoia from 3,500 at the beginning of the "late war" to 1,100 by 1700. (These figures seem to refer to warriors rather than total population.) For the power and status of the Five Nations chiefs, the losses were genuine and catastrophic regardless of their causes. It is possible that by 1700 there were more Iroquois, under other names, in Canada than in Iroquoia.<sup>26</sup>

The Ojibwas had won a number of battles against the Iroquois in the area to the north of Lake Ontario, and the Ottawas had won their share of battles in the southern region of Lake Huron.<sup>27</sup> In Iroquoia the French army, the Canadian militia, and various Algonquian nations took the fight to the Iroquois.<sup>28</sup>

As the Iroquois lost their ability to participate in offensive raids in the Upper Great Lakes region, the Bkejwanong region became safe enough to inhabit on a large scale basis, and by the late 1690s, the Kamiga Ottawas took the decision to move all of their people to Bkejwanong. For the Kamigas this move was a homecoming. There had been several Kamiga summer villages in the region before the outbreak of hostilities with the Iroquois, and even after the Iroquois made the region unsafe, Kamigas continued to quarry chert and hunt for the animals of the Carolinian forest in the

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<sup>26</sup> Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 208.

<sup>27</sup> For an account of the Ojibwa victories culled from the Ojibwa oral history, see Eid, "Ojibwa-Iroquois War," 298-306.

<sup>28</sup> The best accounts of this war are to be found in Eccles, *Frontenac*, 244-272; and Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 186-213.

Bkejwanong region.<sup>29</sup> At the same time the Bkejwanong region became increasingly important for its strategic value. The Potawatomis and the Miamis were moving eastward as Iroquois warriors made fewer expeditions into the west. If the Ottawas did not act quickly to establish themselves in their old area, the Potawatomis would be able to block them from this gateway and insinuate themselves as France's new leading ally.

In 1695, word came from western Lake Michigan that the Mascoutens and Outagamis were forming an alliance with the Sioux.<sup>30</sup> The Sioux had been on bad terms with the Ottawas ever since the Kiskakons and Tionnontatés had moved to Chequamegon Bay in 1661.<sup>31</sup> Now it appeared that twelve hundred Mascouten and Outagami warriors were holding discussions with envoys from the Five Nations aimed at forming an anti-Ottawa alliance. If this were true, it would be to the Ottawas' advantage to move a strong force to Bkejwanong before these nations could occupy this gateway.<sup>32</sup>

The Ottawa plan to move some of their villages from northern Lake Huron to Bkejwanong was mentioned in passing to the French for the first time the summer of 1695.<sup>33</sup> Three years later on 2 July, 1698, a brigade of Ottawas led by the Sinago ogima Chingouessi arrived at Quebec from Michilimackinac. According to

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<sup>29</sup> The oral tradition is useful here in providing clues about the distant past. Blackbird mentions that his people had settled in this region at some time before the French came to the Great Lakes. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 93-94.

<sup>30</sup> Champigny au ministre, AN, C11A, 17 août, 1695, AN, C11A, 13; 343v.

<sup>31</sup> Relation de divers événements survenu au Canada, 1695, AN, C11A, 13: 229.

<sup>32</sup> Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada, 1697, AN, C11A, 14: 14v-15.

<sup>33</sup> Relation de divers événements au Canada, 1695, AN, C11A, 13: 223.



Chingouessi, the Ottawa council had decided that two of the Ottawa nations, the Kamigas and the Kiskakons, would put out their fires at Michilimackinac in order to move south to Detroit.<sup>34</sup> This news alarmed Frontenac who imagined that the Ottawa Nation was coming apart and that the French position at Michilimackinac would be seriously weakened. He was vitally afraid for his commercial ventures in the west, and he warned Chingouessi that "bad spirits" were trying to break the Ottawa Nation apart.<sup>35</sup>

Frontenac reminded Chingouessi of the strategic importance of the Michilimackinac gateway and the role it had played in their past victories:

You will note that since your fire was lit at Michilimackinac, you have always had the advantage over your enemies.<sup>36</sup>

According to Frontenac's argument, Ottawa strength was to be found in the unity of the four nations within the confederacy. If they left Michilimackinac, or if they divided their forces they would be destroyed. Frontenac would have preferred all four groups of the Ottawa Nation to concentrate their villages in the region of Michilimackinac.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Relation de ce qui s'est passé au Canada, 20 octobre, 1698, AN, C11A, 15: 28.

<sup>35</sup> Relation de ce qui s'est passé au Canada, 20 octobre, 1698, AN, C11A, 15: 28-28v.

<sup>36</sup> "Vous voyez que depuis que votre feu est allumé à Michilimackina vous avez la toujours de l'avantage de vos ennemis." Relation, 20 octobre, 1698, AN, C11A, 15: 29.

<sup>37</sup> Frontenac was not concerned with the alliance as much as he was concerned with the fur trade. He did not yet know of Cadillac's plans for a new post: "Frontenac was not at all concerned with the problem of occupying and holding this vast territory for France; his only interest was the furs to be garnered from the western tribes." By this time in his life (he would not live to greet the New Year) Frontenac's powers were slipping. Age and declining health prevented his imagination from grasping the possibilities of a new post at *le détroit*. He knew of the glutted European beaver market, but he did not see the ways in which a new post in the west could alleviate that problem. His reaction to Chingouessi's proposal was, therefore, negative. Eccles, *Frontenac*, 340; Relation, 20 octobre, 1698, AN, C11A, 15: 29.

In 1694, Louis de La Porte de Louvigny had asked to be relieved of his command at Michilimackinac in order to return to France to attend to some family business. He was replaced by Antoine Laumet *dit* La Mothe Cadillac, a man who quickly went about the business of making himself rich from the fur trading opportunities at the post. Cadillac remained unconcerned when the Kamigas moved to Bkejwanong in the late seventeenth century. He knew the state of his command well and from a self-interested point of view, he knew the time had come to look for new opportunities.<sup>38</sup>

The possibilities to realize profit at Michilimackinac, however, were evaporating as quickly as the glut of beaver pelts on the European market was growing. The conditions which Louvigny, Cadillac, Frontenac, and the *coureurs de bois* had been able to exploit so effectively were changing, and as an enterprising individual, Cadillac knew how to change with the vicissitudes of the economic climate. His keen political sensibilities overcame his isolation from the seat of French power and he soon became aware of the increasing need to block the English from the region of the Upper Great Lakes by means of a fort at southern Lake Huron or at Niagara.<sup>39</sup> The commander of such a post would wield an authority which Cadillac deemed to be consonant with his

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<sup>38</sup> Even so it seemed curious that he should want to abandon his lucrative position as commandant at Michilimackinac. With an annual salary of 1080 *livres* a year, Cadillac had found the means to send 27,596 *livres* to France during his three-year tenure as commandant. Nor did Cadillac live the life of an ascetic while in the Upper Great Lakes. In spite of his complaints of the whitefish diet, Cadillac lived extraordinarily well. Champigny au ministre, 3 juillet, 1698, AN, C11A, 16: 87-95; La Touche au ministre, 15 octobre, 1697, AN, C11A, 15: 165.

<sup>39</sup> Dulhut had proposed the establishment of such a post in 1694 to the governor general, Denonville, who remained uncertain over the merits of the scheme. Denonville à Dulhut, 6 juin, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 52-53v; Denonville à La Durantaye, 8 mai, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 51-52.

station. He was a good enough courtier to imagine what favour the person who had an effective plan for the establishment of such a post would hold. Finally, Cadillac was painfully aware of the enemies he had made at Michilimackinac and of the problems which they would be able to give him in the future. The Jesuit disgust at his behaviour regarding the trade in brandy is hard to exaggerate and the traders whom he had cheated and bullied were no less sick of the sight of him.<sup>40</sup> Cadillac had plenty of motives for leaving Michilimackinac; what he needed was an opportunity.

For a time, this opportunity seemed likely to pass by Cadillac. In 1696 the fur glut reached a crisis and the royal government decided upon a course of action which would have effectively put all of the traders out of business. Louis XIV evidently decided that his old minister Colbert's compact colony idea had been right after all, and he shut down the western trading network. On 21 May, 1696, the king issued an edict prohibiting *congés* (or trading licences) to the *pays d'en haut*.<sup>41</sup> Given this prohibition, Cadillac realized that even his old protector and business partner Frontenac would not be able to help him. After some quibbling, Cadillac decided to end his tenure at Michilimackinac.

Without an alternate plan in mind, Frontenac was not prepared to abandon the game so easily. His argument, whatever its real intent, had some merit. He told

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<sup>40</sup> The full extent of Jesuit anger is seen in the later correspondence between three Jesuits at Michilimackinac, Carheil, Enjalran, and Marest with Cadillac when the latter had established his post at Detroit. From the fall of 1701 to the spring of 1702, no fewer than fifteen letters were sent to Cadillac to complain of his shameful trading and his schemes to lure the Ottawas to Fort Pontchartrain de Détroit. They even enlisted the aid of Father Claude Avenau at Fort Saint Joseph des Miamis to force Cadillac to halt his activities. See, *Correspondance entre les pères jésuites et le sieur de Cadillac, 1701-1702*, AN, C11E, 14: 67-76v.

<sup>41</sup> *Déclaration du roi, 21 mai, 1696*, AN, B, 19: 118-121.

Pontchartrain that without a strong French presence at Michilimackinac and Fort St. Joseph, the west would fall to the English and to the Iroquois.<sup>42</sup> At the very least, he argued, the two posts should remain open in order to keep the Ottawa allies content by furnishing them with French arms and by maintaining armourers there who could "repair the Indians guns."<sup>43</sup> Frontenac realized that if the French abandoned the *pays d'en haut*, the Ottawas would abandon the alliance.

The Ottawas did not intend, however, to abandon Michilimackinac; they simply wanted to complete the Kamiga move to Bkejwanong.<sup>44</sup> Like the Jesuits and *coureurs de bois* at Michilimackinac, the Ottawas were sick of Cadillac and had reverted to their time honoured strategy of threatening the French by trading with the English.<sup>45</sup> This was the first item about which Frontenac and Champigny wrote in their annual report for the year 1696:

The necessity in which we find ourselves, by the notice which we received last autumn of the bad disposition of the Ottawas and the Hurons, and of their desire to conclude a peace with the Iroquois without our participation, and to attract English commerce, should have had us engaging in the search for other means of turning them away from their

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<sup>42</sup> Frontenac au ministre, 25 octobre, 1696, AN, C11A, 14: 154-167.

<sup>43</sup> Mémoire, 1696, AN, C11A, 14: 306-307.

<sup>44</sup> In the spring, a party of Ottawa hunters including Onaské, Ouenemek, et Mikinak, encountered a group of Iroquois hunting with a group of Tionnontatés near the Kamiga village at Bkejwanong. The Ottawas took the Iroquois by surprise and killed a number of them. Nevertheless, the presence of Iroquois warriors made a strong Ottawa presence all the more urgent. *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada, 1696*, AN, C11A, 14: 44.

<sup>45</sup> A group of Ottawas had spent the winter hunting with an Iroquois party and full reconciliation seemed to be near. Champigny au ministre, 18 août, 1696, 14: 182v.

plans.<sup>46</sup>

Instead of convincing the Kamigas to remain at Michilimackinac, Frontenac found himself in the position of throwing more kindling onto the fire of Ottawa discontent. He now had to try to convince the officials in France to keep Michilimackinac open, or risk driving the Ottawas and the Tionnontatés into the welcoming arms of the English merchants.

The situation at Michilimackinac in 1696 was unsettled. The Tionnontatés violently opposed the Kamigas' move to Bkejwanong. Once they had taken the decision to settle Bkejwanong, in lieu of their hope to return to Nottawasaga Bay, they took a proprietary interest in the region to the south of Lake Huron. The Tionnontatés had always cherished hopes of returning to Nottawasaga Bay, but two things prevented this from happening. First, some of the Amikwas and Mississauga Ojibwas had moved south along the shore of eastern Lake Huron and into the region to the north of Lake Ontario as the Iroquois warriors were beaten back. The Ottawas had no desire to cause trouble with the Ojibwas on behalf of the Tionnontatés. Second, the Kiskakons, who were the Tionnontatés' closest ally, were content to stay at Michilimackinac.

As the entire Kamiga Ottawa community moved to Bkejwanong, the Tionnontatés understood that their plans were disrupted, and that their hopes of greater autonomy were unlikely to be realized. The Kiskakons had agreed to stay at Michilimackinac where they would continue to protect the gateway. This decision

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<sup>46</sup> "La nécessité ou nous sommes trouvez par l'avis, que nous avons reçûs l'automne dernier de la mauvais disposition des Outaouïacs et hurons et de l'envie qu'ils avoient de conclure leur paix avec les iroquois sans notre participation et d'attirer chez eux le commerce de l'anglois nous auroit engagé a chercher divers moyens pour les detourner de ce plan." Frontenac et Champigny au ministre, 26 octobre, 1696, AN, C11A, 14: 119-119v.

enabled the Kamigas to move south, and in so doing gave the Tionnontatés cause to blame their old Kiskakon allies for their problems. Eventually the argument between the Tionnontatés and their old allies the Kiskakons grew violent, and an enraged Tionnontaté murdered one of the Kiskakons. In retaliation, a group of young Kiskakon warriors surprised a group of Tionnontatés, killing twenty people, including one of the most prominent of their leaders.<sup>47</sup>

The Tionnontaté chief, a man the French called Le Baron, was outraged by the bloody events and told Cadillac that the Tionnontatés were leaving Michilimackinac for the English post at Albany.<sup>48</sup> At this point Cadillac intervened and managed to convince Le Baron that the Tionnontatés would have the autonomy they desired at Bkejwanong. Le Baron was persuaded. After listening to Cadillac he came to believe that a move to Bkejwanong would provide the Tionnontatés with the opportunity to gain their independence from both the Kiskakons and the Kamigas after all. He believed Cadillac's promises of special treatment at the new village in the south. Le Baron also realized that if the Tionnontatés broke their ties with the French his rival, a man called Kondiaronk, would be able to assume the leadership of the Tionnontaté Nation. Kondiaronk had always been an exponent of a pro-English policy.<sup>49</sup>

To Frontenac then, the timing of the royal prohibition of 1696 could not have been

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<sup>47</sup> Champigny au ministre, 18 août, 1696, AN, C11A, 14: 183v.

<sup>48</sup> Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada, 1697, AN, C11A, 15: 13v; Champigny au ministre, 18 août, 1696, AN, C11A, 14: 183v.

<sup>49</sup> Champigny au ministre, 18 août, 1696, AN, C11A, 14: 183v; Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada, 1697, AN, C11A, 15: 13v.

worse. In this Champigny agreed with him, and his report to the minister recommended leaving Michilimackinac and Fort St. Joseph open, even if the trade was not economically viable.<sup>50</sup> In the end, the government in Versailles saw the logic in these arguments and agreed to keep the two posts operational.<sup>51</sup>

Cadillac used the Kamigas' plan of a definitive move to Bkejwanong to his immediate advantage and he prepared a plan which would keep the Ottawas in the alliance and which would not contribute to the problems associated with the *coureurs de bois*, the beaver glut and the underdevelopment of the colonial economy. Better still, his plan called for the development of a post which would keep the English and the Iroquois out of the Upper Great Lakes and hemmed in to the south and the east.<sup>52</sup> He guaranteed that his new post would provide profits for the Canadian and the French merchants. He promised to uphold the three-year embargo on beaver pelts, and he promised to adhere to price regulations when the beaver trade was reopened. He argued at length on the natural advantages of *le détroit*, particularly on the abundance of *menues pelleteries* or furs from a variety of animals which were not to be found further to the north in the Canadian forest. Finally he promised to "civilise" the Indians, a promise presumably made to attenuate the volume of Jesuit criticism.<sup>53</sup>

Cadillac's genius was to take an Ottawa plan, the Kamiga proposal to re-settle

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<sup>50</sup> Champigny au ministre, 25 octobre, 1696, AN, C11A, 14: 196-207.

<sup>51</sup> Ordre, 28 avril, 1697, AN, F3, Moreau de St. Méry, 8: 25-26.

<sup>52</sup> This was a long standing French objective. See Denonville à La Durantaye, 6 juin, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 51-52; Denonville à Dulhut, 6 juin, 1686, AN, C11A, 8: 53-53v.

<sup>53</sup> Mémoire de Cadillac, 26 octobre, 1699, AN, C11A, 17: 101-103.

Bkejwanong, and make it appear to the French officials as though he commanded great authority over the Ottawas at Michilimackinac. Other than his own grand claims, there is no evidence to support Cadillac's version of the Ottawa migration from Michilimackinac to Bkejwanong. On the other hand, there is ample evidence to support the Ottawa version. This account suggests they established villages at Bkejwanong completely of their own volition and according to their own interests. Some officials in New France knew this. According to the 1699 report by the new governor Louis Hector de Callière and the intendant Champigny, Cadillac would succeed in his project because the Ottawas already lived at *le détroit*.<sup>54</sup>

The most important factor in the Kamiga re-settlement of Bkejwanong was the retreat of the Iroquois from the region. By 1699, the Five Nations no longer posed an offensive threat to either the French or the Ottawas and, in view of their desperate situation, the Iroquois sent a peace delegation to Montreal in early March of 1699. On the eighth of that month the delegation of Ohonsiowanne of the Onondagas, Otacheté of the Oneidas, and Tsonhuastsuan of the Cayugas, presented the new governor, Callière, with three French prisoners. They gave the governor eight wampum belts and asked that the French use their influence to put an end to the Ottawa raids. In return they proposed an exchange of prisoners and a general peace settlement.<sup>55</sup> Callière knew

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<sup>54</sup> Callière et Champigny au ministre, 20 octobre, 1699, AN, C11A, 17: 3-16v. Another reference to Ottawas living in the region is even more intriguing. It comes from a letter written by an unnamed *coureur de bois*. This *coureur de bois* wrote to the king's counsellor, Esprit de Cabart de Villermont, about Bkejwanong and he provided a description of the people whom he encountered. He was in the Bkejwanong region in the summer of 1701 and he met Cadillac and Tonty who "were on their way to establish a post near the Ottawa village of Desaguadeno." "...qui est venu [word obscured by stamp] établissement pres du'un village des outaouacs a Desaguadeno." Villermont à Toinard, 1 janvier, 1702, AN, Marine, 2JJ56, X.

<sup>55</sup> Paroles adressées à Callière, 8 mars, 1699, AN, F3, 8: 143-144.



that he did not have the authority to make the peace on behalf of the Ottawas. In fact he had no idea how the Ottawas would react to the proposal. He replied to the Iroquois delegates that he could only make peace, "jointly with all of the allies of the west."<sup>56</sup>

In order to understand the peace process that this meeting initiated, it is useful to examine the motivations of the three main parties involved, the French, the Five Nations, and the Ottawas.<sup>57</sup> It is also important to distinguish between the Ottawas' objectives and those of their Algonquian neighbours in the Great Lakes. Here as elsewhere in this study, it is insufficient to speak of Algonquian objectives. One must examine the objectives of each individual nation.<sup>58</sup>

The French motives are not difficult to understand. Succinctly put, the French hoped to eliminate the Iroquois threat to the St. Lawrence colony and to preserve their alliance with the nations of the *pays d'en haut*. By the turn of the century the French were beginning to realize the tremendous advantages which they could command by keeping the English pinned along the Atlantic coast.<sup>59</sup> To the official French mind the allied nations of the Upper Great Lakes were but an auxiliary force to be employed in

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<sup>56</sup> "conjointement avec tous nos alliés." Réponse de Callière aux Iroquois, 8 mars, 1699, AN, F3, 8: 144-146.

<sup>57</sup> Although the Ottawas were not the only Algonquian nation represented at the peace settlement, their position dictated the reactions of their Ojibwa and Algonquin neighbours. The Ottawas were more closely associated with the French than were the other two nations and they were more interested in the peace than were the nations located further to the west who came to Montreal. The decision to focus the attention on the Ottawas of all of the nations represented is not taken merely because they are the subject of the present investigation. It can also be justified in terms of their influence with the French.

<sup>58</sup> There has been one monograph written on the peace settlement. In most ways it is a thorough and detailed work, but its author fails to draw the necessary distinctions between the various nations of the Great Lakes. The author treats "les nations de l'ouest" as a single unit without individual aims. See Gilles Havard, *La grande paix de Montréal de 1701*, (Québec: Recherches amérindiennes au Québec, 1992), 40-47.

<sup>59</sup> The 1697 Treaty of Ryswick in Europe settled very little and the French knew that the conflict with the English was far from over.

the French interest. In 1701 that interest was to force the English to keep a large force in North America thus wasting men and material which could be employed more profitably in the European theatre of the war. Peace with the Iroquois would enable the French and their allies to devote all of their energies in the campaign against the English. In fact, the French hoped to encourage the Iroquois to create problems for the English.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand the French were deeply concerned over their alliance with the Ottawas. The good will won back by Louvigny had by this point all been lost again by Cadillac. Much of the good will which Louvigny enjoyed came from his opposition to the trade in brandy. He took a firm stand against the trade in French *eau-de-vie* and he brought the *coureurs de bois* under control so that the bad apples, like Le Maire and Berthot, could not cause trouble. The return of Frontenac meant an increase in the volume of French brandy, *l'eau-de-vie* flowing into the *pays d'en haut*, but this trade created more harm than Louvigny was prepared to tolerate. He was horrified at the effect of alcohol on the Ottawas, who lost control of their senses when inebriated. Louvigny was not an entirely scrupulous man, indeed he was something of a profiteer, but he could not abide the abuse of alcohol and the ruin it caused. Furthermore, he told Frontenac that the Ottawa elders wanted the trade stopped.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> W.J. Eccles, "The Fur Trade and Eighteenth-Century Imperialism." In W.J. Eccles, ed., *Essays on New France*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 81-82.

<sup>61</sup> Louvigny reminded Frontenac that his role was "...à contribuer au service de Dieu et du Roy, à la accroissement de la religion à l'établissement du commerce, à la continuation de la guerre contre les Iroquois au consentement universel de tous les esprits raisonnables et Chrétiens des anciens et guerriers...qu'ils ne regardoit cette sorte de commerce que comme un pillage qu'on faisait publiquement." Louvigny à Frontenac, 30 juin, 1691, AN, C11A, 12: 140.

Callière recognized the Ottawa influence over the other nations of the Great Lakes and he worried about the consequences of an Ottawa defection.<sup>62</sup> If the Ottawas did abandon the French the result would be disaster, and the French knew it:

If these people ever joined the English and the Iroquois, one solitary campaign would suffice to oblige all of the French to leave Canada.<sup>63</sup>

Some historians have suggested that the Ottawas lived in fear of the day the French decided to abandon them.<sup>64</sup> In fact, the opposite was true. By 1701 the trade in beaver pelts was a distant second to military support in terms of the priorities of the French-Ottawa alliance.

The Iroquois motivation for peace is also reasonably clear. As Francis Jennings observed, their losses from the wars against the Canadian militia, the French army, and the Algonquian allies were staggering. American Iroquois specialist Daniel Richter has estimated that the Iroquois population declined from 10,000 people in the 1640s to 8,600 in 1675.<sup>65</sup> By the turn of the century according to Richter's well-researched study, the situation was desperate:

All of the Iroquois nations except the Cayuga had seen their villages and crops destroyed by invading armies and all five nations were greatly weakened by loss of members to captivity, to death in combat, or to famine and disease. By some estimates, between 1689 and 1698 the Iroquois lost half of their fighting strength. That figure is probably an exaggeration, but by 1700 perhaps 500 of the 2,000 warriors the Five

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<sup>62</sup> Callière au ministre, 16 octobre, 1700, AN, C11A, 18: 66.

<sup>63</sup> Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale du Canada*, (Paris: Nyon Fils, 1744), II: 161.

<sup>64</sup> *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 208; White, *Middle Ground*, 32.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 40 (1983), 542-543.

Nations fielded in 1689 had been killed or captured or had deserted to the French missions and had not been replaced by younger warriors. A loss of well over 1,600 from a total population of approximately 8,600 seems a conservative estimate.<sup>66</sup>

The Iroquois desire for peace was an admission that their bold foreign policy initiatives had fallen short of their objectives and they needed to cut their losses while they still could.<sup>67</sup> As Jennings noted, "Diplomacy, no matter how brilliant, is the prisoner of statistics and technology, and the European mass was too much for Iroquois energy."<sup>68</sup>

The forces which motivated the Ottawas to seek peace with the Five Nations are much less discernible. For Richard White, the Algonquians (including, but by no means exclusively the Ottawa Nation) supported the peace settlement for reasons which must be explained within the context of the alliance itself. In other words the peace settlement was only an aspect of the larger alliance. White's interpretation includes his notion of a "middle ground" between the two faces of the alliance:

The alliance, because it was largely Algonquian in form and spirit, demanded a father who mediated more often than he commanded, who forgave more often than he punished, and who gave more often than he received.<sup>69</sup>

Out of this alliance, White's Algonquians hoped to create the benevolent Onontio which they would need to settle their disputes, and supply them with the goods they wanted.

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<sup>66</sup> Richter, "War and Culture," 551. Also see Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 188. Similar figures are provided by Havard in his study of the peace settlement. Havard, *La grande paix*, 65.

<sup>67</sup> In 1730 a prominent Seneca named Tonatakout asked Callière "that the hatchet be removed from the hands of the western Indians, in particular the Ottawas, the Illinois, and the Miamis." Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 203.

<sup>68</sup> Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 186.

<sup>69</sup> White, *Middle Ground*, 143.

Thus, by acquiescing to the French demand for a peace with the Iroquois, the Algonquians would be able, at long last, to leave the "refugee centres" where White has argued they lived.

The use of the term "Algonquian" in any discussion of the peace settlement at Montreal in 1701 is problematic. Although White and other historians have used this term profitably in a number of ways, it is inappropriate in a discussion of the peace. The Algonquian nations<sup>70</sup> had specific and different agendas, and they did not all participate merely because they needed a benevolent "father" to settle their disputes.<sup>71</sup> White argues that the peace settlement led to the "break up" of the *pays d'en haut* as the various peoples broke out of the "refugee centres" and moved into "previously empty lands."<sup>72</sup> These new settlements (White calls them "regional blocs" or "subunits" of the *pays d'en haut*) were like the "refugee centres" in that they contained a blend of many different peoples. This interpretation can not be supported by evidence. In the French documents, and in the French maps, villages were always given a specific national affiliation for the duration of the entire French regime.<sup>73</sup> Individual nations

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<sup>70</sup> The following Algonquian-speaking nations were represented at Montreal and signed the treaty: (in order of the document) Kiskakons, Kamigas, Sinagos, Miamis, Sakis, Potawatomis, Outagamis, Mascoutens, Menominees, Ojibwas of Bawating, Osagés, Nipissings, Algonquins, Amikwas, and Abenakis.

<sup>71</sup> To provide an obvious example, the people who lived to the west of Lake Michigan had very different concerns regarding the Iroquois than those who lived in the Ottawa valley, and yet they were both Algonquian. There were disputes, alliances, and a myriad of complex relationships between all of the Algonquian peoples who were at Montreal in the summer of 1701. To present their interests as "Algonquian" is a gross oversimplification, one that can only be explained in terms of an imaginative theory such as the "Ontario" idea.

<sup>72</sup> White, *Middle Ground*, 143.

<sup>73</sup> The best, and most thorough collection of maps and documents is to be found in the inventories of the French Hydrographic Service. In order to draw the most accurate maps possible, the Hydrographic Service kept copies of all of the manuscripts and maps relating to North America. The catalogues and inventories of this collection were updated annually, and serve as an exhaustive source of information on the Great Lakes region.

acted according to their own specific needs and interests. In the case of the Ottawas, these needs and interests were in direct conflict with many of their neighbours.

The Ottawas had three main and inter-related reasons for participating in the peace conference at Montreal. In the first place they wished to maintain their position as the principal ally of the French among all of the other Algonquian nations. They could not have hoped to preserve this position if they had not sent delegates. In the second place, they had to assure themselves of French arms and French support against the Sioux, Mascouten, and Outagami nations in the west. Finally they needed to assure themselves of French support against the English. The new settlement at Bkejwanong gave these concerns an urgency which they had not previously had.

When the Kamiga Ottawas took the decision to re-settle Bkejwanong, they knew the region was difficult to defend. On the other hand the region was a particularly rich and fertile one and as the Iroquois withdrew into the cantons, it became evident that some nation or another would take advantage of the opportunity to settle. The Ottawas also had to consider their ongoing western conflict. They had been in conflict with the Sioux for over thirty years, mainly because of their alliance with the Tionnontatés and the Kiskakon move to Chequamegon. If they moved some of their villages to the south, they would have to be sure that the Iroquois would not attack them from the east. Even though the Iroquois could no longer attack in great force, individual parties of warriors could cause trouble for the Ottawas. They wanted to eliminate this problem before

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None of the maps produced by the Service, and indeed none of the maps used by the Service, depicts "refugee centres." Inventaires et catalogues anciens du dépôt des cartes et plans, xvii-xix siècle, Les Archives du Service Hydrographique de la Marine, AN, 1JJ, 60-84.

meeting the challenges from the Sioux, the Mascoutens, and the Outagamis in the west. The Ottawas did not want to fight on two fronts.

This problem was underlined in the meetings held by two Kamiga Ottawa ogimas, Miscouaky and Mekoua, with the French officials prior to the peace conference. When Miscouaky and Mekoua came to Montreal in the summer of 1700 they told Callière of the Iroquois hunting party in the Bkejwanong region. Kinongé, hunting with a young but prominent Kiskakon named Koutaoliboe, had encountered the Iroquois party south of Wauwi-Autinoong and a fight had ensued. Several of the Iroquois were killed, but Kinongé was alarmed that Iroquois warriors had been found so near the Kamiga village. Mekoua also told Callière of the Sioux threat in the west and of the plans of a young Kiskakon warrior named Onaské to attack the Sioux in a preemptive strike.<sup>74</sup> Callière warned the Ottawas not to break the peace. The French wanted to reserve the Ottawas strength for the continuing struggle against the English.<sup>75</sup>

As the nation with the closest ties to the French, the Ottawas expected not that Onontio would moderate their disputes, but rather that he would favour the Ottawas in problems which they might encounter. When Koutaoliboe arrived at Montreal to confront an Iroquois delegation who had come to complain of the rough treatment which they had received, he expected the French to be impressed with his presence. Koutaoliboe did not ask Onontio for forgiveness for the attack which he had carried out against the Iroquois; he demanded that Callière warn the Iroquois not to retaliate against

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<sup>74</sup> Paroles des Outaouais adressées à Callière, 21 juin, 1700, AN, C11A, 18: 78-78v; Réponse de Callière, 27 juin, 1700, AN, C11A, 18: 79-80.

<sup>75</sup> Réponse de Callière, 27 juin, 1700, AN, C11A, 18: 79-80.

the Ottawas. Speaking on behalf of all four Ottawa nations, Koutaoiliboe told Callière to tell the Iroquois, "not to make one more like attack against them."<sup>76</sup>

Callière may well have seen his role as that of peace keeper, but the Ottawas saw the peace as one which confirmed their status as France's principal ally, and for the duration of their alliance with the French they would remind them of this and would ignore French appeals to appease other nations in order to allow the French to maintain an impartial appearance. What the Ottawas wanted from the peace settlement of 1701 was a tacit understanding from the French. As had been seen previously, when Kinongé, Noncheke, Ocheepik, and Nansouakouet held their meeting at Michilimackinac in the autumn of 1689, they decided to put pressure upon their French allies in order to force the French to establish a post. Their plan had been designed to increase Ottawa influence over the French, and as the alliance entered the eighteenth century, it was clear that the plan had worked. The Ottawas were still in a position to defend their way of life in Lake Huron, and the French governor, Callière, was in the same position as Frontenac twelve years earlier, that of trying to appease the Ottawas.

So in August 1701, the governor of New France, Louis-Hector de Callière, hosted a conference at Montreal in order to ratify the peace agreement which the Ottawas and Iroquois had made the previous September. Thirteen hundred delegates representing all of nations of the Great Lakes were present.<sup>77</sup> It was the largest such gathering ever seen in Montreal:

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<sup>76</sup> "de ne faire plus qu'une meme coup avec nous." Paroles des Iroquois, septembre, 1700, AN, C11A, 18:143.

<sup>77</sup> Callière au ministre, 4 octobre, 1701, AN, C11A, 19: 117.



I have the extreme pleasure to see presently all of my children assembled, you Hurons [Tionnontatés], Outaouacs du Sable [Kamigas], Kiskakons, Outaouacs Sinago, Nation of the Forks [Nassauakuetons], Sauteurs [Bawating Ojibwas], Pouteouatamis, Sakis, Puants [Winnebagos], Folles Avoines [Menominee], Renards [Outagamis], Maskoutins, Miamis, Illinois, Amikois, Nepissingues, Algonquins, Temiskamingues, Christinaux [Crees], Gens de Terre [Crees], Kikapous, Gens de Sault [Mission Iroquois], Gens de la Montagne [Mission Iroquois], Abenakis, and you of the Iroquois nations.<sup>78</sup>

In terms of its accomplishments, however, the so-called Great Peace of Montreal was somewhat less impressive. The principal cause of the tension between the above nations, the use of land and resources, was left untreated. Instead each of the nations pledged allegiance to Onontio and to promise to treat their neighbours as brothers.<sup>79</sup>

The Montreal peace conference of 1701 was a curious blend of Algonquian, Iroquoian, and French forms. The conference began in earnest with the arrival of some of the Iroquois delegates and the delegates from the *pays d'en haut* at the Mission

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<sup>78</sup> "Jay une extreme joye de voir icy presentement tous mes enfans assembleés, vous hurons, outaouacs du sable, kiskakons, outaouacs sinago, nation de la fourche, sauteurs, pouteouatamis, sakis, puants, folles avoines, renards, maskoutins, miamis, ilinois amikois, nepissingues, algonquins, temiskamingues, Christinaux, gens de terre, kikapous, gens du Sault, de la Montagne, Abenakis, et vous nations iroquoises." Several of the names which Callière used require explanation. The names employed by Callière are a combination of French translations of the Algonquian names, like renards and nation de la fourche, and Algonquian names, like Kiskakon and Amikwa. Some of the names reveal the lack of French knowledge of the peoples of the *pays d'en haut*. For example, the term "gens de terre" was often used to describe people unknown to the French. On the maps of the Great Lakes region the "gens de terre" (also called "gens de bois") appear to be migrating west. In actual fact, the cartographers were simply using these generic names to locate people with whom the French had no contacts. In this case, Callière referred to the Crees who lived to the north of Lake Superior. The Gens du Sault and the Gens de la Montagne were the names given to the two groups of Mission Iroquois, that is Five Nations Iroquois people who had converted to Christianity and who lived within the St. Lawrence colony. See Denys Delâge, "Les Iroquois chrétiens des <<réductions.>> 1667-1770." *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 21 (1991), 62-64 and Lucien Campeau, "Roman Catholic Missions in New France." in William C. Sturtevant ed., *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 4: 468-469; Ratification de la Paix faite au mois de Septembre dernier, août, 1701, AN, C11A, 19: 41.

<sup>79</sup> Ratification de la Paix, août, 1701, AN, C11A, 19: 41v-43.

Iroquois village at the Sault de St. Louis, which the Iroquois called Kahnawaké.<sup>80</sup> As the Oneidas, Onondagas, and Cayugas arrived (the Senecas arrived the next day with the nations of the Upper Great Lakes), the Mission Iroquois lit a small bundle of dried bramble branches as a welcome to the delegates and an invitation to take part in the peace accord to be held at Montreal.<sup>81</sup>

When the Ottawas and the other nations from the Upper Great Lakes arrived the next day, 22 July, 1701, the Mission Iroquois greeted them with volleys from their muskets and shouts of welcome. The Ottawas in turn fired their muskets into the air and shouted *Sassakoue!*<sup>82</sup> The four Ottawa ogimas, and the chiefs of the other nations of the Upper Great Lakes, were invited into the longhouse of the chief of the Mission Iroquois of Kahnawaké in order to dance the Calumet, the celebration of peace. After the chiefs had entered the longhouse and taken their places on the floor, a group of Ottawas dancers and musicians entered, one of them deftly balancing a pipe of red stone decorated with feathers. The twelve musicians sat in a circle and sang to the rhythm of their drums and their maracas.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Bruce Trigger, "Native Resettlement, 1635-1800." in R. Cole Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) 1: 47.

<sup>81</sup> The Mohawks arrived at the end of the conference and signed Callière's treaty at that time. La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4: 194; Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 277-278.

<sup>82</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4: 197-198.

<sup>83</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4: 197-198.

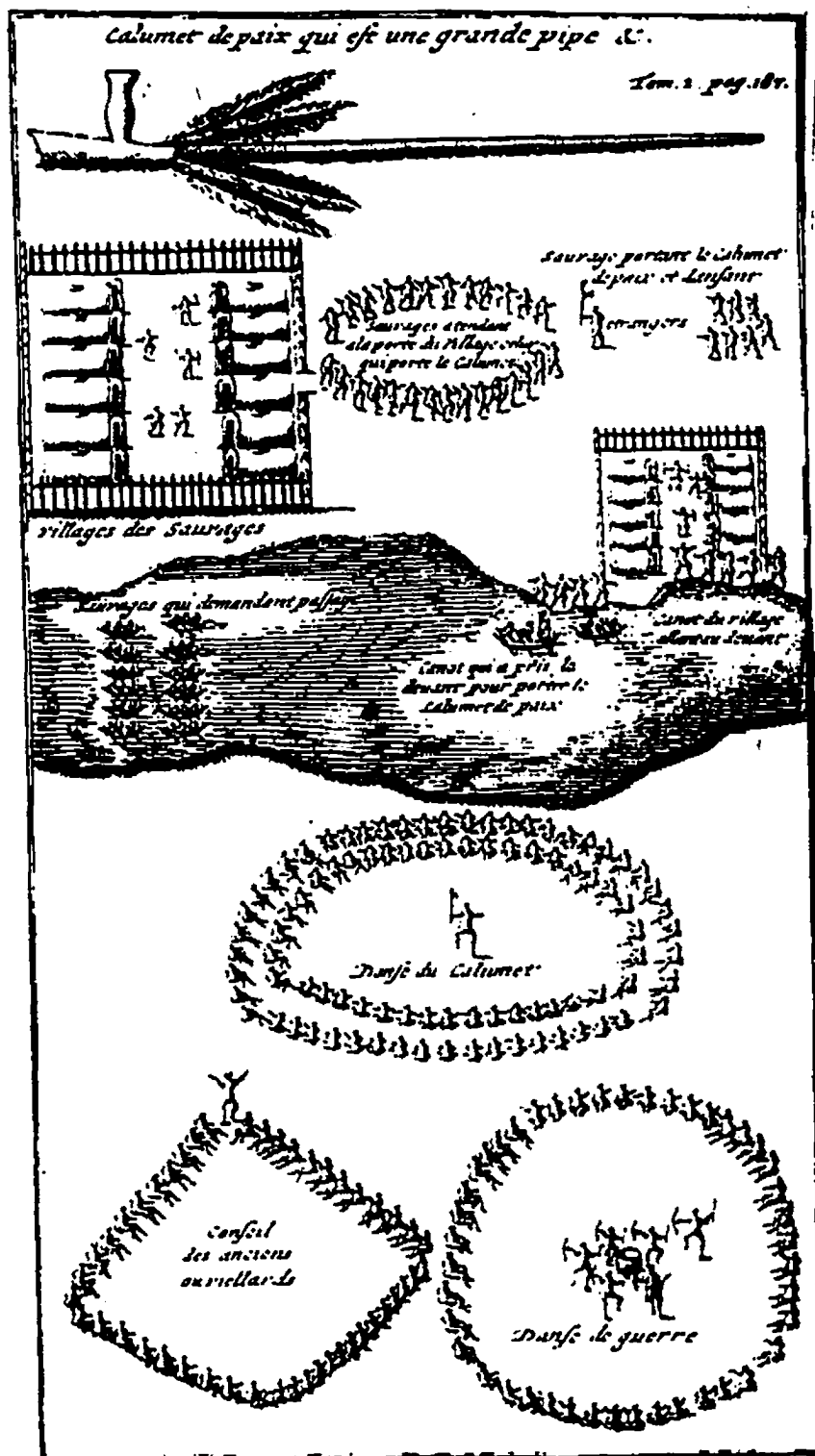


Figure 10: The Calumet was the most important aspect of the peace celebrations. This illustration from Lahontan depicts the council of the elders, the pipe, the dance, and the ceremonies associated with the arrival of the delegates.

After a quarter of an hour, one of the Ottawa ogimas stood abruptly, took an axe, and struck it into one of the poles supporting the building. The musicians stopped right away and the ogima told the story of how he had killed four Iroquois warriors five years earlier. He then took some tobacco, and said "I take this as a medicine to restore my spirit." The musicians applauded him by shouts and by furious rattling of their maracas. At this point the whole longhouse burst into cheers and as soon as those who were outside heard the din, they cheered as well.<sup>84</sup>

The Calumet dance was designed to break the tension created by the coming together of old enemies. Like the Feast of the Dead, the Calumet dance was an essential feature of Ottawa foreign relations and it took place at the opening of every peace conference in order to clear the air. The person in whose honour the Calumet was sung became a naturalized child of the nation who hosted the event. It was among the highest honours which could be conferred upon an individual, but the significance of the ceremony went beyond individual glory:

The Calumet halted warriors of the tribe who had sung it, and stayed the hands of those who sought vengeance for those who had been slain in the past. The Calumet compelled the suspension of hostilities; and assured safe passage to deputies of nations which had recently been at war. It is, in a word, the Calumet which has the authority to confirm everything, and which renders solemn oaths binding.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4: 197-198.

<sup>85</sup> "Le calumet arreste les guerriers de la nation de ceux qui l'ont chanté, et toutes les vengeances qu'on seroit en droit de tirer pour ceux qui auroient esté tuez. Le calumet fait aussy faire les suspensions d'armes; donne entrée aux députés des ennemis qui veulent aller chez les nations [de] gens qui ont esté récemment tuez. C'est luy en un mot qui a la de confirmer tout, et qui fait ajouter foy aux serments solennels qui se font." Perrot, *Memoire*, 100.

Like the Feast of the Dead, the Calumet dance was not originally an Ottawa ceremony. It came to the Ottawas from the west as nation after nation made peace with one another. The Ottawas understood its easterly migration and they told the French that the ceremony was first given to the Pawnees (a people who lived far to the west, to the south of the Sioux), by the sun.<sup>86</sup>

As far as the Ottawas and the Iroquois were concerned, the real business of the conference was thus completed at Kahnawaké before the conference at Montreal had even begun. Nevertheless, important business was still to be conducted there, and the Ottawas and other nations of the west went to Montreal on 23 July in the expectation that the French would show support for the expansion of Ottawa territory around the Bkejwanong region.<sup>87</sup> As soon as the Ottawas arrived, they built small cabins in the shade along the wall of the town of Montreal. On the fronts of their cabins they fixed sun shades fashioned from their mats and supported by poles which they had brought along with them.<sup>88</sup> As soon as all of the delegates had arrived, Outoutagan of the Kamiga Ottawas presented Callière with furs and, to the cheers of the entire assembly, he declared the conference open.<sup>89</sup>

The first days of the conference at Montreal were devoted to a series of

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<sup>86</sup> Perrot, *Memoire*, 100.

<sup>87</sup> Many of the western nations did not normally travel in canoes and had to be transported by *coureurs de bois*. La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4: 197.

<sup>88</sup> La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4: 200.

<sup>89</sup> Outoutagan was called Jean Le Blanc by the French, probably because his complexion was not as dark as the other Ottawas. Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 275; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4: 197.

individual meetings between Callière and the various chiefs.<sup>90</sup> Of the four Ottawa ogimas at Montreal, Outoutagan bore the greatest responsibility for the success of the conference, and his meeting with Callière was the critical point of the conference.<sup>91</sup> Outoutagan was the son of Le Talon, one of the most prominent Ottawas of the 1660s and 1670s. He was a strong supporter of the French, just as his father had been, and he was keenly aware of the prominence of the French alliance in the history of his own family. On more than one occasion he reminded the French governors of his family connection and the role his father had played in supporting the French in the past.<sup>92</sup> Outoutagan was the among the most perceptive of the Ottawa ogimas, but he was also the most volatile. This last quality made him a diplomat of uneven quality.<sup>93</sup>

Of all of the private audiences he held, Callière's meeting with Outoutagan was the most delicate. Callière was able to convince most of the chiefs who sought private audiences with him that he was acting in their interest. The governor had a mild and engaging manner which led many of the delegates to believe his word even though he

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<sup>90</sup> These meetings addressed the various individual concerns (such as the Bawating Ojibwa demand for a gunsmith of their own at Bawating), and general concerns such as the proper protocol for the exchange of prisoners. La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4: 202, 214-215; Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 275-276.

<sup>91</sup> The Tionnontaté chief, Kondiaronk (whom the French called Le Rat), fell ill and died during the conference, and many commentators felt that this was the defining moment of the conference. Dramatic as it may have been, Kondiaronk's death actually had little impact. Kondiaronk claimed to have worked hard to bring the conference to pass, but in the end the Tionnontaté's minor influence was diminished by the passing of their chief. Harard, *La grande paix*, 147-149.

<sup>92</sup> Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac à Vaudreuil, 18 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 113v-114.

<sup>93</sup> On several occasions Outoutagan spoke quickly without worrying about the effect of his words. He once told Frontenac that only weaklings had to ride horses. On other occasions he offended the Jesuits by his attitude towards brandy. Rapport de Clairambault d'Aigremont au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 46; Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 275-276.

made too many promises to keep, and even though he blurred the important issues.<sup>94</sup>

Outoutagan was a more difficult case:

Jean Le Blanc [Outoutagan] was the one who gave him [Callière] the most trouble. This Indian possessed great spirit, and though strongly committed to the French nation, he saw more clearly than was desired in a matter of this consequence.<sup>95</sup>

Outoutagan informed Callière that the Ottawas did not wish to see the various nations of the west relocated to the new fort which Cadillac had just completed at Detroit. He told the governor that Bkejwanong was Ottawa territory and the attempt to attract Potawatomis, Miamis, and others would have grave consequences.<sup>96</sup>

As it was there were already three villages in the Bkejwanong region. To the west of Fort Pontchartrain, about five kilometres distant stood Michipichy's Tionnontaté village. Unlike the other villages, this one consisted of Iroquoian style longhouses. About six hundred people, almost all of the remaining Tionnontaté nation, lived here. Two kilometres further west there was a Potawatomi village where about five hundred Potawatomis lived with their chief Ouilamek.<sup>97</sup> To the east, and directly across the

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<sup>94</sup> For example, he promised to send Nicolas Perrot to several different nations in the *pays d'en haut*. Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 274-283.

<sup>95</sup> Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 275-276.

<sup>96</sup> Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 275-276, 283-284; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4: 254-256; Callière et Champigny au ministre, 6 novembre, 1701, AN, C11A, 19: 27-28; Assemblée faite par Callière de tous les chefs de sauvages de chaque nation d'en haut, 6 août, 1701, AN, F3 Moreau de St. Méry, 8: 271.

<sup>97</sup> Most of the Potawatomis lived in the area. The French called the Rivière Saint Joseph to the south of Lake Michigan. Ouilamek (also referred to as Ouenemek) was from this region but he came to Bkejwanong in 1701 hoping to assert the Potawatomi claim to the strategic gateway. Rochemonteix, *Relation*, 273-276; Charlevoix, *Journal*, 3: 256-265; Marest à Vaudreuil, 4 juin, 1708, AN, C11A, 165-176v; Boishébert, Carte du Lac Sainte Claire, 1730, Service historique de la marine, rec. 67, no. 73; Léry fils, Carte de la rivière du détroit, 1749, Service historique de la marine, rec. 67, no. 71; Bellin, Plan du fort du Détroit, 1754, BN, Section des cartes et plans, GE DD 2987; Bellin, mss. (uncatalogued) BN, Section des cartes et plans.

river from Fort Pontchartrain itself stood the Ottawa village. Over seven hundred Ottawas lived here, and almost all of them were of the Kamiga Nation. It was a typical Ottawa summer village with its rectangular structures topped with barrel-shaped roofs (here made from elm bark, not birch bark as at Michilimackinac), fish-drying racks, canoes, and woven mats everywhere.<sup>98</sup>

True to his nature, Outoutagan spoke bluntly. He told Callière that there were not enough resources in the Bkejwanong region to support the numbers of people which Cadillac wished to settle. He told the governor, somewhat dishonestly, that the game in the region was not abundant:

We have destroyed and devoured everything in the area. There are now few beavers and we can only hunt bears, cats, and other *menuës pelleteries*.<sup>99</sup>

Callière supported Cadillac's plan, and he actually hoped to settle other western nations along with the Kamiga Ottawas at Fort Pontchartrain. Furthermore, Outoutagan would not be as easily fooled as the other chiefs who had never before had direct contact with the French governor.

The issue of Fort Pontchartrain was not resolved at the peace conference and it would lead directly to a series of troubles in the west. The "Great Peace of Montreal"

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<sup>98</sup> Charlevoix, *Journal*, 3: 256-265; Rochemonteix, *Relation*, 273-276; Boishébert, Carte du Lac Sainte Claire, 1730, Service historique de la marine, rec. 67, no. 73; Léry, *Carte de la rivière du détroit*, 1749, Service historique de la marine, rec. 67, no. 71; Bellin, Plan du fort du Détroit, 1754, BN, Section des cartes et plans, GE DD 2987; Bellin, mss. (uncatalogued) BN, Section des cartes et plans; John Montresor, Plan of Detroit, 1763, Maps Division, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, 728.

<sup>99</sup> "Nous avons détruit et mangé toute la terre. Il y a peu de castors présentement, et nous ne pouvons plus chasser qu'aux ours, chats, et à autres menuës pelleteries." La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4: 203.



of 1701 actually accomplished little as far as the Ottawas were concerned.<sup>100</sup> The peace agreement with the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy was important, but in terms of military capability, the Iroquois had ceased to be an important threat before the conference even took place. The Ottawas who had signed the peace settlement in 1701, Chingouessi, Kinongé, Koutaoliboe, and Outoutagan did not agree to allow Callière to act as their father, but rather they agreed to a peace settlement with the Iroquois.<sup>101</sup> If the Kamigas were to exclude others from the Bkejwanong gateway, they would have to find a way which did not involve French help. Callière, because of the wishes of his superiors in France, could not support Outoutagan in this request.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Assemblée faite par Callière de tous les chefs de sauvages de chaque nation d'en haut, 6 août, 1701, AN, F3 Moreau de St. Méry, 8: 271.

<sup>101</sup> For an explanation of the peace settlement based upon an economic interpretation, see Havard, *La grande paix*, 41-44.

<sup>102</sup> In a sense, Callière's hands were tied. Cadillac's fort at Detroit had the support of the minister of the marine and the king himself. France had embarked upon an expansionist policy aimed at claiming the Mississippi and the west. Detroit was an integral part of this plan. W.J. Eccles, *France in America*, rev. ed. (Markham, Ont.: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1990), 107-109.

**Chapter Six:  
Michipichy and Mekoua Challenge the Alliance,  
1701-1708**

Callière died in May of 1703 and once again the Ottawa ogimas had a new governor with whom to contend. When they met Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil in July of 1703, at Fort Frontenac, and again in September at Montreal, they reminded him of their special status as the leading ally of the *pays d'en haut*.<sup>1</sup> The two Ottawa delegations told Vaudreuil how sorry they were that Callière had died and then immediately informed the new governor that they expected him to continue Callière's policy of supporting the Ottawa alliance.<sup>2</sup> Vaudreuil replied that he would do his best but he warned them about the dangers they would encounter if they continued to send warriors to the west to attack the Sioux. This was advice the Ottawas chose to ignore and Vaudreuil knew that it was beyond his ability to prevent them from following their own policies. They could use the weapons they obtained from the fur trade at Fort Pontchartrain to attack the Sioux when they pleased. In his first official report as governor Vaudreuil informed the minister that Cadillac's new post was already causing problems in the Upper Great Lakes.<sup>3</sup>

The troubles at Bkejwanong which Vaudreuil predicted began in earnest three

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<sup>1</sup> An outbreak of smallpox in the St. Lawrence in the spring of 1703 prevented the Ottawas from making their annual diplomatic mission to Montreal (suivant leur coutume). Instead twenty canoes of Kamiga Ottawas, Miamis, and Tionnontaté's came from Bkejwanong to see the new governor at the eastern end of Lake Ontario. A group of Kiskakon Ottawas went to Montreal in September, 1703, once they had been assured that the disease had been eradicated. Vaudreuil au ministre, 14 novembre, 1703, AN, C11A, 21: 52v; Paroles de Le Pesant, chef outaouais, adressées à Vaudreuil, 14 et 17 juillet, 1703, AN, C11A, 21: 66-66v; Paroles adressées à Vaudreuil par les outaouais de Michilimackinac, 2 et 4 septembre, 1703, AN, C11A, 21: 70-71.

<sup>2</sup> Le Pesant, chef outaouais, adressées à Vaudreuil, 14 et 17 juillet, 1703, AN, C11A, 21: 66-66v; Paroles adressées à Vaudreuil par les outaouais de Michilimackinac, 2 et 4 septembre, 1703, AN, C11A, 21: 70-71.

<sup>3</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 14 novembre, 1703, AN, C11A, 21: 53.

years later in 1706. They were caused by Tionnontaté, Ottawa, and Miami concerns and they had little to do with the French presence, although the French commander at Fort Pontchartrain de Détroit, La Mothe Cadillac, certainly aggravated a bad situation. With the withdrawal of the Iroquois war parties, the Kamiga Ottawas and Tionnontatés had moved south to reclaim the Bkejwanong region. At the same time, and for the same reasons, the Miamis and Potawatomis moved east to stake their claim to the area. All of these nations were interested in the rich resources and the strategic value of the region. Cadillac wanted simply to improve his earnings by attracting the largest number of people he could to his trading post. In order to do this effectively he requested the services of the Tionnontaté chief, Michipichy (or Quarante Sols, as the French called him). This action would lead directly to the troubles which engulfed the Bkejwanong region and poisoned the relations between the Ottawas and the French.

Michipichy's authority amongst the Tionnontatés of Michilimackinac was due to his ability to maintain a separate Tionnontaté policy. He was a skilled politician who was able to give the Tionnontatés an influence far greater than their situation would normally allow. For over half a century the Tionnontatés of Michilimackinac had depended upon the Ottawas for protection against the Iroquois and for aid in adapting to the different climate and resources of Michilimackinac. Some of the Tionnontatés could remember what life had been like before 1649, and others must have been entertained by stories of a golden age of prosperity.<sup>4</sup> Michipichy was the first of the Tionnontaté chiefs who had the opportunity to recreate this past and his determination to do this

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<sup>4</sup> Lahontan, *Nouveaux voyages*, 114-118; Perrot, *Memoire*, 143-146.

caused much discomfort for those who stood in his path.

As early as 1703, Michipichy had committed the ultimate act of belligerence, as far as the French were concerned; he had opened contact with the English at Albany. His objective, as Vaudreuil described it in his annual report to the minister, was to create "between them [the Tionnontatés] and the English a kind of commerce."<sup>5</sup>

Vaudreuil had welcomed a delegation of Tionnontatés led by Michipichy to Quebec in the month of July, 1703. Michipichy told Vaudreuil that the English had promised them goods at cheap prices if they took their furs to Albany. He indicated that he was interested in this offer and that so were the Miamis who had established a small village in Bkejwanong. Then he told Vaudreuil that both nations wished to go to war against the Sioux.<sup>6</sup> The threat was clear. If the French refused to furnish the Tionnontatés and Miamis with the weapons they wanted for their campaign against the Sioux, Michipichy would take his business to the English. Michipichy had played the card which would injure Vaudreuil the most.

Vaudreuil replied in frustration that the kings of England and France were at war with one another, and therefore the Tionnontatés should be at war with the English as well because they had signed the peace agreement at Montreal two summers before. He reminded Michipichy that the Sioux representatives were also signatories of the peace settlement and that no action should be taken against them unless the Sioux attacked

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<sup>5</sup> "...une sorte de commerce entre les anglais et eux." Vaudreuil au ministre, 14 novembre, 1703, AN, C11A, 21: 53.

<sup>6</sup> Paroles des Hurons, 14 juillet, 1703, AN, C11A, 74-75v.

first. Vaudreuil suggested a more worthy adversary, the English.<sup>7</sup> In his report to the minister Vaudreuil complained of Cadillac's mismanagement of Indian affairs and he argued that allowing Cadillac to establish a post at Detroit had been a profound error: "If ever the English establish a considerable trade with our allies, I do not doubt at all that Detroit will be the cause of it."<sup>8</sup>

Michipichy had discovered a technique which the Ottawas had employed for years: the best way to intimidate and manipulate the French officials in Quebec was to raise the spectre of English commerce. At the same time he realized the strong desire of the Tionnontaté people to stay in the Bkejwanong region in order to make it their new home. Bkejwanong boasted a climate which would accommodate their horticulture and the strong French presence meant that they would enjoy both security and easy access to French weapons and other trade goods. Michipichy himself realized how he could take advantage of the French to strengthen his leadership and to act as a regional power along the lines suggested by the Ottawa-French relationship.<sup>9</sup> Michipichy had one problem. With the Kamiga Ottawas firmly established at Bkejwanong he would not be able to treat effectively with the French. The Ottawas would always be considered the oldest and most important member of the alliance. Michipichy needed to sever the old ties between his nation and their old Ottawa allies, and he needed to convince Cadillac and Vaudreuil that the Ottawas would abandon Bkejwanong.

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<sup>7</sup> Paroles des Hurons, 14 juillet, 1703, AN, C11A, 21: 74-75v.

<sup>8</sup> "Si jamais l'Anglois [word obscured] un commerce considerable avec nos alliés ce sera Détroit quy en sera cause je ne doute point." Vaudreuil au ministre, 14 novembre, 1703, AN, C11A, 21: 53.

<sup>9</sup> Paroles des Hurons, 14 juillet, 1703, AN, C11A, 21: 74-75v.

The next year 1704 saw the beginning of Michipichy's campaign to intimidate the French and to force the Ottawas to abandon Bkejwanong. Michipichy began by taking part in the negotiations of the Ottawas, Miamis, and Tionnontatés with the Senecas for free access to the English at Albany. He then returned to the Tionnontaté village at Bkejwanong and immediately began making trouble with both the Ottawas and the Miamis.<sup>10</sup> The result was immediate. The Ottawas informed Vaudreuil that they were not prepared to live in close proximity with all of the nations of the west at Bkejwanong, and that some of the Kamigas living there wished to return to Michilimackinac.<sup>11</sup> Vaudreuil was concerned by this suggestion because without the presence of the Ottawas, the Tionnontatés would be "thrown into the waiting arms of the Iroquois."<sup>12</sup> If this happened, commerce with the English was sure to follow.

Unfortunately for Michipichy, most of the Kamiga Ottawas actually had no intention of returning to Michilimackinac. A prominent and ambitious Kamiga named Mekoua, but called Le Pesant by the French, realized how concerned the French would be if the Ottawas were to abandon the southern post so he threatened to do just this. He hoped the threat would undermine Michipichy's efforts to establish himself as the regional master. When Michipichy saw that the Ottawas were not about to leave he threatened to move his nation to Iroquoia where they would finally mend relations

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<sup>10</sup> Paroles des Hurons, Outaouais, et Miamis de Détroit, 30-31 juillet, 1704, AN, C11A, 22: 47-49; Vaudreuil au ministre, 16 novembre, 1704, AN, C11A, 22: 34-40.

<sup>11</sup> Some, including the old Kamiga ogima, Kinongé, did return to Michilimackinac. Vaudreuil au ministre, 16 novembre, 1704, AN, C11A, 22: 37.

<sup>12</sup> "...se jette entre les bras de l'Iroquois." Vaudreuil au ministre, 16 novembre, 1704, AN, C11A, 22: 37v.

between the two Iroquoian groups. At the same time he waited for the occasion to take revenge against a party of Ottawas from Michilimackinac who had killed a Tionnontaté warrior while they were visiting the Ottawa village at Bkejwanong.<sup>13</sup> Having had no success in persuading the Ottawas to leave, Michipichy planned to trick the Ottawas and a village of Miamis who lived to the south of Lake Michigan, into a mutually destructive conflict when the opportunity arose in the summer of 1706.<sup>14</sup>

Mekoua had no intention of returning to Michilimackinac. For him, as for the other Ottawa leaders at Bkejwanong, several threats to the region made a strong Ottawa presence important. In the first place, the Ottawas were alarmed by Michipichy's manoeuvres. They did not want the Tionnontatés to insinuate themselves with the French at the new post. Here they would have greater access to French weapons and here they would be able to influence French policy. Given the new hostile attitude Ottawa fears about the Tionnontatés ran deep.

Vaudreuil knew of these bad feelings and when he learned from an escaped Iroquois prisoner of a new crisis in Ottawa-Tionnontaté relations he reported the danger to the minister:

As this news, monseigneur, comes only from an Indian it wants confirmation, but it is not implausible, especially as we have been informed for a long time of the just causes of complaint which the Hurons

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<sup>13</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 5 mai, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 231-232.

<sup>14</sup> Although there is relatively little historical writing on the peoples of the Upper Great Lakes, particularly in comparison with the Iroquois, much has been written about the misadventures of the prominent Kamiga Ottawa Mekoua during the summer of 1706. Among the accounts, see White, *Middle Ground*, 83-90; Yves F. Zoltvany, *Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil Governor of New France, 1703-1725* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 81-86; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. "Le Pesant;" and Jean Delanglez, "Cadillac, Proprietor of Detroit." *Mid-America* 32 (1950), 226-258.

have against the Ottawa Indians of Michilimackinac. We know that they are only waiting for the occasion to fly at one another's throats.<sup>15</sup>

Vaudreuil hastened to assure the minister that Alphonse de Tonty, who was in command at Detroit in Cadillac's absence, was capable of preventing any such fighting.<sup>16</sup>

Mekoua could not have been so certain, and for the Ottawas this new threat posed a problem for their gateways strategy. They now had to be concerned with an old ally who appeared ready to join forces with the old Iroquois enemy at a time when new threats from the Miamis and other nations in the west were emerging. The Ottawas were not concerned with the Tionnontaté's wish to move out of the Bkejwanong region, but they were very concerned that such a move would revitalize their old Iroquois enemy to a dangerous extent.

Mekoua foresaw this threat and moved to prevent the Iroquois-Tionnontaté alliance by deception. With young Kamiga warriors from Bkejwanong and young Kiskakon warriors from Michilimackinac, Mekoua had accompanied the Tionnontaté on their peace mission to the Senecas at the end of July 1704, supposedly to show support. As soon as the conference was over, he led two unprovoked attacks, one against the Senecas at Fort Frontenac and the second against the Onondagas.<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup> "Comme cette nouvelle n'est venue que d'un sauvage, monseigneur, nous croyons qu'elle merite confirmation. Elle est tout plausible, surtout etant donné que nous connaissons depuis longtems les justes plaintes qu'ont les Hurons [Tionnontaté] contre les Outaouais de Michilimackinac. Nous savons qu'ils attendent seulement l'occasion de s'egorger les uns les autres." Vaudreuil au ministre, 5 mai, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 231.

<sup>16</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 5 mai, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 231-231v.

<sup>17</sup> Ottawas from both Michilimackinac and Bkejwanong took part in these attacks, but at first the French believed them to be the work of the Michilimackinac part of the nation. *Paroles des Hurons, Outaouais, et Miamis de Détroit aux Tsonnontouans*, 30-31 juillet, 1704, AN, C11A, 22: 47-49; *Paroles des Tsonnontouans*, 12 septembre, 1704, AN, C11A, 57-57v; *Paroles de La Grande Terre, chef Onontagué*, AN, C11A, 22: 5252v.



effect of the two attacks was to ruin the nascent alliance between the Tionnontatés and the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy. The Senecas and Onondagas assumed that the Tionnontatés had been party to Mekoua's treacherous plot to lull them into a false sense of security.<sup>18</sup>

As the Ottawas returned home with their prisoners, both groups stopped at the Kamiga Ottawa village in Bkejwanong for a celebration. As soon as he determined the cause of the celebrations, Tonty, just across the river in Fort Pontchartrain, asked some of the Kamigas to help him set free the six Seneca Iroquois prisoners in the interest of the preservation of the peace. The Kamigas refused Tonty bluntly, so he took a party of French soldiers and rescued four of the Seneca prisoners while the Ottawas celebrated their victory. The next day the French rescued the other two, but Mekoua learned of this, recaptured the six unfortunate Seneca prisoners, and arranged for some of his men to return them to the Ottawas from Michilimackinac who had left that morning at first light.<sup>19</sup>

When the Kiskakons arrived at Michilimackinac they immediately sent their Seneca prisoners to their allies, the Ojibwas, and to "other more distant nations " as a means of impressing these groups with Ottawa military prowess.<sup>20</sup> One of the six

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<sup>18</sup> Vaudreuil was confused about Mekoua's actions. Vaudreuil worried that the Ottawas of Michilimackinac were trying to force their countrymen to return to the north. This interpretation reflects Vaudreuil's worry over the post at Detroit, and it also shows the extent to which Cadillac had succeeded in convincing the officials in Quebec that the Jesuits should be forced to close their mission at Michilimackinac in order to allow all of the Ottawas to settle at his post in the south. Vaudreuil au ministre, 16 novembre, 1704, AN, C11A, 22: 36-37; Vaudreuil et Beauharnois au ministre, AN, C11A, 22: 21v-22.

<sup>19</sup> Vaudreuil et Beauharnois au ministre, 17 novembre, 1704, AN, C11A, 22: 21v-22.

<sup>20</sup> Vaudreuil et Beauharnois au ministre, 3 mai, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 169.

prisoners managed to escape and made his way to Montreal where he was brought in front of Vaudreuil himself in order to tell his story.<sup>21</sup> This man claimed that the Ottawas boasted of their independence from the French and they informed the Iroquois prisoners that they were being sent to different nations in order to show the French and all of their allies how little the Ottawas cared for the terms of the peace agreement which had been signed in Montreal in 1701.<sup>22</sup> The Iroquois prisoner told a harrowing tale of abuse and Ottawa indifference to their French allies. In spite of the peace settlement the Kiskakons treated their prisoners rudely and upon arrival at Michilimackinac they kicked in the doors of the Jesuit cabin, took all of the Jesuit belongings, and drank all of the Jesuit wine. They did this, according to the Seneca, to show contempt for the French and their peace.<sup>23</sup>

By this time Vaudreuil had learned something of the politics of the Great Lakes region and he warned the minister not to put too much faith in this report:

As this news only comes to us, monseigneur, from an Iroquois prisoner who has lately been saved from their clutches, we believe that confirmation is merited.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed the story regarding the rude treatment of the Jesuits turned out to be false, as Louvigny reported to Vaudreuil upon his arrival at Michilimackinac in that summer of

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<sup>21</sup> This is the same man who informed him of the enmity between the Tionnontatés and the Ottawas.

<sup>22</sup> Vaudreuil et Beauharnois au ministre, 3 mai, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 168v-169.

<sup>23</sup> Vaudreuil et Beauharnois au ministre, 3 mai, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 169.

<sup>24</sup> "Comme cette nouvelle n'est venue, monseigneur, que par un prisonnier iroquois qui s'est sauvé de leurs mains, nous croyons qu'elle merite confirmation." Vaudreuil et Beauharnois au ministre, 3 mai, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 169.

1705.<sup>25</sup> Louvigny also reported that the Iroquois prisoners had not been sent far afield and he would return them.<sup>26</sup> The Iroquois prisoner's attempt to turn the French against the Ottawas had failed.

The cabins of the Jesuits had been in fact destroyed but not by wilful Ottawas in search of loot and alcohol. They were burned to the ground in the summer of 1705 by the Jesuits themselves. The two Jesuits, Etienne de Carheil and Joseph-Jacques Marest hoped to force the *coureurs de bois* to abandon the post by leaving it themselves. Marest and Carheil arrived in Montreal that summer and reported that without the presence of a commandant the situation at Michilimackinac had become intolerable. The *coureurs de bois* were trading brandy without fear of repercussion and the only solution the Jesuits had to force the *coureurs de bois* to abandon the post was to leave and to destroy their dwellings before they left. They hoped that without their presence the *coureurs de bois* would be afraid to remain in the company of the Ottawas.<sup>27</sup>

Louvigny, who commanded great respect among the Ottawas, asked for and was granted the lives of the five Senecas. He returned to the St. Lawrence with them in the autumn of 1705 in time for Vaudreuil to invite the principal Iroquois chiefs to Montreal

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<sup>25</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 19 octobre, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 236; Vaudreuil, Beauharnois, et Raudot au ministre, 19 octobre, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 181; Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 306; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* s.v. Carheil, Etienne de and Marest, Joseph-Jacques.

<sup>26</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 19 octobre, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 236.

<sup>27</sup> The *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, and other sources are in error in the assertion that the Jesuits left because the Ottawas were all lured to Detroit by Cadillac. The document is quite clear: "The missionaries at Michilimackinac also came down after having burned their dwellings and their chapels. They believed that this was necessary to oblige the *coureurs de bois* to leave." Vaudreuil au ministre, 19 octobre, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 236; Vaudreuil, Beauharnois, et Raudot au ministre, 19 octobre, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 181; Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 306; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* s.v. Carheil, Etienne de and Marest, Joseph-Jacques.

in order to return the men in person.<sup>28</sup> He also informed the Iroquois chiefs that the Ottawas of Michilimackinac had offered their apologies for the actions of Mekoua and that they would replace the Iroquois dead with slaves. For their part, the Kiskakons who accompanied Louvigny to Montreal, under the leadership of Kinongé, Koutaoliboe and Onaské, blamed the whole episode on their volatile young men and on the incitements of Mekoua. In Vaudreuil's presence, they offered the Iroquois 10 beaver pelts as a display of good faith and as a promise to replace the Iroquois dead, but they had no intention whatsoever of fulfilling this promise. To do so would risk creating a dangerous division within the Ottawa Nation.<sup>29</sup>

Having thus satisfied Vaudreuil, Kinongé, Koutaoliboe, and Onaské demanded French support against the Miamis who had attacked the Kamiga Ottawas at Detroit. Vaudreuil was inclined to pledge support, particularly when he remembered what Mekoua had told him earlier that month when he visited the governor at Montreal. Vaudreuil was concerned especially with the now familiar threat:

I ask you, Onontio, on behalf of all of those present, to have pity on us and to let us return with goods, even though we have few beaver pelts, as I told you before, Onontio, if your men do not carry any goods with them, we will be forced next year to go to the English.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 19 octobre, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 240.

<sup>29</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 19 octobre, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 240; Paroles des Outaouais aux Iroquois, 23 août, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 255-255v; Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac, 22 et 23 août, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 260.

<sup>30</sup> "Je vous prie mon pere de la part de tous ce que nous sommes icy, d'avoir pitié de nous, et que nous voir en retour [word obscured] pas tout [word obscured] quoy que nous avons peu de castor, car je le dit mon pere d'avance si vos gens ne raportent point des marchandises je seray obligé l'année prochaine d'aller aux anglois." Paroles de Le Pesant adressées au gouverneur général au nom des Outaouais de Détroit, 4 août, 1705; Vaudreuil au ministre, 19 octobre, 1705, AN, C11A, 22: 237. Tonty warned Vaudreuil that if the French did not supply the Ottawas with brandy, Le Pesant would open trade with the English for rum. Cadillac had made the same

Vaudreuil sensed that the problem was reaching a crisis as different groups made conflicting demands. It was impossible therefore for him to treat all of the French allies equally. The Ottawas were forcing him to make a choice, favour them over all other nations or else lose them to the English.

Even though Mekoua's bold new initiatives were supported only by the younger warriors of the Kamigas and Kiskakons, they were enough to worry the French. Cadillac was troubled by the anti-French sentiment at Fort Pontchartrain (though he himself may be justly blamed for it) and he appealed for official help from France to force the Kiskakons, who had always been the most ardent supporters of the French, to be sent to his new post. He was aware of Vaudreuil's opinion of his plans, so he wrote directly to the minister of marine.<sup>31</sup>

Cadillac's best years as a politician were behind him, however, and his letter did not impress the minister. Cadillac tried to argue that the Kiskakon Ottawas would receive better Christian instruction at Fort Pontchartrain. Given his well-known battles with the Jesuits at Michilimackinac, such logic was fairly transparent, even to the officials in France. Cadillac also reported the story of the Iroquois prisoner as though it

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claim but Vaudreuil had merely assumed that he wanted to profit from the lucrative trade in liquor. Tonty was more trustworthy and Vaudreuil became genuinely worried. He did not feel any better when Le Pesant reminded him that the Ottawas no longer had anything to fear from the Iroquois who had now guaranteed them free passage to the English, or so he claimed.

<sup>31</sup> Cadillac's letter to the minister blamed virtually everyone remotely connected with the *pays d'en haut* for the recent problems. Tonty had done a poor job as his temporary replacement. He had not been assiduous enough in settling the Indians on the plots of land which Cadillac had laid out for them. Cadillac also blamed the governor-general Vaudreuil, the intendant Beauharnois, the Jesuits Marest and Carheil, and the Company of the Colony for doing their utmost to see that his venture met with dismal failure. He then proposed the solution for which he had campaigned tirelessly. The Ottawas of Michilimackinac should be forced by the French government to settle in the lands he had put aside for them in Bkejwanong. Cadillac au ministre, 20 octobre, 1705, AN, C11A, 23: 145v-156.

were completely accurate and unbiased:

He said that the Ottawas of Michilimackinac cut down the great red cross of the Jesuit fathers and then made a bonfire out of the wood. This proves that they are bad Christians.<sup>32</sup>

Cadillac also offered a slightly different account of the departure of the two Jesuits.

They did not leave to force the *coureurs de bois* to return to Quebec, but rather they left under threats from the Ottawas. If there were any similar problems at Fort Pontchartrain, these were the fault of Alphonse de Tonty.

Unfortunately for Cadillac, Vaudreuil had provided the minister with more reasoned and less self-interested accounts of the situation in the *pays d'en haut* and Cadillac's advice was ignored. It would have been impossible to execute his suggestions in any event. The French did not have the authority to coerce the Kiskakon Ottawas to settle at Bkejwanong and to abandon Michilimackinac. The Sinagos who had briefly joined the Kamigas at Bkejwanong had all returned north. Even some of the Kamigas, such as the old ogima Kinongé, had returned to Michilimackinac.<sup>33</sup> In any case the troubles which finally resulted in open conflict at Bkejwanong, sealed Cadillac's fate and his days of causing problems for the Ottawas of Lake Huron were numbered.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "Il a dit que les outaouais de missillimackinac ont brisé a coup de hache la grande croix rouge des peres jesuites et en ont fait un feu de joye ce qui prouve que ce sont des mauvaises Chretiennes." Cadillac au ministre, 20 octobre, 1705, AN, C11A, 23: 153.

<sup>33</sup> Paroles adressées à Vaudreuil par le chef Outaouais Miscouaky, 26 septembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 243-250; Pontchartrain à d'Aigremont, 13 juillet 1707, AN, B, 29: 126; Rapport de Clémentbault d'Aigremont au ministre concernant sa mission d'inspection dans les postes avancés, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 26-77v.

<sup>34</sup> When Cadillac learned of the fighting at Detroit his immediate reaction was to ask the Senecas to attack the Ottawas. He promised all of the Iroquois French arms if they would destroy the Ottawas who were creating such a problem at his post. He had no motive other than blind revenge. Vaudreuil et Raudot au ministre, 3

The Kiskakons at Michilimackinac were worried about the trouble brewing at Bkejwanong and their ogima Koutaoiliboe had decided to send the Kiskakons, Campanissé and Onaské, and the Kamiga, Kinongé, to Montreal in the summer of 1706.<sup>35</sup> The latter two had been to visit Vaudreuil the summer before and were accomplished in the art of diplomacy.<sup>36</sup> The three Ottawas arrived in Montreal in late July of 1706 and told Vaudreuil of the potential for trouble at Detroit and their concern regarding Vaudreuil's continued support in the alliance. They told Vaudreuil that the Christian Iroquois living at Sault St. Louis had treated them badly and they worried that a new Iroquois alliance of the Tionnontatés, the Five Nations Confederacy, and the Christians of the St. Lawrence valley would replace the Ottawas as France's principal ally. The other purpose of their visit was to ask for a French commander to be appointed to Michilimackinac.<sup>37</sup>

The Kiskakons, along with those of the Kamigas and the Sinagos who had returned from Bkejwanong, felt that they were being ignored by the French and they worried about their supplies of arms:

We ask you Onontio, as we are now compelled to fight so many enemies, that we might have powder and bullets in order to defend ourselves

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novembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 33-34; Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 311.

<sup>35</sup> Koutaoiliboe had been a supporter of the French alliance for many years and he was given credit by Marest for preventing the Kiskakons at Michilimackinac from returning to Detroit and taking revenge upon the French as some had wanted. Marest à Vaudreuil, 14 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 262; Marest à Vaudreuil, 27 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 262v-263.

<sup>36</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 4 novembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 215; Marest à Vaudreuil, 14 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 259-262v.

<sup>37</sup> *Paroles adressées à Vaudreuil par des chefs Outaouais de Michilimackinac*, 1 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 238-242.

against our enemies.<sup>38</sup>

Vaudreuil could guess at another reason for this delegation. Mekoua was a loose cannon and they came to distance themselves from his actions and to reassure Vaudreuil of their continued alliance. Campanissé told Vaudreuil that the Kiskakons were afraid that the French would abandon Michilimackinac permanently and he warned Vaudreuil that should this happen, the Kiskakons would not go to Fort Pontchartrain at *le Détroit* but rather, and Campanissé is quite clear on this point, they would take their furs to the English at the Bay who would furnish them with guns and ammunition.<sup>39</sup>

Trouble began in earnest in the summer of 1706 when Michipichy of the Tionnontaté's decided to try to start a war between the Ottawas and the Miamis. He hoped to rid Bkejwanong of both of these peoples in order to insinuate himself into a strong position with the French.<sup>40</sup> At the start of the summer Mekoua mobilized his forces to take part in a campaign with the Sakis against the Sioux. When he perceived the Kamigas preparing to go to war, Michipichy sent word to the Miamis that the Ottawas were coming to destroy them.<sup>41</sup> Michipichy then told Mekoua that the

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<sup>38</sup> "Nous vous prions, Onontio, puisque nous sommes obligés de se battre contre tant d'ennemies, que nous avons besoin de poudre et de balles pour nous défendre contre eux." Paroles adressées à Vaudreuil par des chefs Outaouais de Michilimackinac, 1 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 242.

<sup>39</sup> Paroles de Campanissé, in Vaudreuil au ministre, 4 novembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 223v.

<sup>40</sup> Vaudreuil got most of his information regarding this crisis from an interpreter named Maurice Menard who called himself Lafontaine. This man carried Joseph-Jacques Marest's letters to Vaudreuil and he also gave the governor his own account of the state of affairs in the *pays d'en haut*. As a former *coureur de bois*, Lafontaine had a good command of the Ottawa language and a good sense of the problems which underlay the current crisis. Marest à Vaudreuil, 27 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 262v.

<sup>41</sup> The Ottawas were committed to come to the aid of the Sakis against Sioux the who had recently defeated the Sakis, an Ottawa ally at the time. Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac à Vaudreuil, juin 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 112v.



Miamis were preparing a preemptive strike against him. Mekoua wasted no time in attacking the Miamis who turned to the French for help.

Unfortunately, Cadillac had underestimated the severity of the trouble that was brewing, and he had left the post to attend to other business.<sup>42</sup> In his absence, the inexperienced Etienne de Véniard de Bourgmont was in command and he was promptly manipulated by Michipichy into fighting with the Miamis against the Ottawas.<sup>43</sup> In the ensuing fight the Ottawas were badly beaten but they managed to kill a French Recollet priest, who was caught outside of the gates of the fort, as well as a soldier who went to the priest's aid.<sup>44</sup>

Michipichy's ruse worked even better than he had hoped it would. He had not only drawn the Ottawas and the Miamis into a mutually destructive conflict, but he had also managed to create the most serious rupture in French-Ottawa relations since Ocheepik set the Ottawa youth against the French in the late 1680s. Unfortunately for Michipichy and the Tionnontaté people, the French and the Ottawas were not willing to

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<sup>42</sup> Later Outoutagan was to tell Vaudreuil that there would have been no trouble if La Forest, Tonty, or Cadillac had been at the post. *Paroles de Jean Le Blanc [Outoutagan] à Vaudreuil*, 23 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 123v.

<sup>43</sup> Michipichy's proper Tionnontaté name is unknown. He was certainly the most influential of all of the Tionnontatés and he had much intercourse with the French throughout his long life. His name comes to light in several documents, but the best account of his life is to be found in a long letter written by Vaudreuil to the minister of marine in 1704. Michipichy had been a captive of the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy and he lived to tell the tale which indicates some influence amongst the Iroquois. Michipichy was able to protect the Tionnontaté's interests by deflecting the energy of their powerful enemies away from his people. He understood French and English interests clearly and he knew the objectives of the Miamis, Ottawas, and Iroquois. See *Vaudreuil au ministre*, 16 novembre, 1704, AN, C11A, 22: 34-40; *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable au Canada depuis le départ des vaisseaux en 1696 jusqu'au l'automne 1697*, AN, C11A, 15: 3-21; *Paroles des Hurons*, 14 juillet, 1703, AN, C11A, 21: 74-75v.

<sup>44</sup> *Paroles de Miscouaky*, 26 septembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 243-250; and *Rapport de Clairambault au ministre*, 14 novembre, 1704, AN, C11A, 29: 46-52.

allow their old alliance to be torn apart by this incident. Vaudreuil feared instability in the west and the Ottawas feared the consequences of losing French military technology.<sup>45</sup> The means by which the alliance could be reconstructed would have to be found.

Michipichy could not offer the French what they needed in the Upper Great Lakes. He did not have the same authority with the Ojibwas as the Ottawa leaders had, and the Tionnontatés did not have enough warriors to pose a serious threat to either the Iroquois or the English. Most importantly, the Tionnontatés did not have control over any of the important gateways into Lake Huron and therefore they could not prevent the passage of enemies as the Ottawas could. It was this ability to control the traffic of the Upper Great Lakes which had given the Ottawas their authority with their neighbours. Michipichy's bid for control of the Bkejwanong gateway fell short when the Ottawas and French made attempts to reconcile.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> As the war between France and England intensified, Vaudreuil grew more apprehensive about the state of affairs in the west. He wanted to ensure the maintenance of the alliance with the Ottawas in order to enlist their aid against the English. Historian Yves Zoltvany called this the "Vaudreuil doctrine on Indian affairs." He quoted at length on Vaudreuil's principal concern: "Our entire policy towards the Indians must consist of preventing the liaison between the Upper tribes, who are the Ottawas and Lake Indians, with the Iroquois, so that, should one of these two nations decide to make war against us, we can oppose the other to it. This is what was executed during the Iroquois war, when the Ottawa parties were continuously campaigning [against the Five Nations], and what brought it to an end." Zoltvany, *Vaudreuil*, 82-83.

<sup>46</sup> In his interpretation of the causes of the brawl at Fort Pontchartrain, the American historian Richard White does not refer to the designs and ambitions of Michipichy and Mekoua, but rather claims that the French "father" had failed to mediate disputes in the "multitribal settlement" of Detroit: "The French had to make sure that killings between tribes were settled and the dead covered. Cadillac had promised to do this, but uncovered and unrevenged dead continued to poison relations between the Miamis and the Huron-Petuns [Tionnontatés], on the one hand and the Ottawas on the other. Le Pesant himself had presented a list of the dead left uncovered and unavenged before the departure of the fateful war party. The result of the French refusal to act was the fighting of 1706 and a threat to the entire alliance." White, *Middle Ground*, 83. Whether the Bkejwanong region was a "multitribal" settlement is open to question. Whether the French were responsible for the "covering" of Ottawa dead, and other acts of mediation requires the reader to accept White's interpretive notion of the authority of Onontio. The documentary evidence suggests that there were a number of different peoples living in the

After the contretemps at Fort Pontchartrain, Mekoua beat a hasty retreat northward to Michilimackinac. He was in grave danger at Fort Pontchartrain and he knew it. The Ottawas then had to decide a way in which to approach the French, for although they had taken losses Mekoua had initiated the attack on the French and had killed Delhalle and the soldier in cold blood. The actual discussions of the Ottawa council at Michilimackinac were never recorded but they can be reconstructed, in part, by the case put forward by the young Miscouaky who was sent to the St. Lawrence in order to offer the Ottawa account of the events.<sup>47</sup>

Miscouaky was the ideal candidate for the job of presenting the Ottawa perspective on the crisis. He was a younger brother of Outoutagan, who by this time had replaced the aging Kinongé as ogima of the Kamiga Ottawas. Their father, Le Talon, had been a great supporter of the alliance with the French and the French had regarded him as a strong leader who commanded great respect.<sup>48</sup> As a Kamiga Ottawa from Detroit, Miscouaky was able to explain to the French in great detail the political intricacies which had led Mekoua to take action against the Miamis and then against the

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Bkejwanong region: the French, three of the four Ottawa nations, some Miamis, some Potawatomis, and all of the Tionnontatés. They did not live in one large, "multitribal" settlement, however, but rather in villages which were distant from one another. Indeed every single map, and every single document of the hundreds concerning Bkejwanong refer directly to the distinct villages. The maps of the region indicate Ottawa, Tionnontaté, Potawatomis, and Ojibwa villages. White's notion of "multitribal settlements" leads directly to his assertion that the French were required as mediators. That there were no such settlements would seem therefore, to topple White's idea about mediation. White, *Middle Ground*, 83.

<sup>47</sup> Paroles adressées à Vaudreuil par le chef outaouais Miscouaky descendu de Michilimackinac avec Ménard, 26 septembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 243-250.

<sup>48</sup> Dulhut was impressed by the way in which Le Talon and Kinongé controlled the traffic through the gateways in northern Lake Huron and he decided from his experience that these men would be much better allies than enemies. Dulhut à Frontenac, 5 avril, 1679, AN, C11E, 15: 2; Bacqueville de la Potherie, *Histoire*, 2: 119-120.

French. Although he lived at Bkejwanong, Miscouaky had gone to Michilimackinac with most of the Ottawa leadership to take part in a council meeting called specially to address the problem caused by Mekoua's actions. Miscouaky was somewhat more skilled as a diplomat than his elder brother who was known for his quick tongue, and although Outoutagan accompanied his younger brother on the trip to Montreal, it was Miscouaky who presented the case.<sup>49</sup>

Miscouaky left Michilimackinac directly after the council meeting at Michilimackinac, and he arrived at Quebec towards the end of the month of September 1706. He told Vaudreuil of the events and explained the reasons which led Mekoua to take his bold course of action. Clearly the Ottawa council felt that with regard to the actual conflict, they had to tell the French their side of the story:

The reason which obliged us to fight against the Miamis is that before leaving to attack the Sioux, the Miamis at Detroit decided to attack our village in order to eat all of our women and children.<sup>50</sup>

Clearly Vaudreuil was troubled by the fighting between the allied nations, but he was willing to concede the justice in Miscouaky's report. He was more upset about the French deaths and his authority in the west demanded that he take a strong position. Vaudreuil accepted Miscouaky's version of the events and was impressed by the speed at which he had been sent from Michilimackinac. Vaudreuil asked Miscouaky, however, to return in the spring with all of the ogimas from Michilimackinac in order to

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<sup>49</sup> Paroles adressés à Vaudreuil par le chef outaouais Miscouaky descendu de Michilimackinac avec Ménard, 26 septembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 243-250.

<sup>50</sup> "La raison qui nous a obligé a nous battre contre les Miamis est qu'avant partir pour aller en guerre contre les Sioux, les Miamis qui étoient au détroit ont attaque nostre village et mangé nos femmes et nos enfants." Paroles adressées à Vaudreuil par le chef outaouais Miscouaky, 26 septembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 243.

resolve the affair.<sup>51</sup>

Vaudreuil thanked Miscouaky for explaining the Ottawa perspective and then wrote to the minister to explain why he believed the Ottawas were justified. He did not wish to appear lenient when confronted with the death of a French priest at the hands of the Ottawas, but on the other hand he was concerned with the state of the alliance:

I am unable to consent, monseigneur, to the destruction of a nation which proved to be so faithful to us in the last war. What has happened at Detroit is more the product of ill fortune than of ill will.<sup>52</sup>

If the Ottawas were forced to submit to arbitrary French will, he told the minister, they would take all of their furs to Albany or to Hudson's Bay where the English would exchange them for weapons.<sup>53</sup>

In asking Miscouaky to come to Montreal in the spring, Vaudreuil's intention was to exploit some of the internal divisions within the Ottawa confederacy in order to isolate Mekoua and his faction of young Kamigas. The settlement at Bkejwanong had given new impetus to the old anti-French faction, and Mekoua was quite prepared to use this faction to make his own claim for the leadership of the Kamiga Ottawas. He presented challenges not only to Vaudreuil, but also to Outoutagan and Miscouaky. Kinongé, the old and greatly respected leader of the Kamigas in moving back to Michilimackinac had denied the two brothers the benefit of his influence in the

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<sup>51</sup> Réponse de Vaudreuil à Miscouaky, 28 septembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 255-257.

<sup>52</sup> "Je ne puis consentir, Monseigneur, a laisser destruire une nation quy nous a esté si fidele dans la derniere guerre et quy dans ce quy s'est passé au detroit a [word obscured] plus de malheur que de mauvaise volonté." Vaudreuil au ministre, 4 novembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 215v.

<sup>53</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 4 novembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 216.

dispute.<sup>54</sup>

As he waited for the Ottawa delegation to arrive, Vaudreuil had the opportunity to read over reports from the *pays d'en haut* and to reflect on the meetings he had held which concerned the problems within the Ottawa confederacy. Earlier that summer, Vaudreuil had sent the Jesuit, Joseph-Jacques Marest, to Michilimackinac in order to report on the situation in the Upper Great Lakes and to solve the continuing problems between the Ottawas and the Iroquois.<sup>55</sup> The Ottawas still had not sent slaves to replace the Iroquois dead from the attack at Fort Frontenac.<sup>56</sup> Marest sent two reports explaining that there was a considerable division within the Ottawa confederacy caused by Mekoua and the rejuvenated anti-French faction.<sup>57</sup>

During the winter of 1706-1707 Vaudreuil had time to reflect on what he had learned from Miscouaky's mission in late September. He sensed that the Ottawas were uncomfortable with Mekoua and that if the French were to reopen a post at Michilimackinac, the anti-French faction would lose some of the prestige it now held with the youth. Vaudreuil's sense was supported by Marest's two letters from Michilimackinac which had been written in August. According to Marest there was

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<sup>54</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 4 novembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 219-219v.

<sup>55</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 28 avril, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 3; Vaudreuil et Raudot au ministre, 3 novembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 32v.

<sup>56</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 4 novembre, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 214v-215.

<sup>57</sup> Marest à Vaudreuil, 14 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 262; Marest à Vaudreuil, 27 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 262v-263.

considerable desire for the French to re-establish a strong presence at Michilimackinac.<sup>58</sup>

Both Koutaoliboe and Onaské of the Kiskakons had asked Marest to use whatever influence he had with Vaudreuil to appoint a commander at Michilimackinac.<sup>59</sup> Marest argued that Koutaoliboe had handled the crisis well and that he deserved French support. Koutaoliboe told Marest that he would not be able to defeat the anti-French faction unless a new French commander were sent.<sup>60</sup> The Kiskakons had always maintained the closest ties to the French of any of the Ottawa groups and Koutaoliboe hoped to restore his own authority by returning Michilimackinac to its former glory.

Marest's second letter was written two weeks later, on 27 August, after some of the Ottawas involved in the fighting at Fort Pontchartrain had returned to Michilimackinac. They suggested that Mekoua would not come to Michilimackinac, but would go instead to Manitoulin to lay low and to win the Sinago youth to his anti-French party.<sup>61</sup> This proved to be false. Outoutagan had accompanied Mekoua to make sure he came to Michilimackinac and they had stayed for a time at Saginaw Bay with the Nassauacketons.

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<sup>58</sup> Even the Kamiga Ottawas at Bkejwanong petitioned the French to reopen the post at Michilimackinac. Paroles de Jean Le Blanc [Outoutagan] à Vaudreuil, 23 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 122-122v.

<sup>59</sup> Marest was not free from bias in this issue; he despised Cadillac and wanted to see his establishment ruined. Nevertheless the Kiskakons had reservations about the decision to settle at Bkejwanong, and Mekoua's troubles seemed to justify their concern. Marest à Vaudreuil, 14 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 259-262v; Marest à Vaudreuil, 27 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 262v-263v.

<sup>60</sup> Marest à Vaudreuil, 14 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 262.

<sup>61</sup> Marest à Vaudreuil, 27 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 262.

Marest learned the details of the fighting at Fort Pontchartrain and was able to report them to Vaudreuil from the Ottawa perspective. He concluded his letter by reminding Vaudreuil of the opportunity to resolve the problems in the *pays d'en haut* by giving his support to Koutaoiliboe:

The Ottawas have seen the price they have had to pay for being divided, and must now work effectually to unite forever. To maintain their confederacy, and to strengthen it, I will do all that I can. Koutaoiliboe is a man to be handled carefully for this to succeed and it will be necessary to furnish him with good presents.<sup>62</sup>

In other words, according to Marest, the way to solve the crisis in French-Ottawa relations was to support the leader who seemed likely to carry the most influence by providing him with French goods to be distributed to the others. By supporting Koutaoiliboe, the French would be assured of repairing the damage caused by Mekoua and Cadillac.

On 16 June, 1707, the delegation which Vaudreuil had asked Miscouaky to organize arrived at Montreal and two days later presented Vaudreuil with their account of the events of the previous summer. This time Outoutagan was the chief Ottawa negotiator. In spite of his lack of diplomatic tact, he was the logical choice to lead this Ottawa delegation for several reasons. In the first place, he had been involved directly in the troubles at Fort Pontchartrain. He had tried to prevent Mekoua from attacking the French, but he had not carried enough authority with the younger men who wanted to pursue the more bellicose policy which Mekoua was proposing. Later in the summer of

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<sup>62</sup> "Les Outaouks ayant vu en qui leur a cousté pour s'estre divisé et doivent travailler effectivement a se reunir pour jamais. A maintenir leur nation et a la bien affermir, je contribueray autant que je pourray. Koutaoiliboe est un homme a menager pour ce la, ce qui merite quelques presents considerables." Marest à Vaudreuil, 27 août, 1706, AN, C11A, 24: 263v.



1706, he was seriously injured when Michipichy invited him to a peace conference and tried to kill him as a last gasp to wrestle the Bkejwanong region away from Ottawa control.<sup>63</sup>

Most importantly, Outoutagan represented a link with the history of the French-Ottawa alliance. At a time when the alliance was in difficulty this was an important consideration. Outoutagan was careful to remind Vaudreuil of this:

I ask you to remember that it was my own father, Le Talon, who was the first of all of the nations of the *pays d'en haut* to come to the French. He came through the forest to Trois Rivières where he was well received by the French commander.<sup>64</sup>

According to Outoutagan, Le Talon and the then governor-general Rémy de Courcelle had been careful to keep the lines of communication open through frequent contact, and by providing each other with a "key" to open the gateways which separated them.<sup>65</sup> Understanding would have been better, Outoutagan was implying, if the French treated the Ottawas like their oldest ally, and not simply as one of a number of Great Lakes nations.

Outoutagan's inherited position gave him an important authority at a time when the Ottawa leadership was in transition. The old leaders, such as Le Talon, Nansouakouet, Noncheka, and Ocheepik had died and only Kinongé of the Kamigas

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<sup>63</sup> Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 312; Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac à Vaudreuil, 18 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 112-121v.

<sup>64</sup> "Le Talon, mon propre pere qui est le premier de toutes les nations d'en haut d'aller aux francois. Il est venu a travers les bois à Trois-Rivieres ou le commandant francois l'a bien accueilli." Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac à Vaudreuil, 18 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 113v-114.

<sup>65</sup> Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac à Vaudreuil, 18 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 114.

remained. Kinongé's authority was being undermined, however, by the struggle within the Kamiga nation and by Mekoua, whose bold actions at Fort Pontchartrain were a desperate last attempt to claim Kinongé's position. Outoutagan represented stability, and he reminded Vaudreuil of the difficulties of leadership in transition:

We have no elders left, and all of our chiefs whom you have known before, none but Le Brochet [Kinongé] remains able to come down.<sup>66</sup>

Later in his appeal, he reminded Vaudreuil of the danger of losing the elders and their erudition:

By losing our elders we have lost all; we have no astuteness left to guide us. How should we have any with no leaders.<sup>67</sup>

A commandant at Michilimackinac would improve this bad situation because the Ottawa leaders would have a better sense of French policy and one less concern at a time when they were trying to resolve their problems with Michipichy and the Tionnontatés. Vaudreuil wanted to appoint a French commander to Michilimackinac, but he had to wait for the report of a naval commissary named François Clairambault d'Aigremont whom the minister Pontchartrain had appointed to write a report on the *pays d'en haut* in July 1707.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "Mon pere vous voyez vos enfants les outtaouais voila tous ce que nous sommes en etat devenir icy. Nous n'avons plus d'anciens et de tous nos chefs que vous avez vus autres fois il ne nous reste plus que Brochet qui soit en estat de descendre icy." Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac à Vaudreuil, 18 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 112v.

<sup>67</sup> "Nous avons tous perdu en perdant nos anciens nous n'avons plus d'esprit pour nous conduire comment en avoient nous n'ayant plus de commandants." Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac à Vaudreuil, 18 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 118.

<sup>68</sup> Clairambault had been sent by Pontchartrain, the minister of marine, on an inspection tour of the posts of the west in order to ascertain their worth and to note the state of the alliance. Pontchartrain had heard of the serious problems caused by Michipichy and Mekoua at *le Déroit*, and he was astute enough to suspect the French presence in the region might have been an important contributing factor. He did not want to prejudice

Outoutagan reminded Vaudreuil that the Tionnontaté chief Michipichy was to blame for the troubles of the previous summer. Outoutagan conceded, however, that Mckoua had acted rashly, but he asked Vaudreuil not to condemn the entire nation because of the behaviour of Mckoua who was trying to win the support of the young warriors in his bid for the leadership of the Kamigas. He then offered to replace the two dead Frenchmen and Campanissé of the Kamigas stepped forward with two slaves.<sup>69</sup>

Vaudreuil thanked Campanissé for the two slaves and then told the assembly that these slaves would serve to replace the Iroquois who had been killed at Fort Frontenac and whom the Ottawas had failed to replace.<sup>70</sup> They would not, however, replace the two dead Frenchmen. "French blood," Vaudreuil told them, "is sacred."<sup>71</sup> He then warned them not to offend in such a manner again, promised to consider their demand for a renewed French presence at Michilimackinac, and asked them for Mckoua's

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Clairambault's report, so he contented himself with reminding the man of his duty. Clairambault was told to make an evaluation on the spot regarding the worth of each post. He was reminded that his was an important responsibility because according to the report the king would decide to keep the most useful ones and to abandon the others. Pontchartrain à Clairambault, 13 juillet, 1707, AN, B, 29: 126; Rapport de François Clairambault d'Aigremont au ministre concernant sa mission d'inspection dans les postes avancés, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 26-77v.

<sup>69</sup> Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac à Vaudreuil, 18 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 112-121v; Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac à Vaudreuil, 21 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 106-111v; Paroles de Jean Leblanc à Vaudreuil, 23 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 122-123v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 24 juillet, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 54-61v.

<sup>70</sup> Vaudreuil still had to fulfil his promise to the Iroquois that he would request slaves of the Ottawas to replace the Senecas killed at Fort Frontenac. Réponse de Vaudreuil aux chefs outaouais, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 139-140v.

<sup>71</sup> "Le sang des françois est sacre." Réponse de Vaudreuil, in Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac à Vaudreuil, AN, C11A, 26: 121v.

head.<sup>72</sup> Outoutagan did not have the authority to condemn Mekoua, and he told Vaudreuil as much.

Vaudreuil hoped to impress Outoutagan with his munificence. He told Outoutagan to report to Cadillac at Fort Pontchartrain and that he would communicate his policies regarding the *pays d'en haut* through Cadillac until such time as a commandant for Michilimackinac might be appointed. He sent an interpreter, Jean-Paul Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, with them to ensure that Cadillac would know his wishes.<sup>73</sup> Vaudreuil's ultimate response to the crisis in relations was indeed that of an ally, but he worried that it would appear lenient to the minister of marine in Versailles, so he took care to explain his actions carefully:

For the affairs of the colony to be at ease, and for the interest of the colony to be protected, tranquillity must be maintained amongst all of the Indian nations, and wars must be avoided. I felt that it was in the best service of the King to search for the means to accommodate this affair with minimal upset, nevertheless we were fully aware of the attack which the Ottawas had carried out against us.<sup>74</sup>

Given the time to think through the problem, Vaudreuil had arrived at a sensible and just resolution. It was not ideal, but on the other hand Mekoua's contretemps had been

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<sup>72</sup> Réponse de Vaudreuil, 18 juin, 1707, AN, C11A, 26; 114.

<sup>73</sup> Saint-Pierre's instructions were clear. He was to give Cadillac Vaudreuil's instructions verbally. Cadillac was to conclude a peace settlement between the Ottawas, Miamis, and Tionnontatés. He was to ask Sakima for slaves for the Iroquois and he was to accompany the Ottawa delegation to Michilimackinac. Once there, he was to help Marest to ease the tensions of the Kiskakons. If he met any *coureurs de bois* along the way he was to confiscate their goods and send them back to the St. Lawrence. *Instructions de Vaudreuil à Jean-Paul Legardeur de Saint-Pierre*, 6 juillet, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 65-68v.

<sup>74</sup> "Le repos de cette colonie aussy bien que son interest demandant la tranquillité parmy toutes les nations sauvages, plustot que la guerre, Jay cru quil estoit de bien du service du Roy de chercher les moyens d'accomoder cette affaire sans quil paru neamoins que nous fussions insensible au coup que les outaouais avoient fait." Vaudreuil au ministre, 24 juillet, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 55-55v.

a messy affair.

On 6 August, 1707, Outoutagan arrived at Fort Pontchartrain and called on Cadillac according to Vaudreuil's request. Outoutagan spoke for the Kamigas of Bkejwanong and Onaské spoke for the Kiskakons of Michilimackinac. To the consternation of the Ottawa delegation, Cadillac put his own stamp on Vaudreuil's instructions and took the opportunity to complain about what the Ottawas had done to the settlement which he had planted at Detroit. True to his sense of drama and his own notions of Ottawa language, Cadillac told the delegation of his sense of loss and betrayal:

While I slept peacefully and dreamt only of good things, an evil bear [Mekoua means bear in the Ottawa language], a malicious bear, got up to the very top of the tree [the Ottawa Nation], and shook it with all of his strength. The axe which he had hidden in the tree fell on the top of my cabin and broke it. My heart broke free and fell to the right and left, to the bottom of my stomach, and to the top of my throat. Then I said to myself that I would cut down this tree, dig up its roots, and reduce it to ashes.<sup>75</sup>

Cadillac admitted, however, that he had been in a rage when he felt these emotions, and now he would be satisfied with the life of he who had caused all of the problems.

"...that drunken bear who has wrought all of the evil. Le Pesant [Mekoua]."<sup>76</sup> Unlike Vaudreuil who had not forced the issue, Cadillac told the delegation that he wanted Mekoua at Fort Pontchartrain, dead or alive. If the Ottawas failed to bring Mekoua to

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<sup>75</sup> "Pendant que je dormais paisiblement et que je ne revais qu'a de bonnes affaires un mechant ours est monté au plus haut de l'arbre il a secoüé de toute sa force la hache qui y estoit pendüs est tombée sur ma cabanne et la cassée mon coeur s'est déplacé ils'est jetté et elancée a droit et a gauche il est tombé jusqu'au bas de mon ventre il est remonté jusqu' a ma gorge. Jay dit que je couperay cet arbre et je l'acheray jusqu'a ses racines le reduisez en cendrier." Procès-verbaux des conseils tenus à Détroit, 6 août, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 125.

<sup>76</sup> Procès-verbaux des conseils tenus à Détroit, 6 août, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 125.

Cadillac, he promised them no peace.

Outoutagan was annoyed with Cadillac's interference in the matter. The delegation expected that Cadillac would follow the instructions which they knew Vaudreuil had issued to him through Saint-Pierre. Nevertheless, Outoutagan attempted to explain to Cadillac why such a demand was bad for the French-Ottawa alliance:

The demand you make of us is surprising. The Bear that you ask us to bring to you is a powerful man in our village and he has strong allies amongst all of the nations of the Lakes.<sup>77</sup>

In spite of the difficulties, Outoutagan promised to deliver Mekoua to Cadillac.

Kinongé, who had come down to Fort Pontchartrain, and Outoutagan had no love for the unruly Mekoua and they did not worry about him being hauled up in front of the vindictive and unreasonable Cadillac. Outoutagan was prepared to surrender Mekoua for the good of the alliance, but it is doubtful that he would have agreed to allow the French to execute the old Kamiga ogima.<sup>78</sup>

After Outoutagan had said his piece, Onaské of the Kiskakons spoke. His contribution to the proceedings revealed a genuine anger with Mekoua and the Ottawas in Detroit in general. He spoke of the hardships at Michilimackinac and blamed them

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<sup>77</sup> "Ce que vous nous demander notre pere est surprennant. L'ours que vous demander est fort puissant dans notre village il a de grands allies aux toutes les nations des lacs." Procès-verbaux des conseils tenus à Détroit - Reponses de Outoutagan, 6 août, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 126.

<sup>78</sup> On the other hand several Ottawas, including the influential Kiskakon chief *Koutaoiliboe* and *Sakima* of the *Nassauakuetons*, were outraged at the demand for Mekoua's head and they appealed to Vaudreuil to stop Cadillac from carrying out the execution. Upon learning of Cadillac's plan, *Koutaoiliboe* and the French interpreter *Saint-Pierre* went to Montreal to see Vaudreuil and to tell him what Cadillac had told the Outoutagan and the Ottawas at Fort Pontchartrain. They met Vaudreuil on 7 October, 1707 and *Koutaoiliboe* immediately demanded to know why *Saint-Pierre* had been sent if not to tell Cadillac that the damage to the alliance caused by Mekoua had been repaired by Vaudreuil and Outoutagan. *Paroles adressées à Vaudreuil par les Outaouais de Michilimackinac*, 7 octobre, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 76.

on Mekoua's hostile actions. He suggested following Koutaoiliboe's advice and asked Cadillac to reopen a French post at Michilimackinac.<sup>79</sup> The others were silent, perhaps because they realized that Cadillac would never agree. The rest of the conference was devoted to the business of making peace among the Ottawas, Miamis, and Tionnontatés, and Cadillac's demands actually helped to bring these old allies together.<sup>80</sup>

In the end Mekoua did make his way to Fort Pontchartrain, mainly of his own volition, but with some persuasion from Koutaoiliboe.<sup>81</sup> Mekoua had lost the respect he had once commanded and Cadillac allowed him to escape from the Fort in order to avoid offending any of the allies.<sup>82</sup> Vaudreuil was not too critical of the way the situation unfolded:

It is true also that the Sieur de la Mothe facilitated Le Pesant's escape. He had two reasons for doing this: the first, because this was the easiest means to be rid of the mess, and the second, because it would be much easier to handle the Ottawas if Le Pesant either returned to Michilimackinac, or if he died of misery in the forest.<sup>83</sup>

Vaudreuil did not wish to be too critical of Cadillac, mainly because his own solution to the problem was to ignore it. His instructions to Cadillac through Saint-Pierre were

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<sup>79</sup> Procès-verbaux des conseils tenus à Détroit, 6 août, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 126-126v.

<sup>80</sup> Procès-verbaux des conseils tenus à Détroit, 6 août, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 124-131v.

<sup>81</sup> Paroles adressées à Vaudreuil par les Outaouais de Michilimackinac, 7 octobre, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 76v.

<sup>82</sup> Paroles des Outaouais à Cadillac, 24 septembre, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 69-74v; Observations de Vaudreuil, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 94-105v.

<sup>83</sup> "Il est vray aussy que le Sr de la Mothe luy a facilité son évacion pour deux raisons, la premiere parce qu'il a esté bien aissé de s'en debarrasser, et la seconde, parce que estant bien aissé de menager les outaouais, soit que le pesant se rende a Michilimakina ou qu 'il meure comme il a dit de misere dans le bois." Observations de Vaudreuil, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 95v.

vague enough to accommodate the widest possible interpretation, but Vaudreuil hoped Cadillac would allow the matter to drop.<sup>84</sup>

In October 1707, a Kiskakon delegation which included Koutaoliboe and Onaské arrived at Quebec to complain to Vaudreuil of Cadillac's demand for Mekoua's head and to ask for Saint-Pierre to be posted permanently to Michilimackinac.<sup>85</sup> Vaudreuil was forced to conclude from what he learned from them, and from Saint-Pierre, that Cadillac's policies would not, in this case, cause any lasting harm to the alliance. He reported this to the minister of marine, but he noted that it was time to send someone to the west to evaluate the situation and to write a report of recommendations.<sup>86</sup> In letters to the minister, Cadillac and Vaudreuil blamed each other for the troubles and the poor French response.<sup>87</sup>

In 1708 the problems in the alliance caused by Michipichy and Mekoua dominated the discussions in the Ottawa council which met at Michilimackinac in early June of that year.<sup>88</sup> Miscouaky and his brother Outoutagan argued that Bkejwanong was critical to Ottawa interests. In spite of the recent difficulties Bkejwanong was

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<sup>84</sup> Instructions de Vaudreuil à Jean-Paul Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, AN, C11A, 26: 65-68v.

<sup>85</sup> According to Koutaoliboe all four Ottawa nations as well as the Bawating and Mississauga Ojibwas, the Winnebagos, the Menominees, the Potawatomis, the Sakis, and the Outagamis had heard Saint-Pierre speak at Michilimackinac and all of them wanted him to stay as the commander of the post. Paroles adressées à Vaudreuil par les Outaouais de Michilimackinac, 7 octobre, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 78v.

<sup>86</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 12 novembre, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 62-64.

<sup>87</sup> Observations de Vaudreuil, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 94-105v; Cadillac au ministre, 1 octobre, 1707, AN, C11A, 26: 132-136v.

<sup>88</sup> Vaudreuil et Raudot au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 9v.



Ottawa territory which had to be retained to prevent access to Lake Huron by the Iroquois, the English, and the nations of the west. Kinongé, who knew the value of the gateways strategy better than the rest, disagreed. He argued passionately for the abandonment of the Bkejwanong region and he cited Mekoua's antics as an example of what could be expected if the Kamiga Ottawas did not return to Michilimackinac. As the three Kamigas argued over the value of the relative merits of Bkejwanong, the others (Chingouessi of the Sinagos, Koutaoiliboe and Onaské of the Kiskakons, and Sakima of the Nassauakuetons),<sup>89</sup> listened and wondered how the old rivalry between Mekoua and Kinongé affected the latter's position in this important debate.<sup>90</sup>

As the meeting drew to a close, most of the ogimas supported Kinongé's position. Bkejwanong was both too dangerous and too controlled by Cadillac. Nevertheless a compromise was reached. Outoutagan and his brother Miscouaky would return to their village at Bkejwanong, while Kinongé would continue to live at

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<sup>89</sup> To this point in the history of the Ottawa Nation there has been little mention of the Nassauakuetons. They do not figure prominently in any of the French documents and when they are mentioned little description is given. A typical example of this apparent neglect may be found in the Peace Settlement of 1701. Vaudreuil mentions the four nations of the Ottawa but he names speakers only for three of the nations, and he only mentions *la nation de la fourche* briefly. A certain Elaouassé signed the document on behalf of the Nassauakuetons, but his name does not appear elsewhere. Sakima is somewhat more prominent. The Jesuit Joseph Marest knew Sakima and was impressed by his growing prominence in the council meetings. Sakima was adopted into the Ottawa Nation from his native Mahicans, but it is unclear whether he had Ottawa blood. Sakima's rise in prominence meant a concomitant rise for the Nassauakuetons who had traditionally looked toward the west and the Potawatomis. As the Ottawas became more concerned with western affairs, opportunities presented themselves to those who had a better knowledge of this region. Texte du traité signé à Montréal le 4 août, 1701, AN: C11A, 19: 41-44; Marest à Vaudreuil, 4 juin, 1704, AN, C11A, 28: 174-174v.

<sup>90</sup> Marest à Vaudreuil, 4 juin, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 165-176v; Paroles de Koutaoiliboe à Vaudreuil, 23 juillet, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 205-211v; Réponse de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais de Michilimackinac, 23 juillet, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 212-216v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 5 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 102v-103v.

Michilimackinac with the Kiskakons.<sup>91</sup> Koutaoiliboe, on his annual visit to Montreal to meet with Vaudreuil, explained the situation to the governor:

...even though we [the Kiskakons, Nassauakuetons, and Sinagos] do not wish to abandon Michilimackinac, this will not prevent our having relations with the Indians of Detroit [the Kamigas]. They will give us their corn, when they have some, and we will give them beaver pelts.<sup>92</sup>

By referring to the advantages to be gained from this reciprocal trade relationship, Koutaoiliboe hoped to explain to Vaudreuil his reason for staying at Michilimackinac in economic terms. Had he known more about internal French colonial politics, he would not have hesitated to tell Vaudreuil how the Ottawas felt about Cadillac. Koutaoiliboe was concerned to heal the wounds caused by Mekoua at Fort Pontchartrain, and he asked Vaudreuil for guns to show that the military alliance was still firm.<sup>93</sup>

Those Ottawas who supported the preservation of the village at Bkejwanong, namely Outoutagan, Miscouaky, and Ouakesson (a young Kamiga Ottawa whom Cadillac hoped to control), argued three points. In the first place, a military presence at the village at Bkejwanong would prevent others from gaining access to the lake while at the same time guaranteeing the Ottawas that privilege. Second, the Bkejwanong region was located in an area which would support the cultivation of corn, beans, and squash.

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<sup>91</sup> Marest wrote to Vaudreuil to tell him that Outoutagan and Miscouaky had prevailed in the debate. The Ottawa village was to remain at Bkejwanong on the eastern bank of the river and a little to the south of the fort which was on the western shore. The Kamigas who had fled with Mekoua, and those who had come to the conference returned to the south, while most of the Kiskakons and Sinagos who had been in Bkejwanong resolved to stay at Michilimackinac. Marest à Vaudreuil, 4 juin, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 167v.

<sup>92</sup> "Puisque nous ne voulons pas abandonner michilimakina cela n'empêchera pas que nous n'ayant des relations avec les sauvages du détroit, il nous donnent de leur bled quand ils en auront et nous leur troqueront du castor." In other words the old trade relation which the Ottawas maintained with the Tionnontatés would be recreated. Paroles de Koutaoiliboe à Vaudreuil, 23 juillet, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 210.

<sup>93</sup> Paroles de Koutaoiliboe à Vaudreuil, 28 juillet, 1708, AN C11A, 28: 210v.

If a particularly cold winter ruined the chance of an adequate harvest at Michilimackinac, there was still a good chance that the crop would flourish further to the south at Bkejwanong. In effect the village at Bkejwanong would fill the role which the Tionnontatés had filled prior to 1649 in the interlocking economy of the northern Lake Huron region. Finally, the supporters of the village at Bkejwanong pointed to the dangerous new incursions into the region by the Miamis and others. A party of Miamis, disgruntled over the Mekoua's escape, had attacked an Ottawa party in the spring of 1708 and taken several women as prisoners. Without an Ottawa village, the Miamis and others from the west of Lake Michigan would move their villages into the vicinity of the French fort and block the Ottawas from obtaining French weapons.<sup>94</sup>

Those who wished to abandon Bkejwanong, especially Kinongé, argued forcibly for the return of French officials to Michilimackinac. There was concern over Cadillac's threats to block the Ottawas from the Ottawa River route to the French settlements in the St. Lawrence valley. This threat, had it been effectuated, would have forced all commerce to pass through the straits between Lakes Huron and Erie and right past the front gate of Cadillac's establishment.<sup>95</sup> When Koutaoliboe informed Vaudreuil of this concern in July of 1708, the governor told the ogima of the Kiskakons not to worry. Cadillac would never be able "to build a barrier" across the Ottawa

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<sup>94</sup> Paroles de Koutaoliboe à Vaudreuil, 23 juillet, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 209v-210; Vaudreuil au ministre, 5 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 102v-103v; Vaudreuil et Raudot au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 8.

<sup>95</sup> Cadillac would never have been able to police the upper parts of the Ottawa River. *Projet des règlements proposés par Ruelle d'Auteuil au ministre Pontchartrain*, 15 avril, 1707, AN, C11A, 27: 46.

River.<sup>96</sup>

In the meantime, Vaudreuil awaited Clairambault's report on the situation in the *pays d'en haut*. Although Pontchartrain had specified his desire for an unbiased, first hand account, Vaudreuil had sent Clairambault off on 5 June, 1708 with a party of Kiskakons.<sup>97</sup> Of all the Ottawas, the Kiskakons were the most attached to the Michilimackinac gateway. They had always maintained their desire to stay even when their old Tionnontaté allies opted to move to Bkejwanong. By placing Clairambault, a man of mainly administrative experience, in the hands of the Kiskakons, Vaudreuil must have known that they would have a strong influence on his report. Clairambault would be dependent upon the Kiskakons for sustenance, for shelter, for transportation, for information, and even for entertainment. It would not be strange for him to see the *pays d'en haut* from a Kiskakon perspective.<sup>98</sup>

Clairambault was immediately impressed with Fort Frontenac at Cataraqui; it seemed useful as a staging point for the Indian allies of the *pays d'en haut* to meet the French for joint operations against the Iroquois and the English.<sup>99</sup> He was similarly impressed with Niagara. A fort here, he argued, would prevent contact between the

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<sup>96</sup> Paroles de Koutaoliboe à Vaudreuil, 23 juillet, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 205-211v; Réponse de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais de Michilimackinac, 23 juillet, 1708, An, C11A, 28: 212-216v.

<sup>97</sup> Rapport de Clairambault d'Aigremont au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 27.

<sup>98</sup> When another party of Kiskakons came to Montreal in the middle of July, Vaudreuil told the Kiskakon chief Koutaoliboe to hide nothing from Clairambault should he ask any questions. He told Koutaoliboe to expect Clairambault at Michilimackinac later that summer and he hoped that Clairambault's presence would alleviate the Ottawa problem. Réponse de Vaudreuil, 23 juillet, 1708, AN, C11A, 28:212-216v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 2 juin, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 181-184v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 28 juin, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 72v.

<sup>99</sup> Rapport de Clairambault d'Aigremont au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 31.

English and the allies, particularly the "Mississaugas who are established in Lake St. Clair, and who carry many of their furs to the English."<sup>100</sup>

The party left Niagara on 29 June, made the difficult Niagara portage up the escarpment on the eastern side of the waterfall, put their canoes in the water near the big island where La Salle had built the Griffon in 1679, and paddled their canoes upstream along the Niagara River to Lake Erie. When they reached the Lake, they turned west and headed along the shoreline of Lake Erie's northern coast. On 15 July they arrived at Fort Pontchartrain where they were greeted by Cadillac, the Ottawa ogima Outoutagan and his brother Miscouaky, the latter two having just arrived from the recent council meetings at Michilimackinac.<sup>101</sup> It did not take Clairambault a long time to form a poor impression of *le Détroit*.

The fort itself, however, impressed Clairambault. Located on the northern shore of the river, at the point where it bends to the northeast, the fort itself consisted of a wooden palisade and a number of wooden buildings on a grid pattern. On entering the fort from the water gate, one walked along the main street, turned to the right along the rue Saint Louis and found Cadillac's house at the end of the street. Apart from the

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<sup>100</sup> "Que les Mississagues qui sont etabis dans le ;lac Ste Claire portent aussy beaucoup de pelleteries chez les Anglois." When Clairambault arrived at Niagara there was but little evidence of the two forts which had been built by the French. La Salle was the first to build at Niagara and he built a small wooden palisade above the falls in the winter of 1678-1679. Fort Conti was proved to be only a place for the men to live as they built the Griffon, La Salle's ship. In 1687 a second fort was built, this time on the eastern shore of the mouth of the Niagara River. This location was ideal as the fort was protected on its western flank by the river and on its northern flank by Lake Ontario. This second fort, called Fort Denonville after the governor-general of New France, was built during Denonville's campaign against the Iroquois and it was meant as a staging point for the Algonquian allies of the Upper Great Lakes. It was abandoned in 1688 when Denonville realized that he would not obtain support from the metropolitan government. Rapport de Clairambault d'Aigremont au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 32.

<sup>101</sup> Rapport de Clairambault d'Aigremont au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 35v.

church, this was the most impressive building in the fort and Cadillac had a large garden behind the house. Most of the other buildings were row houses with several families of soldiers and traders living in each. Unmarried soldiers lived in barracks along the west wall. On the east wall stood the church and the chaplain's modest house. Directly behind the church, in contravention of the usual practice, was the powder store. Any accident there would have blown the church to smithereens, but the commandant's house would have been sheltered from the explosion.<sup>102</sup> Behind the fort were fields of corn, beans, peas, and squash, as well as fruit trees and grape vines.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, Clairambault formed a bad impression of the place and felt that it was "very detrimental" to the well-being of the colony. Clairambault, no doubt influenced by his Kiskakon escorts noted that there were too many different nations (he listed Ottawas, Miamis, Tionnontatés, Ojibwas, and Potawatomis) living in "dangerous" proximity to one another.<sup>104</sup> The Miamis were only there at all because Cadillac had

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<sup>102</sup> Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29. 35v; also see Bellin, Plan du Fort Détroit, 1754, BN, Section des Cartes et Plans, GE DD 2987; Bellin mss. (uncatalogued), BN, Section des cartes et plans.

<sup>103</sup> Boishébert, Carte du Lac Sainte Claire, 1730, Service historique de la marine, rec. 67, no. 73; Léry fils, Carte de la rivière du détroit, 1749, Service historique de la marine, rec. 67, no. 71; Bellin, Plan du fort du Détroit, 1754, BN, Section des cartes et plans, GE DD 2987; Bellin mss., (uncatalogued), BN, Section des cartes et plans; Rapport de Clairambault, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 35v.

<sup>104</sup> The Miamis and the Ojibwas did not have villages in the region itself as the others did, but the Miamis had a camp outside the gates of the French fort and their main villages were not far to the southwest. The Ojibwas lived on an island which they called Minishenhying in the northeastern corner of the lake which they called Wauwi-Autinoong, but which the French called Lac Sainte Claire. Boishébert, Carte du Lac Sainte Claire, 1730, Service historique de la marine, Rec. 67, no. 73; Léry fils, Carte de la rivière du détroit, 1749, Service historique de la marine, rec. 67, no. 71; Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 45.

asked them to come trade at his post.<sup>105</sup> This, Clairambault concluded had upset all of the others.<sup>106</sup> Clairambault could find nothing positive to say about *le détroit*, a fact which much have pleased both Vaudreuil and Koutaoliboe.

Clairambault's expedition left Fort Pontchartrain on 3 August and paddled their canoes north through the shallow waters of Wauwi-Autinoong to the Ojibwa village, where they spent the night as guests of the Ojibwas. On the next morning they set out from the island of Minishenhying<sup>107</sup> and began the long paddle along the western shore of Lake Huron. Clairambault was impressed by the canoe skills of his Kiskakon guides. They crossed the mouth of Saginaw Bay in the face of a stiff wind with little difficulty. The mouth of the bay is some forty two kilometres across from Pointe aux Barques on the southern shore to the site of Sakima's village on the northern shore. Clairambault spent the night here with Sakima and the Nassauquetons before continuing the next day.<sup>108</sup>

As Clairambault and his Kiskakon escort struggled against the headwinds of Saginaw Bay, Koutaoliboe arrived back at Michilimackinac from his meeting with Vaudreuil at Montreal. He immediately began preparations for the arrival of Clairambault and he did an effective job. When Clairambault arrived on 19 August, he

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<sup>105</sup> The Miamis lived along the upper reaches of the Wabash River, south of Lake Michigan and to the south west of the Potawatomis.

<sup>106</sup> Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 46v-47.

<sup>107</sup> Now called Walpole Island.

<sup>108</sup> The present name of the place, Tawa City Michigan, is a clear reference to its history, as is the name of the bay itself. Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 68.

was immediately pleased:

I only stayed there for four days during which time I decided that this was the greatest of all of the distant posts of Canada, as much with regard for its advantageous situation, being so difficult to approach without being detected, as for the commerce which may be transacted. This post is the rendezvous for all of the nations which come from Lake Superior, from the Bay of Stinkards [Green Bay], and from the St. Joseph's River.<sup>109</sup>

Koutaoiliboe treated Clairambault generously and presented him with an expensive cloak of Lake Superior beaver pelts which greatly impressed the Frenchman and he became determined to prevent the English from gaining access to pelts of such quality.<sup>110</sup>

The next morning Koutaoiliboe escorted Clairambault around the Ottawa village. At this time it was located on the eastern tip of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Koutaoiliboe pointed to the island of Michilimackinac, or Great Turtle Island, and explained the spiritual significance as the place where the Ottawas first settled in the region. From this vantage point, Clairambault could see across the strait to the northern tip of the Lower Peninsula and he could see all of the islands. He could understand immediately why this area was so strategically important. Then Koutaoiliboe took him to see the corn fields and the ripening plants of corn, beans, and squash.<sup>111</sup>

Koutaoiliboe then explained the principles of Ottawa strategy and told

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<sup>109</sup> "Je n'ay sejourné que quatre jours pendant lesquels jay remarqué que c'est le plus considerable de tous les postes avancer du Canada, tant par rapport a la situation avantageuse a cause de la difficulté quil y a d'y venir que par le commerce qu'on peut faire. Ce poste est le rendezvous de toutes les nations qui descende du lac Superieur, de la baye des puants, et de la riviere st. Joseph." Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 68.

<sup>110</sup> Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 68v.

<sup>111</sup> Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 69.



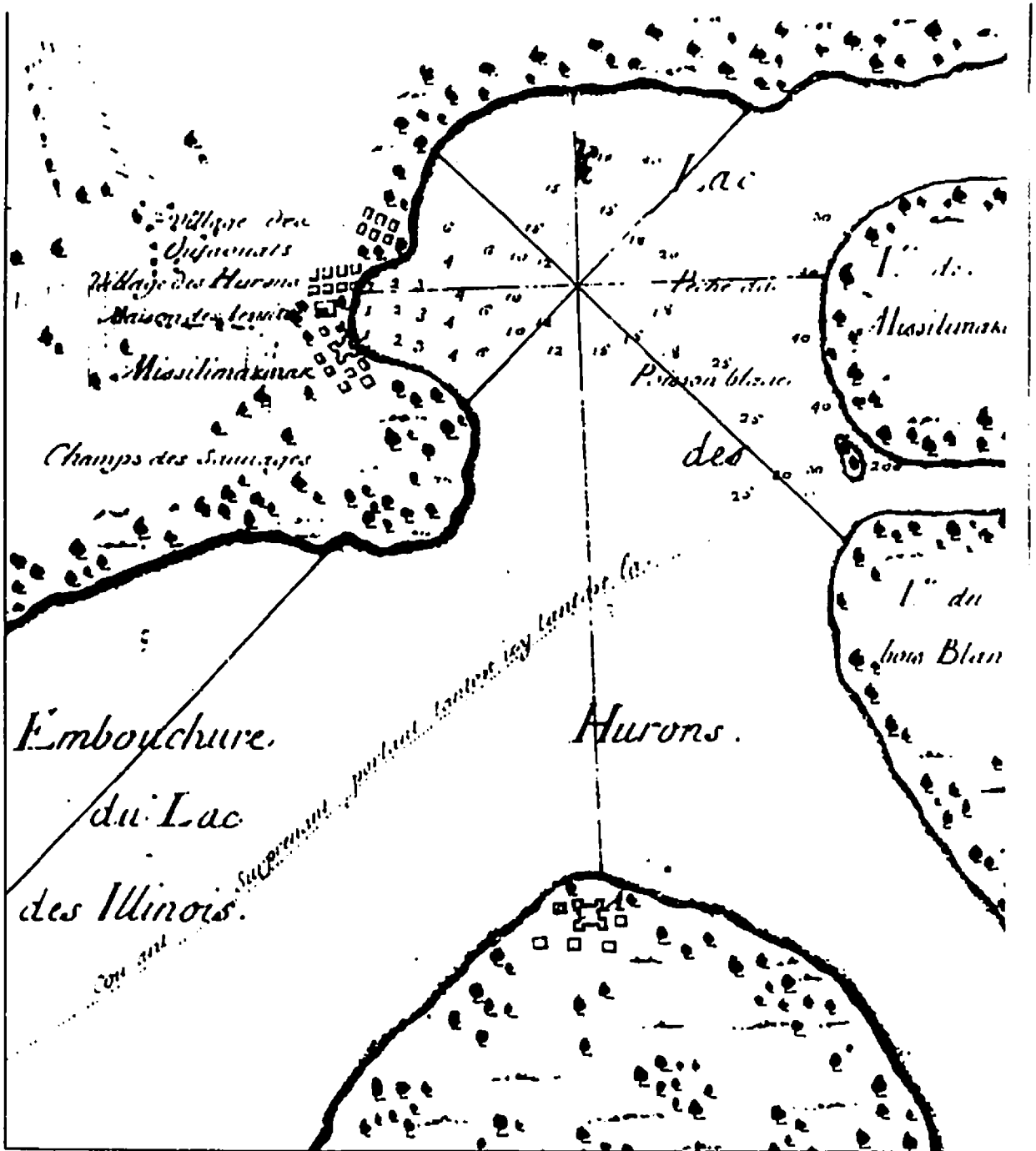


Figure 11: An anonymous map of Michilimackinac drawn around the time of Clairambault's visit. This map show the Ottawa and Huron villages and gives a good indication of the way the Ottawas controlled the Michilimackinac gateway. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

Clairambault why Michilimackinac was vital to their interests:

This passage is the route of all the nations who could have in mind the idea of making war. It is an easy thing for the Ottawas to stay the hands which bear the hatchets as they attempt to pass. In this way the Ottawas have become the mediators of all the differences, for all of the nations pass through the straits.<sup>112</sup>

As he heard the words, Clairambault realized that Cadillac's claims of power in the *pays d'en haut* were false. He also realized that far from being the great father, Onontio had little power in the Upper Great Lakes. Onontio did not have the ability to mediate because he did not control the critical gateways of the Lakes. Koutaoliboc had shown Clairambault exactly how that system worked and now he was explaining the process to his guest in a way that could not be misinterpreted.

It was one thing to see potential enemies from a distance; it was another entirely to be able to prevent them from executing their bellicose designs. This was the next aspect of the strategy which Koutaoliboc explained to his guest:

Michilimackinac is completely inaccessible to the most powerful of the Ottawa enemies. Neither the Miamis, nor the [Outagamis] were people of the canoe.<sup>113</sup>

Koutaoliboc asked Clairambault to remember the difficult trip from Bkejwanong to

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<sup>112</sup> "C'est le passage des nations qui pourraient avoir dessein de faire la guerre estant facile aux Outaouais d'arrester leur hache et destre mediateurs de tous les differents comme ils tout est passé par la." Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 68.

<sup>113</sup> "Il est inaccessible aux plus puissants de leurs ennemis qui sont les Miamis et les Ouyatanons n'estant point gens de canot." Clairambault refers to the "Ouyatanons" and the Miamis in his document, but these two words referred to the same people. It is likely that he meant to refer to either the Mascoutens or the Outagamis whom were all considered by the French under the general rubric "Illinois" and who lived in the region to the west of Lake Michigan. The Ottawas did not always make the distinction between the individual nations themselves but referred to all of these peoples as the "Outagamik" which simply meant *people of the other shore*. This was a clear reference to the other shore of Lake Michigan whose only outlet was through the straits at Michilimackinac. Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 68.

Michilimackinac. He had been with skilled Kiskakon canoeists and still the trip had taken sixteen days because of the contrary winds. He asked Clairambault to think of the crossing of Saginaw Bay and the large rolling waves of Lake Huron. He asked Clairambault if he thought it possible for people to cross Lake Michigan, a lake almost as large as Lake Huron, if they had not the same skill with their canoes as had the Ottawas who paddled canoes into the deep water in the storms of November.<sup>114</sup>

Koutaoiliboe convinced Clairambault to recommend the appointment of a French commander to Michilimackinac.<sup>115</sup> Otherwise, the Lake Superior furs would be taken to the English at Hudson's Bay, and the Ottawas would revolt.<sup>116</sup> Clairambault also told the minister that the Ottawas should be given the items they ask for the most, "knives, guns, powder, lead shot, tobacco, and kettles."<sup>117</sup> Clairambault's report was accepted by Vaudreuil who wrote to the minister the next year to express confidence in its findings. Vaudreuil immediately proposed to send that veteran of western affairs,

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<sup>114</sup> Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 68v. Clairambault was impressed with the abundance of the excellent fish, but he also knew that it must be difficult to catch sufficient numbers to feed the whole population.

<sup>115</sup> Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11a, 29: 69v.

<sup>116</sup> Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 70-72v.

<sup>117</sup> A recent article by an American scholar, Dean Anderson, argues that the people of the western Great Lakes wanted clothing more than weapons and ammunition. This is not accurate. The author only examines the supply of goods and neglects the demand. He also devised lists which placed guns in two separate functional categories, hunting and weapons. If something could be used as a weapon, it was. The Ottawas always demanded knives, guns, axes, and ammunition before any other items. See Dean L. Anderson, "European Trade Goods in the Western Great Lakes Region, 1715-1760." in Jennifer S.H. Brown, W.J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman, eds., *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 107; Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, AN, C11A, 29: 75v.

Louis de La Porte de Louvigny, to Michilimackinac in order to reopen the post.<sup>118</sup>

With the decision to reopen Michilimackinac, it was clear that the alliance between the French and the Ottawas had weathered another storm. Vaudreuil sent the Ottawas a clear signal that the problems which had plagued Fort Pontchartrain at Bkejwanong were forgotten and that the "knives, guns, powder, shot, tobacco, kettles" and other French trade goods would be available at Michilimackinac once again. For Outoutagan and Koutaoliboe, Vaudreuil's moves to reopen Michilimackinac were a victory for those Ottawas who supported the alliance with the French. Mekoua had attempted to use latent anti-French sentiment in order to realize his political ambitions, as Ocheepik had done before, but like Ocheepik he had failed to sway the majority of Ottawa people. This time blood had been shed, but thanks to the astute leadership of Outoutagan, Koutaoliboe, and Vaudreuil, the alliance was preserved. These leaders understood the importance of the alliance as a means of protecting their respective positions. In spite of the challenges of Michipichy's attempt to insinuate himself between the Ottawas and the French, and Mekoua's attempt to wrest the Kamigas away from the leadership of Outoutagan, the rhythm of life in Lake Huron continued.

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<sup>118</sup> Vaudreuil et Raudot au ministre, 14 novembre, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 12. This recommendation was in fact accepted, but the French did not move as quickly as Koutaoliboe would have liked. Louvigny did not report to Michilimackinac until 1716 when he was sent to the *pays d'en haut* to command an army of Canadians against the Outagamis.

## Chapter Seven: Conflict with the Outagami, 1708-1737.

Just as relations between the French and the Ottawas were improving in 1708, a new crisis loomed on the western horizon.<sup>1</sup> During the winter of 1707-1708, parties of Bawating Ojibwas had been attacked by Outagami and Saki warriors along the southern coast of Lake Superior. The Outagamis and Sakis, two closely related Algonquian nations who lived along the western shore of Lake Michigan, had been allies of the Ottawas, but their attacks on the Bawating Ojibwas completely altered the state of affairs.<sup>2</sup> As Koutaoiliboe told Vaudreuil in July of 1708, the Outagamis and Sakis were now enemies of the Ottawas.<sup>3</sup> Vaudreuil did not like to hear of problems between nations which he considered to be allies of the French, but because he had already decided to support Koutaoiliboe and the Ottawas in their request to reopen the post at Michilimackinac, he decided to support the Ottawas in their conflict with the Outagamis.<sup>4</sup>

For several years, there had been tension between the Outagamis and the Ojibwas. Like most other conflicts in the Great Lakes, this one had its origins in the

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<sup>1</sup> There were still some loose ends which had to be settled. Vaudreuil still had to appease the Senecas who were waiting to be compensated for their losses at Cataragui. Cadillac proposed organizing all of the Indians living at or near his fort into "Indian Companies" which he would command in times of war. Vaudreuil felt obliged to inform the minister of the reasons why this idea would never work and why, in fact it was detrimental to the good of the alliance. He told Pontchartrain that the Ottawas were not used to subjugation and that they would resent such treatment. Vaudreuil et Raudot au ministre, 13 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 61-63.

<sup>2</sup> Most scholars who have studied the origins of the Fox Wars have placed the blame on the French in general, and on Cadillac in particular. Actually this conflict, like all others in the region, was caused by competition over resources. White, *Middle Ground*, 154; Richard Lortie, *La guerre des Renards, 1700-1740, ou quatre décennie de résistance à l'expansionisme Français* (M.A. diss., Université de Laval, 1988), 17-22; R. David Edmunds and Joseph L. Peyser, *The Fox Wars: the Mesquakie Challenge to New France* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Péroles des Folles Avoines à Vaudreuil*, 23 juillet, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 211-211v; *Réponse de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais de Michilimackinac*, 23 juillet, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 214.

<sup>4</sup> *Réponse de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais de Michilimackinac*, 23 juillet, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 214.

competition for resources. At first the two groups clashed over hunting territory in the peninsula between northern Lake Michigan and southern Lake Superior. Bawating Ojibwas were attacked in their traditional hunting territories by groups of Outagamis who came up the west coast of Lake Michigan in search of deer and other game which had become scarce in the Carolinian forest of western Lake Michigan.<sup>5</sup> These encounters naturally led to open conflict and after the raids in 1708, in which a number of Ojibwas were dragged off as Outagami prisoners, the Ojibwas appealed to their Ottawa allies for help.<sup>6</sup>

Had the Ottawas a choice, they likely would have refused to help the Ojibwas. They were already on poor terms with the Miamis, the Sioux, and the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy with whom they had an uneasy peace.<sup>7</sup> Their old Tionnontaté ally, Michipichy, had proved to be treacherous and even the Potawatomis at Bkejwanong seemed belligerent. With the passing of every year the English forces loomed as a real threat to the Ottawas and they would have liked to avoid war with the large and bellicose Outagami Nation. However, the Ottawas had no choice. The

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<sup>5</sup> Clairambault reported this shortage in his report of 1708. He wrote that the furs of Detroit were of poor quality and were quite scarce. He contrasted these furs with the excellent and abundant beaver skins which were available at Michilimackinac. Clearly the Carolinian forest was in the middle of a scarce cycle in the early years of the 1700s. Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 45 and 68v.

<sup>6</sup> Réponse de Vaudreuil aux outaouais et autres descendus avec M. d'Argenteuil, 29 juillet, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 87.

<sup>7</sup> Far from being over, this hostility seemed ready to boil over in 1709. The Senecas who came to see Vaudreuil were warned of this danger. They were still angry about the unprovoked attack at Fort Frontenac in 1705 and with the apparent lack of Ottawa response to their demands for slaves to replace their Seneca dead. See, Paroles de Tsonnontouans à Vaudreuil, 7 juillet, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 98-103v; Paroles des Sauvages du parti commandé par Monsieur de Ramezay, 2 août, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 128-130; Raudot fils au ministre, 1 novembre, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 242v.

Ojibwas, particularly the ones living at Bawating whom the French called the Sauteurs, were old allies and necessary players in the gateways defensive system. The Ottawas were drawn into war with the Outagamis by their Ojibwa allies for a number of reasons. Spiritually, it was vital to protect Michilimackinac, and the presence of Outagami hunting and war parties in the area of the Upper Peninsula was seen with growing alarm. There was already worry over the presence of Miamis at Bkejwanong, and now there were reports of Miami allies, the Outagami Nation, in the region of Bawating. It was absolutely necessary to prevent these people from gaining access to Michilimackinac, the centre of Ottawa life and the very heart of the Ottawas' ancestral homeland.

According to the Ottawa oral tradition, the Ottawas had a time honoured obligation to all of the Ojibwas, but particularly to those of Bawating.<sup>8</sup> According to Andrew Blackbird, the Ojibwas were excellent warriors who taught their children not to fear death, but rather to fear dishonour. Nevertheless, in times of threat, they turned to the Ottawas for help. They looked to the Ottawas for counsel and for military support:

But the Ottawas were, however, considered as the most ancient tribe of Indians and were called by the other tribe [the Ojibwa Nation] "their big brother." Although they [the Ottawas] are a smaller race, in stature, than many other tribes, they were known as the most wise and sagacious people. Every tribe belonging to all the Algonquin family of Indians looked up to the Ottawas for good counsel; and they were as brave as the Chippewas and very expert on the warpath.<sup>9</sup>

Once the Ojibwas appealed to their "big brothers" for military support, the Ottawas

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<sup>8</sup> Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 80.

<sup>9</sup> Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 80.

really had no choice. Their sense of history, and even the way in which they identified the necessities of their world, rested upon their maintaining good relations with the Ojibwas of Bawating.

Spirituality was only one aspect of the cultural necessity for supporting the Ojibwas in their struggle against the Outagami Nation. The Ottawas had been sporadically involved in wars against the Sioux in the west, which had, from time to time, brought them into open conflict with the different Algonquian peoples of western Lake Michigan. According to Assikinack, young warriors had been clamouring for a campaign against these peoples for years. In one incident, a party of Ottawa warriors returning from a defeat at the hands of the Sioux in 1704, were insulted by Outagamis who mocked their failure and who gloated over their losses. The Ojibwa request came as welcome news to this faction and indeed it helped to heal the rift between the young warriors and the ogimas who had chosen to ignore the insult.<sup>10</sup>

In the spring of 1709 a delegation of Bawating Ojibwas came to Michilimackinac to participate in a Feast of the Dead and they were treated as the most honoured guests.<sup>11</sup> The Ojibwa chief, Ouakimaouadeb , made his appeal to the old Kamiga ogima, Kinong . Kinong  had lived across the river from the Ojibwas at Bawating for many years and he had an intimate knowledge of them from the time when the Kamiga Ottawas had guarded the Bawating gateway. Ouakimaouadeb  reminded Kinong  of those days and of the close ties which had always existed between

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<sup>10</sup> Assikinack, "Warlike Customs of the Ottawas," 308.

<sup>11</sup> R ponse de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais et autres descendus avec M. d'Argenteuil, 29 juillet, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 87-89.



the Ojibwas of Bawating and the Ottawas. He told him of the spirit of mutual cooperation and reminded him of the many campaigns in which they had fought on the same side against a common enemy. He reminded Kinongé of the canoe skills of the Bawating Ojibwas, learned in the rapids as they fished for whitefish and lake trout, and he argued that these skills made his nation a valuable Ottawa ally.<sup>12</sup> After telling Kinongé all of these things, Ouakimaouadebé turned to the other Ottawa ogimas who were participating in the Feast of the Dead, Koutaoiliboe of the Kiskakons and Sakima of the Nassauquetons, and asked their help against the Outagamis who had come uninvited into Ojibwa land and who had spilled Ojibwa blood. Koutaoiliboe and Sakima did not hesitate. They pledged their support and told Ouakimaouadebé that they would take him at once to see Vaudreuil.<sup>13</sup>

Two French officers Pierre d'Ailleboust d'Argenteuil and Jean-Paul Legardeur de Saint-Pierre were present for this Feast of the Dead as well. They had come north from Fort Pontchartrain in the early spring of 1709 in order to reassure Koutaoiliboe that Vaudreuil intended to reopen the post at Michilimackinac. These two were well-known to the Ottawas at Michilimackinac since they had been sent by Cadillac to find Mekoua following the troubles at Bkejwanong in 1706. Their presence on this occasion was more welcome and Koutaoiliboe immediately took Ouakimaouadebé to tell them his story of Outagami incursions into the Ojibwa hunting ground. As veterans of western

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<sup>12</sup> Adresse de Ouakimaouadebé chef des Sauteurs, 29 juillet, 1709, AN, C11A, 30:91v-92.

<sup>13</sup> Réponse de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais et autres descendus avec M. d'Argenteuil, 29 juillet, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 87-88.

affairs both men could appreciate the seriousness of the matter.<sup>14</sup> D'Argenteuil sent a Saki (who had been living at Michilimackinac) to the west in order to ask for the release of the Ojibwa prisoners. He also recommended an immediate conference with Vaudreuil, a proposal which Koutaoiliboe, Sakima, and Ouakimaouadeb   welcomed. All three men embarked immediately with d'Argenteuil and arrived at Montreal towards the end of July, 1709 after a quick passage across the north of Lake Huron and down the Ottawa River.<sup>15</sup>

The Ottawas set up their camp near the town walls and waited while d'Argenteuil went to inform Governor Vaudreuil of their arrival. When Vaudreuil arrived D'Argenteuil briefed him in the presence of the others. He told of the raids perpetrated by the Outagamis against the Bawating Ojibwas. He told Vaudreuil that he had enlisted the help of a Saki (an ally of the Outagamis) in gaining the release of some Bawating Ojibwas prisoners among the Outagamis. However he emphasized the depth of feeling on both sides and warned that this peace mission would bring only temporary respite and that more troubles were to come.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The two men were cousins who had been in the west on numerous occasions since the 1690s. Ailleboust d'Argenteuil played a leading role in the fur trade and acted as one of Frontenac's agents among the Ottawas. He was a faithful servant of Cadillac at Detroit, and he had some influence over Sakima's Nassauakucton village on the northern shoreline of Saginaw Bay. Legardeur de Saint-Pierre first went to the west in 1689 and was stationed at Fort Frontenac. Like his cousin he became involved in the fur trade and gradually spent more time at Michilimackinac and at Fort Pontchartrain de Detroit. Unlike his cousin, however, he had nothing but contempt for Cadillac and he exposed him as a profiteer and a brandy trader to the officials in Quebec. See, Marest    Vaudreuil, 4 juin, 1708, AN, C11A, 28: 165-176v; Rapport de Clairambault au ministre, 14 novembre, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 26-77v; Argenteuil au gouverneur, 1708, AN, C11A, 29: 241v; R  ponse de Vaudreuil aux outaouais et autres, 29 juillet, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 86-92v; Paroles des sauvages, 2 ao  t, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 128-130.

<sup>15</sup> R  ponse de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais et autres, 29 juillet, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 86-92v.

<sup>16</sup> R  ponse de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais et autres, 29 juillet, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 86-87.

Koutaoliboe and Sakima then addressed the governor. They spoke of the desirability of peace in the region and they repeated their demand that Michilimackinac be reopened. They assured Vaudreuil that a French presence would help the cause of peace in the *pays d'en haut*. As an example they asked Vaudreuil to consider the role of d'Argenteuil in the recent fighting between the Ojibwas and the Outagamis. Vaudreuil was pleased with their suggestions and he told them that he would work to ensure peace. He also asked them, and this demand revealed his continuing preoccupation with his own worries, to do nothing to upset the Iroquois and to show them kindness.<sup>17</sup> Koutaoliboe and Sakima must have been frustrated by this strange request since their present concerns had nothing to do with the Iroquois. Finally, Ouakimaouadebé spoke. He repeated much of what he had told the Ottawa ogimas in his address to Kinongé at Michilimackinac a month earlier. He then asked Vaudreuil for French help in the war which he felt would soon escalate into a serious problem. He asked Vaudreuil specifically for a Jesuit missionary to be sent to Bawating to help maintain the lines of communication between the French and the Ojibwas, and an armourer to repair damaged weapons and to provide gunpowder and lead shot.<sup>18</sup>

Vaudreuil now sensed the extent of the danger and for him this constituted the worst possible news. While he still feared the Iroquois, he did not want the western allies to become embroiled in an internecine war in the *pays d'en haut*. He was also worried about the role the Ottawas would play in such a conflict. If this war

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<sup>17</sup> Réponse de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais et autres, 29 juillet, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 88.

<sup>18</sup> Réponse de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais et autres, 29 juillet, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 89-91v.

progressed, the Ottawas would side with the Ojibwas and France's leading ally would pursue the war actively. He had, he thought, only one option and this was to put into effect the peace plan over which Callière had presided at Montreal in 1701. He offered to act as a mediator the next summer for a conference between the interested parties. At this same conference he told Koutaoliboc and Sakima, they would also be able to solve the troubles at Bkejwanong forever.<sup>19</sup>

This was not the response that the Ottawas wanted. They did not expect Vaudreuil to act as a mediator, but rather they wished to see him act in the Ottawa interest. The role of a mediator resolving disputes was totally alien to their culture and they could not understand such a relationship within the terms of the Great Lakes world. They expected Vaudreuil to do as they had done for Ouakimaouadebé. They expected him to pledge his support and then to act immediately to prove his good intentions. When Ouakimaouadebé had come to Michilimackinac, the Ottawas had acted as a good ally. They told him that his fight was their fight and then immediately proposed and initiated a plan of action which would help to prove their vocal support, the trip to Montreal. Blinded by his fear of the English and the Iroquois, Vaudreuil could not see the problem from the Ottawa perspective. His only concern was to eliminate the danger of an open confrontation in the west.

Disappointed though they were, the Ottawas and Ojibwas agreed to return in a year's time to meet with Vaudreuil and the other nations of the Upper Great Lakes. In the meantime, they returned home and that winter the attacks continued. A group of

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<sup>19</sup> Réponse de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais et autres, 29 juillet, AN, C11A, 30: 92v; Raudot fils au ministre, 1 novembre, 1709, AN, C11A, 30: 235v.

Outagamis attacked an Ojibwa hunting party near Lake Superior and a group of Saki warriors ambushed another Ojibwa family hunting in their ancestral territory.<sup>20</sup> To make matters worse, another nation of western Lake Michigan, the Menominees had also gone north in search of game. Like the Outagamis and the Sakis, the Menominees were suffering from the lack of game in western Lake Michigan and they had to send hunting parties far afield in search of animals to be used for food and clothing. In the early spring of 1710 some Menominee warriors attacked an Ojibwa group in the Bawating region itself.<sup>21</sup>

On 29 July, 1710, Vaudreuil's conference of Ottawas, Ojibwas, Sakis, Tionnontatés, Miamis, Outagamis, and Potawatomis began at Montreal.<sup>22</sup> A contingent of Ottawas from Michilimackinac, accompanied by d'Argenteuil, met with Vaudreuil individually before the conference to tell him of their particular concerns. Koutaoliboe spoke for the group. He told Vaudreuil that they were pleased that Louvigny had been appointed to the command of the new French garrison at Michilimackinac and pledged support for Louvigny in this position. After Koutaoliboe had spoken, Chingouessi got to his feet and told Vaudreuil that all that Koutaoliboe had said for the Kiskakons applied for the Sinagos as well. Sakima then made the same comment for the Nassauakuetons and Kinongé, who had accompanied the others from Michilimackinac,

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<sup>20</sup> Paroles de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais, Sauteux, Sakis, Hurons, Miamis, Renards, Potéouatamis et autres Indiens descendus d'en haut, 1710, AN, C11A, 31: 82.

<sup>21</sup> The French called the Menominees the Folles Avoines or the Wild Rice people. In this document, however the Menominees are called the Malomins. Paroles de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais, Sauteux, Sakis, Hurons, Miamis, Renards, Potéouatamis et autres Indiens descendus d'en haut, 1710, AN, C11A, 31: 82.

<sup>22</sup> Paroles de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais, Sauteux, Sakis, Hurons, Miamis, Renards, Potéouatamis et autres Indiens descendus d'en haut, 1710, AN, C11A, 31: 81-88v.

made the same pledge in the name of the Kamigas of Bkejwanong.<sup>23</sup>

Koutaoiliboe's speech is important for what it did not include. He did not mention the problems in the Great Lakes and therefore he did not ask for Vaudreuil's help in settling the dispute between the Ojibwas and the Outagamis. Evidently the Ottawa leaders had decided that Vaudreuil would not willingly involve the French in the troubles in the Upper Peninsula. They had come to tell Vaudreuil of their specific wishes and to hear what he had to say regarding his proposal for peace.

After he had listened to the representatives of the various nations of the *pays d'en haut* Vaudreuil addressed the entire assembly. He began by announcing his decision to reopen a French post at Michilimackinac.<sup>24</sup> For this to be successful, he argued, peace must be attained in the whole region. Then in a gesture which must have annoyed the Ojibwas, he turned to Ouakimaouadébé and asked him "to stay the hatchet which has for such a long time bathed the region of Lake Superior in blood."<sup>25</sup> No sooner had he blamed the Ojibwas for the war, than he turned to Koutaoiliboe and began to praise the Kiskakon ogima for the "great courage" which he had shown in working for peace at Michilimackinac.<sup>26</sup> Koutaoiliboe was thus made to look like a disinterested tool of French policy rather than an ancient ally of the Ojibwas of Bawating. Vaudreuil continued with this theme by praising all of his "children at

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<sup>23</sup> Paroles adressées à Vaudreuil par les Outaouais, 29 juillet, 1710, AN, C11A, 31: 114-117v.

<sup>24</sup> Paroles de Vaudreuil aux Outaouais, Sauteux, Sakis, Hurons, Miamis, Renards, Potéouatamis, et autres Indiens descendus d'en haut, 1710, AN, C11A, 31: 81v.

<sup>25</sup> "d'arrester la hache qui depuis longtems a ensanglanté les terres des environs du lac superieur." Paroles de Vaudreuil, 1710, AN, C11A, 31: 82.

<sup>26</sup> Paroles de Vaudreuil, 1710, AN, C11A, 31: 82.

Michilimackinac" the Kiskakons, the Sinagos, and the Nassauakuetons. He then pointed to the Kamigas (whom he called the Ottawas of Detroit), and asked them to follow the good examples of their countrymen at Michilimackinac.<sup>27</sup> For the Outagamis, he had only a warning. He told them bluntly that they risked his hostility unless their aggressive acts were stopped.<sup>28</sup>

Whether Vaudreuil was attempting to deflate the situation by a divide-and-conquer policy, or whether he simply did not realize the way his plan would be interpreted is hard to know. In any event, the conference did nothing to alleviate the problems in the *pays d'en haut*. In fact nothing short of brute force would prevent the nations of western Lake Michigan from attacking their neighbours. They did not have enough game to support themselves so they had to venture into the lands of their neighbours regardless of the consequences. Koutaoliboe understood that Vaudreuil's warnings would not deter the desperate Outagamis and he moved quickly to reassure Ouakimaouadebé of continued Ottawa support. Before leaving Montreal, Koutaoliboe told Vaudreuil that the Kiskakons would support the Ojibwas and if this meant war with the Outagamis, he was prepared to fight. Vaudreuil immediately called for d'Argenteuil and told him to return to Michilimackinac with Koutaoliboe and to take the message of peace to all of the peoples of the *pays d'en haut*.<sup>29</sup> Vaudreuil sensed that the peace conference had failed and he decided to ask for the same nations to return the following

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<sup>27</sup> Paroles de Vaudreuil, 1710, AN, C11A, 31: 83v.

<sup>28</sup> Paroles de Vaudreuil, 1710, AN, C11A, 31: 85-86.

<sup>29</sup> D'Argenteuil au ministre, 10 octobre, 1710, AN, C11A, 31: 187.

summer.<sup>30</sup>

In the early spring of 1711 Vaudreuil sent agents throughout the *pays d'en haut* to invite the nations of the Great Lakes to yet another conference in Montreal.<sup>31</sup> Saint-Pierre was sent to Michilimackinac in order to tell Koutaoliboc and the Kiskakons and Chingouessi and the Sinagos of the planned conference. He told them to take their warriors with them as Onontio wished to address as many people as he could. Saint-Pierre then continued on his way to Lake Michigan to bring word to the Menominee of Vaudreuil's invitation.<sup>32</sup> D'Argenteuil was sent on a similar mission to Bkejwanong and to Saginaw to tell Outoutagan and the Kamigas and Sakima and the Nassauakuetons of the planned meeting. Other agents were sent to other nations: Jean-Baptiste Bissot de Vinsenne was sent to the Miamis; Charles Le Moyne de Longueuil was sent to the Outagamis; Pierre-Charles Desliettes was sent to the Potawatomis at St. Joseph's River; and a fur trader named Réaume was sent to Lake Superior all at the same time.<sup>33</sup>

The six hundred people who went to Montreal that summer heard nothing about the situation in the *pays d'en haut*. Instead they heard Vaudreuil tell them that their real enemies were the Iroquois and not one another. Not surprisingly, the meeting was not a

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<sup>30</sup> To be fair to Vaudreuil, one ought to point out the crises which confronted his tenure in the period of 1709 to 1711. As the historian Yves Zoltvany noted, this was a period when New France lived under the constant fear that an English-Iroquoian attack was imminent. Politically, Vaudreuil's authority was being questioned by the intendants the Raudots and the economic situation in the west lay in ruins because of Cadillac's schemes. Problems with the Algonquian allies were not at the top of his agenda and the Ottawas were neglected. See, Yves Zoltvany, *Vaudreuil*, 94; *Mémoire de Vaudreuil pour servir d'instruction à ceux qu'il envoie chez les nations des pays d'en haut*, 10 mars, 1711, AN, C11A, 32: 82-93v.

<sup>31</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 25 octobre, 1711, AN, C11A, 32; 46.

<sup>32</sup> *Mémoire de Vaudreuil*, 10 mars, 1710, AN, C11A, 32: 82.

<sup>33</sup> *Mémoire de Vaudreuil*, 10 mars, 1711, AN, C11A, 32: 82-93v.



great success. There was a general agreement that the Iroquois were still an enemy to be feared, but the causes of the differences which had plagued the Upper Great Lakes were ignored and thus left unresolved.<sup>34</sup> The Ojibwas were still wary of Outagami incursions into their territory, and the Ottawas were still conscious of their important obligations to protect their own territory and to conserve the alliance system as they had always understood it.

The situation was such that the smallest event could spark a conflagration. In fact, by bringing all of these nations together at Montreal, Vaudreuil contributed to the problem. Arguments erupted and accusations led directly to an escalation of hostility. After the conference, Sakima and a group of Nassauakuetons were returning to their village at Saginaw Bay when they encountered a group of Mascoutens, another nation from Lake Michigan. What happened next is not entirely clear. The Potawatomi chief, Makisabi, who had spoken with Sakima soon after the event, told Vaudreuil that the Mascoutens insulted Sakima and ridiculed him as a coward.<sup>35</sup>

Sakima decided to avenge this insult and in the winter of 1711-1712 he led a party of Nassauakuetons and Potawatomis against a group of Mascouten and Outagamis who were hunting in their own territory. The Ottawas and Potawatomis killed several of the Mascoutens and Outagamis, and then quickly returned to their villages at Saginaw and Bkejwanong respectively. Sakima sent word of his attack to the Kiskakons at Michilimackinac, and then he settled down to wait for the rest of his

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<sup>34</sup> Mémoire de Vaudreuil, 10 mars, 1711, AN, C11A, 32: 82-93v; Ramezay au ministre, 1 novembre, 1711, AN, C11A, 32: 110.

<sup>35</sup> Paroles de Makisabi, chef poutéouatami, 17 août, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 85-90v.

warriors to return from their winter hunting. By April, when the Nassauakuctons normally returned, he had his full army of one hundred and fifty warriors. They attacked the Mascoutens at the St. Joseph River and forced the survivors of the village to flee to Bkejwanong to the protection of the Outagamis who had a camp there under the command of two chiefs, Lamyma and Pemoussa.<sup>36</sup>

Sakima and the Nassauakuctons chased the fleeing Mascoutens all the way to Bkejwanong. Here they joined forces with some Potawatomis, Ojibwas, and the Kamigas under the leadership of Outoutagan and Koutaoiliboc who had come down from Michilimackinac in command of an army of Kiskakon and Sinago warriors who had arrived at the end of April, 1712. The combined Ottawa force immediately surrounded the palisade which protected the Outagami camp and waited for the besieged Mascoutens and Outagamis to come out to fight. While the bulk of the Ottawa army waited at the Outagami camp, the Ottawa leaders went to see the new commandant Jacques-Charles Renaud Dubuisson in the nearby fort.<sup>37</sup>

Dubuisson had been sent to Fort Pontchartrain as a replacement for François Dauphin de La Forest, who had taken ill. Dubuisson was not too familiar with the situation in the *pays d'en haut*, and when Sakima, Outoutagan, and Koutaoiliboc paid him a visit, he was only too pleased to follow their advice. The three Ottawa ogimas, as well as a Potawatomi and two Ojibwa chiefs, were allowed into the fort and sat with

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<sup>36</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 6 novembre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 51-52v; Marest à Vaudreuil, 21 juin, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 71-72.

<sup>37</sup> Marest à Vaudreuil, 21 juin, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 71-73; Vaudreuil au ministre, 23 juillet, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 42-43v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 15 octobre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 44-48v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 6 novembre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 53-54; Dubuisson à Vaudreuil, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 161-166.

Dubuisson in a circle in front of the commander's house. All of the men smoked the pipes which Sakima presented to Dubuisson and then Sakima addressed the meeting.

He told Dubuisson that the Ottawas had come to protect the French from the

Outagamis:

We do not fear death and we will even die cheerfully, if need be, for our father and liberator. The only favour we ask is that you beseech Onontio, the father of all nations, to take care of our women and children if we are all killed and to put some sweet grass on our bodies to keep off the flies. We left our villages in order to come to your aid, but we came so quickly that we did not have time to get munitions and provisions. We trust you will not let us suffer for want of either.<sup>38</sup>

Sakima made several good points. The Outagamis were already shouting their allegiance to the English, and the Ottawas were prepared to do the actual fighting. All that Dubuisson was required to do was to provide the weapons and provisions and to use his men as Ottawa auxiliaries.

Nevertheless, Dubuisson was in a difficult position. His instructions from Vaudreuil had been as clear as they were brief: prevent the allies from fighting one another.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, by the time Dubuisson was made aware of the problem, it was already beyond his power to prevent the fighting. He decided to cast his fortunes with the Ottawa allies. Vaudreuil himself had sided with the Ottawas in the past, and besides, Sakima told him that the Outagamis planned to burn Fort Pontchartrain to the

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<sup>38</sup> Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 365.

<sup>39</sup> Ordre de Vaudreuil à Renaud Dubuisson d'aller commander à Détroit en l'absence de La Forest, 13 septembre, 1710, AN, C11A, 31: 76-77v; Instructions de Vaudreuil à Renaud Dubuisson, 13 septembre, 1710, AN, C11A, 78-80.

ground and torture to death any of the French unfortunate enough to escape the inferno.<sup>40</sup> According to Sakima, three canoes full of Outagamis had been on their way to the Iroquois when they were intercepted by some Ojibwas who prevented them from continuing.<sup>41</sup> Dubuisson immediately offered the Ottawas gunpowder and lead shot and pledged French support for their war against the Outagamis.<sup>42</sup> Together the French and the Ottawas laid siege to the Outagami camp and for the next nineteen days they kept the Outagamis under fire.<sup>43</sup>

On the nineteenth day of the siege the spring rains which had been falling intermittently intensified dramatically. The Outagamis and their Mascouten allies waited until nightfall when, under cover of the darkness and the downpour, they effected their escape. They had little difficulty evading the Ottawa forces, but unfortunately they followed the river northward directly to the Ojibwa village on Wauwi-Autinoong. The Mississauga Ojibwas there sent word to the Ottawas who paddled north and quickly caught up to the Outagamis who were on foot. After another siege, the Ottawas engaged the Outagamis in battle. According to Dubuisson, of the thousand or so Mascoutens and Outagamis, seven hundred were killed and most of the

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<sup>40</sup> Dubuisson à Vaudreuil, 15 juin, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 161-612v; Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 365-366.

<sup>41</sup> It is not clear from the document how the Outagamis got canoes. This story seems to be a fabrication. Dubuisson à Vaudreuil, AN, C11A, 33: 163.

<sup>42</sup> Dubuisson à Vaudreuil, 15 juin, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 167.

<sup>43</sup> Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 366; Dubuisson à Vaudreuil, 15 juin, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 161-178v.

rest were taken prisoner.<sup>44</sup>

Soon after the battle, Koutaoliboe and Sakima left Bkejwanong for Quebec with a Potawatomi chief named Ouenemek. They took with them a Saki chief named Mouet, who wanted to distance himself from his allies the Outagamis.<sup>45</sup> They arrived at Montreal at the end of July and met with Vaudreuil who, having heard of the lopsided Ottawa victory, was about to travel to Montreal to meet with any of the allies coming in from the west.<sup>46</sup> Koutaoliboe made no excuse for the brutal attack; indeed he told Vaudreuil that the Ottawas were determined to destroy the Outagami Nation. Vaudreuil was dismayed at this and told Koutaoliboe:

It would be deplorable if my children of Michilimackinac were to be destroyed by the Outagamis and Mascoutens for having followed their vengeful spirits.<sup>47</sup>

Vaudreuil was alarmed at the turn of events, but Koutaoliboe had no such concerns.

The Outagamis had been badly beaten, but one day they would attempt to take revenge.

The Outagamis would attempt to get weapons from the English but as long as

<sup>44</sup> Dubuisson à Vaudreuil, 15 juin, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 167-177; Marest à Vaudreuil, 21 juin, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 71-76; Marest à Vaudreuil, 2 juillet, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 77-79v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 23 juillet, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 42-43v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 15 octobre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 44-48v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 6 novembre, 1712, AN, C11A, 53v-54; Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 2: 366.

<sup>45</sup> Mouet's nephew had been taken prisoner by the Bawating Ojibwas and he was concerned to rescue him. He believed that the Ottawas would defeat the Outagamis so he decided to side with them in the confrontation. Paroles de M. le gouverneur général en réponse de celles que lui ont dit Koutaoliboe, Ouenemek, et Mouet, chefs outaouais, potéouatamis et sakis, 28 juillet, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 81-83v.

<sup>46</sup> Paroles de M. le gouverneur général en réponse de celles que lui ont dites Koutaoliboe, Ouenemek, et Mouet, chefs outaouais, potéouatamis et sakis, 28 juillet, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 81-83v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 6 novembre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 51-53.

<sup>47</sup> "Il serait facheux que mes enfants de Missilimakina vinrent destre detruite par les Outagamis et Mascoutens que pour vouloir trop poursuivre leur vengeance." Paroles de M. le gouverneur général, 28 juillet, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 81v-82.

Michilimackinac were reopened, and the Ottawas had French weapons, this would not be a problem.

The nature of the French-Ottawa alliance had always had a strong military aspect, but now this aspect became absolutely critical to the survival of both groups. By 1712 the trade between the French and the Ottawas continued to be dominated by weapons:

The Indians came to the French carrying their furs, fish, game, and the fruits of the earth, and they carried away gun powder, guns, woollen blankets and cloths. This commerce is very favourable to the French and is undertaken with neither disorder nor scandal.<sup>48</sup>

Vaudreuil understood the danger which the Outagamis posed to the French and to the Ottawas in the west and he complied with Koutaoiliboe's demand to reopen Michilimackinac by offering to send Louvigny in 1713.<sup>49</sup>

Louvigny, however, was unavailable, he had business in the St. Lawrence, and would not return to Michilimackinac before 1716. In the meantime the Ottawa concern grew. Kinongé, for example, warned Vaudreuil that the situation was as dangerous for the French as it was for the Ottawas: "this war," he told Vaudreuil, "that we have with the Outagamis is your war just as it is our war, because you were killed by them just as

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<sup>48</sup> "Les sauvages y venoient apporté leur pelleteries, pesche, chasse, et les fruits de la terre, et ils remportoient de la poudre, des armes, des couvertures de laine et des draperies: ce commerce estoit tres avantageux, et se faisoit tranquillement, sans desordre et sans scandal." *Mémoire de l'état présent du Canada, 1712*, AN, C11A, 33: 266. This memoir was written by François-Madeleine-Fortuné Ruelle d'Auteuil de Monceaux. Ruelle d'Auteuil had been the attorney general of the sovereign council in Quebec. He was the victim of political intrigue however, and was forced by the Raudots to take early retirement in Paris. From this vantage point he kept a careful eye on the business of the colony and reported its changes in a series of long memoirs. Ruelle d'Auteuil, like others was impressed with the changing face of the alliance network and was concerned about the growing importance of weapons in the trade.

<sup>49</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 14 novembre, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 46v.

they killed us."<sup>50</sup> He asked Vaudreuil to send Louvigny to Michilimackinac at once and he said that the best way to ensure their combined success was to build a "solid establishment" at Michilimackinac.<sup>51</sup> Sakima and Miscouaky made the same demands and for the same reason, but again Vaudreuil had to tell them that Louvigny was detained.<sup>52</sup>

Louvigny's arrival at Michilimackinac was delayed twice: once because he was at the centre of an argument between Vaudreuil and the intendant, Bégon, and the second time due to illness. In the meantime, an officer in the marine, Constant Le Marchand de Lignery, was sent to Michilimackinac in September of 1712 as a sign of good faith to the Ottawas from Vaudreuil. He was instructed to tell Koutaoliboe that Louvigny would arrive in the spring with a garrison of twenty soldiers.<sup>53</sup> Lignery lacked experience in relations in the Great Lakes and attempted to rule the Ottawas as though they were French subjects. The Ottawas did not appreciate this and they complained about Lignery to Vaudreuil.<sup>54</sup>

There is no question that the French would have preferred not to become

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<sup>50</sup> "La guerre que nous avons avec les renards est votre guerre comme la notre puisqu'ils vous ont tués comme nous." Paroles du Brochet, chef outaouais de Michilimackinac, 23 août, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 68.

<sup>51</sup> Paroles du Brochet, 23 août, 1712, AN, C11A, 34: 69.

<sup>52</sup> Paroles des chefs outaouais Saguima et Miscouaky à Vaudreuil, 26 août, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 69v-72; Réponse de Vaudreuil aux paroles du Brochet, de Saguima, et de Miscouaky, 28 août, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 72-75.

<sup>53</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 15 octobre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 48-48v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 6 novembre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 59; Vaudreuil et Bégon au ministre, 12 novembre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 48.

<sup>54</sup> On their annual trip to Montreal in the summer of 1713, Kinongé, Sakima and Miscouaky complained of Lignery's shortcomings and they reminded him of his promise to send Louvigny. Paroles du Brochet, chef outaouais de Michilimackinac, 23 août, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 68-69v; Paroles des chefs outaouais Saguima et Miscouaky à Vaudreuil, AN, C11A, 34: 69v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 8 septembre, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 42.

involved in what they perceived to be a vicious, internecine war between two groups of their Algonquian allies. Vaudreuil attempted to prevent the fighting on several occasions but French authority in the west was minimal. If any lesson may be drawn from the confrontation between the Ottawa-Ojibwa forces and the Mascouten-Outagami forces, it is that French power in the west ended just beyond the walls of Fort Pontchartrain. When the fort was completed at Michilimackinac in 1716 it extended French power, but only marginally. The "Fox Wars," as the French called the fighting, did not result from a failure of Vaudreuil to mediate disputes among his Algonquian "children;" they resulted because Sakima and Koutaoliboe were determined to eliminate a serious threat to their authority in their ancestral territory. Outagami raiders crossed their Rubicon by moving into the Ojibwa territory at Bawating. This was a direct threat to the Ottawas at a time when they had a number of other foreign relations concerns.<sup>55</sup>

Vaudreuil was not too concerned to attempt a forced compromise. His main concerns in 1712 were the threats posed to the St. Lawrence colony by the Iroquois and the English forces. He needed the Ottawas as allies, and if this meant supporting their efforts against the Outagamis, so be it. His reports to Pontchartrain concerning Dubuisson's actions at the siege at *le Détroit* and the massacre at *lac de Ste. Claire*,

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<sup>55</sup> American historian Richard White suggested that the Ottawas were upset with the Outagami presence at Detroit, and that the "Fox Wars" grew out of the failure of the two sides to accept the mediation of their "Father" Vaudreuil. The problems in Bkejwanong certainly contributed to the anti-Outagami sentiment of the Ottawa war chiefs, but the real menace was at Bawating. The notion of mediation, as has been mentioned before, is difficult to apply to this situation. See White, *Middle Ground*, 149-150.



praised the commandant for his actions.<sup>56</sup> There is no evidence that the French were concerned with their inability to mediate the situation. On the contrary, Vaudreuil was quite prepared to accept Ottawa authority in the *pays d'en haut* as long as the Ottawas remained firm allies of the French. Indeed, as events proved, the French were even willing to participate in the war in order to please their oldest and most influential ally in the region.

Vaudreuil still feared an Iroquois alliance with the Outagamis which would force the Ottawas into a war on two fronts. Vaudreuil always felt the most threatened by the Iroquois because of their proximity to Montreal, and even though they had been badly weakened as a fighting force, the governor was always afraid of their ability to rebound. Indeed, in the summer of 1712 Vaudreuil's Iroquois agent Louis-Thomas Chabart de Joncaire warned him of this possibility. A pro-Outagami sentiment was brewing amongst the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, and Cayugas. Fortunately for Vaudreuil, the westernmost nation of the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy, the Senecas, were completely opposed to such a plan.<sup>57</sup> In fact, a deputation of forty Senecas came to Montreal in the late summer of 1712 to tell Vaudreuil that they would have no part of an alliance with the Outagamis whom they considered to be a difficult and violent

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<sup>56</sup> In his annual report, written in November of 1712, Vaudreuil praised the "good conduct of Dubuisson" and he recommended this officer for other important commands. If he had been troubled at all by Dubuisson's inexperience and his decision to follow Sakima's suggestions, he would certainly have mentioned them to the minister. Dubuisson would have made an excellent scapegoat in what was a problematic and dangerous situation. By praising his actions Vaudreuil was in effect giving Dubuisson's actions an official seal of approval. By recommending him for other responsible duties, Vaudreuil was making public his approval of the Ottawa massacre of the Outagamis. Vaudreuil au ministre, 6 novembre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 54.

<sup>57</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 15 octobre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 44-48v; Vaudreuil au ministre, 6 novembre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 58-58v.

people who could, "live in peace with no one."<sup>58</sup>

Vaudreuil was not convinced by the Senecas, however, and he believed that it would be necessary to open Michilimackinac in order to assemble all of the Ottawas there in a state of readiness for war with the Iroquois.<sup>59</sup> He explained to the minister that the Ottawas were concerned about their supply of French arms and ammunition at a time when the Outagamis were threatening revenge:

If we do not send to Michilimackinac the things which are so necessary to the nations in the *pays d'en haut* they will continue to go to find them at the English posts at Hudson Bay and Albany.<sup>60</sup>

Vaudreuil decided to open Michilimackinac and to send Louvigny, the Ottawas choice, as soon as he was available. He did not get permission from the minister before he made this decision, but Pontchartrain agreed with his reasoning and sent his approval the next summer.<sup>61</sup>

In the early summer of 1713, an Outagami war party was discovered in the region of northern Lake Michigan by a party of Ottawa scouts who had been sent to watch for such an attempt. The scouts sent word back to Michilimackinac and the Ottawas with some Ojibwas were sent to attack the Outagamis at a place called Ongekam which they described as being sixty leagues from Michilimackinac.<sup>62</sup> The

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<sup>58</sup> Paroles de Tsonnontouans à Vaudreuil, 10 septembre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 95-100v.

<sup>59</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 6 novembre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 59.

<sup>60</sup> "Si on n'envoie pas a Missilimakina les choses qui sont necessaires aux nations d'en haut ils continuerons de les aller chercher chez les Anglois dans la Baye d'Hudson et a Orange." Vaudreuil et Bégon au ministre, 12 novembre, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 16.

<sup>61</sup> Pontchartrain à Vaudreuil, AN, B, 35: 325.

<sup>62</sup> This was likely the Manistique River mouth on Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Outagamis also had scouts posted, however, and the place was deserted when the warriors arrived.<sup>63</sup> Sakima and Miscouaky went to Montreal to tell Vaudreuil of this incident and of the continuing fighting between the Ottawas and the Outagamis and of the growing Ottawa need for French weaponry:

We have needs which are vital to support ourselves against an enemy who is so powerful. These are arms, gun powder, and generally all things.<sup>64</sup>

Vaudreuil shared their concerns about Lignery's military abilities, but as long as Bégon refused to allow Louvigny to go, he would do nothing.<sup>65</sup>

He told the two Ottawa ogimas that Louvigny would come in the next year, and the French would send him and soldiers for a campaign against the Outagamis. In the meantime he advised them to make peace and dismissed their concerns:

You have nothing to fear from the Outagamis, nor from any nation that cannot use the canoe and who lives in the southern part of Lake Michigan.<sup>66</sup>

Even as Vaudreuil sought to reassure the Ottawas he was worried about their threat to appeal to the English for help. He had received word that summer from the two Jesuits at Michilimackinac. Marest told him of Koutaoiliboe's prediction that if Louvigny did

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<sup>63</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 8 septembre, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 41v-42.

<sup>64</sup> "Nous avons besoins qui nous sont necessaires pour nous soutenir contre un sy puissant ennemy, estant d'armes, de poudre et generalement de toutes choses." Paroles des chefs outaouais Saguima et Miscouaky à Vaudreuil, 23 août, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 70v.

<sup>65</sup> Mémoire de Bégon sur l'établissement de Michilimackinac, 20 septembre, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 128-133v.

<sup>66</sup> "Vous n'alliez pas vous exposez aux renards, ny de toutes les nations qui n'ont point l'usage du canot et qui habitent au sud du lac Mechingan." Réponse de Vaudreuil aux paroles du Brochet, de Saguima, et de Miscouaky, 28 août, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 74.

not come soon, the Ottawas at Michilimackinac would disperse.<sup>67</sup> Jean-Baptiste Chardon reported much the same. Lignery had learned from his mistakes, but it was too late for the Ottawas to approve of him and they were threatening to abandon Michilimackinac unless Louvigny were sent quickly.<sup>68</sup>

Vaudreuil was also worried about rumours of English incursions. Lignery reported that such a threat did indeed exist, and he told Vaudreuil of persistent rumours at Michilimackinac of generous English offers.<sup>69</sup> Against these rumours, the intendant Bégon remained unmoved. In his memoir on the subject he let it be known that he considered the reopening of the post to be a waste of money:

Furthermore, the principal object of Louvigny's proposed voyage is to reestablish the post at Michilimackinac which in any event is more peaceful now. As we do not wish to weaken the colony in a time of war, it will be necessary before working toward this reestablishment to know the intentions of His Majesty regarding the extraordinary expense which will be necessary, as much for the officers of the post, as for the garrison and for the gifts which will be given to the Indians every year. To this point there are no funds available for such an undertaking.<sup>70</sup>

Vaudreuil judged the expense worth the risk and Bégon did not. Bégon was concerned with the amount of money which the reopening of the post would entail whereas

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<sup>67</sup> Marest à Vaudreuil, 19 juin, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 80-82v.

<sup>68</sup> Chardon à Vaudreuil, 29 juin, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 82v-83v.

<sup>69</sup> According to Lignery, the English were using the Iroquois as intermediaries to deliver a message of peace and commerce to the entire region. Vaudreuil au ministre, 16 septembre, 1714, AN, C11A, 34: 286v-287.

<sup>70</sup> "D'ailleurs le principal objet du voyage de m. de Louvigny estant de restablir le poste de Michilimakina ce qui a esté remir a la paix parce qu'on n'a pas voulu affaiblir la colonie pendant la guerre il est necessaire avant travailler au rétablissement de scavoir les intentions de sa majesté sur la dépense extraordinaire qui sera faite tant pour les officiers que pour la garrison et les presents a faire aux sauvages tous les ans pour laquelle il n'y a aucun fonds ordonne." Mémoire de Bégon sur l'établissement de Michilimackinac, 20 septembre, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 130-130v.

Vaudreuil was concerned with the loss of the Ottawas as allies. This loss would cost the French government even more in the long term.

In the autumn of 1714 a meeting was held by Vaudreuil, Bégon, and Ramezay the governor of Montreal. The point of this meeting was to decide what the French ought to do in the Upper Great Lakes region. Clairambault d'Aigremont was invited to attend and to give the others the benefit of his experience in the affairs of *pays d'en haut*. Vaudreuil convinced Bégon to send a large French force to Michilimackinac to help the Ottawas to destroy the Outagami Nation. Louvigny was to be given the command.<sup>71</sup> Vaudreuil then went to France himself to report on the situation in North America at a time when peace with Britain was at hand.

Before he could embark, Louvigny fell ill and command went, by default to Lignery. Lignery, however, never got his chance. Vaudreuil's absence left Ramezay responsible for the logistical aspects of the operation. This proved to be a disaster. Supplies never reached Michilimackinac, but plenty of brandy did. Some of the French were ambushed on their way by a party of Outagami warriors. Lignery had little authority with the Ottawas and he soon found that he had none at all with *coureurs de bois* whom Lignery had hoped to include in the campaign against the Outagamis. The Miamis who gathered at Fort Pontchartrain to take part in the attack contracted rubella, as did some of the Ottawas at Michilimackinac. Succinctly put, the whole attempt was a failure which accomplished nothing save to render the Ottawas even more anxious

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<sup>71</sup> Vaudreuil au ministre, 16 septembre, 1714, AN, C11A, 34: 285-286.

about French military capability.<sup>72</sup>

After reading the accounts of the failed attempts, including Louvigny's three letters, the Council of Marine decided to give him the opportunity to take command of a second expedition.<sup>73</sup> Louvigny finally departed from Montreal on 1 May, 1716.

When he reached Michilimackinac with 225 men the Ottawas were delighted. He immediately took charge of the *coureurs de bois* and told them that if they followed his command they would be granted an amnesty and could return to the colony.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, should they trade in brandy, or should they disobey his orders in the campaign, he assured them that they would be returned to the colony, flogged, and condemned to the galleys for life. Unlike Lignery, Louvigny had no difficulty with the *coureurs de bois*.<sup>75</sup>

He then told the Ottawas and Canadians who had assembled at the village of his plan to attack the Outagamis. He reminded Sakima of the siege tactic which the Ottawas had employed against the Outagamis at their camp by Fort Pontchartrain, and

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<sup>72</sup> Louis XIV died on 1 September, 1715 ending the term of Jérôme Phélypeaux, Comte de Pontchartrain, as minister of marine. The officials in New France were not aware of this and addressed their correspondence to the minister although it was actually read by the newly formed Marine Council. Ramezay et Bégon au Conseil de Marine, 13 septembre, 1715, AN, C11A, 35: 5v-8; Ramezay au Conseil de Marine, 16 septembre, 1715, AN, C11A, 35: 74-47v; Louvigny au Conseil de Marine, 3 octobre, 1715, AN, C11A, 35: 220-223v; Louvigny au Conseil de Marine, 26 octobre, 1715, AN, C11A, 35: 224-227; Ramezay au Conseil de Marine, 28 octobre, 1715, AN, C11A, 35: 88-88v; Louvigny au ministre, 30 octobre, 1715, AN, C11A, 35: 366-377.

<sup>73</sup> Délibération du Conseil de Marine sur la guerre des Renards, 28 mars, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 217-219.

<sup>74</sup> In 1714 a serious shortage of fur was experienced in France which may have influenced the Council in its decision to allow for the offer of amnesty to the *coureurs de bois*. Néret et Gayot au ministre, 6 avril, 1715, AN, C11A, 35: 324-325; Délibération du Conseil de Marine et décision de Conseil de Régence, 28 avril, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 244-245v.

<sup>75</sup> Louvigny's orders from the Council of Marine gave him full authority to bring the *coureurs de bois* under control. His orders specified which penalties he was able to threaten. Délibération du Conseil de Marine et décision du Conseil de Régence, 28 avril, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 244-245v.

he told them that he would use this same, effective technique. The entire force then went south to Fort Pontchartrain in order to join forces with the Kamiga Ottawas and the Canadians who lived there. By the time the force left Fort Pontchartrain in the middle of July, its strength was over 800 men, half were Canadians and the other half Ottawas with a few Tionnontatés and Ojibwas. The campaign itself was anti-climactic. When the allied force laid siege to the Outagami fort, the Outagamis quickly offered their surrender.<sup>76</sup>

Louvigny had given some thought to the future stability of the region and he took the vital step of asking the Ottawas what conditions of the peace ought to be. Sakima and Miscouaky immediately requested the release of all Ottawas who had been captured by the Outagamis. They also requested slaves to replace the Ottawas who had been killed in the fighting since 1712. Louvigny himself demanded enough beaver pelts from the Outagamis to cover the cost of his expedition.<sup>77</sup> Then Louvigny did something unexpected. He demanded six Outagami chiefs be turned over to the French to guarantee Outagami compliance with the Ottawa demands. Louvigny knew that if he helped the Ottawas to win a peace settlement which was very much in their favour, it would improve their prestige in the Great Lakes and it would make them even stronger

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<sup>76</sup> Vaudreuil au Conseil de Marine, 14 octobre, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 71-74v; Vaudreuil au Conseil de Marine, 30 octobre, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 59-60v; Louvigny au Conseil de Marine, 14 octobre, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 173-174v.

<sup>77</sup> Louvigny seems to have again decided to line his own pockets. Bégon did not believe the accounts of expenditure which Louvigny submitted. The intendant believed that he had grossly exaggerated all of the expenses in order to realize a profit. Vaudreuil au Conseil de marine, 13 novembre, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 70 [this letter was actually written by Bégon, but signed by Vaudreuil who was too ill to write for himself]; Délibération du Conseil de Marine sur une lettre de Bégon concernant divers états financiers, 3 février, 1717, AN, C11A, 37: 62-65.

as allies of the French.<sup>78</sup>

Louvigny has received credit from a number of historians, and deservedly so.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, his real skill was not so much his leadership, but his understanding of the limits of his authority. He was careful to listen to what Sakima, Koutaoliboc, and Miscouaky told him and he formed his plans based upon a combination of his abilities and Ottawa interests. He also made certain to carry enough goods with him to prove his worth as an ally. Louvigny was a good negotiator who gained the respect of his allies by his resolute attitude and his courage.<sup>80</sup>

By the autumn of 1716 peace had been restored to the *pays d'en haut*. Trade was reopened at Michilimackinac and the disputed territory to the west of Michilimackinac was once again safe for the Ojibwas of Bawating to hunt. Louvigny and his soldiers continued construction of a French fort on the southern shore of the straits at Michilimackinac which they had started that spring. Lignery and his men had built a stockade on the southern shore as the Kiskakon Ottawas had moved their village

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<sup>78</sup> Vaudreuil au Conseil de marine, 14 octobre, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 71-74v; Vaudreuil au Conseil de Marine, 30 octobre, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 59-60v; Louvigny au Conseil de Marine, 14 octobre, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 173-174v.

<sup>79</sup> Zoltvany, *Vaudreuil*, 142; White, *Middle Ground*, 160-161; Eccles, *Frontenac*, 279; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v., "La Porte de Louvigny."

<sup>80</sup> White claims that the Ottawas were furious with Louvigny for concluding a peace settlement and for opening trade so quickly. While there is abundant evidence of Louvigny's desire for compensatory gestures, there is no evidence of Ottawa displeasure at the peace settlement. Indeed, by all accounts the terms were considered to be quite harsh, particularly Louvigny's insistence that the Outagamis surrender six chiefs (and all of the children of those chiefs) to the French as a guarantee of future peace. After the Outagamis surrendered, Sakima, Miscouaky, and other unnamed chiefs publicly acknowledged their satisfaction with the terms of the peace. In all of the documents the words "tough conditions of peace," or "harsh conditions of peace" are used. White, *Middle Ground*, 161; Vaudreuil au Conseil de Marine, 14 octobre, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 71-74v; Louvigny au Conseil de Marine, 14 octobre, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 173-174v; Délibération du Conseil de Marine sur des lettres de Vaudreuil et Louvigny, 28 décembre, 1716, AN, C11A, 36: 279-282v; Délibération du Conseil de Marine, 17 novembre, 1717, AN, C11A, 37: 371-377v.



across the water for security against the Outagamis who were in the Upper Peninsula. Their gateway secured, the Ottawas of Michilimackinac turned their attention to their most pressing need, the autumn whitefish fishery.

The peace was won by Sakima, Miscouaky, and Kinongé, although this last ogima did not live to witness it.<sup>81</sup> They had put intense pressure on Vaudreuil to send Louvigny and to open a French post at Michilimackinac. They asked for Louvigny not only because he represented the old alliance with Frontenac and was familiar with their ways, but because he listened to their suggestions and he helped them to implement their policies. Louvigny knew the limits of his authority and he did not cross them. The victory over the Outagamis was achieved with European techniques and Ottawa planning.

The peace lasted for eleven years until 1727. There were sporadic outbursts in 1722 but in general the Ottawas had no trouble from the Outagamis. However, in 1726 the Outagamis threatened an alliance with the Sioux, and the Ottawas at Michilimackinac were once again forced to respond. A delegation from Michilimackinac and Fort Pontchartrain of Ottawas, Ojibwas and Potawatomis travelled to Montreal to meet with the new governor-general, Charles Beauharnois de La Boische. Beauharnois came out to greet the delegation and was immediately impressed that the chiefs had come to meet him so early in the season. He told them at once that they

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<sup>81</sup> Kinongé made his last trip to Montreal in the summer of 1713. He was the only Ottawa chief left from the time when the French first travelled to the area of northern Lake Huron and he outlived his fellow Kamiga Le Talon as well as Noncheka of the Kiskakons, Ocheepik of the Sinagos, and Nansouakouet of the Nassauakouetons. He even outlived some of the next generation of Ottawa chiefs as Koutaoliboe and Outoutagan both died in the same year. *Paroles du Brochet, chef outaouais de Michilimackinac adressé à Vaudreuil, 23 août, 1713, AN, C11A, 34: 68-69v.*

could rely upon his support.<sup>82</sup> Good to his word he sent Lignery, now much more experienced in the affairs of the *pays d'en haut*, to attack the Outagamis. Lignery, however, was plagued by the same problems which had troubled him in his last campaign and his army of 1500 Ottawas, Ojibwas, Potawatomis, Canadians and French soldiers never found the Outagamis in sufficient numbers to attack.<sup>83</sup>

Throughout 1729 and into 1730 there was occasional violence between the Ottawas, Ojibwas, and Potawatomis on one side and the Outagamis on the other. In the spring of 1730 the Ottawas took the matter into their own hands. The Outagamis had moved to the north in order to hunt moose in the Upper Peninsula region to the north of Lake Michigan. They established a winter village at place the Ottawas called Ongekam, well within the hunting territory of the Ojibwas of Bawating. A war party consisting of over 200 Ottawas and Ojibwas left Michilimackinac in the late winter and attacked the unguarded village.<sup>84</sup> The Outagami, like the Hurons in 1649, did not expect an attack in winter. They were surprised in their villages and could not organize a defence. The Ottawas burned twenty Outagami wigwams and took 80 men prisoner. These men were taken to the Ottawa village at Bkejwanong and burned to death for the crime of encroaching on Bawating property. The Kamiga Ottawas of Bkejwanong, the Potawatomis and the Ojibwas of Wauwi-Autinoong were invited in order to participate

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<sup>82</sup> Résumé des lettres de Beauharnois, 27 avril, 1727, AN, C11A, 49: 564-571.

<sup>83</sup> Beauharnois was upset because he hoped to impress the Ottawas with an early success. He was disappointed because early indications suggested the campaign was going well and he sent word to the minister in August of a successful campaign. Beauharnois au ministre, 4 août, 1728, AN, C11A, 50: 132-132v; Beauharnois au ministre, 18 août, 1728, AN, C11A, 50: 136-136; La Perrière et La Fresnière à Beauharnois, septembre, 1728, AN, C11A, 50: 106-107; Beauharnois au ministre, 1 octobre, 1728, AN, C11A, 50: 104.

<sup>84</sup> Beauharnois au ministre, 6 mai, 1730, AN, C11A, 52: 174.

in this brutal ceremony.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, a French force, employing some Ottawas from Bkejwanong, attacked the Outagami villages to the south of Lake Michigan. This attack was also successful, but less dramatic than the Ottawa attack at Ongekam. The Outagamis were never again able to mount a threat against the Ottawa Nation.<sup>86</sup>

This French attack, under the command of Nicolas-Antoine Coulon de Villiers, was clearly a separate undertaking. Its presence indicated a new trend in the French-Ottawa alliance. The Ottawas were now acting more independently of the French and more in concert with the Ojibwas and Potawatomis. For the next thirty years, the French-Ottawa alliance was to operate in such a fashion. The long peace between France and Britain from 1713 to 1744 meant that the Ottawas were less vital to the French as a force against the British in North America. For their part, the Ottawas were pleased with their ability to maintain contact with the French through the posts at Michilimackinac and Bkejwanong, but they did not need to travel to the St. Lawrence every summer to report to the governor and to appeal for arms.

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<sup>85</sup> Beauharnois au ministre, 6 mai, 1730, AN, C11A, 52: 174v.

<sup>86</sup> Résumé des lettres de Beauharnois, 1730, AN, C11A, 52: 254-257v.

## Chapter Eight: Rekindling the Council of the Three Fires

With the final defeat of the Outagamis in 1731 the French-Ottawa alliance fell into a period of prolonged lethargy. With the reopening of Fort Michilimackinac in 1715, the Ottawas' principal demand had been met and now the French supplied arms and armourers which helped the Ottawas to prevent others from gaining access to their resources. Gradually, the Ottawas moved from active negotiation with the French to a state of inaction. The French were welcome to live in the Ottawas' country, but nevertheless they were required to meet certain conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Every year the French commandant gave presents to the ogimas of the Kiskakons and Sinagos who lived at Michilimackinac and to the ogimas of the Nassauakuetons living on the north shore of Saginaw Bay. At Bkejwanong, the Kamiga ogimas accepted gifts from the commandant of Fort Pontchartrain. These presents had been an aspect of the alliance ever since Champlain gave the axe in 1615, but only with the formal establishment of Michilimackinac did they become important. Presents served a dual purpose. On a symbolic level they were offered as an expression of alliance within the Ottawa tradition of the Feast of the Dead. Each year the French commandants and Ottawa ogimas would exchange a few beaver pelts for French arms, ammunition, knives, and luxury items such as cloth. The pelts were too few in number to have had more than a ceremonial value; the French goods were worth a great deal more. Just as gifts were given during the Feast of the Dead to honour the dead of the past year and to

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<sup>1</sup> The Indian agent George Croghan noted these conditions in his journal entry for 3 December, 1760 when the British force which was sent to take possession of Fort Pontchartrain met with Pontiac. Pontiac made two demands: a "smith to mend our guns and hatchets" and a doctor. According to Pontiac the French had always provided these services. George Croghan, "Journals" in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 1: 114-115.

reaffirm alliances, the French offered arms to show the Ottawas their desire to remain allies and to pay homage to their past engagements.<sup>2</sup>

The presents offered by the French were also a form of rent for the Ottawa land upon which the forts were situated. Although the Ottawas did not have a sense of private property, they had a strong sense of their ancestral homeland and the French were reminded constantly of the Ottawa sense of territoriality. When Vaudreuil asked Sakima and Miscouaky why the Ottawas were so firmly opposed to the Outagamis, he was told bluntly that the "people of the other shore" belonged on the other shore.<sup>3</sup> Violations of this sense of territoriality were the most serious crimes which could be committed and time and again the Ottawas were prepared to go to war to defend their home against those who breached the gateways into Lake Huron. Their long and brutal war with the Iroquois originated with a struggle over Bkejwanong; their more recent fights with Michipichy's Tionnontatés and the Miamis were over the same territory and their bloody fight with the Outagamis was caused by infringements into the northern trans-Lake Huron region. When the Nassauakueton ogima, Sakima, advocated the destruction of the entire Outagami Nation, he was expressing the seriousness of this

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<sup>2</sup> An excellent example of the nature of French presents, the necessity for giving them and the ways in which they were distributed is found in the *Etat des marchandises et munitions distribués en 1693 aux nations sauvage éloignées de la colonie accorder par Sa Majesté la meme année, septembre, 1693*, AN, C11A, 12: 290. Some of these presents were distributed at Montreal and others were given by Louvigny at Michilimackinac, by Courtemanche at the St. Joseph's River, by Mantel and Tonty at Chicago, and by La Sueur and Perrot at Chequamegon. More specific examples may be found in the Fonds Verreau of the Archives Historique du Musée du Séminaire du Québec. See for example, Lignery, *Comte de l'emploi que j'ai fait des effets du Roy qui sont restés à Michilimackinac*, 24 juin, 1729, Archives Historiques du Musée du Séminaire de Québec, Fonds Verreau, 45: 9d.

<sup>3</sup> *Paroles de M. le gouverneur général en réponse de celles que lui ont dit Koutaoiliboe, Ouenemek, et Mouet, chefs outaouais, potéouatamis, et Sakis*, 28 juillet, 1712, AN, C11A, 33: 81v.

transgression.<sup>4</sup> The French were welcome to live permanently in the ancestral homeland of the Ottawas, but they were expected to pay a tribute for this privilege.

After Michilimackinac was reopened in 1715, the Ottawas had less need to travel to Montreal or Quebec to meet with the governor. They were informed of the political situation by the commandants of the post and they were able to obtain all of the goods they required from the French when the shipments arrived from the St. Lawrence colony in the spring.<sup>5</sup> In turn, the French had less need for Ottawa military assistance after the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Their hold on the Great Lakes was secure from the British and Iroquois alike, and the threat of British attacks against the St. Lawrence colony was considerably diminished.

The French continued to warn the Ottawas of the British threat, but the Ottawa leaders ignored these warnings. They had no appropriate terms of reference from which to evaluate either the size or the ambitions of the British forces. From Michilimackinac the world looked much different than it did from Quebec and this perception, or lack of perception, lulled the Ottawas into a false sense of security. The situation at Bkejwanong had stabilized, and the French continued to operate their post at Michilimackinac according to Ottawa wishes.

In the meantime the Ottawas rejuvenated their old connections within the

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<sup>4</sup> Paroles de chefs outaouais Saguima et Miscouaky à Vaudreuil, 26 août, 1713. The French were well aware of this strong and persistent sentiment and in 1726 the commandant of Fort Saint-Louis des Illinois, Pierre-Charles de Liette, advocated the destruction of the entire Outagami Nation as a way of appeasing the Ottawas and ensuring peace in the *pays d'en haut*. *Mémoire concernant la paix que M. de Lignery a faite avec les chefs Rénards, Sakis, et Puants à la baie*, 7 juin, 1726, AN, C11A, 48: 419.

<sup>5</sup> When Charlevoix visited Michilimackinac on 28 June, 1721 he was disappointed at the attitude of the Ottawas who were there. He noted that they had little interest in the French and no interest in the mission. Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 3: 279.

Algonquian communities of the Upper Great Lakes. For example, the confrontation against the Outagamis had strengthened ties between the Ottawas and the Ojibwas of Bawating. The settlements in the Bkejwanong region had brought the Kamiga Ottawas into greater contact with the Mississauga Ojibwas who lived on an island in Wauwi-Autinoong (or Lake Sainte Claire as it was known to the French), and the Potawatomis who had moved from the St. Joseph River into a village on the western bank of the straits near Fort Pontchartrain. While the conflicts and upheavals associated with the move into Bkejwanong were certainly factors in the renewal of relations, economic advantages and shared history were also important considerations.

In the seventeenth century there had been little interaction. The three nations lived far away from one another, and they had little reason to interact. This changed with the decline in relations between the Ottawas and the Tionnontatés. In the first chapter of this thesis, the symbiotic relationship between the Tionnontatés and the Ottawas was presented as one of the critical factors in Ottawa life. Their economic strategies at the national level, at the village level, and even at the level of the family hunting group, were contingent upon the accessibility of goods which could not always be produced in the northern reaches of Lake Huron, at the northern limit of the Canadian-Carolinian transitional forest. The Tionnontatés made corn, beans, and squash available to the Ottawas at times when the Michilimackinac harvest failed in cold or wet years. The Potawatomis of southern Lake Michigan could fulfil this same role. They inhabited a region, located well within the milder climate of the Carolinian forest, from Bkejwanong in the east to Lake Michigan in the west. Most of their villages were

located along the St. Joseph River.<sup>6</sup>

For most of the seventeenth century, the Ottawas had little contact with the Potawatomis, but this changed dramatically in the late seventeenth century when the Kamiga Ottawas moved to Bkejwanong, the eastern boundary of Potawatomi territory. Relations between the French and the Potawatomis were improving, and several French officers noted the enthusiasm of these people for the wars against the Outagamis in the following decades. Charlevoix, for example, praised the Potawatomi Nation:

In all of Canada, there is no other nation which has always been so sincerely attached to the French.<sup>7</sup>

By the 1730s, the Potawatomis were being mentioned along with the Ottawas in much of the correspondence from the *pays d'en haut*. In fact, relations between the Ottawas and the Tionnontatés had deteriorated so badly that by the early thirties Potawatomis and Kamiga Ottawas were conducting raids against the Tionnontaté village at Bkejwanong.<sup>8</sup>

Just as the Ottawas had relied on Potawatomi assistance in their wars with the Outagamis, they now came to the aid of the Potawatomis in a war against the Chickasaws in 1733. Unlike the wars with the Outagamis, the war with the Chickasaws began when the French in the Illinois country became embroiled in regional politics.

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<sup>6</sup> R. David Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 33.

<sup>7</sup> "Aussi n'y a t il point en Canada de Nation, qui ait toujours été plus sincérement attaché e aux Francois." Charlevoix, *Histoire*, 3: 291.

<sup>8</sup> Beauharnois au ministre, 10 octobre, 1731, AN, C11A, 54: 417; Beauharnois au ministre, 15 octobre, 1732, AN, C11A, 57: 334v; Résumé de lettres de Beauharnois, 18 février, 1732, AN, C11A, 58: 211v; Résumé de lettres de Beauharnois et Hocquart, 1732, AN, C11A, 58: 224v; Beauharnois au ministre, 1 mai, 1733, AN, C11A, 59: 4v.



The Chickasaws came to the aid of their allies and trading partners the Natchez, and the Potawatomis came to the aid of the French. Soon the Ottawas were involved in a confrontation which had nothing to do with the Upper Great Lakes. Again, it is the strength of these alliances which must be stressed. The Ottawas only participated in the Chickasaw wars because the Potawatomis asked for help, just as the Ottawas had come to the aid of the Bawating Ojibwas against the Outagamis.<sup>9</sup>

That the Ottawas were helping the Potawatomis in this conflict, and not the French, is evident from the actions of Henri-Louis Deschamps de Boishébert, the commandant of Fort Pontchartrain. In May of 1733, Beauharnois wrote to the minister regarding the events of the summer of 1732 in the Bkejwanong region:

Several war parties of Ottawas and Potawatomis of Detroit executed attacks against the Chickasaws. Last summer he [Boishébert] had to change the route of four parties of Ottawas who went to the Flat Heads [Natchez]. He had to block their route in order to turn their arms in the direction of the Chickasaws, from whence they returned in the autumn with many scalps and a number of slaves without offering any explanation.<sup>10</sup>

The Kamiga Ottawas who took part in this campaign preferred to attack the Natchez, as they were the nation who posed the greatest threat to the Potawatomis. The Kamigas were not nearly as interested in the Chickasaws who only threatened the French in Louisiana and French communications along the Mississippi.

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<sup>9</sup> Beauharnois au ministre, 30 mai, 1733, AN, C11A, 59: 9-9v.;

<sup>10</sup> "M. de Boishébert me marque que plusieurs partys d'Ouataouais et de Poutaouïatamis de Détroit ont fait coup sur les Chicacachas et que l'esté dernier il avoit fait changer de route à quatre partis d'Outaouïais qui alloient chez les Tetes Plattes qu'il leur avoit barréle chemin et fait tourner leurs armes du costé des Chicachas d'ou ils sont revenus l'automne avec plusieurs chevelures et esclaves sans autre explication." Beauharnois au ministre, 30 mai, 1733, AN, C11A, 59: 9-9v.

The Ojibwas joined with the Ottawas and Potawatomis on these campaigns against the Chickasaws, as Beauharnois explained to the minister:

I received a letter from the Sicur de Boishébert dated 13 June which informed me of the campaigns which he has put in the field against the Chickasaws. Four war parties embarked with a total of 56 Sauteur and Mississauga Ojibwas who have come from Lake Huron, 48 Ottawas and another of 36 of the same nation, and another of 10 Ottawas along with 6 Potawatomis.<sup>11</sup>

The Ojibwas, like their Ottawa allies, were prepared to engage in warfare for the benefit of the alliance even though the Ojibwas could derive no other benefit from their actions.

Both the Ojibwas and Ottawas lived far away from the Chickasaws and the Natchez.

Together, the Ojibwas, Ottawas, and Potawatomis formed a confederacy known as the Council of Three Fires.<sup>12</sup> The three nations were closely related in terms of language, beliefs, and history, and all three believed themselves to be descended from the ancient Anishinabeg who came to the Great Lakes hundreds of years before.<sup>13</sup> The main differences between the three groups were economic and based in the different resources which were available to each nation. In spite of their shared histories, competition over resources had served to keep relations difficult, particularly between

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<sup>11</sup> The actual numbers involved are not representative of Potawatomi involvement because most of that nation's warriors resided at the St. Joseph River and would not have fallen under Boishébert's jurisdiction. "J'ay recu une lettre du Sr. de Boishébert du 13 juin dernier qui me marque qu'il a mit en campagne pour aller contre les Chicachas quatre partys, scavoir un de cinquants six Saulteurs et Mississaguez qu'il avoit rencontré dans sa tournée du lac Huron, un de quarante huit Outaouais, un autre de trente six de la meme nation et un autre de dix avec six Poutaoüatamis." Beauharnois au ministre, 24 juillet, 1733, AN, C11A, 59: 14.

<sup>12</sup> This confederacy is known as the People of the Three Fires in Michigan, and the Council of the Three Fires in Ontario. James A. Clifton, George L. Cornell, and James M. McClurken, *People of the Three Fires* (Grand Rapids: The Grand Rapids Tribal Council, 1986), iii-v.

<sup>13</sup> Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 85-96.

the Potawatomis and the Nassauakueton Ottawas. With encouragement from the French, who always encouraged peace between their allies, and because of the break in relations with the Tionnontatés, the Ottawas turned to their old allies the Potawatomis in the eighteenth century.

Like other confederacies and alliances, the Council of the Three Fires had its share of difficulties. For example, in the early spring of 1734, a group of Nassauakuetons from the village at Saginaw happened across a party of Potawatomis from the Saint Joseph River who were hunting within territory which the Nassauakuetons regarded as their own. The Nassauakuetons killed two men and one of the women. The others escaped to their village at Saint Joseph where they reported the crime to the French commandant of the post.<sup>14</sup> The Nassauakuetons quickly resolved this affair to the satisfaction of all parties by formal apologies and by the offer of Outagami slaves to replace the dead Potawatomis.<sup>15</sup>

This incident is revealing for two reasons: it is indicative of the extreme sensitivity shown by the Ottawas with regard to territorial claims, and it shows the effectiveness of diplomacy within the Council of the Three Fires. Like the Outagami hunters who trespassed on Ojibwa land in search of game, the Potawatomi party was aware of the consequences of trespassing on Nassauakueton land, but they were willing to test those limits in the important search for game. Within the Council of the Three Fires this was a situation which required diplomacy, not violence, for a solution. If the

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<sup>14</sup> Beauharnois au ministre, 11 octobre, 1734, AN, C11A, 61: 314v.

<sup>15</sup> Beauharnois au ministre, 17 octobre, 1736, AN, C11A, 65: 143.

Nassauauketons had happened across an Iroquois or Outagami hunting party, the result would have been war. In this case the event was settled according to the rules of the Confederacy. Slaves were offered, apologies were made, and no lasting harm was done to the Confederacy.

Of the four members of the Ottawa Nation, the Nassauauketons were the most isolated from outside contacts. The Kamiga Ottawas in Bkejwanong necessarily had the closest ties to the Potawatomis of Bkejwanong and the Mississauga Ojibwas of Wauwi-Autinoong. The Kiskakons and Sinagos of Michilimackinac now maintained the closest relations with the Ojibwas of Bawating. The closest ties were ones of national affiliation and all four Ottawa nations were loyal to those within the larger Ottawa Nation itself. Among the allies, Ottawa loyalty was shifting from the Tionnontatés to the Ojibwas and Potawatomis. By the 1730s, loyalty to the French came last in this scheme.

There were strong spiritual reasons for the rekindling of the Council of the Three Fires in the early eighteenth century. All three groups accepted a shared interpretation of their history. Elders of all three nations gave similar accounts of the way in which these three Anishinabeg peoples came into the region of the Upper Great Lakes. According to all three traditions a group of people, the Anishinabeg, journeyed west along the Ottawa River, through Lake Nipissing, and onto Manitoulin Island. The traditions regarding the reasons for the migration and the reasons for leaving Nipissing and Manitoulin differ, but on the whole the account is the same. When the Anishinabeg arrived at Michilimackinac (according to the Ottawa and Potawatomi versions) or

Bawating (according to the Ojibwa version) the group split into three parts. The Ottawa stayed in Lake Huron; the Ojibwas moved into Lake Superior, and the Potawatomis migrated into Lake Michigan. Though their dialects were quite distinct, and though all three nations practised different economic strategies, they shared a common heritage which enabled them to fuse as a larger confederacy during the period of the 1720s.<sup>16</sup>

In order to appreciate the way the Three Fires peoples understood their world, it is useful to imagine the mental maps which they created of the Upper Great Lakes region. The linear maps drawn by the French hydrographers are of limited use in such a task. Instead, one must consider the cyclical, circular imagination of the Three Fires peoples. They pictured their home as an immense medicine wheel, with each nation responsible for a certain well-delineated area. For example, the Kiskakon Ottawas placed the hub of the wheel at Michilimackinac. They understood the eastern part of the medicine wheel (including Manitoulin, Nottawasaga, and Bkejwanong) to be Ottawa territory. To the south they located the Tionnontaté region, to the west the Potawatomis and to the north the Ojibwas. Each direction connoted important spiritual meanings and responsibilities as well. The east was primordial, its people were said to have existed before all the others. As the "elder brothers" the Ottawas, who inhabited the east, were responsible for the well-being of all of their allies. They were the gatekeepers.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The different accounts are to be found in Assikinack, "Warlike Customs," 307; Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 85-96; Warren, *History of the Ojibway*, 80-85. This story of the origin of the three Nations is only one aspect of the shared cultural heritage of the members of the Council of Three Fires. Their beliefs regarding creation, and the spiritual world are very close. All three held similar philosophical notions about the medicine wheel and the importance of the sense of place.

<sup>17</sup> Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 80; Johnston, *Ojibwa Heritage*, 94-102; Johnston, *Ojibway Ceremonies*, 120-121; also see Four Winds Development Project, *The Sacred Tree: Reflections on Native American Spirituality* (Twin Lakes, Wisconsin, Lotus Light Publications, 1989), 42-47.

In the seventeenth century, the relations between the three nations of the Council of the Three Fires had been formal and symbolic rather than necessary. Every year representatives of the Potawatomi and Ojibwa nations were invited to the Feast of the Dead ceremonies held on Manitoulin Island or at Michilimackinac, and every year the Ottawas repeated their vow to defend the Ojibwas and Potawatomis from attack, particularly from the east.<sup>18</sup> Neither the Potawatomis, nor the Ojibwas were in need of this protection however, and the Ottawas were not called upon to aid their allies until the Outagamis began to intrude upon Ojibwa land in the early 1700s. Similarly, when the Potawatomis became embroiled in a war against the Chickasaws in the early 1730s, the Ottawas fulfilled their obligations by sending warriors to join the Potawatomis on their campaigns. A final reason for the rekindling of the Council of the Three Fires was economic. The Ottawas had lost the Tionnontatés as trading partners, and the Potawatomis, whose economy was essentially the same as the Tionnontatés', filled a void in the Ottawa economy.

In fact, by middle of the 1730s, relations between the Ottawas and Tionnontatés were more or less hostile. In 1738 the governor Beauharnois reproached the Ottawas for their attacks against the Tionnontatés at *le Détroit*. He asked them why they were bathing the Bkejwanong region in blood when they ought to have been fighting on behalf of the French. "From now on," Beauharnois intoned pompously, "another affair must concern us; it is that of our enemy, the Chickasaws."<sup>19</sup> This affair was no longer

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<sup>18</sup> Charlevoix, *Journal*, 3: 377ff.

<sup>19</sup> "Une autre affaire doit désormais nous occuper, c'est celle des chicachas notre ennemy." Beauharnois au ministre, 11 octobre, 1738, AN, C11A, 69: 134v.

the Ottawas' concern but they did not simply tell Beauharnois to mind his own affairs; they thanked him for his words and kept their promise to go on the warpath on his behalf. The Ottawas still wanted to keep their French allies happy, even though they did not feel as dependant upon their help as they had been during the wars against the Iroquois and the Outagamis.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, even though France remained a valuable ally, Ottawa relations with the French had faded considerably. The Ottawas were unaware of the danger from the British which loomed on the horizon, and they allowed their contacts with the French to diminish. The French, on the other hand, took a new interest in the alliance. At the same time as the Ottawas were renewing their ties with the Potawatomis and Ojibwas, the French were preparing for a confrontation with the British. In 1736 a young French officer and Indian agent to the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy, Philippe-Thomas Chabert de Joncaire, took a census of all of the Indian people of New France. The title of Joncaire's document, "Census of the Indian Nations Which Have Relations With the Government of Canada, the Warriors of Each and Their Arms," indicates that this was no ordinary census. Just as Cadillac reported (falsely as it happened) the number of warriors at Bkejwanong, so did Joncaire list the warriors who might possibly assist the French in the coming wars.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The Ottawas, Ojibwas, and Potawatomis from the entire Lake Huron region took part in this campaign. See, *Mémoire du sieur Auger, voyageur des pays d'en haut*, mai, 1738, AN, C11A, 69: 152.

<sup>21</sup> There are two reasons why Joncaire was given the task: he had just succeeded his father as the agent to the Iroquois and the governor felt this chore would help him to learn about the Indians of New France; second, the French were preparing for war with Britain. *Dénombrement des nations sauvages qui ont rapport sur le gouvernement du Canada, des guerriers de chacune avec leurs armories*, 1736, AN, C11A, 66: 236-256v.

The number of warriors listed in Joncaire's report provide a good indication of why the French needed the Ottawas to help them to fight against the British. The Ottawas had always needed French arms and ammunition, but as the Anglo-American population expanded along the eastern seaboard, and as inland expansion became a distinct possibility, the Ottawas would have to rely upon the armies of France to help defend the gateways to Lake Huron. There were 180 warriors at Michilimackinac and Joncaire noted that the, "Kiskakons and the Sinagos share this village."<sup>22</sup> At Saginaw, Joncaire counted 80 Nassauakueton warriors under the command of Sakima, who by this time was likely too old to take an active command.<sup>23</sup> Finally at *le Détroit* there were some 200 Kamiga Ottawa warriors.<sup>24</sup> Joncaire counted 250 Tionnontaté warriors at *le Détroit*, 150 Potawatomi warriors at *le Détroit*, 30 Sauteur Ojibwa warriors at *le Sault de Sainte Marie*, and 150 Mississauga Ojibwa warriors at *lac Sainte Claire*.<sup>25</sup>

Just as the Ottawas still needed the French, the French still needed the Ottawas. If war with the British were to break out, the French forces in North America would

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<sup>22</sup> Dénombrement des nations sauvages, 1736, AN, C11A, 66: 238. Unfortunately Joncaire did not indicate the specific numbers belonging to the two nations. There were more Kiskakons than Sinagos, but it is difficult to know how many more.

<sup>23</sup> Dénombrement des nations sauvages, 1736, AN, C11A, 66: 238v. Sakima would have been in his late fifties or early sixties by this point.

<sup>24</sup> Dénombrement des nations sauvages, 1736, AN, C11A, 66: 245v.

<sup>25</sup> Joncaire's estimates are reasonably accurate even though many of the young men whom he would have considered as warriors were off on various expeditions at the time of the census taking. Joncaire's report was confirmed a year later when the intendant Hocquart wrote a report on the colony using information which he had gathered from the various posts in the *pays d'en haut*. This report provided similar numbers: 140 Ottawa warriors at *le Détroit* and 200 Ottawa warriors at Michilimackinac. The French were beginning to sense that the uneasy peace which Walpole had maintained in Europe could not last forever and the officials in the colony were thinking about their defensive plans. These reports were written in order for the minister of marine to make informed decisions regarding the security of the colony. Dénombrement des nations sauvages, 1736, AN, C11A, 66: 238v-246; Détail de toute la colonie, AN, C11A, 67: 103v.



again have to rely heavily on their Indian allies. The French did not have sufficient numbers of regular soldiers, or *troupes de la marine*, to defend the St. Lawrence colony. It would be absurd to imagine a defence of the huge arc of territory which the French claimed from Quebec along the St. Lawrence, through the Great Lakes to the Mississippi and all the way to New Orleans. The only chance they had to provide an adequate defence was to rely on the assistance of their Indian allies. The problem for those charged with the defence of the colony concerned the attitude of those allies. Some were more enthusiastic in their support of the French than were others.

Those who supported the French argued in favour of taking a cautious approach in foreign relations. By 1738 all of the old leaders from the wars with the Outagamis had either died or retired from active campaigning. Sakima, the youngest of the Ottawa leaders of that time, was the only one still alive and he could no longer lead the Nassauakuctons into battle. Second, the posts in the *pays d'en haut* were operating according to the wishes of the Ottawa people who lived near them. At Michilimackinac and at Fort Pontchartrain, there were armourers to repair the guns which the Ottawas damaged from misuse and there seemed to be no shortage of either weapons or ammunition. Faced with an increasingly uncertain future, the young Ottawa ogimas preferred to proceed carefully and to remain good allies of the French.

The Ottawa leadership continued to support the French for two interconnected reasons: firstly, they began to fear the British and secondly a conservative philosophy influenced the new, unproved leaders to accept the relationships which their ancestors had maintained. Neither their fears, nor their conservatism can adequately explain the

continuation of the alliance with the French, but if one considers elements of both sentiments in the context of the events of the 1740s and 1750s, elements of the old gateways strategy are clearly discernible. The new leaders, Mikinak of the Kiskakons, Nissowaquet of the Nassauakuetons, Kinousaki of the Kamigas, and Pentalouan of the Sinagos, did not want to assert bold new policies.<sup>26</sup> It was enough to be renewing ties with the Potawatomis and Ojibwas.

Personality played no small part in the Ottawa decision to continue in the French interest in the 1740s and 1750s. A French commander, Pierre-Joseph Céloron de Blainville, was now influential in the affairs of the *pays d'en haut* in the same manner as Louis de La Porte de Louvigny had been years before. Céloron was appointed to command at Michilimackinac in 1738 and in his first communication from the post he announced his success in persuading the Kiskakons, Sinagos, and Ojibwas of Bawating to continue the war against the Chickasaws. His method was simple; he told the Ottawas at the post of the danger posed by the British and their allies the Chickasaws. According to Céloron, if this danger remained unchecked the Potawatomis would soon come under attack.<sup>27</sup>

Céloron's first year in command at Michilimackinac saw one of the biggest

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<sup>26</sup> The profiles of several of these men in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* are unfortunately inaccurate. Kinousaki was not the same person as the Quinousaquy. Mikinak is a common Ottawa name meaning Turtle and there are a number of references to people of this name. Pentalouan does not have a profile in the *DCB*, but he figures in a number of histories under the name Pennahouel. This name is simply a mistaken transcription of the name which appears in the French documents. Historians who used printed translations of the documents (such as the *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* or the *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*) rather than the originals have thus repeated the mistake. Nissowaquet's profile is reasonably accurate.

<sup>27</sup> Etat général de la dépense que moi Céloron, capitaine et commandant pour le roi à Michilimackinac, ait faite par ordre de Monsieur le général pour ramener les sauvages, AN, C11A, 72: 123-124.

conferences to take place at the post in years. Representatives of the four Ottawa nations, as well as representatives of the Mississauga and Bawating Ojibwas, Potawatomis, and Tionnontatés (who had been invited at Céloron's request) had assembled at Michilimackinac in the early summer of 1739 to take part in the great Feast of the Dead. This Feast was being held in honour of the decision taken to move the Nassauakueton village from Saginaw Bay to Waugaukuezee (which the French called l'Arbre Croche) in northern Lake Michigan to the west of Michilimackinac.<sup>28</sup> According to Nissowaquet, the old quarrels between the Ottawas and the Potawatomis had been detrimental to the long tradition of the Ottawa Nation's place in Lake Huron. It had not been proper to fight in one's own home against one's own allies. The hereditary ogima of the Nassauakuetons, Nagachioué, supported this position and added that it would be better to unite against the Chickasaws, as Céloron suggested.<sup>29</sup> Nagachioué would have done better to remain quiet as he was killed in the campaign and succeeded by his son Cabina.<sup>30</sup>

Nissowaquet, who had replaced Sakima as the war ogima of the Nassauakuetons, formed an immediate liking for Céloron, and he spoke in favour of the new commandant's proposal at the council meeting which was under way. The two other

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<sup>28</sup> Etat général de la dépense, 4 juillet, 1739, AN, C11A, 72: 123-124.

<sup>29</sup> Etat de la dépense, 4 juillet, 1739, AN, C11A, 72: 123-124; Etat des fournitures faites par François Ménard, par ordre de Coulon de Villiers, à des familles Népassingues, Potéouatamis, et d'Outaouais étant allés en guerre chez les Chicachas, mars, 1740, AN, C11A, 73: 259-260; Etat de la dépense faite à Montréal pour et à l'occasion de la guerre des Chicachas, 16 Septembre, 1740, AN, C11A, 72: 188-218; Beauharnois au ministre, 2 octobre, 1740, AN, C11A, 74: 13-14v.

<sup>30</sup> Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac de la bande de la Fourche à M. le marquis de Beauharnois, 6 juillet, 1740, AN, C11A, 74: 16; Réponses de M. le Marquis de Beauharnois aux Outaouais de Michilimackinac de la bande de la Fourche, 9 juillet, 1740, AN, C11A, 74: 19-19v.

young, but influential Ottawa war ogimas at the council meeting, Mikinak who had succeeded Koutaoliboe as ogima of the Kiskakons and Kinousaki who had succeeded Miscouaky as the ogima of the Kamigas at Bkejwanong, supported Nissowaquet and Céloron.<sup>31</sup> As children all of these men had known Louvigny and now it seemed safest to follow the suggestion of this new French commander who seemed to be cut from the same cloth. In an almost unprecedented show of unity, almost all of the other prominent Ottawas at the Feast of the Dead, Mincheokima of the Kamigas, Akikamingue of the Kiskakons and Chelaouiskaouois of the Sinagos, agreed. They respected the decisions of their predecessors and they respected the success which had seen the ancestral homeland preserved from the covetous outside world. Now, in the company of their ancient allies the Ojibwas and Potawatomis, the new leadership of the Ottawas confirmed their decision to cast their lot with the French as their ancestors had done when they met Champlain in 1615.

All council decisions required the consensus of the whole group, however, and there were always some who accepted the decision of the group unhappily. In this case the dissenting opinion came from the ogima of the Sinagos, Pandalouan. Pandalouan spoke eloquently in favour of an isolationism. He argued that the best policy was to abandon the French cause, to refuse the war against the Chickasaws, and to conserve the Ottawas' strength for matters which affected Lake Huron. These points had merit and certainly some of those who held to the anti-French sentiment which had existed since the beginning of the alliance, supported Pandalouan's view and appreciated his words.

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<sup>31</sup> Beauharnois au ministre, 2 octobre, 1740, AN, C11A, 74: 13-14v.

Like Ocheepik before him, Pentalouan protested loudly against the decision to remain in the alliance with the French.<sup>32</sup>

At first, Pentalouan was merely bitter and he reluctantly accompanied the warriors on the campaign against the Chickasaws only because the Sinago warriors were eager to take part. Over time his anger and his dislike of Céloron and all things French grew. He scorned the silver medallion which Céloron gave to each of the ogimas to commemorate their actions. In the spring of 1740, he went to see the Ojibwa leaders at Bawating, Otilinois and Oniskaouois, and he told them to abandon the French cause. He pretended to be an emissary of his people and thus gave his claim an official seal of approval. The two Ojibwas had attended the council the year before, however, and they knew of Pentalouan's dissenting attitude. They thought it curious that the Ottawa council should have appointed him to deliver such news and they told him so which enraged him even further.<sup>33</sup>

At the end of May, 1740, with the help of some like-minded companions, Pentalouan broke into one of the French storerooms at Fort Michilimackinac and stole several kegs of brandy. The group then proceeded to drink itself into a state of oblivion. In the middle of the night after brawling and raising a commotion, Pentalouan decided to rid Michilimackinac of the French forever by blowing the fort to pieces. With the help of three of his drunken companions, he smashed in the door of

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<sup>32</sup> Beauharnois au ministre, 3 octobre, 1740, AN, C11A, 74: 21-22v.

<sup>33</sup> Paroles de M. le marquis de Beauharnois aux Outaouais, Potéouatamis, Sakis, Renards, Folles Avoines, Sauteux et autres, par son ordre à l'occasion de Pentalouan actuellement au cachot, 8 juillet, 1740, AN, C11A, 74: 23-24; Beauharnois au ministre, 3 octobre, 1740, AN, C11A, 74: 21-22v.

the powder magazine in the southeast corner of the post. He set fire to one of the powder kegs and ran. Unfortunately his companions, who had become bored with his blundering attempts to set the fire, fell asleep and were killed in the explosion which also destroyed the magazine and part of the soldier' barracks.<sup>34</sup>

The explosion and ensuing fire could easily have poisoned relations between the Sinagos and the French, but Céloron took steps to limit the damage. Céloron immediately placed Pentalouan under arrest and took him to Montreal to be tried by the governor. Beauharnois also decided to take steps to defuse the situation, and he sent invitations to the representatives of many nations of the Upper Great Lakes in order to inform them of the threat from the British. The conference was held in Montreal in early July of 1740. An atmosphere of apprehension and uncertainty permeated the camps and on the night of 7 July, a brawl began in which an Ottawa killed an Outagami. As Beauharnois opened the conference the next day he announced that the incident had already been resolved and that the Ottawas had agreed to replace the Outagami's loss. He then warned the entire assembly, "that brandy kills more people than warfare," and then presented the case against Pentalouan.<sup>35</sup>

After Beauharnois had listed Pentalouan's offenses, a prominent warrior of the Sinago Ottawas got to his feet and asked for time to be allowed to discuss the matter. Beauharnois agreed and the Sinagos left the conference. They returned in one month and a man who had been a rival of Pentalouan's for the position of ogima of the

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<sup>34</sup> Paroles de M. le marquis de Beauharnois aux Outaouais, 8 juillet, 1740, AN, C11A, 74: 23-24.

<sup>35</sup> "l'eau-de-vie tue plus de monde que la guerre." Paroles de M. le marquis de Beauharnois aux Outaouais, 8 juillet, 1740, AN, C11A, 74: 23-24.

Sinagos, Nainchéoquima, was chosen to speak on their behalf. He spoke briefly and to the point. Pentalouan merited his disgrace and he had lost his authority with the Sinagos. It was not, however, customary for the leaders of the Ottawa Nation to compound the misery of one who had damaged his or her own reputation, and Nainchéoquima asked Beauharnois to free Pentalouan in order to give him the opportunity to right the wrongs which he had caused. Beauharnois appreciated the logic of this proposal, and for the good of the alliance he put his personal rancour aside and had Pentalouan freed from prison.<sup>36</sup> Beauharnois, a man who knew something of politics himself, appreciated the gesture of having Pentalouan's rival speak on his behalf and he realized that the affair was over and that the alliance was still on solid ground.

Céloron found himself tested time and again during his tenure both at Michilimackinac and at Fort Pontchartrain when he was transferred there in 1741. The Nassauauquets were still at Saginaw Bay, in spite of their decision to move to northern Lake Michigan and they occasionally got into trouble with the Potawatomis of the St. Joseph River.<sup>37</sup> The Kiskakons had depleted the soil around Michilimackinac and some of their nation wanted to move to Waugaunaukezee near the place where the

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<sup>36</sup> Réponse des Outaounis à la parole de M. le marquis de Beauharnois concernant l'affaire de Pentalouan par Nainché Oquima chef, 7 août, 1740, AN, C11A, 74: 25. Pentalouan did in fact repent for the difficulties which he had caused and he apologized to the Ottawa council, not for his views, but rather for his attempt to subvert the council's authority once a decision had been made. By 1743, Verchères reported to Beauharnois that the council had restored his dignity to him after he had made a formal apology. Beauharnois au ministre, 13 octobre, 1743, AN, C11A, 79: 171v.

<sup>37</sup> Mémoire des frais, 24 janvier, 1741, AN, C11A, 76: 240.

Nassauakuetons proposed moving.<sup>38</sup> The French would have preferred to have all of the Ottawas at Michilimackinac where they could be easily organized for military campaigns. At Bkejwanong C loron found that the problems with the Tionnontat s had never been satisfactorily resolved and this resulted in seemingly endless squabbles over which he had no control. Again he relied upon his personal influence. In June of 1742 a delegation of Kiskakon Ottawas went to Montreal to see Beauharnois regarding the change in command at Michilimackinac. They thanked the governor for appointing C loron and they hoped that his successor, Verch res, was a man of the same calibre.<sup>39</sup>

When he transferred to Fort Pontchartrain, C loron made his most important contribution to the alliance. He met delegates of a Nassauakueton party from Saginaw who announced their intention to go to the British at Oswego to trade.<sup>40</sup> For some time the Nassauakuetons and the Kamigas of Bkejwanong had been in contact with British agents who made friendly overtures towards them. C loron told Nissowaquet, who was leading the group, that trade with the British would lead to British domination and the expulsion of the Ottawa Nation from Lake Huron. C loron spoke with such

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<sup>38</sup> C loron de Blainville   Beauharnois, 2 septembre, 1741, AN, C11A, 75: 221-221v.

<sup>39</sup> Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac de la bande de la Fourche, Sinagos et Kiskakons   Monsieur le marquis de Beauharnois, gouverneur g n ral de la Nouvelle France, 16 juin, 1742, AN, C11A, 77: 151-152.

<sup>40</sup> The Ottawas had always threatened to abandon the French in order to trade with the British, but by 1725 the threat seemed to the old governor to be more serious. Vaudreuil noted this in a letter concerning the British plans for Oswego. The Ottawas, he argued, were as much in the interests of the British and Iroquois as the French. The Ottawas told the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy that all the Lakes were Ottawa possessions and that they had as much right to trade at the new British fort at Oswego as well as in the *pays d'en haut*. Vaudreuil was somewhat mystified by this new sentiment. It seemed to him that nothing had changed and that, in spite of the peace that Walpole was keeping in Europe, the British were still enemies. Vaudreuil au ministre, 22 mai, 1725, AN, C11A, 47: 169v-170.



conviction and sincerity that Nissowaquet believed the warning and made the decision never again to trade at Oswego. He informed the Ottawa council at Bkejwanong of Céloron's impassioned plea and although there were some who doubted Céloron's motives, there was a genuine sense among the council that he had spoken the truth.<sup>41</sup>

To prevent further attempts by the Ottawas to go to the British, Beauharnois sent an armourer, the eldest son of Amiot who was the armourer at Michilimackinac, to the Nassauakueton village at Saginaw.<sup>42</sup> The Ottawas at Michilimackinac were also concerned and they asked Beauharnois to tell the Jesuits to allow Amiot to spend his time repairing guns rather than wasting it by making chalices and other religious objects.<sup>43</sup> Clearly there was a growing concern among the Ottawas about the security of their region and about Céloron's warning about the British. At Fort Pontchartrain, Kinousaki of the Kamiga Ottawas was of the same opinion and he told Céloron that he had already been warned by another of the French commanders in the west, Pierre-Benoît Payen de Noyan, about the British threat.<sup>44</sup>

His concern was shared by Mikinak of the Kiskakon Ottawas, who spent much time travelling from Bkejwanong to Michilimackinac, and who sensed the growing concern of the Ottawas in all of their villages. Mikinak told Beauharnois of his concern over the spirit of the younger warriors who were anxious to fight. He wanted

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<sup>41</sup> Paroles des Outaouais du Sagouinan à Beauharnois, 18 juin, 1742, AN, C11A, 77: 153-153v.

<sup>42</sup> Réponse de Beauharnois aux paroles des Outaouais du Sagouinan, 24 juin, 1742, AN, C11A, 77: 155-155v.

<sup>43</sup> Paroles des Outaouais de Michilimackinac, 16 juin, 1742, AN, C11A, 77: 151-152.

<sup>44</sup> Paroles des Outaouais du Détroit en deux bandes à M. le marquis de Beauharnois, 14 juillet, 1742, AN, C11A, 77: 196-201.

Beauharnois to give them news which would raise the spirits of the youth and turn them against the British.<sup>45</sup> Mikinak, like Kinongé before him, spent much of his time travelling along the western shore of Lake Huron, calling on the Nassauauuctons at Saginaw on his way to see the Kamigas at Bkejwanong. Like Kinongé, Mikinak was firmly committed to the French alliance and he was one of the few Ottawas still willing to make the occasional trip to Montreal.<sup>46</sup>

Mikinak became Beauharnois' most important ally and his most reliable source of information in the *pays d'en haut*.<sup>47</sup> By travelling so extensively in Lake Huron, Mikinak was able to stay abreast of the latest developments in the Ottawa villages, but in return he expected Beauharnois to confer a special status upon him in order to impress the other Ottawas. He asked Beauharnois for medals in order to prove to the rest of the Ottawas how important an ally of the French he was and how highly Beauharnois valued his friendship and advice. With this status he would be able to convince the others of the benefits of the alliance with the French.<sup>48</sup>

Beauharnois was only too happy to comply with Mikinak's wishes and he

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<sup>45</sup> Paroles des Outaouais du Détroit en deux bandes à M. le marquis de Beauharnois, 14 juillet, 1742, AN, C11A, 77: 196-201.

<sup>46</sup> He went to Montreal in 1740, in 1741, and again in 1742. Most of the other Ottawas, like Nissowaquet for example, told Beauharnois that the voyage along the Ottawa River was too time consuming. Paroles de Beauharnois aux outaouais, 12 juin, 1741, AN, C11A, 75: 91v-92; Paroles des Outaouais du Saguinan à Beauharnois, 18 juin, 1742, AN, C11A, 77: 153; Paroles des outaouais de détroit, 14 juillet, 1742, AN, C11A, 77: 197.

<sup>47</sup> Paroles de Beauharnois aux Outaouais, 12 juin, 1741, AN, C11A, 77: 91v-92.

<sup>48</sup> Paroles de Outaouais, 14 juillet, 1742, AN, C11A, 77: 197.

promised "the most beautiful silver medals" as soon as he could get them from France.<sup>49</sup> He wrote a long report to the minister of marine on the state of Indian affairs in the colony and he confidently predicted that, "in the case of war with Britain, the Iroquois will remain neutral, but the Ottawas and Sauteurs will fight for us."<sup>50</sup> In fact, the Ottawas were so concerned about the possibility of British penetration into Lake Huron that Kinousaki made strong peace overtures to the Tionnontatés and asked them to return to Bkejwanong after they had moved their village to Sandusky in the Ohio Valley region.<sup>51</sup> Thus, when hostilities commenced in earnest in the summer of 1744 the Ottawas were among the first to take part in the fighting. The new commandant at Fort Pontchartrain, Paul-Joseph Le Moyne de Longueuil, heard of the presence of a British patrol in the Ohio Valley which had been sent in order to disrupt French communications in the region. Longueuil informed Kinousaki of this and the Kamiga war ogima left immediately with a party of 35 warriors. The British soldiers, far from their base and full of apprehension about the nature of warfare in the *pays d'en haut*, did not stay for long. When their scouts detected the presence of Ottawa warriors in the region, they abandoned their plans and left immediately for the safety of Oswego.<sup>52</sup> Céloron's efforts were already paying dividends.

By 1745 Ottawa and Ojibwa warriors from Michilimackinac were going to

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<sup>49</sup> Réponse de Beauharnois aux paroles des Outaouais de Détroit, 2<sup>e</sup> juillet, 1742, AN, C11A, 77: 225-230v.

<sup>50</sup> Mémoire concernant diverses nations indiennes, 1742, AN, C11A, 78: 388-392.

<sup>51</sup> Paroles de kinousaki, chef Outaouais de Détroit, aux hurons installés à Sandoské, 5 mai, 1743, AN, C11A, 79: 95-96.

<sup>52</sup> Beauharnois au ministre, 7 novembre, 1744, AN, C11A, 81: 126-13v.

Montreal in order to participate in raids against the Anglo-American colonists.<sup>53</sup> Kinousaki and Mikinak led war parties to Montreal from Michilimackinac and Bkejwanong respectively, and Nissowaquet led his Nassauakueton warriors from Saginaw to the St. Lawrence where they took part in guerrilla warfare known as *la petite guerre*.<sup>54</sup> This type of war was waged with devastating effect against the Anglo-American colonists who now had to fear for their security on a daily basis. Just as the Iroquois had terrified the French settlers at Lachine in the summer of 1688, now the Ottawas and Canadians attacked the Anglo-American settlers in small groups throughout the Albany region. The Ottawas and the Canadians, many of whom had learned the techniques of *la petite guerre* as *coureurs de bois*, acted as scouts for the French army using their canoe skills to get information to the French commanders with great speed. Their British counterparts could not hope to communicate or travel so effectively.

As the war dragged on, however, enthusiasm lagged and by 1747 some of the Ottawas advocated abandoning the alliance with the French. The fighting between the French and the British was becoming less and less comprehensible for the nations of the Upper Great Lakes. Most of these people had not been born during the last war between the French and British and the others were too young to have participated. They had no experience with the European concept of war and though they generally approved of the style of war of the Canadian militia, they were disgusted with the French military. They approved of the campaign against Saratoga in August of 1747,

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<sup>53</sup> Beauharnois au ministre, 28 octobre, 1745, AN, C11A, 83: 102-107v.

<sup>54</sup> *Mémoire des ouvrages faits par Pierre Belleperche pour des Outaouais allant en guerre (bandes de Mikinak et Kinousaki, Indiens du Saguinan)*, 23 juillet, 1745, AN, C11A, 314-314v.

but they were frustrated by the lack of similar successes.<sup>55</sup> After Saratoga, the chiefs and the allied warriors who had taken part told the French that they would not fight against the Indian allies of the British. Frankly they were pleased to watch the two European nations fight their battles between themselves.<sup>56</sup>

Among the Ottawas there was growing disagreement over participation in the war. Mikinak advocated fighting on while several others wanted to follow the example of the Ojibwas who had already gone home. The Tionnontaté were certainly in favour of abandoning the war, and their chief, Orontony, went even further by attacking some of the French settlements at Bkejwanong.<sup>57</sup> The other Ottawa ogimas, however, decided to support of the French position. Even Pentalouan, who by this time had cleared his name of the disastrous events at Michilimackinac, was certain that support of the French cause was in the best interest of the Ottawa Nation. After the Tionnontaté attack against the French, Pentalouan went to Montreal at the head of Sinago war party and volunteered to take part in a raid against the Anglo-American settlements.<sup>58</sup>

Not all of the Ottawas accepted the opinion of their ogimas, however, and some began to argue in favour of chasing both the French and the British from the Upper

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<sup>55</sup> Mémoire des parties de guerre qui ont été équipés à Montréal, 10 août, 1747, AN, C11A, 87: 2-14.

<sup>56</sup> Mémoire du Canada, 1747, AN, C11A, 87: 16.

<sup>57</sup> Mikinak never advocated an attack against the French, he merely suggested withdrawing from the fighting in order to preserve Ottawa strength. The Tionnontaté's under their leader Orontony at Sandusky in Lake Erie did openly break with the French interest, but Mikinak did not join in this attempt. He merely proposed an isolationist policy such as the Ojibwas were putting into effect. Mémoire de Canada, 1747, AN, C11A, 87: 21.

<sup>58</sup> Journal concernant ce qui s'est passé d'intéressant dans la colonie à l'occasion des mouvements de guerre, 1747, AN, C11A, 87: 88v.

Great Lakes. In the late summer of 1747 three Frenchmen were killed when they were caught by a party of Nassauakuetons from Saginaw.<sup>59</sup> Clearly if the war were to last much longer, and if the situation did not change the French- Ottawa alliance would collapse as more and more Ottawas questioned the value in fighting in a war which appeared to have no benefit.

With the end of hostilities in 1748, the crisis was momentarily averted.

Kinousaki and Mikinak appealed to the new French commandant-general Roland-Michel Barrin de La Galissonière to forgive the transgressions committed by the Nassauakuetons.<sup>60</sup> Nissowaquet and a delegation of Nassauakuetons went to Montreal in the late summer of 1748 to ask forgiveness in person from La Galissonière.<sup>61</sup> Everywhere in the *pays d'en haut* allies who had turned on the French made their apologies and asked forgiveness. A growing gulf existed, however, between the Mikinak, Nissowaquet, Kinousaki, and Pentalouan on the one hand, and the Ottawa youth on the other. The four Ottawa ogimas had a better sense of the dangers posed to their ancestral homeland by the British than did young warriors who were tired of the French and their seemingly ineffective ways of waging war. For people who had lived their whole lives around Lake Huron, the British menace was hard to discern and the

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<sup>59</sup> Mémoire concernant ce qui s'est passé, 1747, AN, C11A, 87: 90.

<sup>60</sup> La Galissonière was named to the post of commandant-general in the absence of Jacques-Pierre de Taffanel de La Jonquière who had been named governor-general in March of 1746. While on his way to accept his post, La Jonquière was forced to return to France by storms and disease amongst the sailors of his squadron. In May 1747 he was captured by a British squadron under the orders of Vice-Admiral George Anson and Rear-Admiral Peter Warren. After these misadventures, La Jonquière was finally able to take the post of governor-general of New France in August of 1749.

<sup>61</sup> Journal concernant ce qui s'est passé d'intéressant dans la colonie de novembre 1747 à octobre 1748, AN, C11A, 87: 180.

younger Ottawas continued to apply pressure on their leaders to pursue an autonomous policy in concert with the Ojibwas and Potawatomis.<sup>62</sup>

In the period between the end of the War of Austrian Succession and the beginning of the Seven Years War, the alliance between the French and the Ottawa was again put in jeopardy. Nissowaquet's promise never to trade with the British was ignored by the younger members of all four nations of Ottawas who began to trade at Oswego. The Ottawa ogimas remained committed to the French alliance, but many young Ottawas shared neither the insecurity nor the sense of loyalty which bound their leaders to the French. Prominent younger men went to trade at Oswego and told the French quite honestly that they did so out of a sense of curiosity. For them the British were no different than the French. The Ottawa youths still demanded French weapons and ammunition, but they were ambivalent about the French cause.<sup>63</sup>

Indeed, the cooling of relations in the late 1740s may be attributed to the ogimas' need to reconcile the Ottawa youth with the Ottawa leadership. Mikinak certainly made good use of the Anglo-French rivalry to protect Ottawa interests in the *pays d'en haut* and to assert his own influence within the confederacy. He was by no means the first to employ this tactic (La Petite Racine had used it years earlier), but he was the most accomplished. His usual tactic was to swear to the French that he would never go to the British base at Albany. He kept his word but sent his young wife in his place. There are several reports of "la femme de Mikinak" making the long journey

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<sup>62</sup> Journal concernant ce qui s'est passé d'intéressant dans la colonie de novembre 1747 à octobre 1748, AN, C11A, 87: 175-177v.

<sup>63</sup> Paroles adressées à La Jonquière par les Kiskakons, juillet, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 38-39.

from Bkejwanong to Albany after his advanced years prevented him from going.<sup>64</sup>

Typical of this new lack of respect for the alliance was the attitude of two young Kiskakons, Noukouata and Pennantouenne. They arrived in Montreal in the summer of 1751 after having traded English rum to the Potawatomis for their furs. The Potawatomis complained to the French commander at the St. Joseph River post that they did not like the English "rum" (this is hardly surprising since it was often a mixture of alcohol, water, and a little gun powder to give it colour) and that they preferred to trade directly with the French for brandy. The commandant, François-Marie Picoté de Belestre, wrote to La Jonquière to tell him that the two Kiskakons had traded with the British. When Noukouata and Pennantouenne went to Montreal in July of 1751, they were confronted by La Jonquière himself who demanded to know whether the accusation were true. The two young men confessed to their trade with the British, but they now claimed to be sorry. To La Jonquière's chagrin they told him that they were not sorry for contravening French authority, but rather they were sorry for they had not liked the English "rum." They clearly had no intention of abiding the prohibition against the trade at Oswego.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> It was unusual, but not unheard of for Ottawa women to travel with the men. There are two important reasons for this. In the first place the women did not take part in the fighting; secondly Ottawa women were responsible for the crops in the field. They made their most important contribution to the economy during the warm months when the men were away on diplomatic missions or campaigns. There are two exceptions to this general rule. Women did take part in campaigns which were far enough away that there was uncertainty whether the men would return for the winter. Women also undertook diplomatic missions such as the one mentioned by Raymond involving Mikinak's wife and the wife of Chikatahen. The French were impressed enough to record what they must have considered an unusual situation, but unfortunately they did not record these women's names. Mikinak died on 26 February, 1755. He was about 75 years old at the time of his death. Raymond à La Galissonnière, 1748, AN, C11A, 97: 396.

<sup>65</sup> Paroles des Potéouatamis de la rivière St. Joseph, juillet, 1750, AN, C11A, 95: 249-250; Paroles adressées à La Jonquière par les Kiskakons, juillet 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 38-39.



A party of Sinagos from Michilimackinac told La Jonquière the same story in the summer of 1751. Mississangué, a younger brother of Chelaouikaouois who was the hereditary ogima of the Sinagos, told La Jonquière that they were losing authority over the youth.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, the ogimas and the elders of the Ottawas at Michilimackinac were still united and firmly committed to the alliance with the French:

We are all of the same village and we have the same spirit; we have the same sentiments for you and we have nothing to add that the Kiskakons have not already told you.<sup>67</sup>

According to Mississangué, the Potawatomis and the Ojibwas were experiencing the same difficulties as the Ottawas. In the summer of 1750, Mikinak was on his way to Michilimackinac after visiting the French at Montreal when he met a group of young Potawatomis near Bkejwanong who were on their way home from Oswego with kegs of British rum.<sup>68</sup> In the spring of 1751, the son of one of the prominent Ojibwa elders at Bawating returned with a wampum belt which he had received from the English commander at Oswego.<sup>69</sup> Clearly, the younger Ojibwas and Potawatomis were of the same mind as their young Ottawa allies.

As far as the Ottawas were concerned, the solution to this problem was for La

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<sup>66</sup> Paroles adressées à La Jonquière par les Outaouais sinagos de Michilimackinac, juillet, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 42.

<sup>67</sup> Nous sommes tous du même village nous avons les mêmes esprits et les mêmes sentiments pour vous et nous avons rien ajouter a ce que les Kiskakons vous ont dit." Paroles adressées à La Jonquière par les Outaouais sinagos de Michilimackinac, juillet, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 40.

<sup>68</sup> Paroles adressées à La Jonquière par les Outaouais sinagos de Michilimackinac, juillet, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 42.

<sup>69</sup> Paroles adressées à La Jonquière par les Outaouais sinagos de Michilimackinac, juillet, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 41v.

Jonquière to offer presents to the Ottawa youths in order to dissuade them from going to Oswego or Albany. A young Kiskakon named Pennantouenne was sent by the Kiskakon ogimas on the Sinago mission to Montreal in July of 1751 in order to tell La Jonquière of the solution which the Kiskakon ogimas proposed:

The band of the bear, the Kiskakons, speaks to you with this wampum belt in order to ask for some presents, especially powder, lead shot, and some rifles.<sup>70</sup>

There would be no need for any of the young Ottawas, Ojibwas, or Potawatomis to go to Oswego to trade if the French simply gave enough presents.

La Jonquière was pleased to offer the Ottawas some presents but he also proposed a different course of action which he hoped would provide the younger Ottawas, Ojibwas, and Potawatomis with a diversion from their trips to Oswego. A party of Miamis had attacked the Potawatomi village at the St. Joseph River in the spring of 1750. They had killed some Potawatomis and they had deliberately torn down and shredded the white and gold flag of the French Bourbon monarchy as a show of defiance against the French.<sup>71</sup> La Jonquière suggested a campaign against these "rebel Miamis" and he offered rewards. For every Miami rebel prisoner turned over to Céleron de Blainville at Fort Pontchartrain, the French offered one hundred *écus*, and for every rebel scalp fifty *écus*.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> "La bande de l'ours Kiskakon vous parle par collier pour vous demander quelques presents, surtout de la poudre, du plombe, et quelque fusils." Paroles adressées à La Jonquière par les Kiskakons de Michilimackinac, juillet, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 39.

<sup>71</sup> Paroles adressées à La Jonquière par les Outaouais sinagos de Michilimackinac, juillet, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 40v-41.

<sup>72</sup> Paroles de La Jonquière aux Kiskakons et aux Outaouais sinagos, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 42.

Pennatouenne and Mississangué agreed at once. As soon as they returned to Michilimackinac they told the ogimas what La Jonquière had proposed and the ogimas immediately asked the young warriors to depart on a campaign with the Ojibwas and Potawatomis against the Miamis.<sup>73</sup> Mikinak at Michilimackinac and Kinousaki at Bkejwanong sent invitations to the Ojibwas and the Potawatomis respectively and a party of young warriors from all three nations, and a French officer named Paul-Joseph Le Moyne de Longueuil, set out in the spring of 1752.<sup>74</sup> The warriors of the Council of the Three Fires quickly defeated the Miamis and returned to Fort Pontchartrain with many prisoners and scalps in order to collect their reward from Céloron.<sup>75</sup>

As the war between the French and the British began again in the Ohio Valley, it was clear that divisions existed within the Ottawa Nation and the Council of the Three Fires. The most important problem which the leaders of the three nations would have to confront concerned the decline in authority over the young warriors. At the same time squabbles over resources continued to divert attention away from the underlying threat. For example, at the very moment when the French were calling on their Ottawa, Ojibwa, and Potawatomi allies to go to the Ohio River to fight the Anglo-Americans,

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<sup>73</sup> Réponse des Kiskakons et Sinagos, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 42.

<sup>74</sup> Le Moyne de Longueuil was given the opportunity to go because Céloron refused, much to La Jonquière's annoyance. La Jonquière à Pierre-Joseph Céloron de Blainville, 1 octobre, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 167v; Bigot au ministre, 10 octobre, 1752, AN, C11A, 98: 171v-172; Bigot au ministre, 26 octobre, 1752, AN, C11A, 98: 272.

<sup>75</sup> There is no report of the number of prisoners or scalps turned over to Céloron, but the intendant François Bigot complained to the minister of the enormous expense. He was only relieved that the Ottawas and Ojibwas had saved some money by killing most of their victims rather than turning them in as prisoners. Bigot au ministre, 10 octobre, 1752, AN, C11A, 98: 171v-172; Bigot au ministre, 26 octobre, 1752, AN, C11A, 98: 271v-272.

the Sinagos and the Bawating Ojibwas got into a fight over the resources in the Saginaw Bay where some Sinagos had their winter hunting grounds.<sup>76</sup> The resources of the Upper Great Lakes continued to take priority over the conflicts to the south.<sup>77</sup>

The French were now involved in a fight for the future of the colony itself and the Ottawas could no longer be sure of special treatment from them. The new officers who came to the colony regarded one Algonquian nation as being the same as another one, and they knew little of the long history and cooperation of their predecessors with the Ottawas. The anti-French party within the Ottawas gained strength from young warriors who argued in favour of the Council of the Three Fires and against the French. In fact, the only reason the Ottawas and their Ojibwa and Potawatomi allies continued to fight at all was the conviction held by their leaders that the British would be a threat to the security of the Great Lakes. The Ojibwas and Potawatomis knew that if the Ottawas were defeated by the British, the eastern gateway would be wide open and there would be nothing to prevent Anglo-American incursions into their homes.

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<sup>76</sup> Paroles des Outaouais sinagos, 13 juillet, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 43v-44.

<sup>77</sup> La Jonquière had no idea of the nature of the problem between the Sinagos and the Bawating Ojibwas. He was concerned only with getting the allies to go to the Ohio. Réponse de La Jonquière, 13 juillet, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 44-44v.

## Chapter Nine: The Seven Years' War and the end of the Alliance.

The appearance, in the early 1750s, of armed parties of Anglo-American adventurers and British regulars in the Ohio Valley proved that the Ottawa ogimas had been right to warn of the British menace to the maintenance of the gateways strategy. In 1751 Mikinak of the Kiskakons and Kinousaki of the Kamigas went to Montreal to complain of the lack of French support for campaigns against Memeskia of the Miamis.<sup>1</sup> In a meeting with the governor, Jacques-Pierre de Taffanel de La Jonquière that summer, they expressed their displeasure with the French attitude toward the Miamis.<sup>2</sup> According to the two Ottawa ogimas, Memeskia posed a threat to the French and the Ottawas alike. On the one hand, he was allied with the British, and on the other he had moved his Miami village from the region to the south of Lake Michigan to Pickawillany in the Ohio region.<sup>3</sup>

La Jonquière shared the concern of the two Ottawa ogimas. He knew that Memeskia was involved actively in negotiations with a number of Indian nations to the west. Memeskia was close to his father's people, the Piankashaws, and he hoped to use

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<sup>1</sup> Memeskia or La Demoiselle, as the French called him, was the product of a marriage between a Piankashaw man and a Miami woman. He rose to prominence by virtue of his will alone, as he had no strong political allies in a society which favoured a patrilineal system of political authority. Raymond à La Jonquière, 5 septembre, 1749, AN, C11A, 93: 64-65; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, sv. "Céloron de Blainville, Pierre-Joseph de."

<sup>2</sup> La Jonquière à Céloron de Blainville, 1 octobre, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 165-170.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond à La Jonquière, 5 septembre, 1749, AN, C11A, 93: 64-65; Extraits des lettres et de nouvelles envoyées à La Jonquière par Raymond, commandant au fort des Miamis, 1750, AN, C11A, 95: 375-397; Copie d'une lettre de Benoist de Saint-Clair, commandant au pays des Illinois à Raymond, commandant au fort des Miamis, 11 février, 1750, AN, C11A, 97: 392-393v; La Jonquière à Céloron de Blainville, 1 octobre, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 165-170; La Jonquière au ministre, 15 octobre, 1751, AN, C11A, 95: 298-291v; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 40-41; White, *Middle Ground*, 219-222; Michael McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724-1774* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 72.

his influence with them to insinuate himself between the British and the nations who lived to the west. La Jonquière learned this from the commander of the Illinois country,

Benoist de Saint-Clair:

He [Memeskia] has done all that he can possibly do, at the urging of the English, in order to attract to his party the nations from Wabash [south of Lake Michigan] and even those from the Fort des Chartres [in the Illinois country]; he has sent word, and spread wampum belts all the way to the Missouri.<sup>4</sup>

Kinousaki and Mikinak naturally feared the growing authority of Memeskia, who might one day be able to use the British as an ally against the Ottawas in their own ancestral home. They also saw the opportunity to use this man as a focus for Ottawa discontent and as a common enemy who could be used to heal the divisions within the nation. Memeskia's sobriquet, Old Britain, left no room for doubt regarding his political sympathies. Kinousaki and Mikinak therefore appealed to the French for assistance against this threat in the expectation that a campaign against him would bring their young warriors back on the side of the French alliance.

In the summer of 1751 Mikinak and Kinousaki arrived in the St. Lawrence colony to ask La Jonquière for assistance against Memeskia and the Miami threat at Pickawillany. Their demand was simple: they wanted more French soldiers to help them in their planned assault on Pickawillany:

Mikinak and Kinousaki seem to have good regard for the French, but they find fault with the small number of French soldiers which composed the war party against the Miami Nation. This number, they feel, is

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<sup>4</sup> "Il a fait tout son possible, a la sollicitation des Anglais pour attirer dans son parti les nations d'Oubache et meme celles du fort du Chartres, il y a eu des paroles et des colliers répandus jusques dans le Missouri." La Jonquière au ministre, 15 octobre, 1751, AN, C11A, 95: 291v.

insufficient to make war upon the enemy.<sup>5</sup>

La Jonquière suggested sending François-Marie Le Marchand de Lignery to ask the Potawatomis and Mascoutens to participate on the side of the Ottawas for he feared the outbreak of a general conflagration in the west.<sup>6</sup>

La Jonquière's concern was heightened by his knowledge of Anglo-American aspirations in Memeskia's region, the Ohio Valley. The rich farmland in this region was coveted by the Anglo-Americans who had been prevented from moving over the Allegheny Mountains because of the French and their Indian allies. The British, sensing the discontent of their colonists and concerned about French pretensions to the interior of the continent, soon confirmed La Jonquière's fears by beginning a campaign to claim the Ohio Valley as their own.<sup>7</sup> In October of 1753 an Anglo-American officer named George Washington was sent by the Governor of Virginia to Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre who was in command of the French in the Ohio country.<sup>8</sup> Washington met Legardeur at the newly constructed Fort Le Boeuf and gave him a letter from Governor Dinwiddie, in which the governor stated his claim:

The lands upon the River Ohio, in the western parts of the Colony of Virginia, are so notoriously known to be the property of the Crown of Great Britain, that it is a matter of equal concern and surprise to me, to

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<sup>5</sup> Mikinak et Kinousaki parroissent toujours d'avoir de bonnes sentiments, mais ils trouvent que le peu de françois qui composent le party aillent aux Miamis n'est pas suffisant pour faire la guerre aux ennemis." La Jonquière à Pierre-Joseph de Céloron de Blainville concernant l'expédition projetée contre les Miamis et autres Indiens du fort de La Demoiselle à la rivière à la Roche, 1 octobre, 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 167v.

<sup>6</sup> La Jonquière à Céloron de Blainville, 1 octobre 1751, AN, C11A, 97: 165-170.

<sup>7</sup> W.J. Eccles, *Essays on New France* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 146.

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre was the son of Jean-Paul Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, and is commonly referred to as Legardeur in order to avoid confusion.

hear that a body of French forces are erecting Fortresses, and making settlements upon that River, within his Majesty's Dominions.<sup>9</sup>

Legardeur politely told Washington to tell Dinwiddie to address future correspondence to the new governor in Quebec, Ange Duquesne de Menneville. Regarding Dinwiddie's demand that he leave immediately, however, Legardeur responded honestly that he was under direct orders and that he could be counted upon to: "conform myself to them with all the exactness and resolution which can be expected from the best officer."<sup>10</sup> In other words he would not withdraw.

The Ottawas and the French had found, once again, a common position upon which they could rejuvenate their old alliance. The Ohio country was critical to the French and to the Ottawas both. The French worried about British soldiers and Anglo-American farmers cutting the St. Lawrence colony off from the Louisiana colony. The Ottawas feared that a strong British presence would undermine their ability to defend their ancestral home from the Miamis and any other erstwhile British allies to the south. If British expansion was to continue unchecked, then newly dispossessed peoples would be looking for opportunities in the west away from the British settlements. The most attractive regions for settlement, as far as the Ottawas were concerned, were to be found in and around Lake Huron where the diverse resource base, abundant fish and game, and areas suitable for cultivation had served their ancestors well for many centuries.

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<sup>9</sup> *The Journal of Major George Washington, sent by the Hon. Robert Dinwiddie, Esq; His Majesty's Lieutenant-Governor, and Commander in Chief of Virginia, to the Commandant of the French Forces on Ohio, to which are added the Governor's Letter, and a translation of the French Officer's Answer.* (Williamsburg: William Hunter, 1754), 25. Hereafter cited as *Washington's Journal*.

<sup>10</sup> *Washington's Journal*, 27; Duquesne au ministre, 2 novembre, 1753, AN, C11A, 99: 66v.



In the early 1750s, the Ottawas were ready for war. The oldest and most experienced of the four war ogimas of the Ottawas, Mikinak, was also the war ogima of the Kiskakons, the nation which always supplied the military commander according to ancient custom. This meant that the leadership of the Ottawa Nation was not divided at this critical moment. Although Mikinak was a strong supporter of the alliance with the French, it was difficult for the French to know what his position would be on any given issue. The French were so used to counting upon the Ottawas for military assistance, that new officers from France took Ottawa participation in their wars for granted. Previous experience, however, had shown this might not be the case with Mikinak.<sup>11</sup>

The French-Ottawa raid at Pickawillany, which Mikinak planned, marked the beginning of hostilities in the Ohio Valley and the rejuvenation of the French-Ottawa alliance. On 21 June, 1752 Charles-Michel Mouet de Langlade commanded a party of 250 Ottawas, Ojibwas, and Canadians from Michilimackinac against the Miamis and British who had settled at Pickawillany.<sup>12</sup> From the French perspective, the attack was a complete success. Most of the Miami and Piankashaw warriors were away hunting, leaving the village undefended. Five British traders were taken prisoner, escorted to Quebec, and put on a ship bound for La Rochelle. Duquesne hoped this would dissuade

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<sup>11</sup> Cadillac had made this mistake in 1701 when Koutaoliboe stood up and declared that the Kiskakon Ottawas would never leave Michilimackinac and that they would not accept his invitation to join the Kamigas at Fort Pontchartrain. Cadillac hoped to persuade the young Mikinak (who was acting as the messenger between Cadillac at Bkejwanong and Koutaoliboe and the Jesuit Marest at Michilimackinac) to convince the other Kiskakons to move south. Mikinak used this opportunity to learn the fine art of playing both sides against the middle. It appeared to both Cadillac and Marest that Mikinak was working to promote their objectives while Mikinak remained faithful only to his own ogima, Koutaoliboe. *Correspondance entre Cadillac et les peres jésuites, 1700-1701*, AN, C11E, 14: 67-78v.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Le Moyne de Longueuil au ministre, 18 août, 1752, AN, C11A, 98: 350-353; Duquesne au ministre, 25 octobre, 1752, AN, C11A, 98: 27-28v.

the British from making further attempts to trade in "French territory."<sup>13</sup>

Mikinak also considered the attack a great success. The alliance with the French was popular once again and a dangerous enemy was eliminated. Memeskia was taken prisoner, tortured to death, cut into pieces, boiled in a large cauldron, and eaten by the Kiskakons, Nassauakuctons, Sinagos, and Bawating Ojibwas. Contrary to what the modern reader might think, Memeskia was shown a great deal of respect.<sup>14</sup>

Memeskia's death eliminated the threat of an Anglo-Miami alliance in the Ohio region and improved the security of the southern gateway into Lake Huron. The Ottawas sustained no casualties in the attack and the young warriors won distinction by disposing of such a prominent enemy.<sup>15</sup>

As a result of the victory at Pickawillany, a *métis* named Charles Mouet de Langlade improved his reputation as a leader at Montreal, Quebec, and Michilimackinac. Both the governor of Montreal, Charles Le Moyne de Longueuil, and the governor-general, Duquesne, reported favourably on Langlade's exploits and his popularity with the Ottawas. Langlade's mother, Domitilde, was the sister of the Nassauakueton war ogima Nissowaquet; his father was Augustin Mouet de Langlade, a successful trader at Michilimackinac. As a boy, Langlade had accompanied his uncle, Nissowaquet, on a successful campaign against the Chickasaws. The Nassauakuetons

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<sup>13</sup> Duquesne au ministre, 25 octobre, 1752, AN, C11A, 98: 27-27v.

<sup>14</sup> By eating his remains, the Ottawa warriors paid tribute to his reputation as a great warrior and his authority over the nations of the Ohio region. It was customary to eat the heart of a brave man who had been tortured to death, but eating other parts of the body was a rare display of respect. The Ottawas believed that by eating Memeskia they would gain a portion of his courage.

<sup>15</sup> Le Moyne de Longueuil au ministre, 18 août, 1752, AN, C11A, 98: 353.

attributed their success to his presence and he came to be regarded as a man of great spiritual power.<sup>16</sup>

More than any other person, Langlade, had the ability to rejuvenate the alliance. His loyalties lay with Mikinak and the Ottawas at Michilimackinac where he had been born, and where he had risen to a position of influence. His ambitions lay within the hierarchy of the French military, as his appeals to Duquesne prove. In other words, he was ideally placed to inject new life into the old alliance. He was certainly a person with a foot in both worlds. In the aftermath of the victory at Pickawillany he ate a part of the body of Memeskia as an Ottawa warrior, and then he wrote a report of the event like a good French officer. Langlade was not merely a symbolic presence signifying the rebirth of the alliance, he was also a product of the alliance itself and a man who would fight passionately in defence of the interests which had tied the French and the Ottawas together since Champlain arrived at Lake Huron.<sup>17</sup>

Even as the Ottawas and French found reason to rejuvenate the alliance, the Anglo-American traders and land speculators re-doubled their efforts to make inroads in the Ohio Valley. In response, Duquesne decided, in June 1754, to pursue a more aggressive policy of defending the Ohio Valley from the expansionist Anglo-Americans. More men were sent to the new chain of French forts which had been built in a line

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<sup>16</sup> Duquesne au ministre, 25 octobre, 1752, AN, C11A, 98: 28; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, sv "Mouet de Langlade, Charles-Michel."

<sup>17</sup> Duquesne asked the minister for a pension of 200 *livres* for Mouet de Langlade in order to show appreciation for his victory at Pickawillany. Two years later he asked the minister for a commission as ensign in the marine for the young leader. Le Moyne de Longueuil au ministre, 18 août, 1752, AN, C11A, 98: 353; Duquesne au ministre, 25 octobre, 1752, AN, C11A, 98: 27; Duquesne au ministre, 10 octobre, 1754, AN, C11A, 99: 280.

from the Lake Erie shore south to the confluence of the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela Rivers. An officer of the colonial regulars, Louis Coulon de Villiers, was given command of the force of 700 Canadians and Indians from the St. Lawrence. He was ordered to take his army to Fort Duquesne, the furthest of the four forts, to reinforce the detachment at the fort under the orders of the commandant, Pierre Pécaudy de Contrecoeur.<sup>18</sup>

Prior to Coulon de Villiers' departure from the St. Lawrence, Contrecoeur learned of the presence of an Anglo-American expedition in the vicinity of Fort Duquesne. On 26 May, 1754, he sent Coulon de Villiers' younger brother, Joseph de Coulon de Villiers de Jumonville, to investigate and to deliver a formal summons to the Anglo-Americans requiring their immediate and permanent withdrawal from the Ohio Valley. Washington's men, in an act which the European world viewed with horror, discovered Jumonville's camp, stole quietly upon it and opened fire on their sleeping rivals, the French, in a time of peace. Jumonville and most of his men were killed in cold blood.

It is easy to attribute this admittedly cowardly act to the power of the Anglo-American expansionism. Indeed, Washington has been portrayed as a hireling of the wealthy Virginia interests. His journal, however, suggests a different motivation for his actions. As soon as the Anglo-Americans reached the Ohio Valley, they were beset by fears of Ottawa cruelty. All of the early traders in the region noted these fears in their

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<sup>18</sup> These forts were: Fort Presqu'Isle which was built on the south shore of Lake Erie in 1753; Fort le Boeuf which was built on the Rivière au Boeuf in 1753; Fort Machault which was built at the confluence of the Allegheny and le Boeuf Rivers in 1753; and Fort Duquesne which was built at the confluence of the Allegheny, Ohio, and Monongahela Rivers in 1754.

journals and correspondence.<sup>19</sup> Washington's actions were treacherous indeed, but they were motivated by his fear that Ottawas were in the area, or at least this is what he later claimed.

If the shots fired by Washington's party were the opening volley in the Seven Years War, then the Ottawas can justly be said to have played an important role in its outbreak. The copy of Washington's report of the incident which was circulated in Europe certainly supports this assertion. In the section of the report concerning the attack against Jumonville's party, Washington claimed:

Other than the French forces mentioned above, we had reason to believe, from the reports which had been made, that another party was coming to the Ohio; we also knew that six hundred Ojibwas and Ottawas were coming down the Siodo River to join them.<sup>20</sup>

Clearly Washington panicked. He knew of the presence of Louis Coulon de Villiers' force, and he wanted to put distance between his party and the French and their Algonquian allies. By the preemptive attack upon Jumonville, Washington was able to beat a hasty retreat away from danger in the form of the Ottawa and Ojibwa warriors. As far as the Ottawas were concerned, however, Washington was threatening the southern gateway to Lake Huron, and he had to be prevented from gaining a foothold in the area.

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<sup>19</sup> For examples see, *The Journal of Major George Washington, sent by the Hon. Robert Dinwiddie esq; His Majesty's Lieutenant-Governor and Commander in Chief in Virginia, to the Commandant of the French Forces on the Ohio*, (Williamsburg: William Hunter, 1754), 15-23; "Conrad Weiser's Journal of a Tour to the Ohio, August 11 - October 2, 1748," in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 32.

<sup>20</sup> Jacob-Nicolas Moreau, *Mémoire contenant le précis des faits avec leurs pièces justificatives pour servir de réponse aux observations envoyées par le ministre d'Angleterre dans les cours de l'Europe* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1756), 90.

By 1754 the British information regarding the French fortifications in the Ohio Valley was dated.<sup>21</sup> They did not know the strength of the chain of fortifications which the French had built from the southern shore of Lake Erie to the confluence of the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela Rivers. Similarly, they had no way of knowing about the movements of France's Algonquian allies.<sup>22</sup> The British did not have a clear sense of how these Algonquian nations would react if hostilities were opened in the Ohio Valley. Certainly the Ottawas had fought with the French in the War of Austrian Succession, but in that war they had not displayed enthusiasm for the French cause.<sup>23</sup>

To men like George Washington, who appreciated the material possibilities to be realized in the Ohio Valley, potential profits outweighed the risk of Algonquian hostility. Once in the field, however, such cool calculations appeared to have been mistaken. The French were willing to devote men and material to prevent Anglo-

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<sup>21</sup> The best information came from an account by fur trader named John Defieuvre who had worked in the Ohio Valley during the 1740s and early 1750s. Defieuvre claimed that there were six French forts in the Lower Great Lakes region: Fort St. Vincent upon the Miami River, Sandoski on the south shore of Lake Erie, Detroit, Niagara, Toronto, and Cataraqui at the eastern end of Lake Ontario. Of these six only Fort Niagara and Fort Frontenac at Cataraqui were built of stone and equipped with guns and substantial numbers of French troops. Fort Pontchartrain had a garrison of 35 regulars and 200 militia. The others were built of logs and had garrisons of only a few regular soldiers. Stanley Pargellis, ed., *Military Affairs in North America, 1748-1765: the Cumberland papers in Windsor Castle* (New Haven: Archon Books, 1969), 30-31.

<sup>22</sup> Pargellis, *Military Affairs*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> At the outbreak of the War of Austrian Succession the English commander at Oswego reported that the French allies seemed to lack enthusiasm. He had heard of a great feast held Fort Pontchartrain at which the French had slaughtered a number of cattle and danced, in the Ottawa fashion, with the severed heads of the animals. The cow heads represented the heads of the British they hoped to kill. When the Kamiga Ottawas rose to dance they told the French that the heads of the cows represented not the British but their new enemies the Catawbas. There is no account of this feast in the French documents, but its authenticity is not important. The British believed this story, and they hoped that the Ottawas would again refuse to help the French in the Ohio Valley. See Samuel Hazard, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives. Selected and Arranged From Original Documents in the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Conformably to Acts of the General Assembly, February 15, 1851 and March 1, 1852 Commencing 1644* (Philadelphia, 1852), 1: 665. Using animal heads in such dances was common. See *Jesuit Relations*, 70: 98.

American expansion and the Ottawas were prepared to participate in the struggle in their own fashion. Defievre's report of October 1754 hinted at this:

The French have now upon the Ohio and in their different forts about 1500 Regulars, and are said to have been joined by 500 or 600 Ottaway Indians.<sup>24</sup>

Mikinak had sent a large number of Ottawas south to the Ohio Valley in order to prevent the British from gaining access to the region, but his warriors (and the Ojibwas and Potawatomis who went with them) acted independently of the French. The Ottawas joined the French, but they fought using their own methods. Langlade and other Canadians acted as liaisons with the French army.

Ottawa participation in the campaigns of the Seven Years War (like other Ottawa conflicts) is best understood with regard to their concerns about resources. The Ottawas had always feared British designs upon the resources of the Upper Great Lakes. In the seventeenth century, the British threat had been limited by the strong Iroquois presence in the region to the south of Lake Ontario. In the early eighteenth century the French and the Ottawas had been able to prevent the British from moving inland across the Allegheny Mountains. In the middle years of the eighteenth century the peace in Europe had kept British designs on the interior of the continent in check. Nevertheless, by the 1740s a growing number of Anglo-American commercial interests coveted the land and fur resources of the Ohio region and the British were prepared to appease their colonists. The Ottawa ogimas feared the presence of a strong Anglo-American force with easy access to Bkejwanong.

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<sup>24</sup> Pargellis, *Military Affairs*, 32.

This concern was used to good effect by a French expedition to Michilimackinac in the summer of 1754. The expedition was led by a French officer named Michel-Jean-Hugues Péan and was sent under the authority of the marine commissary, Jean-Victor Varin de La Marre, and not the governor, Duquesne. In fact, when Duquesne learned of the expedition he took steps to have it recalled.<sup>25</sup> Clearly this expedition was designed to circumvent the Canadians and to curb their growing influence with the Ottawas. The French were beginning to worry about the Canadian-Ottawa connections and the ability of the Canadians to influence the Ottawas.<sup>26</sup>

Péan did not understand the diplomatic niceties of the French-Ottawa alliance. By chance, the French arrived at a time when many of the nations of the Upper Great Lakes had gathered at Michilimackinac. The conference was held outside the walls of the fort with the delegates seated in a large semi-circle, with the nervous Péan in the centre facing them. He had instructed his men to keep the canons of the fort loaded with grape and pointed at the delegates. He then addressed the conference through a number of interpreters including Langlade:

I was sent to you by your father Onontio to tell you that he loves all of his children, and he wishes to prove this to you by his presents which I am charged with distributing among you in his name. But I am also to inform him of your intentions to raise the hatchet, and to go with your French brothers to fight the English. Your father Onontio has heard that

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<sup>25</sup> Varin de La Marre au ministre, 24 juillet, 1754, AN, C11A, 99: 493-494v; J.C.B., *Voyages au Canada dans le nord de l'Amérique septentrionale faits depuis l'an 1751 à 1761* (Quebec: Imprimerie Léger Brousseau, 1887), 70-79. The author of the journal, J.C.B., claims that the mission took place in 1753. There is no evidence of any large expedition to Michilimackinac that year. His memory may have been faulty concerning the date, or his manuscript could have been altered in keeping with the secrecy of the mission.

<sup>26</sup> In fact, Péan eventually concluded that the Ottawas and Canadians fought well together and they had a strong advantage over the British in North American warfare. Pierre Pouchot, *Mémoire sur la dernière guerre de l'Amérique Septentrionale entre la France et l'Angleterre* (Yverdon, 1781), 1: 49.



you have listened to evil counsel, engaging you to turn your arms against your French brothers, who are as numerous as the leaves on the trees, and of whom you have seen only a small branch on a great tree.<sup>27</sup>

Skilled in the art of Ottawa relations or not, Péan got a favourable response. One after another the orators rose to their feet and agreed to join the French in their next campaign.

They underscored their commitment with a long and elaborate ceremony. After all the orators had spoken, tobacco was distributed by the French and lit by the participants who gave a loud war cry and then applied red and black paint to their faces and bodies. Once they had decorated their bodies in the traditional colours of war, the warriors got to their feet and danced a war dance to the beat of drums and rattles. The next phase of the ceremony was the most impressive. It involved a pantomime in which the battle scenes were dramatized. Just as the Ottawas prepared to hunt the bear by interpreting the various stages of the process, so did they prepare for war by killing and scalping imaginary enemies in a ritual dance.<sup>28</sup> Mikinak and Langlade had ensured the Ottawa participation and now the Ottawas appealed to their allies to join in the struggle.

The war began in earnest in the summer of 1755 when Major General Edward Braddock led an army of 2200 Anglo-American militia and British regulars against Fort Duquesne. Opposing the two battalions of regular soldiers and all of their artillery pieces were 108 *troupes de la marine*, 146 Canadian militia, and 600 Ottawas and Ojibwas. The result of this battle indicates the way the war would have been managed

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<sup>27</sup> J.C.B., *Voyage au Canada*, 73.

<sup>28</sup> J.C.B., *Voyage au Canada*, 77-78.

had the Ottawas and the Canadian militia been responsible for strategy. The Ottawas and the Canadians happened upon an advance unit of Braddock's army. Under the cover of the forest, the Ottawas and Canadians attacked. The British attempted to use European battle tactics, with predictable results. Their musket fire proved to be completely ineffective against an enemy concealed by trees. The Ottawas and the Canadians fired at the British lines from under the cover of dense summer foliage, aiming at the officers and the sergeants who called the firing cadence. There was soon chaos on the British side as the leaderless soldiers panicked at the sound of Ottawa war cries. Those British who could still run dropped their heavy weapons and ran.<sup>29</sup>

The French-Ottawa victory is even more impressive when one considers that the French commander, Daniel-Hyacinthe-Marie Liénard de Beaujeu, was killed in the third discharge of musket fire, one of the few French casualties. In total, the French and Ottawas suffered only forty-three men killed or wounded. The British lost over two-thirds killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. The French-Ottawa victory did not end there. Braddock's papers were also captured giving the French an intimate knowledge of the British battle plans for the entire 1755 campaign season. Niagara was immediately

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<sup>29</sup> There are no recent historical interpretations devoted solely to the Battle of Monongahela. Ian Steele, in his history of the massacre which followed the capitulation of Fort William Henry, makes a number of references to Braddock's defeat but he does not attempt to offer a detailed analysis of the actual campaign. For Steele, the victory was "...largely due to some six hundred Ottawas from Michilimackinac and Detroit..." See Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the "Massacre"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 78-79. Francis Jennings acknowledged that "...Indian warriors were to be feared in pitched battle..." His interpretation stressed Braddock's incompetence. This is perhaps unfair since Braddock was faced with a military situation which was completely unfamiliar to him. Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 157-160. The documentary evidence may be consulted in Claude-Pierre Pécaudy de Contrecoeur au ministre, 20 juillet, 1755, AN, C11A, 100: 248-249; Contrecoeur au ministre, 11 novembre, 1755, AN, C11A, 100: 253-254v; Contrecoeur au ministre, 28 novembre, 1755, AN, C11A, 100: 250-251.

reinforced since the British were planning an attack there. Victory was complete.<sup>30</sup>

The Battle of Monongahela represents the high point of the French-Ottawa alliance. The Ottawas and the Canadians won the victory by employing Ottawa tactics, the tactics the French called *la petite guerre*. Few casualties were suffered and the British were beaten soundly. The French officers in command, Liénard de Beaujeu and Jean-Daniel Dumas, knew enough to listen to the advice given to them by the Ottawas and Canadians. Dumas, in particular, was aware of the effectiveness of Ottawa warfare and its appropriateness in the rough terrain of the eastern forest. He sensed, as he later reported to Vaudreuil de Cavignal, a certain willingness on the part of the Ottawas to participate with the French as long as they had success. Success in this kind of warfare was more certain if Ottawa tactics were employed.<sup>31</sup>

There were two reasons why the French regular officers were willing to fight according to the Ottawa plan. In the first place most of the force consisted of Ottawas and the French appreciated their ability to strike terror in the British ranks. Secondly, a Canadian born officer named François-Marie Le Marchand de Lignery argued forcibly on behalf of the Ottawa plan. Le Marchand de Lignery had accompanied his father on the wars against the Outagamis and he had taken part in the Ottawa wars against the Chickasaws. He had an excellent knowledge of Algonquian warfare and he had a high opinion of Ottawa ability. He knew that if the Ottawas remained in the forest and did

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<sup>30</sup> References to Braddock's captured papers are common in the French documents. See for example, Réponses de Vaudreuil de Cavignal aux paroles que les Cinq-Nations ont envoyées, 22 octobre, 1755, AN, C11A, 100: 98-107v; Mémoire, décembre, 1755, AN, C11A, 100: 309-310v.

<sup>31</sup> Vaudreuil de Cavignal au ministre concernant la situation du côté du fort Duquesne, 8 août, 1756, AN, C11A, 101: 88-94v.

not face the British on British terms, victory was likely. His advice to both Beaujeu and Dumas was to allow the Ottawas and Canadians to fight their fight and to instruct the French regulars to follow this example. The Canadians had been fighting in the Ottawa fashion for years and they would fight most effectively according to the principles of *la petite guerre*.<sup>32</sup>

The success of the Battle of Monongahela meant increased enthusiasm among the Ottawas for the alliance with the French and increased enthusiasm for the campaigns of 1757 at Fort William Henry, 1758 at Lake Champlain, and even 1759 at Quebec. The Ottawas were well represented at all of these battles.<sup>33</sup> Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil de Cavignal, the new Canadian governor-general of New France, was quick to report the importance of their contribution to the French victories. Unfortunately the Ottawas would not be able to contribute in the same manner again. The new French military commander in North America, Louis-Joseph de Montcalm, lacked the imagination and the experience, of the likes of Dumas and Liénard de Beaujeu. There was more of Edward Braddock's thinking in Montcalm's concept of military planning than there was François-Marie Le Marchand de Lignery's.

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<sup>32</sup> Contrecoeur au ministre, 20 juillet, 1755, AN, C11A, 100: 248-249.

<sup>33</sup> For example, on 28 July, 1757 Montcalm's officer, Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, took a census of the Algonquian and Iroquoian warriors fighting on the French side at Fort William Henry. He counted 820 Algonquians and Iroquoians living within the colony (Algonquins, Abenakis, Iroquois, Hurons, and Micmacs) and 979 Algonquians from the *pays d'en haut* including 337 Ottawas, 157 Sauter Ojibwas, 141 Mississauga Ojibwas, 88 Potawatomis, 129 Menominees, and 127 other western Algonquians. Bougainville gave the specific origin of all of the warriors. For example, he listed 94 Kiskakon Ottawas from Michilimackinac, 70 Nassauakueton Ottawas from Michilimackinac, 35 Sinagos from Michilimackinac, 10 Sinagos from the Magnetawan River, 44 Nassauakuetons from Isle au Castor, 30 Sable Ottawas from Bkejwanong, and 54 Kamigas and Nassauakuetons from Saginaw. Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, "Journal de l'expédition d'Amérique commencée en l'année 1756," *Rapport de l'Archiviste du province de Québec, 1923-1924*, 301-302.

Montcalm's arrival in the colony signalled the advent of a new metropolitan perception of the colony's worth. As time passed at the court of Versailles, the old policy regarding the Ottawa alliance faded from view, and the ministers of Louis XV no longer considered the Ottawa posts to be worth the expense. New France was not as closely connected with royal interests as it had been in the days of Louis XIV, and the British threat in North America was not considered to be as serious a threat to the fortunes of the monarchy. Indeed, in France there was a considerable, and growing, anti-colonial sentiment championed by the atavistic Marquis de Capellis. In 1754, the minister of marine, Antoine-Louis Rouille, warned governor-general Duquesne that the old system was no longer viable and that the Lake posts had to be closed down:

I did not fail to inform the King of the other measures which you took to decrease the expenditures which occur regarding the Indians, and His Majesty is grateful to you for them. Never has it been so necessary as it is now to work effectively to decrease all expenses. You know the straits we were in when you left for Canada. You must discern how much they have had to worsen due to the immense costs which have been drawn by that Colony since you have been there...Our resources are so depleted that if things cannot be put back into the condition they were in before the advent of these immense financial excesses, which we have been experiencing for some years, we shall be strongly compelled to abandon the Colony.<sup>34</sup>

Montcalm was of the same opinion. He regarded New France and its Algonquian allies as an excessive waste of money. He determined to have as little to do with the Ottawas as possible and he certainly did not want to learn the art of warfare from them. With Montcalm's arrival, the system which had served New France and France so well was about to be lost.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ministre à Duquesne, 31 mai, 1754, AN, B, 99: 200.*

Montcalm's victories at Oswego and at Fort William Henry proved, in the final analysis, to be catastrophic for New France because they gave him a certain authority in Versailles which the Canadian, Vaudreuil de Cavignal, lacked. Montcalm had no use for the Ottawas, their Algonquian allies or their methods of war. He conducted his North American campaigns according to European principles and before long the Ottawas, who had been initially impressed, came to dislike the French general and his strict adherence to an alien form of war which observed traditions which the Ottawas considered inane. European warfare, with its sieges, its pitched battles, and its artillery, was not appropriate in the North American theatre. There were neither roads nor open fields, and the difficulties of marching and carrying artillery pieces were almost insurmountable. Ottawa warfare or *la petite guerre*, was ideally suited for the rough terrain on which the fighting took place. Unlike other French officers, who were so impressed with the stealth, surprise, and speed of Ottawa warfare that they published treatises on the subject, Montcalm completely rejected *la petite guerre*.

The Ottawas' first impressions of Montcalm, however, were positive. In June of 1757, 300 Kiskakon, Sinago, and Nassauakueton Ottawas canoed from Michilimackinac to Montreal in order to participate in the siege of Fort William Henry. The role Montcalm assigned to them was to act as scouts for the French army, which was in the process of laying the siege works. They were impressed with Montcalm's victory at Oswego, and wanted to meet him.<sup>35</sup> Bougainville noted their arrival in his journal:

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<sup>35</sup> The Ottawas had not participated in the campaign at Oswego in 1756. They had intended to take part, and indeed large numbers of Ottawas and other Algonquians arrived in June at Fort Presqu'Isle on Lake Erie's north shore in order to act in concert with their French allies in the summer's campaign. When they heard of the smallpox at Fort Niagara, however, they returned to the *pays d'en haut* without further ceremony. Bougainville,

The Ottawas of Michilimackinac have asked for an audience with le Marquis de Montcalm. They complimented him on the capture of Oswego. "We wished to see," said their chief, "this celebrated man who, on setting his foot on the ground, has destroyed the English fortifications. From his reputation and his exploits, we imagined that his head would be lost in the clouds. But behold you are a little fellow and it is in your eyes that we find the grandeur of the highest pine trees and the spirit of the eagle." Among these people it is nature alone that speaks.<sup>36</sup>

The other Ottawas and Mississaugas who arrived from Bkejwanong were similarly eager to meet Montcalm and to compliment him on his victory at Oswego.

For a time, the fall of Oswego renewed the spirits of all of the Algonquian allies of the French. They had grown weary of British claims of French weakness. Sir William Johnson and the traders of the Ohio Valley had repeatedly told the Ottawas and the others that resistance was futile.<sup>37</sup> The French knew of this effort, but needed evidence with which to refute the British "*fanfarronades*." Montcalm's victory at Oswego provided this evidence. Pierre Pouchot, the French engineer and commandant at Fort Niagara, noted the rejuvenation of the alliance:

One may say that ever since this event that they [the Ottawas and their Algonquian allies] have redoubled their attachment and their friendship for the French, whom they generally prefer to the English, because of the French ease in their way of life and their gaiety. The principal motive in their [Ottawa] conduct, however, comes from that which they know so well, the advantage of being on the strongest side. However much certain ones might have affection for us, they only like the Europeans

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"Journal" *RAPQ* 1923-1924, 208-209.

<sup>36</sup> Bougainville, "Journal" *RAPQ*, 1923-1924, 267.

<sup>37</sup> "Journal of Indian Proceedings," 17 February, 1757, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1921-1965), 9: 610-611; Pierre Pouchot, *Mémoires sur la dernière guerre*, 1: 80.

relative to their own interest.<sup>38</sup>

Pouchot understood clearly the Ottawa interest, and he was not prepared to pretend that the rejuvenation of the alliance was founded on anything more than the most recent success. For the time being the Ottawas would support Montcalm, but this support was tenuous and Montcalm would have to prove his good intentions regarding Ottawa interest apart from French interest. This he would never do.

By the middle of July, Montcalm had lost his charm as far as the Ottawas were concerned. Ottawas (based at Fort Carillon or Ticonderoga) patrolled the area of Lake Champlain and Lake George, but they could do nothing about Fort William Henry itself without Montcalm. They were tired of spending their days in relative inactivity and were anxious to engage the enemy.<sup>39</sup> On 16 July, 1757, a delegation of Michilimackinac Ottawas appealed to Montcalm to launch the attack on the British position. Five days later they held a sacrifice to the war manitou, and they greatly annoyed Montcalm by setting fire to parcels of the French stores, which they used by way of sacrifice. Relations soured further the following day when a nervous French guard shot and killed a prominent Ottawa warrior who was returning from a scouting mission. The next day, 26 July, 1757, the Ottawa ogimas in the region (Pentalouan, Nissowaquet, and Pontiac, the new war ogima of the Kamiga Ottawas) and the most

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<sup>38</sup> Pouchot, *Mémoire sur la dernière guerre*, 1: 80-81.

<sup>39</sup> The Ottawas were not entirely inactive. Under the command of Charles Langlade, scouting parties ventured into the Lakes and attacked British scouts. When Père Roubaud arrived at the Lake George he noted the mutilated bodies of British scouts on the shores of the Lake. Vaudreuil de Cavignal told the governor of the success which Langlade had in his various raids early in the campaign. *Jésuit Relations*, 70: 138-140; Vaudreuil de Cavignal au ministre, 12 juillet, 1757, AN, C11A, 102: 62-64.



prominent of the Ottawa warriors (Brisset, Attimakeg, Makiouita, Agoda, Aukameny, Ouennaga, Ouenaoué, Oyuinen, Saginé, and Akouoi) went to see Montcalm.<sup>40</sup> They accepted the French apologies but demanded immediate action be taken against the British.<sup>41</sup>

The action, when it began, was not what the Ottawas had imagined at all. Montcalm began the siege on 2 August. The Ottawa warriors had no interest in siege warfare with the painfully slow progress of the *fascines et gabions* and the methodical and tedious progress of the trenches.<sup>42</sup> In the Ottawa-Canadian camp, which was located to the south of the Lake George on both sides of the road to Fort Edward, the mood was one of impatience. After a week of the siege, the British commander of Fort William Henry, Lieutenant Colonel George Monro, assembled his officers in the pre-dawn hours of 9 August, and discussed the possibility of surrender. Montcalm's terms of surrender appeared to the British and French alike as generous. To the Canadians they appeared to be treason and to the Ottawas they seemed to be utter madness.<sup>43</sup> In

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<sup>40</sup> Kinousaki died of smallpox in 1752. Mikinak died of natural causes in 1755. Kinousaki was succeeded as the war chief by Pontiac. The Kiskakons chose to follow the man who had been putting Mikinak's plans into effect since the attack at Pickawillany, Charles-Michel Mouet de Langlade. This was an unorthodox choice as Mouet de Langlade was a *métis* and a Nassauakueton. He had lived with the Kiskakons at Michilimackinac rather than with the Nassauakuetons at Saginaw or Waugaunaukezee for most of his life, however, and the Kiskakons admired his military qualities.

<sup>41</sup> Bougainville, "Journal" *RAPQ 1923-1924*, 283-286.

<sup>42</sup> Bougainville, "Journal" *RAPQ 1923-1924*, 294-295; *Jesuit Relations*, 70: 160.

<sup>43</sup> Some historians have argued that the Ottawa participation in the siege of Fort William Henry was based upon a promise made by Montcalm of "plunder." Francis Jennings for example, calls this assertion a certainty, yet he is unable to provide evidence to support this claim. Similarly, Ian Steele mentions the lure of loot in his account of the battle, but Steele also notes other possible motivations. As evidence, Steele refers to a letter from Vaudreuil de Cavignal to the minister of marine noting a deputation of Iowas who appealed to the commandant at the Baie de Puants to pardon some Iowas who had killed a French trader. Since the Iowas were willing to take part in the campaign against Fort William Henry, pardon was granted. There is no mention of "loot." The

exchange for a pledge not to fight in the North American theatre for eighteen months, and a promise to return all French, Canadian, and Indian prisoners, the garrison (armed and with full military honours) was to be escorted to nearby Fort Edward. Monro agreed to allow the French one British officer as a prisoner held to guarantee Montcalm's escort safe passage on the return from Fort Edward.<sup>44</sup>

If anything illustrated the extreme difference between French and Ottawa concepts of warfare, it was the terms of surrender. They were completely unacceptable to the Ottawas and Canadians because they enabled the British army to fight again in eighteen month's time. The Ottawas and the Canadians wanted this army destroyed. As word of the terms spread, Langlade and the Canadians encouraged the Ottawas and the other French allies not to honour them. The Ottawas needed no such encouragement. The defeated British army would have to march right past the Ottawas and Canadians in their camp on the road to Fort Edward. At dawn on the morning of 10 August, 1757, as the British prepared to march to Fort Edward, the Ottawas and other allies attacked the wounded prisoners, the families of the regular soldiers, the servants, and the Anglo-American colonial militia. In other words those attacked first were the people for whom Montcalm had pledged his special care. The Ottawas and the other allies raced along the British column, to the shouts of encouragement from the

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interpretation of both historians on this question does not address the Ottawa desire to rid their world of the British threat. In any event, what Montcalm promised does not necessarily indicate anything more than what he believed the Algonquian allies might have wanted. Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 317; Ian Steele, *Betrayals*, 81; Vaudreuil de Cavignal au ministre, 20 juillet, 1757, AN, C11A, 102: 84-87.

<sup>44</sup> A good account of the surrender is to be found in Steele. He argues that the Canadian *coureurs de bois* encouraged the Ottawas to attack the British prisoners. Bougainville, "Journal" *RAPQ 1923-1924*, 301-302; Ian Steele *Betrayals*, 109-128.

Canadians, and killed and scalped as many British soldiers as they could. Others were dragged into the forest to be taken to Lake Huron as prisoners.<sup>45</sup>

The slaughter of the British prisoners further poisoned the French-Ottawa alliance. Although the Ottawas still took part in the war against the British, their only concern was to eliminate the British from North America. Certain French and Canadians still enjoyed good relations with the Ottawa Nation, but as long as Montcalm remained in command of the French forces the Ottawas refused to have any involvement with French military operations. Langlade and the other Canadian officers who had been at William Henry, and indeed the governor Vaudreuil de Cavignal himself, were thoroughly dismayed and disgusted by Montcalm's arrogant assumptions that the Ottawas and Canadians were only pawns to be used in his battles. As Bougainville noted, the British prisoners were massacred, not only as a result of the Ottawa desire to force them from the Ohio region, but also to shame and humiliate Montcalm:

The great misfortune which we feared has occurred. Evidently the terms of the capitulation are violated and all of Europe will demand that we justify ourselves.<sup>46</sup>

The Ottawas did not understand what it would mean to Montcalm if his capitulation were to be violated, but the Canadians certainly did and they were responsible for

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<sup>45</sup> A thorough account of the massacre is to be found in the observations of Père Pierre-Joseph-Antoine Roubaud, *Jesuit Relations*, 70: 176-182; also see Steele, *Betrayals*, 109-128.

<sup>46</sup> "Une partie de malheur que nous redoutions est arrivée. La capitulation est en apparence violée et l'Europe entière nous obligera de nous justifier." Bougainville, "Journal" *RAPO* 1923-1924, 302.

communications with all of the allies.<sup>47</sup> The Canadians were fighting for their homes, just as the Ottawas and the other allies were. They resented Montcalm's misplaced generosity and his desire to appear magnanimous and chivalrous at the expense of the colony and at the expense of the peoples of the Upper Great Lakes.

The French-Ottawa alliance persisted in name alone for another two years. The Ottawas paddled their canoes back to Lake Champlain the next summer, but they made it clear to Montcalm and to Bougainville that their participation in the fight was due only to their interest in defeating the British. The Ottawas indulged Montcalm by staying at Lake Champlain until the middle of July, 1758 when he held a council of war. The French commander-in-chief told the four hundred assembled Ottawas, Ojibwas, and Potawatomis of a great battle which he had planned and he offered them the chance to garner more scalps and to prove their courage. Montcalm felt that his promise would convince the nations of the Upper Great Lakes to stay. He believed that they considered scalps to be the Algonquian equivalent to French "trophies, obelisks, arches of triumph, and monuments."<sup>48</sup> The Ottawas and their Three Fires allies listened to Montcalm and then left quietly for their homes. None of them trusted the French general and the Ottawas understood that he meant to employ them only as auxiliaries as he had done before, not as his allies. Montcalm's attitude was merely another facet of his concept of European warfare. It was the stubborn belief in the superiority of the European way which eventually led to the end of the French-Ottawa

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<sup>47</sup> Bougainville listed all of the translators on his list of Indian participants at the siege of Fort William Henry. All of them were Canadian *coureurs de bois*. Bougainville, "Journal" *RAPQ 1923-1924*, 300.

<sup>48</sup> Bougainville, "Journal" *RAPQ 1923-1924*, 343.

alliance, and which contributed directly to the fall of New France. The Ottawas would still fight the British but their faith in the alliance was gone.<sup>49</sup>

Unlike the Ohio nations who signed the Treaty of Easton, the Ottawas never accepted peace with the British.<sup>50</sup> In fact they were so concerned with the ramifications of French defeat that they fought on against the British for the remainder of the war. As the Canadians and Ottawas sensed, Montcalm's insistence on fighting pitched battles contributed significantly to the French defeat. The Canadians and the Ottawas worried that this defeat was inevitable but they fought on because they were trying to defend their ways of life. The French-Ottawa alliance had gradually become a Canadian-Ottawa alliance and the Ottawas who fought in the final campaigns of 1758, 1759, and 1760 did so largely because of Langlade and other Canadians, whom they had known, and fought alongside, for so many years.

As they had done so many times before, a group of Ottawa warriors under the command of Langlade travelled to Niagara and then to the St. Lawrence in the late spring of 1759.<sup>51</sup> Some of them, wary of the defeatist Montcalm, worried that the

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<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, the French officers were ignorant of the attitude of the Ottawa allies. The commandant at Fort Niagara confidently predicted even more Algonquians for the next summer's campaign. Montcalm believed that the Ottawas held him in great esteem and that they would participate in the campaigns against the British if he asked them to do so. In 1759 he wrote to his third in command, colonel of infantry François-Charles de Bourlamaque, to tell him of the enthusiasm shown by the nations of the *pays d'en haut* for the war against the British. Their enthusiasm had nothing to do with Montcalm or his plans. Montcalm à Bourlamaque, 15 mars, 1759, H.-R. Casgrain, ed., *Collection des manuscrits du maréchal de Lévis: Lettres de M. de Bourlamaque*, 5: 291; Bougainville, "Journal" *RAPQ* 1923-1924, 313.

<sup>50</sup> In October 1758 a peace treaty was signed between the Iroquois, the Delawares, and the British. It did not signal the end of Indian resistance to the British; the Ottawas and their Ojibwa and Potawatomi allies would continue to oppose British attempts to expand into the Upper Great Lakes region.

<sup>51</sup> Pouchot, *Mémoire*, 2: 40.

British would finally succeed in defeating the French. These Ottawas met with the British agent, Sir William Johnson, at Oswego following the fall of Fort Niagara in July 1759, and told him that if the French were defeated they would not continue to fight the British as long as the British kept out of Ottawa territory. Johnson agreed to this, but he had no intention of keeping his word.<sup>52</sup>

After Montreal fell the next year, Major-General Jeffrey Amherst, the commander-in-chief of the British forces in North America, ordered an Anglo-American, Major Robert Rogers, to take possession of the French posts in the Upper Great Lakes. On 13 September, 1760, Rogers loaded two companies of Rangers, about two hundred men, into 15 whaleboats which the British used instead of canoes and embarked for Fort Pontchartrain. He was joined at Fort Presqu'Isle in Lake Erie, on 31 October by a Scottish officer named Captain Donald Scott, by the Indian agent George Croghan and by a company of British regular soldiers. The entire group continued the journey to the mouth of the Detroit River at Lake Erie's western end. As they rowed the whaleboats across Lake Erie, the British and the Anglo-Americans encountered Ottawa fleets six times. The Ottawas were aware of Rogers' presence and they shadowed him all the way to Bkejwanong.<sup>53</sup>

As the whaleboats approached the river mouth on the morning of 27 November,

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<sup>52</sup> Johnson to Jeffrey Amherst, 26 June, 1760, *Sir William Johnson Papers*, 3: 261-262; Conseil tenu à Détroit, 28 novembre, 1760, AN, C11A, 105: 358-358v.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Rogers, *Journals of Major Robert Rogers Containing an Account of the Several Excursions He Made Under the Generals Who Commanded Upon the Continent of North America During the Late War* (London: J. Millan, 1765), 145-171; Robert Rogers, *Concise Account of North America* (London: J. Millan, 1765), 240-243; George Croghan, "Journal of 1760-1761," in Reuben Gold Thwaites ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 1: 100-106.

the Rangers and the British regulars noted with anxiety the presence of a fleet of Ottawa and Ojibwa canoes standing out to meet them. An Ottawa-Ojibwa delegation under the command of Pontiac, the ogima of the Kamigas, had come to ask Rogers his business on Ottawa land. Rogers replied that they had come to take possession of the French forts at Detroit and Michilimackinac. Pontiac responded that the French who had come to the Upper Great Lakes had done so at the invitation of the Ottawas and if the British wanted to come they would have to get permission from all of the Ottawa nations. Rogers promised to provide the Ottawas with guns and ammunition just as the French had done, and he promised to respect the Ottawa claim to Lake Huron.<sup>54</sup>

Pontiac was sceptical of Rogers' promises but he had little choice but to allow him passage. The gateways defence network, the salient feature of Ottawa policy for centuries, now existed more in spirit than in form. The French alliance had gradually insinuated itself into Ottawa foreign policy and now, without the French, the gateways system appeared inadequate to both the Ottawas and their enemies. The Ottawas could only defend their ancestral homeland if they had continual access to European military technology. Without the French to supply weapons, ammunition and gunsmiths, the whole system would fall apart. Pontiac was thus obliged to let this substantial Anglo-American force pass, but he was clever enough to insist on conditions and to inform Rogers that he was entering Ottawa territory. Rogers and his Rangers passed with some apprehension. They knew all about Fort William Henry and many of the men in the whaleboats were terrified at the sight of the fierce looking and elaborately painted black

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<sup>54</sup> Rogers, *Concise Account*, 240-241; Croghan's Journal, 1: 113; Conseil tenu à Détroit, 28 novembre, 1760, AN, C11A, 105 358-358v; Picoté de Belestre au ministre, 16 juin, 1762, AN, C11A, 105: 356-357.

and red Ottawa and Ojibwa warriors.

That evening Rogers camped on Grosse Ile and sent Belestre two documents, one a copy of the terms of capitulation and the other a letter from Vaudreuil de Cavignal instructing him to comply with the terms of the capitulation. The Canadian commandant Picoté de Belestre's particular instructions were to surrender the command of the fort into Rogers' hands without incident. According to the military courtesy of the day and justifiably fearful of possible consequences, Rogers asked the Canadian commandant to address the Ottawas and the other allies the next day in order to apprise them of the changed situation. Picoté de Belestre agreed. The Rangers and the British regulars remained on the island where they would be able to defend themselves if the Ottawas and Canadians refused the terms of capitulation.

The next day, 28 November, 1760, François-Marie Picoté de Belestre, the last commandant at Fort Pontchartrain de Détroit, held a council meeting with the Ottawas, Ojibwas, Potawatomis, and Tionnontatés living in the Bkejwanong region. Picoté de Belestre commanded great respect among all of these nations. He was a Canadian, and he had fought alongside the Ottawas on the campaigns against the Chickasaws in the late 1730s. He had come to know the Potawatomis as the commandant at Fort Saint Joseph and he had won distinction amongst all of the nations by his role in the attack against Memeskia and the Miamis at Pickawillany. In 1757, Picoté de Belestre, had accompanied the Ottawas to Fort William Henry where he played a leading role in the battle. Now he was forced to announce the defeat of his nation and the uncertainty of the future. He held out some hope and told Pontiac that the French were still in



Louisiana, but in truth Picoté de Belestre knew the French could not regain North America and he warned the Ottawas that "the English will not treat them with the same kindness as the French."<sup>55</sup>

The mood in the fort was sombre as Pontiac rose to his feet to address Picoté de Belestre, Rogers, Campbell, and the assembled nations. He began his speech by expressing his sorrow at the circumstances which had forced the French to abandon the post and their old Ottawa allies. He then turned to Picoté de Belestre and invited him to stay in Bkejwanong. Finally he turned to address Rogers and Campbell. The nations of the Upper Great Lakes, he said, "would never recognize the British king as Onontio."<sup>56</sup> According to Pontiac, British perfidy was made manifest by Rogers' very presence. He reminded Rogers of the agreement which the Ottawas had made that summer at Oswego after the fall of Niagara in which Sir William Johnson had promised that, in exchange for peace, the British would not expand into the ancestral homeland of the Ottawas. Now Rogers had arrived and by his own words admitted that the British would take possession of the two French forts.<sup>57</sup>

Pontiac then displayed the courage which had enabled him to rise to his position as ogima of the Kamiga Ottawas. He told Rogers in no uncertain terms what the Ottawas intended to do:

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<sup>55</sup> "les Anglois ne les traiteront pas avec la meme douceur que leur pere." Réponse de Picoté de Belestre, 28 novembre, 1760, AN, C11A, 105: 358v; Belestre au ministre, 16 juin, 1762, AN, C11A, 105: 356-357; Rogers, *Journal*, 162-163.

<sup>56</sup> "ne reconnaitraient jamais le roi de l'Angleterre pour leur père." Picoté de Belestre au ministre, 16 juin, 1762, AN, C11A, 105: 356.

<sup>57</sup> Conseil tenu à Détroit, 28 novembre, 1760, AN, C11A, 105: 358-358v; Croghan's Journals, 1: 114.

They are resolved to send messengers, to all of the nations of the Lakes in order to invite them to assemble in the spring to chase the English from our lands.<sup>58</sup>

Rogers had almost three hundred men under his command and once in possession of the fort, he could have made an attempt to prevent Pontiac from sending the messengers. In fact he could have taken Pontiac prisoner. Instead he listened quietly to what the Kamiga ogima had to say and he made no effort to budge.<sup>59</sup>

After Pontiac had delivered his challenge to Rogers, Picoté de Belestre rose to his feet to reply. His response to the situation repeated many of the themes which the French had voiced over the duration of the French-Ottawa alliance, but he spoke with an emotion not often heard. He warned of the free manner in which the British used alcohol to cheat and weaken people in order to destroy them. He praised Pontiac for his wise decision to mistrust Johnson, Rogers, and the rest and he warned him that the British would never treat the Ottawas as the French had done. Finally he offered his best wishes for the coming struggle, but there was nothing concrete that he could do. Picoté de Belestre could not refute the growing sentiment that the French had become the "slaves of the British" as Pontiac had said in his address.<sup>60</sup>

On the morning of 3 December, 1760, Pontiac led a delegation of Ottawas to see

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<sup>58</sup> "Ils sont résolus d'en faire autant en faisant courir des paroles chez toutes les nations afin de rassembler ce printemps pour pouvoir chasser les Anglois de leurs terres." Conseil tenu à Détroit, 28 novembre, 1760, AN, C11A, 105: 358v.

<sup>59</sup> Neither of Rogers' accounts offers a clear description of this meeting. Evidently, neither Rogers nor Campbell understood much of what Pontiac had to say, if they understood anything at all. Rogers' *Concise Account* was published well after the actual events, and he may have tried to impress his readers by wrapping his own role in a more glorious robe than the events may have warranted. Rogers *Concise Account*, 240-241; Rogers, *Journals*, 160-165.

<sup>60</sup> Conseil tenu à Détroit, 28 novembre, 1760, AN, C11A, 105: 358v.

the Indian agent, George Croghan, who had arrived at the Kamiga Ottawa village a few days earlier. The purpose of this visit was to reassert the demand which had been put to Rogers before he was allowed to enter the gateway. Pontiac came directly to the point:

You have now taken possession of this country. While the French lived here they kept a smith to mend our guns and hatchets and a doctor to attend our people when sick. We expect you will do the same and as no doubt you have something to say to us from the English general and Sir William Johnson we would be glad to know how soon you would go on business as this is our hunting season.<sup>61</sup>

Pontiac's message could scarcely have been more clear. Croghan and the others would be allowed to stay provided that they accept the conditions which had been put to them. Furthermore, the British were not going to be shown any deference for their victory over the French. The Ottawas were determined to live as an autonomous nation in the Upper Great Lakes as they always had. They fervently hoped that their lives would not be disrupted.

Rogers was to have taken possession of all of the posts in the Upper Great Lakes region. He was to have remained in command of Fort Detroit with 150 men and he was to have sent 50 to Michilimackinac, 50 to the Saint Joseph River, and 50 to the Miamis. Winter came early to the Upper Great Lakes in 1760, however, and Rogers did not want his men to attempt to reach Michilimackinac across the dangerous icy expanse of Lake Huron. The formal surrender of Fort Michilimackinac did not take place until the month of September 1761, over a year later. The second in command, Charles Mouet

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<sup>61</sup> Croghan Journals, 1: 114-115.

de Langlade, turned over the post to Captain Henry Balfour, an officer of the British army who had been sent by Amherst to secure this strategic post. Louis Liénard de Beaujeu, the French commander, had left Michilimackinac in Langlade's hands and had gone west in order to join the French in the Illinois country.<sup>62</sup>

At first, Pontiac's bold challenge to Rogers appeared to work. Life did not change drastically in the Upper Great Lakes. The Canadians were allowed to remain at the forts and trade was allowed to continue. The British who came did not attempt to interfere with the trade, indeed some began to participate.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, underlying differences soon began to surface. The commanders at the posts, Captain Donald Campbell at Fort Detroit and Captain George Etherington at Michilimackinac, knew that good relations with the Ottawas were critical but they were unable to convince the British commander Jeffrey Amherst of this. Amherst ignored the advice of his commanders and Sir William Johnson, and the situation in the Upper Great Lakes began to deteriorate. British soldiers were attacked and British traders went missing, presumably carried into the woods by the Ottawas.<sup>64</sup>

In the winter of 1762 Pontiac made good his threat. He and Nissowaquet of the

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<sup>62</sup> Kerléc au ministre, 1 mars, 1761, AN, C13, 42: 207-208.

<sup>63</sup> One Anglo-American, James Stirling, who attempted to profit from the trade at this time found the Ottawas willing enough to trade their furs, but he found it impossible to get goods from his partners in New York with which to exchange for furs. Stirling found Captain Campbell's attitude difficult and troubling and he blamed the British officer for ruining commercial possibilities because of security concerns. James Stirling to Messrs Cox and Sloss, 8 July, 1761, James Stirling Papers, William L. Clements Library.

<sup>64</sup> Like Montcalm, Amherst did not respect the Ottawas or any of the other nations with whom he had dealings. His correspondence makes his extreme dislike for them quite obvious. In one typical letter he made reference to the number of suspected Ottawa crimes against the British and he referred to the Ottawas as "swarthy brutes whose vilest wickedness makes me shudder." Amherst to Gage, 1 August, 1763, Amherst Papers, William L. Clements Library, 6: 56.

Nassauakuetons sent word inviting representatives of all of the nations of the Great Lakes to meet at the Ottawa village at Michilimackinac. The object of the meeting was to plan a concerted effort to expel the British from the interior of North America. The idea was simple and effective. Each post was to be attacked using a well-conceived ruse. For example, at Bkejwanong, the British at Fort Detroit were to be fooled into allowing Ottawas into the fort with concealed weapons and at Michilimackinac a game of baggattaway (lacrosse) was to serve as a diversion for the attack. Although Nissowaquet had called the meeting (as the senior ogima residing at Michilimackinac he had this right) Pontiac was the one who planned the attack. All of the representatives of the nations present agreed and they promised to spread the word among their allies.<sup>65</sup>

Amherst did not believe good relations with the nations of the Upper Great Lakes were in his interest. In fact, he was prepared to destroy these people just as Picoté de Belestre had predicted. Like the other British officers, Amherst had been horrified by the massacre at Fort William Henry. His distrust in these people was confirmed in the summer of 1763 when the resistance which Pontiac had promised Rogers began in earnest. By early July 1763, Amherst reported to Thomas Gage, the military governor at Montreal, that Pontiac had attacked Fort Detroit and that the Fort at Presqu'Isle in Lake Erie had been taken by an Ottawa war party:

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<sup>65</sup> For obvious reasons Nissowaquet and Pontiac wanted to keep this meeting secret. It is difficult, therefore, to discover too much about the actual form of the meeting. What is known comes from the deposition of an Ottawa whom the French called Charlot. Charlot had lived with the French and had converted to catholicism. Pontiac sent him to the Fort de Chartres in the Illinois country in the hope that the French there would join in the attack. Déposition du nommé Charlot, 1763, AN, C11A, 105: 416-418.

There is too much certainty that Presque'ile is destroyed incredible as it is that any consideration should induce Ensign Christie to capitulate with the Devils, his brains must have been turned, and they have been beat out Indian like, with every excruciating torment which they could contrive to exercise upon him.<sup>66</sup>

Gage diplomatically responded that the Canadians at Montreal ought to be sent with trade goods in order to pacify Pontiac and the Ottawas. Gage knew that the underlying cause of the trouble had been Amherst's hostile attitude and his patent unwillingness to improve relations. Amherst thanked Gage for the offer, but declined to accept.

Amherst had another plan which he felt would bring a more permanent solution to the problematic relations between the British and the nations of the Upper Great Lakes.<sup>67</sup>

The events of the summer of 1763 were well-documented. At Detroit, a Canadian named Robert Navarre who lived on a farm near the fort, wrote a lengthy account entitled *Journal ou dictation d'une conspiration faite par les sauvages contre les anglais, et du si ge du fort de Detroux*.<sup>68</sup> An Anglo-American soldier named Jehu Hay also kept a journal of the events at Fort Detroit and Alexander Henry wrote of his experiences at Fort Michilimackinac.<sup>69</sup> All of these accounts tell the story of Pontiac's assault on the British posts. His strategy was partially successful. Many of the British

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<sup>66</sup> Amherst to Gage, 10 July, 1763, Amherst papers, William L. Clements Library, 6: 52.

<sup>67</sup> Amherst to Gage, 30 July, 1763, Amherst Papers, William L. Clements Library, 6: 54.

<sup>68</sup> This manuscript is now kept in the C.M. Burton Historical Collections of the Detroit Public Library. A published edition, which includes a translation and the original French, was used for the present purpose. Clarence Munro Burton, ed., *Journal of Pontiac's Conspiracy* (Detroit: Michigan Society of the Colonial Wars, 1912).

<sup>69</sup> Jehu Hay, *Diary of the Siege of Detroit*. 1 May, 1763 to 6 June, 1765, Manuscripts Division, William L. Clements Library; Alexander Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories between the Years 1760 and 1776* (New York: Riley, 1809).

and Anglo-American soldiers and traders were killed, but Fort Detroit, Fort Pitt, and Fort Niagara held, and the object of expelling the British failed. The plan failed largely because the British had enough rations and were able to weather the siege. The Ottawas and their Ojibwa and Potawatomi allies could not keep the British under siege indefinitely; all of them had to return to their home villages in order to prepare provisions for the winter.

At the outbreak of the fighting, Amherst unleashed the forces of his terrible scheme. Colonel Henry Bouquet, the commander in the west, was instructed by Amherst explicitly:

You will do well to try to Inoculate the Indians by means of Blankets, as well as to Try Every other Method that can serve to Extirpate this Execrable Race. I should be very glad your scheme for hunting them down by Dogs could take Effect; but England is at too great a distance to think of that at present.<sup>70</sup>

The commandant at Fort Pitt, a Swiss mercenary named Simon Ecuyer, was given the dangerous task of putting the germ warfare scheme into practice.

On 13 August, 1763, Ecuyer wrote a report of the expenses at Fort Pitt. In this list he included the following entry:

The Crown to Levy, Trent and Company for sundries had by order of Capt. Simon Ecuyer, Commandant. To sundries got to replace in kind those which were taken from people in the hospital to convey the Smallpox to the Indians viz.

2 Blankets.....	£ 2.00
1 Silk Handkerchief....	£ 0.13.6
1 linnen.....	£ 0.03.6

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<sup>70</sup> Bouquet had made the proposal to infect the Indians with smallpox, but he was concerned that he might contract the disease himself. He proposed importing hunting dogs from the England as a means of hunting down people in the forest. Bouquet to Amherst, 13 July, 1763, Bouquet Papers, British Museum, Series 21634, fol. 325; Amherst to Bouquet, 16 July, 1763, Bouquet Papers, British Museum, Series 21634, fol. 242.

Signed S. Ecuyer, Fort Pitt, 13 August, 1763.<sup>71</sup>

Ecuyer ordered those of his soldiers who had an immunity to the disease to cut the infected blanket cloth into small squares. These squares were then placed inside small tin boxes. The tin boxes were placed inside a series of other tin boxes, each slightly larger than the last. Finally, an Ottawa delegation at Fort Pitt was presented with the boxes as a present. Ecuyer told them that the boxes contained strong medicine and that they must not be opened until the Ottawas returned to Michilimackinac.<sup>72</sup>

With no knowledge of germ warfare, the Ottawas of the delegation did precisely as they were told. The delegation arrived at Michilimackinac in the month of August and spread word of a "gift" from the British. There was great wonder in the crowds which gathered as each little box was opened to reveal another, smaller box. Finally, as the smallest box was opened everyone pressed close to see what it contained. The boxes holding the infected pieces of cloth were passed around and each person looked closely. Eventually the pieces of fabric were taken out and passed from person to person. The disease spread quickly until the whole village of Wauganaukezee was laid waste:

The whole coast of Arbre Croche, or Waw-gaw-naw-ke-zee, where their principal village was situated, on the west shore of the peninsula near the Straits, which is said to have been a continuous village some fifteen or sixteen miles long and extending from what is now called Cross Village to Seven-Mile Point (that is, seven miles from Little Traverse, now Harbor Springs), was entirely depopulated and laid waste.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Bouquet Papers, 21654: 168.

<sup>72</sup> Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 9-10.

<sup>73</sup> Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 9-10.



Most of the Nassauakuetons, and many of the Kiskakons and Sinagos died as a result of Amherst's cowardly and inhuman act. The Ottawa Nation, never among the most populous of Great Lakes nations, was thus completely devastated and rendered only a shadow of its former self.

Amherst clearly recognized the inhumanity of his plan and he took great care in his own correspondence both to emphasize acts of Ottawa cruelty as a means of justifying his own, and to keep his methods a closely guarded secret.<sup>74</sup> His correspondence with Gage reveals his determination to destroy the Ottawa people:

...money must not be spared on such occasions, the unjust and villainous Behaviour of the Savages shall be punished as they deserve and I will make no peace with them 'till I have brought them to such a state, that they shall be afraid ever to think again of making such another attempt.<sup>75</sup>

Many of the letters which the British commander-in-chief wrote that summer, alluded to the "measures taken" to annihilate the Ottawa people with disease.<sup>76</sup> When word of the epidemic raging at Michilimackinac reached Amherst, he was well pleased. His alternative had been to send British troops to the Upper Great Lakes, but by sending germs instead, he claimed to have "saved the lives of better men."<sup>77</sup>

The extent of the devastation is difficult to measure. The British at Michilimackinac were in no state to report on disease in the Ottawa villages. Alexander

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<sup>74</sup> Perhaps more to the point, he also recognized that his plan lacked courage. British officers lived by a strict code of moral conduct and while killing people according to the rules of war was an accepted part of the code, poisoning unsuspecting women and children was clearly unacceptable to his peers.

<sup>75</sup> Amherst to Gage, 1 August, 1763, Amherst Papers, William L. Clements Library, 6: 56.

<sup>76</sup> Amherst to Gage, 20 August, 1763, Amherst Papers, William L. Clements Library, 6: 59.

<sup>77</sup> Amherst to Gage, 8 September, 1763, Amherst Papers, William L. Clements Library, 6: 60.

Henry for example, reports only on his own experiences and he did not visit the Ottawa villages in Waugaunaukezee until the following winter. The best source is the Ottawa oral tradition recorded by Blackbird:

The tradition says it was indeed awful and terrible. Everyone taken with it was sure to die. Lodge after lodge was totally vacated - nothing but the dead bodies lying here and there in their lodges - entire families being swept off with the ravages of this terrible disease.<sup>78</sup>

The Ottawas had suffered epidemics before, but natural epidemics killed many fewer people. Amherst's carefully planned genocide killed on a scale never before seen, or even imagined, in the Upper Great Lakes. The Ottawas, whose sphere of influence had once ranged from the edge of the prairies to the St. Lawrence Valley, were now rendered unable to defend the heart of their ancestral home. While articles and books have been written about the slaughter after the siege at Fort William Henry in which a maximum number of 185 people were killed, the genocide of the Ottawas, which killed at least 1500 people, has been ignored.<sup>79</sup>

The end of the French-Ottawa alliance came in that terrible summer of 1763. Those Ottawas left alive laid had no more support from the French and they had an enemy whose brutality knew no bounds:

It is generally believed among the Indians of Arbor Croche that this wholesale murder of the Ottawas by this terrible disease sent by the British people, was actuated through hatred, and expressly to kill off the

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<sup>78</sup> Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Some historians have acknowledged Amherst's plans, but they have examined the destruction of the Delaware people, another of Amherst's sworn enemies. His correspondence to Gage makes it clear, however, that he was also responsible for the devastation of the Ottawas. Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York: Norton, 1988), 447-448; Steele, *Betrayals*, 144.

Ottawas and Chippewas because they were friends of the French Government or French King.<sup>80</sup>

To protect their ancestral home, and its rich resource base, the Ottawas had gone to great lengths; they were fighting for the survival of their culture and the protection of their homes, not merely for economic or political gain. In the summer of 1763 they finally lost this fight and were virtually destroyed as a nation.

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<sup>80</sup> Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa*, 10.

## **Conclusion:**

We are more than dimly aware of the terrible destructive wars which raged in colonial America as European armies sought to win territories and resources, and Native warriors sought to defend their homes. Libraries are full of books about colonial wars and conquests. There is as great a need, if not greater, to study those much rarer occurrences when Europeans and Natives identified common goals and worked cooperatively toward their attainment. This dissertation was intended to address the ways in which two very different peoples, French colonizers and Ottawa Indians formed an alliance which lasted for one hundred and fifty years. For the most part relations between the two groups were good. Certainly there were periods of trouble, particularly in the days of Cadillac and Mekoua, but calmer heads prevailed and the identification of mutual goals remained an important priority for the French and the Ottawas alike.

Other than the need to study the ways in which the two groups cooperated, this dissertation was written in order to challenge both the ways in which historians have portrayed the Ottawas, and the direction of the history of Indian-White history in general. My main concerns were to eliminate the middleman tag, to describe what life was like for the Ottawas, and to show how the French came to accept the Ottawa demands. This last concern took place on a number of levels. Officials in France were persuaded to keep the post at Michilimackinac open and to supply the Ottawa Nation with arms and armourers in return for military aid. Officials in the St. Lawrence were persuaded to participate in Ottawa wars and young men at Michilimackinac were influenced by the Ottawas to the degree that a number of them became Ottawas in all but their blood.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the alliance concerns the ways in which these young Frenchmen in the Upper Great Lakes were influenced by their Ottawa hosts. Ottawas had been able to incorporate their French allies into their defence network, but they were also able to incorporate young Frenchmen into their society. French arms and people to maintain those arms formed the basis for the alliance, but the young *coureurs de bois* and soldiers held the alliance together when it was challenged by anti-French sentiment. Neither Ocheepik, nor Mekoua, nor Pentalouan was able to break the alliance because men like Kinongé and Outoutagan understood the value of the alliance and because men Louvigny and Langlade were living proof of French commitment to Ottawa goals. The alliance was not always conducted honestly, but its worth was never seriously challenged.

In order to understand the Ottawas' goals, much of this dissertation addressed their resource use and their way of life. Of all the nations of the Upper Great Lakes region, the Ottawas had the most diverse economy and the greatest need to defend their resources. It became evident early in the research that the Ottawas were mainly concerned with the protection of the gateways into Lake Huron: Bawating, Michilimackinac, Nottawasaga, and later at Bkejwanong. It also became evident that these people were industrious, and that they worked hard to use the different resources which their region provided.

As one reads accounts of Ottawa life in the writings of French explorers and Jesuit missionaries, a clear picture of their economy begins to emerge. In the first place their economy was diverse. They hunted, they grew vegetables, they gathered berries,

nuts, and plants, and they above all they fished. They manufactured items both for their own use, and for trade: birch bark canoes and boxes, woven mats, bags, nets, and baskets, and tools from chert. Their lives were organized on an annual cycle and they travelled every year along the same routes to their family winter hunting grounds and sugar bushes and to their summer villages.

The diversity of their economy in the transitional forest was not the only aspect of Ottawa life which distinguished them from their neighbours. Above all other things, and to a greater extent than any other people, the Ottawas depended upon the waters of Lake Huron. Their lacustrine orientation was at once the source of their most important staple, lake whitefish, and the source of their greatest asset, canoe skills. If the Ottawas were able to keep their rivals from gaining access to the resource wealth in their ancestral homeland, it was because they were canoeists of great skill. They proved this time in their travels but they also proved it by defeating their enemies on the open water.<sup>1</sup>

The two main characterizations of the Ottawas, middlemen or refugees, which one encounters in the historical writing, were not supported by the evidence which I found in any of the documents, maps, or archaeological reports which I consulted in the preparation of this thesis. The Ottawas I encountered in the documents were energetic traders, but they traded a wide variety of items, most of which they manufactured themselves, such as their decorated woven mats. There was an ecological basis for trade, but it was also designed to cement alliances and to keep peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Cadillac à Monsieur, 20 octobre, 1697, AN, C11E, 14: 28-30.

There is even less evidence to support the notion that the Ottawas were refugees after the middle of the seventeenth century. While it is true that the Iroquois invasion of Huronia did force the Kiskakons to abandon Nottawasaga Bay, the rest of the Ottawa Nation was not touched at all. Even the level to which the Kiskakons were inconvenienced by the Iroquois assault is debatable. In any event the Ottawas' ability to protect their gateways and to prevent access to Lake Huron kept them safe from outside threats. The world changed with the arrival of European technology, but once the Ottawas secured a supply from the French they remained able to defend themselves.

Until the 1740s the Ottawas managed this very well and their resilience in the face of change is the salient feature of their history. If one examines the whole period from the arrival of Europeans in the Upper Great Lakes to Pontiac's defensive war, Ottawa resilience remains the most enduring feature. Unfortunately new challenges from the British army and from Anglo-American colonists eager to expand into the Great Lakes were able to succeed where the Iroquois had failed. The history of the last twenty years of the alliance is a story of defeats, recriminations, and ultimately brutality. Unlike the French, the British and their colonists were not prepared to treat with the Native Peoples whom they met. Their brutal policies led to the end of the French-Ottawa alliance and to a massacre of terrible proportion.

In the introduction to this dissertation I offered a solution for the apparent neglect of the Ottawas as a historical subject. There is another reason why so much is heard of them in passing and yet so little work has been done with the Ottawas as the focus of the enquiry. They were so badly beaten by Amherst that they faced relative

obscurity in the nineteenth century. A once powerful and influential people simply faded from view. Hopefully this dissertation will give us the opportunity to bring the Ottawas back to the historical stage.



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